

ECONOMICS / POLITICS

Legally employed Georgians in Germany report difficult working and living conditions



FULL STORY ON Page 2

ECONOMICS / POLITICS

Georgian domestic exports up by 19.6%



FULL STORY ON Page 3

## 5 years since tragic murder of Giga Otkhozoria by Russian occupation forces

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

It has been 5 years since Georgian citizen Giga Otkhozoria was killed by occupying forces in the village of Khurcha, near Georgia's Russian-occupied Abkhazia region. Otkhozoria, 31, an IDP from Abkhazia, lived with his family in the town of Zugdidi. Reportedly, Otkhozoria was transporting food for his relative's funeral ceremony in occupied Gali, on May 19, 2016, when the so-called border guards demanded money from him in exchange for transporting goods, which resulted in a dispute. He was on Georgian-controlled territory when he got shot six times by the so-called border guard, Rashid Kanjiogli. Zugdidi City Court sentenced Kanjiogli to 14 years of imprisonment in absentia, however, Kanjiogli has not been punished in the de facto Abkhazia. In 2017, the de facto prosecutor's office terminated the investigation due to a lack of evidence. Georgian authorities have placed the entire responsibility for the incident on the Russian Federation, as it is the force that maintains control over the area.

Yesterday, State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality Tea Akhvlediani arrived at the cemetery of Giga Otkhozoria. The Minister expressed her condolences to family members of Otkhozoria



► 31-year-old Giga Otkhozoria was an IDP from Abkhazia and lived in the town of Zugdidi with his family.

and promised full support on behalf of the government.

"Giga Otkhozoria is a victim of the cruelty and injustice of the occupation which cost the lives of many of our other heroes... The Georgian government uses all mechanisms at its disposal to bring to justice those responsible for the loss of our citizens' lives," said Akhvlediani.

According to the State Security Service of Georgia (SSG), the brutal murder of Otkhozoria represented the inhumane

and criminal face of the occupation regime. "This has severely damaged the security environment along the occupation line as well as in the occupied territories and has once again shown the dire consequences of the occupation," reads the SSG's statement

The Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Garibashvili declared earlier on Wednesday that "the Georgian government is using its utmost effort to strictly punish all those accused of killing Giga Otkhozoria."



► On Wednesday, State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality Tea Akhvlediani arrived at the cemetery of Otkhozoria and expressed her condolences to his family members.

# Legally employed Georgians in Germany report difficult working and living conditions



► According to Nino Veltauri, the head of the State Employment Agency, if the conditions proposed by the contract are not fulfilled, the members of this particular group will be redistributed with other employers.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

According to the Georgian Trade Union (GTUC), 24 Georgian citizens employed in Germany within a seasonal employment program are in unwelcoming working conditions. As Georgian Trade Union announced yesterday, these individuals do not receive the promised salary.

GTUC has published a statement informing that the salaries of those people are €3 instead of the agreed €9 per hour. In addition, the statement reads that Georgians live in 'unbearable' conditions. This group of Georgian citizens in the program are receiving a lower salary because the on-site employer decided to reduce working hours for them. As one of the employees of the program, Jaba Chachanidze, told Formula TV, according to the contract, he was supposed to work eight hours a day, six days a week, however, the employer told him that he would only work four hours and would also be paid according to the number of strawberries harvested. The Georgian side stresses that they have not faced a similar problem with any other employer so far.

GTUC called on the German ambassador to study the issue and the Minister of Labor and Health of Georgia, Ekaterine Tikaradze, to immediately show



► As one of the employees of the program, Jaba Chachanidze stated, they received €3 per hour instead of €9.5 specified in the contract.

interest in the subject, as the employment of Georgian citizens in Germany is organized by the Employment Promotion Agency under the Ministry of Labor.

The Employment Promotion Agency has responded to the problem stating that they have active communication with Georgian citizens who have been legally employed in Germany. According to the agency, as soon as they were informed about the problems that one group of Georgians face in Germany, they contacted the Federal Employment Agency, which in turn, involved relevant German government agencies in this process.

According to Nino Veltauri, the head of the State Employment Agency, as a result of communications with the Employment Agency of Germany, the employer has started to take specific measures to improve the working and living conditions in this particular group of Georgians. The employer also agreed to pay hourly wages only for seasonal workers from Georgia.

"If the condition is not fulfilled, we demand the redistribution of the members of this particular group with other employers," stated Veltauri. According to the agency, the citizens who did not receive the promised salary will be reimbursed for their working hours.

In January 2020, the German Employment Agency and the Georgian Employment Promotion Agency signed the employment agreement for Georgian citizens to find seasonal jobs in Germany. Under this agreement, 4 groups of 54 Georgians left for Germany from April 14 to May 15, 2021. Participants of the program are employed in the agricultural sector.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

### Fully vaccinated persons now allowed in the EU

The EU will allow those who have been fully vaccinated with an authorized vaccine, including Sinopharm, to cross the border, the decision was announced yesterday, on Wednesday.

Persons who have been fully vaccinated with Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, AstraZeneca, and Sinopharm are allowed to enter the EU. According to Kovidriski, the official ranking of the countries will be

published by the European Union on Friday. Georgia has purchased 100,000 doses of Sinopharm, which is the only vaccine in the country in which anyone above 18 is allowed to be jabbed.

According to Amiran Gamkrelidze, director of the National Center for Disease Control, Georgia will receive 100,000 doses of Sinopharm from the Red Cross free of charge, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will purchase 500,000 doses from Sinopharm.

The vaccination process in the country started on March 15. A total of 97,153 have been vaccinated so far, of which 15,513 have been vaccinated with two doses.

### Tsertsvadze: It seems the third wave peak has passed

Director of the Hospital For Infectious Diseases Tengiz Tsertsvadze made a statement regarding the potential passing of the third wave peak.

