

## Elene Khoshtaria leaves European Georgia



According to Elene Khoshtaria, she remains committed to her position and still refuses to use her parliamentary mandate.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Elene Khoshtaria, one of the leaders of the European Georgia, announced during a briefing yesterday that she is leaving the party. According to her, she plans to form a new political force and continue political activities independently.

Khoshtaria clarified that she would neither join another party nor use her mandate in the parliament.

"I would like to emphasise that I will not be joining any other party and that I remain in the oppositional unity, which is the strongest weapon in the fight against the current regime. To avoid any possible speculations, I would like to state that I do not consider entering the parliament. My political positions stay the same," stated Khoshtaria.

David Bakradze, Chairman of European Georgia responded to Khoshtaria's



According to the European Georgia party members, they knew about Khoshtaria's decision, and it was not a surprise for them.

announcement and wished her luck. Bakradze denied the rumors about Khoshtaria's decision being a result of an intra-party feud and stated that the party members had known for a long time that she wanted to start independent political activities after the elections, with more emphasis on civic activism.

Giga Bokeria, one of the leaders of the political party stated that considering his personal, as well as political attitude to-

wards her, he wished Khoshtaria had not left the European Georgia. According to him, despite Khoshtaria's decision, she remains the closest figure to the party.

European Georgia has overcome the mandatory 1% threshold at 2020 parliamentary elections and received five seats. The party members refuse to take up mandates and enter the parliament.

## Occupation forces raise a new barbed wire fence near the village of Pakhulani

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

The State Security Service reported that the Russian occupation forces raised new barbed-wire-fences near Georgia's Russian-occupied Abkhazia region. The agency stated that this action is another destructive step from the occupation forces, which creates more obstacles for locals regarding free movement and further worsens the security situation on the ground. According to the agency, EUMM and international partners have already been in-

formed on the matter.

Within the so-called illegal borderization process, the occupation regime erected a new barbed wire and built new constructions near the Pakhulani village of Tsalenjikha municipality in western Georgia, on December 26-27. According to the locals, the Russian military worked mainly at night to install new constructions.

Parliament's Vice president, Gia Volski stated that the Georgian people will not tolerate the actions of occupation forces, including raising barbed wires and kid-

napping people. According to him, those barbed wires will no longer exist, "just as the Berlin wall collapsed years later."

The chairperson of the Human Rights and Civil Integration Committee, Mikheil Sarjveladze responded to the new illegal so-called borderisation process and stated that the Georgian side has been making every effort to prevent such actions and achieve de-occupation once and for all.

According to the statement made by

the Georgian Foreign Ministry, Over the past two weeks, the so-called illegal borderisation took place near the villages of Tseronisi and Knolevi of Kareli municipality, as well as at the villages of Takhrisdziri, Dvani, Koda, Tchvrinisi, and Atotsi. Near the village of Pakhulani and Muzhava of Tsalenjikha municipality of western Georgia. Near the villages of Khurcha and Ganmukhiri near occupied Abkhazia.



According to the locals, no one has seen how the Russian military built new constructions as they mainly worked at night.



According to the MFA, over the past two months, Russia has been particularly active in its creeping annexation of more Georgian territories.



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.2716; Euro - 3.9959; GBP - 4.4180; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.4359; Swiss Franc - 3.6739

# The National Statistics Office Unemployment in Georgia has increased

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The National Statistics Office has published the employment and unemployment rate calculated according to the new standards of the International Labor Organization (ILO).

The National Statistics Office (Geostat) has released 2020 statistics. Together with the new data, they presented a modified rate of unemployment published in previous years, which was recalculated and showed different numbers.

Until now, unemployment in Georgia was considered a methodology created in 1982, by which the unemployment figures had not much to do with reality. From December 28, Geostat has moved to a new methodology for counting unemployment.

According to the current methodology, only 11.6% of the population of Georgia was considered unemployed, and as a result of the updated methodology, the unemployment rate in 2019 became 17.6%. Compared to the data calculated by the old methodology, the employment rate in Georgia in 2019 was 13-15% lower than the old standard and 42.7% (55.7% by the old standard). Unemployment rates from previous years were also calculated.

The point is that until now any citizen living in a rural area was automatically considered self-employed regardless of whether he or she had a real income. That is why the "official" unemployment rate in rural areas was 5.5%, whilst the new



Unemployment has risen to 17.6% - half of the self-employed are no longer considered employed.



2019 rural unemployment up 11% following Geostat's new calculation standards.

methodology shows that the corresponding rate is 16.7%. According to the new classification, only those who are engaged in

the sale of products grown on their land are considered self-employed in rural areas. In particular, under the new standard,

persons who use more than 50% of the product for personal consumption are no longer considered self-employed. Such people were retained either in the unemployed category or in the population outside the labor force, depending on whether they were looking for a job or ready to start one.

