

Politics

The project financed by Germany provides IDPs with houses

Manifesto published by Georgian Trade Union Trade union is urging the Georgian government to develop an employment policy tailored to the current challenges and to promote its effective implementation in the country.

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Culture & Lifestyle

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BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

At the governmental session held on May 4th, the Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia announced that all kinds of traffic restrictions imposed on the cities of Batumi and Kutaisi would be lifted from May 5th. The MPs at the session discussed issues such as providing assessment to the people left unemployed, facilitating factors of economic revival and informing the minority ethnic groups.

According to the PM, traffic restrictions still remain in force in Tbilisi and Rustavi. However, he expressed hopes that the issue of these two cities would be resolved by the end of the week.

Prior to the session, the PM announced that the government would discuss those social-economical events that had already been planned and presented. He stated that they would initiate the decree of the government as well as changes in the tax code.

Changes in the tax code regard stimulating events carried out in terms of subsidising income taxes for companies and are directed straight at maintaining

#stayhome Stay home, Stay safe #staysafe

Prime minister holds governmental session



The government of Georgia

workplaces in the country as much as possible. The decree of the government is focussed on approval of the social events, intending support of the citizens who have lost their jobs. As Gakharia claims, everyone who lost income amid the pandemic will receive this kind of support.

The PM also mentioned that the Ministry of Agriculture has developed an effective plan for supporting the farmers which will be introduced in the coming days.

"We should all understand that revival of the village and supporting the farmers is gaining completely fresh value and dimension alongside the challenges we face every day, even grocery safety-wise," noted the PM.

According to Gakharia, the second phase of a 6-phase plan of economic opening might be commenced beforehand. However, he stressed that unless all the recommendations given by the Ministry of Healthcare are followed, including changes in our everyday lifestyle as well as in daily activities of companies, discussion about economic revival appears irrelevant.

The PM emphasized the fact that masks and social distancing are becoming part of our lifestyles.

"We will only be able to revive and open the economy if the Ministry of Healthcare manages the epidemic situation, therefore social distancing and face masks need to become an integral part of our

everyday lives as it is the only way for us to be effective in terms of recovering the economy."

As Gakharia stated at the session, economic revival and economic opening are becoming the number one priorities of the government. According to him, in the following days the government will discuss and unveil the strategy plan elaborated by the Ministry of Economy, which intends recovering the most affected sector- tourism.

Gakharia also noted that every citizen of Georgia will be provided with services in the framework of the state of emergency equally, regardless of their ethnic origins or lodging region. He called on local municipalities inhabited by ethnic minorities to double their effort and provide all the citizens with information and benefits enjoyed by the state. In addition, he urged the governors to take effective steps in this direction.

The PM also announced that all companies working in the construction sector, as well as those producing construction materials, will resume functioning from the 5th of May and stressed that daily inspections would continue implemented by the special team of the Ministries of Health and Economy. He also mentioned that from May 5th the car repair companies would be permitted to resume working as well and the logistics business and shipping.

Giorgi Gakharia, the Prime Minister stated at the governmental session that economic revival and economic opening are becoming the number one priorities of the government.



estimated their work as 'crucial for both the logistics business and shipping.'

The project financed by Germany provides IDPs with houses

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Within the framework of the project funded by the government of Germany, houses will be built in land plots possessed by the refugees in the Western Georgia and region of Shida-Kartli. The information was published by Internally Disciplined

Persons, Ecomigrants and Livelihood Agency (IDPELA).

According to IDPELA, The internally displaced families owning the land plots registered until February 1st, 2020 were eligible to participate in the project.

The application with a request to participate in the project was

filled by 94 families.

“On the basis of the documentation submitted by the applicants, guided by long-term resettlement criteria, each family was assigned with preliminary scores.

The families can submit additional documentation, within 15 working days after publish-



Internally Disciplined Persons, Ecomigrants and Livelihood Agency (IDPELA).

ing of the list. The IDPs can send the documents to the official e-mail address - Infoidp@moh.gov.ge or place the documents to the special box, designated for applications and official correspondence, at the citizens' reception center of the Agency,” reads the statement.

The agency takes into consideration the current situation and allows Internally Disciplined Families, who could not manage to submit the documents within the timeline set, to present additional documentation before launching the work of the Committee.

According to the document, the adjustment of preliminary scores is possible, in case the corresponding substantiation exists. After that, the corrected list will be published.

The Monitoring groups will study the living conditions and needs of the IDPs on site. The verified applications will be unveiled to the Committee on IDPs to make a decision.