"The last 2-3 days give the impression that we have passed the peak of the third wave. When the number of cases is too high, many cases are accompanied by more deaths. Proportionally, out of all the confirmed cases, if we take the death rate, it was low in Georgia and remains low."

### Number of vacant places for vaccination available on provax.ge

The number of available appointments for vaccination can be found on Provox.ge website since yesterday. According to the government administration, this information is already available on the website for citizens. The online platform provax.ge was created to raise awareness about the vaccination process and provides informative videos, statistics on the vaccination process, and the national plan for the introduction of the COVID-19 vaccine in Georgia.

<b>THURSDAY</b>		<b>MAY 20</b>	
<b>Day</b>		Sunny	
		High: <b>30°C</b>	
<b>Night</b>		Clear	
		Low: <b>16°C</b>	
<b>FRIDAY</b>		<b>MAY 21</b>	
<b>Day</b>		Sunny	
		High: <b>32°C</b>	
<b>Night</b>		A few clouds	
		Low: <b>18°C</b>	

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The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.

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US DOLLAR – 3.3899 | EURO – 4.1411 | GBP – 4.8154 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE – 4.6003 | SWISS FRANC – 3.7766 |

# Georgian domestic exports up by 19.6%

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat) released its unemployment report. According to the document, in 2020 the unemployment rate in Georgia increased by 0.9% to 18.5%. Statistics show that with the increase in unemployment, the number of economically active population has also decreased.

In 2020, the labor force (economically active population) accounted for 50.5% of the working age population (15 and older). Compared to the previous year, the labor force participation rate decreased by 1.3% and the employment rate decreased by 1.5%. The level of labor activity decreased by 0.3% in urban-type settlements and by 2.6% in rural-type settlements compared to the previous year.

The 2020 Unemployment Report was developed by Geostat through a new methodology that no longer considers rural self-employed people who are not engaged in economic activity to be employed. Unemployment rates of previous years were also calculated accordingly. That is, if in 2019, according to the previous methodology, 11.6% of the population was unemployed in the country, as a result of the calculation of the new methodology, it increased to 17.6%.

Interestingly, as a result of the pandemic crisis in 2020, the unemployment rate in Georgia increased dramatically and more than 100,000 citizens received €200 compensation from the state. On this background, the 0.9% rise in unemployment may seem inaccurate to some.

According to Soso Berikashvili, Dean of the Caucasus University School of Economics, the fact that the statistics show an increase in unemployment by only 0.9% and not more, does not mean that the number of unemployed people has not increased significantly.

“The number of unemployed people, i.e. the number of people who consider themselves unemployed and are looking for a job, should be correlated to the active population, the number of which has decreased especially in the village. Unemployment in the



► In 2020, the unemployment in Georgia increased by 0.9% to 18.5%.



► Georgia's exports to the EU, the US, China, Turkey and Russia have increased.

village is reduced as the active population goes out of business, losing jobs and no longer looking for new ones. They are no longer considered unemployed, they are simply leaving the workforce,” Berikashvili said, noting that the methodology of counting the unemployed is such by the world standard, it “does not give us a realistic picture.”

Geostat also reported Georgia's export-import data in 2021. Overall, Georgia's external trade turnover amounted to \$3.92 billion in January-April 2021, which is 12.8% higher compared to the same period of the last year.

Geostat preliminary data indicates that Turkey (\$594.9 million), Russia (\$476.2 million) and China (\$425.6 million) are Georgia's top trading partners in total external trade turnover in January-April 2021.

Statistics show that exports amounted to \$1.2 billion, which is 19.6% more than in the same period of 2020. This year, Georgia's exports to the EU amounted to \$276 million, which is 55% more than in 2020. With this indicator, the EU accounted for 23% of Georgia's total exports.

During the first 4 months, the top 10 products exported by Georgia were Copper ores and concentrates, Cars (re-export), Ferroalloys, Wines, Alcoholic beverages, Mineral and Freshwater, Nitrogen Fertilizers, Nuts, Medications and Knitted garments.

In the reporting period Georgia's top trading partners by exports were China (\$198.7 million) - an increase of 53% over the previous year mainly due to the increase in exports of copper ores and concentrates, Russia (\$159.6 million - an increase of 26.8%) and Azerbaijan (\$152.2 million - an increase of 2.6%).

Top trading partners by imports were Turkey (\$490.5 million), Russia (\$316.6 million) and China (\$227 million). Overall Georgia's imports amounted to \$2.7 billion, which is 10% more than in the same period of 2020. The products include Cars, Oil and Petroleum Products, Copper ores and concentrates, Natural gas, Medications, Telephones, Trucks, Tunnel digging machine, Electricity, Buses and minibuses.

## Czech medical experts' visit in Georgia

Czech Republic is one of the continuous supporter of Georgia's healthcare system. Within this mandate, a delegation of Czech medical experts visited Georgia on May 17-19.

The main aim of the mission is to establish partnerships with local hospitals and institutions, to specify the content and scope of future involvement of the Czech Republic's permanent medical humanitarian programme



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DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

(MEDEVAC) in the country and subsequently to follow this reconnaissance journey by training for local medical capacities to

increase the quality of oncogynecology and cancer prevention. The team consists of Prof. Michal Zikán, Ph.D., prof. Jiří Sláma,

Ph.D., and programme managers – Ms. Aneta Hanzáková and Ms. Denisa Vráťatová. Within the visit, the delegation met the

representatives of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, Tbilisi State Medical University, National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, and Georgian Medical Holding. The delegation also visited Rukhi and Batumi public hospitals, Screening Centre in Zugdidi and met the Minister of Health and Social Care of Adjara A/R.