As a result of the introduction of the new standard, the share of the self-employed in total employment was reduced from 49.7% to 30.7%.

Geostat also recalculated the unemployment rates of previous years with a new methodology. The new report shows that in the third quarter of 2020, the unemployment rate in the country increased by 0.2% compared to 2019 and amounted to 17%.

Taken into account the changes in methodology, the employment rate of 2019 has decreased to 42.7%, while earlier it was 55.7%.

With the creation of the new standard, the statistics of the economically active population also changed. According to the new indicators, 50.3% of the total population is economically active, while according to the previous methodology, the level of economic activity was 62.9%.

"Unemployment is traditionally higher among men than women. In the third quarter of 2020, compared with the same period last year, this figure decreased by 1.5 percentage points for women and increased by 1.4 percentage points for men." The unemployment rate in the third quarter of 2020 was 14.5% for women and 18.9% for men. In the third quarter of 2020, the employment rate for both women and men decreased by 1.7 and 0.7%, respectively, compared to the corresponding period of the previous year.

According to a local ILO councilor, the Geostat can now produce and publish employment and unemployment indicators, as well as other labor market indicators that are comparable to those of other countries, since the organization updated the Labor Force Survey Questionnaire under a new resolution of ILO adopted at the 19th ILO International Conference, which means that the questionnaire used by Geostat now complies with all standards and regulations.

On 22-25 December, the EU4Youth 'SEAG' project carried out the first online business planning training for project beneficiaries in Georgia.

Around 25 training participants learnt about social enterprises and social entrepreneurship, organisational and legal forms of enterprises (their pros and cons), marketing, management and financial planning. The participants also received information on how to develop a business plan.

The four-day training was led

## EU4Youth online business planning training in Georgia

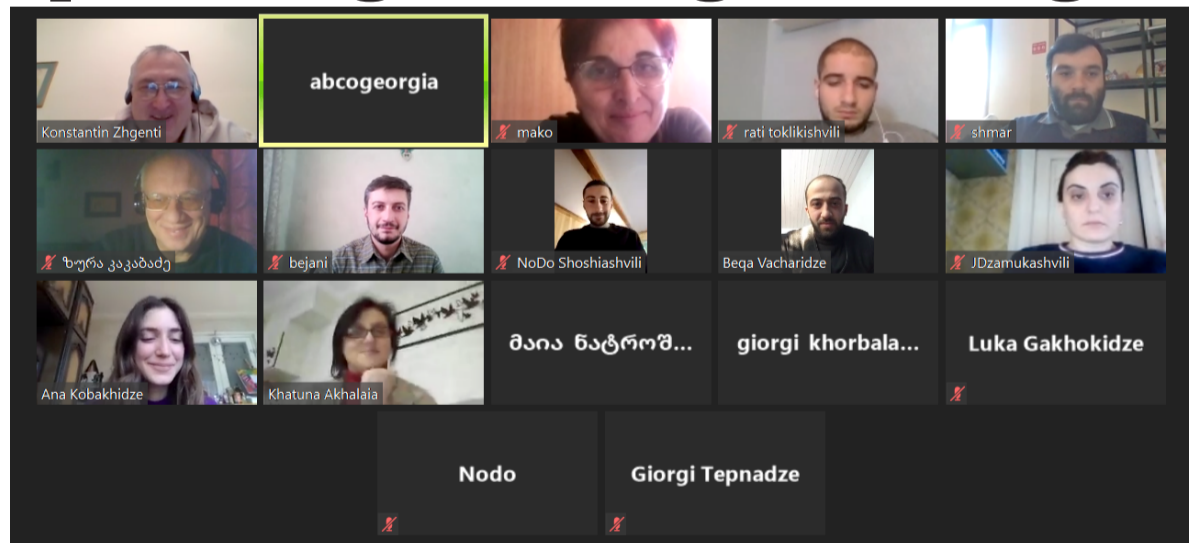


Photo: European Union

by the Association of Business Consulting Organisations of Georgia (ABCO).

The SEAG project ('Social Entrepreneurship in Armenia and Georgia') fosters youth employment and societal change through social entrepreneurship in border regions of Armenia and Georgia. The project supports development of the entrepreneurial potential of young people (ages 18-29) from Armenia and Georgia in the field of social entrepreneurship, notably with a view to contributing to social cohesion, employment, inclusion, and reduction of inequalities. The project is implemented in Georgia by Mercy Corps Europe, together with ABCO.

(euneighbours.eu)

### Weather

Tuesday, December 29

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 10°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: -1°C

Wednesday, December 30

Day Clear

High: 9°C

Night Clear

Low: -1°C

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