The working process of the commission will be transparent and will involve representatives of Public Defender Office, international and local non-governmental organisations.

According to the IDPELA, the project financed by the KfW development bank of Germany and implemented by the Danish Refugee Council, aside from house provision, also intends economic, social and educational integration of the IDPs.

Within the framework of the project, at this stage, 122 houses will be constructed in Western Georgia and Shida Kartli.



According to IDPELA, the project is determined to build 122 houses in Western Georgia and Shida Kartli.

Manifesto published by Georgian Trade Union

By ANASTASIA SOKHADZE

Georgian Trade Unions has stated that there had not yet been any local production encouragement.

Developments around the world, including in Georgia, as a result of the spread of COVID-19, have shown the special need and necessity for the regulation and realization of socio-economic and labor rights-oriented human rights protection in the country.

About 100 thousand citizens employed in the trade sector remained unemployed. Most of the employees in the transport sector were left without income. Although municipal transport drivers have retained their salaries, drivers of minibuses and intercity transport, whose income depended on daily output, have been left without any pay. The situation is similar with taxi drivers, as they depend on the platform (app). Their income is significantly reduced or stopped.

Most of those employed in the informal sector lost their jobs, including nurses employed in the care economy, tutors, janitors, caregivers, the total number of which is up to 40 thousand.

It is noteworthy that the high responsibility of those employed in heavy metallurgy and food trade, people working in emergency mode have to work in low-wage conditions to save themselves and their families from labor.

“The crisis situation has clearly shown how important it is to establish the principles of solidarity and universal justice in the society, which the Georgian Trade Unions demanded. It is now clear

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Manifesto prioritising employment

Weather

Tuesday, May 5

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 25°C

Night T-storm

Low: 14°C

Wednesday, May 6

Day Rain

High: 21°C

Night Showers

Low: 12°C

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TI Georgia releases report on Georgia's economic dependence on Russia



Report also highlights that Georgia's reliance on Russian energy resources has declined significantly in recent years and the dependence on Russian investment is also low.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Transparency International Georgia (TIG), a local watchdog, published a report on 4th of May, which analysed the threats and trends of the country's economic dependence on Russia.

According to the report, Georgia's economy depends on Russia mainly in terms of tourism, foreign trade and remittances, which, according to TIG, is a 'significant challenge' to the country's economic security. The report notes that the revenue from tourism in Russia alone was \$ 700 million last year.

During recent years, exports of Georgian products to Russia have been growing, reaching about \$500 million in 2019. Russia's share in Georgia's total exports were 13.2%. However, the document emphasizes that against the background of the pandemic of Covid-19, since March 2020, Georgia's economic dependence on Russia is 'naturally' declining, (exports to Russia falling to 11.7% in the first quarter of this year), which gives Georgia the opportunity to 'structurally transform the economy and become less dependent on Russia.'

"At least this will be inevitable in the case of tourism, because the attitude towards Georgian

tourism, including Russian tourists, will decrease and it may take several years to return to the level of 2019," TIG said.

According to the report, in 2019, Georgia received about \$ 1.6 billion in revenue from tourists, remittances and goods exported from Russia, which is 9% of Georgia's gross domestic product.

The share of Russian visitors in the total number of foreign visitors to Georgia reached a maximum of 16% in 2018. Due to the restriction on flights imposed from July 2019, Russia's share in Georgian tourism decreased to 15.7%. The ongoing pandemic has also had a significant impact on the influx of visitors from Russia. In the first quarter of 2020, the number of visitors from Russia decreased by 32%, while its share decreased to 13%.

"Georgia's economy will suffer far more from Covid 19 than Russia can potentially economically hurt us," the document reads, adding that this will give the Georgian population and government an opportunity to be less vulnerable to economic sanctions expected from Russia, and develop some sort of immunity.

Speaking about the products exported to the Russian Federation, TIG draws attention to wine and explains that the high de-

pendence of Georgian wine exports on the Russian market also carries political risks.

In 2013-2019, Georgian wine exports increased by \$158 million (244%), of which \$ 110 million came from sales in Russia. In 2019, Georgia exported \$133 million worth of wine to Russia, which was 57% of Georgia's total wine exports.

The organization also states that the population of the winemaking region, Kakheti, depends mainly on income from wine exports and in case of export ban, they will suffer a large share of losses, since many families do not have an alternative source of income.

When talking about the products imported from Russia, TIG states that 100% of the wheat imported in the first quarter of 2020 was from Russia. In general,

up to 70% of wheat consumed by Georgia comes from Russia. Russia's share in Georgia's wheat imports is over 90%.

The organization believes that such a high dependence on wheat imports from Russia poses a certain threat, as they estimate that stopping wheat imports from Russia to Georgia for political or other reasons will lead to a shortage of wheat in Georgia and increase the price of bread.

As for the remittances coming from Russia, they have been decreasing lately. In 2019, \$ 429 million was transferred from Russia, which is 29% of Georgia's total remittances. In 2012, this share was 56%. The year 2020 also began with the decline in remittances from Russia. In January-March, the share of Russian remittances fell to 21%.

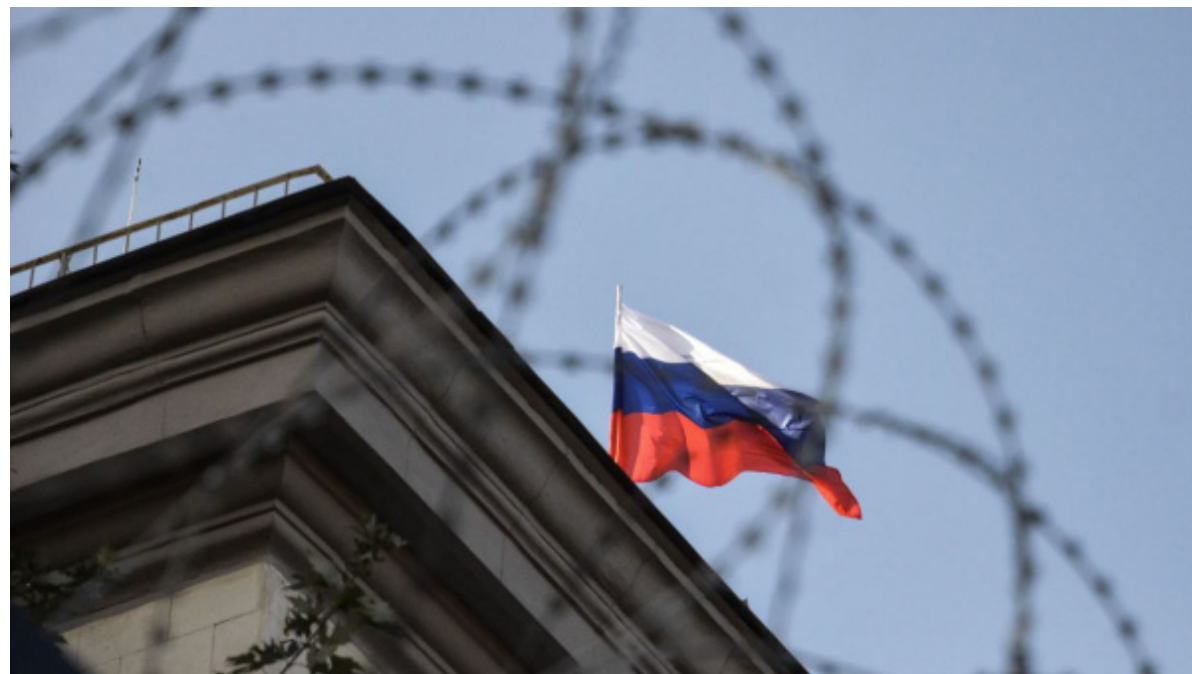
TIG predicts that over time, Georgia's dependence on remittances from Russia will decline further, as European countries are more attractive to Georgian emigrants, and remittances from these countries are on the rise.

According to the TIG, Georgia's economic dependence

on Russia is not just an economic issue, it is a challenge to the country's security. With this in mind, the organization believes that the goal of the Georgian government should be to minimize economic dependence on Russia.

NGO addresses the government with the following post-pandemic recommendations: work even more actively to diversify its export markets, especially in terms of wine exports; Promote local production of wheat and diversification of wheat imports as much as possible, within the approach of helping the business sector to reduce damage caused by pandemic; Unlike previous years, after opening the borders, Russia should not be the target market for attracting tourists, resources allocated for marketing activities should be more actively directed to other countries.

TIG claims the pandemic will inevitably lead to a certain reorganization of Georgia's economy, and one of the consequences of that should be to have the economy less dependent on Russia.



Georgia's economy depends on Russia mainly through tourism, foreign trade and remittances. Photo: RFE/RL

Manifesto published by Georgian Trade Union

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that people need to earn a living in order to survive, which is vital today. If the authorities of the country had decided in time to take such an initiative of the trade unions as imposing unemployment benefits, it would not be necessary to mobilize both financial and human resources in such a crisis today. It is obvious that the country is in danger of a severe economic crisis," reads the manifesto.

In addition, trade unions say it is important for Georgia to take all measures to make employment and job creation a top priority for the country, especially in such grave conditions as is the current crisis.

European Union launches 2020 EU Prize for Journalism in Georgia

On 3 May, the EU marked World Press Freedom Day in Georgia by launching the 2020 EU Prize for Journalism. This is the ninth edition of the prize, run jointly by the EU Delegation and the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia.

The 2020 EU Prize for Journalism will be awarded in six categories covering print, online and broadcast media. It also includes the Special Prize for Peace Journalism, which is awarded by the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) for conflict-sensitive journalism contributing to confidence building and peace.

Each winner in the six categories will receive €1,500. The winner of the EUMM Special Prize for Peace Journalism will receive a one-month fellowship with the Institute of War and Peace Reporting in London.

The deadline for submission of all entries is 15 December 2020. The application form, rules and submission guidelines are available at www.euprizejournalism.ge

The EU Prize for Journalism was introduced in 2012 to highlight and encourage high-quality media work in Georgia. According to the EU, this is now one of the longest running journalism competitions in the country.

(euneighbours.eu)



How to overcome the crisis

Katsia Adanaia and Filipe Chelidze - Country of Liquid Sun



Katsia Adanaia

Amongst famous Georgian business men of the nineteenth century, Katsia Adanaia is notable for having owned the enterprise for producing alcohol beverages in the city of Kutaisi, in Western Georgia. The products which were made in his factory-liqueurs of lemon, currants, mint, rose, tarragon and assorted vodkas-were served not only in Kutaisi but also at the restaurants, hotels and taverns and were sold in the shops of large industrial cities and ports in Georgia and with great popularity amongst consumers.

At that time, restaurant patrons in Kutaisi and other large cities-mostly foreign diplomats, representatives of commercial missions, members of the aristocracy, artists, European guests and otherwise inquisitive travelers- were interested in Georgian meals and beverages and Kutaisi was always distinguished by



its hospitality. Located close to the cities of Batumi and Poti, this also meant that a great number of patrons and guests visited the restaurants and hotels of Kutaisi with each of these locales always having been popular meeting places for businessmen and civil servants. As a result of this also foreign popularity of his products, the labels of the outputs manufactured by Katsia Adanaia, similar to the products of many other companies at this time, were mostly written in French and Russian. Adanaia's registered trademark was the deer and his initials in Cyrillic script, К.Г.А

The Kutaisi Governorate was established in 1846. Accordingly, Kutaisi became the administrative and economic cen-

tre of the region with a concentration of military and civil-administrative institutions. A city Governance Reform implemented in 1875 facilitated the economic growth of the city and its transformation into a bourgeois system and society.

Records of Kutaisi Governors contain dry and stenciled information on the economic processes taking place in the region with only insignificant details on the life of the city. Materials on the initiation and development of Kutaisi industry are especially scarce.

Imereti, similar to the rest of Georgia, is a region of viticulture and wine making. Naturally, the economic reforms in Imereti were followed by the development of the wine industry. In this field, George Bolkvadze was apparently the innovator. He was the first to establish a liquor-cognac production in the 1860s that later became famous throughout the country.

The quality of liquor and cognac production technology at the Bolkvadze Company seems to have been outstanding since a famous wine maker, Filipe Chelidze, spent 12 years at the factory and became proficient in the production of liquor-vodka. Chelidze, however, was still not satisfied by his success decided to master the production of champagne wine. For this purpose, he became acquainted with the French Champagne producer, Victor Tiebo, who was working at the Oldenburg-owned wine factory in Kutaisi (located on Balakhvani Street). Chelidze spent another couple of years in this factory as a probationer. Later, he purchased equipment from Tiebo and a plot of land on Mikheili Street. In 1895,

Chelidze's company, with state-of-art equipment, gained tremendous success. The factory, employing 15 staff members, was annually producing up to 15,000 cask of champagne wine, 100,000 cask barrels of table wine and 15,000 cask barrels of liquor. The Caucasus countries were the primary customers of the factory. Special productions were



Filipe Chelidze

also sent to Russia, mostly to Siberia and the Far Eastern Manchuria regions.

Chelidze's company became a recipient of 11 international exhibition rewards



and a number of medals as the testimony of its success and recognition.



Внутреннее убранство винодельни Филиппа Челидзе в Кутаиси. © Filipe Chelidze's wine cellar in Kutaisi