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# Georgia's Path to EU Membership: A Historic Recommendation

BY MARIAM GORKHELASHVILI

**O**n November 8, 2023, a momentous announcement reverberated across Europe, heralding a historic milestone for Georgia. The European Commission, under the leadership of President Ursula von der Leyen, formally recommended granting Georgia the coveted status of Candidate for European Union (EU) Membership. This pivotal step is poised to shape Georgia's future, further underlining its commitment to the values and principles of the European Union.

The European Council will take the decision on granting the status in December 2023.

In her statement, President Ursula von der Leyen articulated the Commission's resolute support for Georgia's European aspirations, emphasizing the need for specific reforms to accompany this journey. She lauded the positive steps taken by Georgia, particularly highlighting the active involvement of the opposition in parliamentary processes, and the significant strides taken toward deoligarchization.

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Prepared for Georgia Today Business by **GALT & TAGGART** CREATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

Markets				COMMODITIES			
BONDS	Price	w/w	m/m	Price	w/w	m/m	
GRAIL 07/28	85.68 (YTM 7.76%)	-0.0%	-0.9%	Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	79.54	-6.0%	-6.0%
SILNET 01/27	98.66 (YTM 8.85%)	+0.3%	+0.2%	Gold Spot (US\$/OZ)	1,950.20	-1.6%	+6.4%
TBC 06/24	98.99 (YTM 7.47%)	-0.0%	-0.0%				
CURRENCIES				STOCKS			
	Price	w/w	m/m	Price	w/w	m/m	
Bank of Georgia (BGE LN)	GBP 35.40	+6.0%	+1.7%	GEL / USD	2.6974	-0.4%	+2.1%
Georgia Capital (CGEO LN)	GBP 10.16	+10.4%	+6.9%	GEL / EUR	2.8888	+1.2%	+2.3%
TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 27.40	-1.6%	-4.4%	GEL / GBP	3.3165	+0.6%	+2.6%
				GEL / CHF	2.9999	+0.8%	+2.3%
				GEL / RUB	0.0294	+0.7%	+10.9%
				GEL / TRY	0.0947	-0.8%	-2.1%
				GEL / AZN	1.5873	-0.3%	+2.0%
INDICES				GEL / AMD			
	Price	w/w	m/m	Price	w/w	m/m	
FTSE 100	7,401.72	+0.8%	-1.2%	GEL / UAH	0.0747	+0.5%	+2.3%
FTSE 250	17,846.26	+3.8%	+0.6%	EUR / USD	0.9338	-1.3%	-1.1%
DAX	15,229.60	+2.1%	-0.0%	GBP / USD	0.8140	-1.1%	-0.4%
DOW JONES	34,112.27	+2.5%	+2.1%	CHF / USD	0.8993	-0.9%	-1.2%
NASDAQ	13,650.41	+4.5%	+1.6%	RUB / USD	91.8501	-0.8%	-9.0%
MSCI EM EE	39.30	+2.2%	+15.7%	TRY / USD	28.4701	+0.5%	+3.1%
MSCI EM	957.91	+4.6%	+2.2%	AZN / USD	1.6976	-0.1%	-0.0%
SP 500	4,382.78	+3.4%	+1.7%	AMD / USD	401.1600	+0.2%	-3.3%
MSCI FM	2,087.25	+3.6%	-0.2%				



# Georgia's Path to EU Membership: A Historic Recommendation

Continued from page 1

President von der Leyen underscored the importance of EU enlargement in strengthening unity, affirming the European Union's commitment to expanding its reach.

"The European Commission recommends that Georgia be granted candidate status. We fully support the European aspirations of Georgian citizens. These positive steps need to be taken into account by the government. The opposition is actively involved in parliamentary processes, and we have important steps forward in deoligarchization. My main message is that EU enlargement is important to build a strong unity," she said.

Josep Borrell, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, echoed the sentiment of the EU's open door, emphasizing the Georgian people's unwavering commitment to European values. He assured Georgia of continued support on its path to EU integration, further cementing the nation's bond with the EU.

"The Georgian people have shown their unshaken commitment to European values many times. The EU's door is open. We will continue supporting Georgia on its EU path," he said.

In response to the Commission's rec-

ommendation, the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili, expressed profound gratitude. He hailed the decision as a historic one, recognizing the tireless efforts and achievements of Georgia. Garibashvili praised the unity and hard work of the Georgian team, including the Parliament of Georgia and the Chairman of the Parliament, whose collaboration he said had culminated in this momentous occasion.

"It is a great honor for me to congratulate you on today's historic decision. The European Commission positively evaluated the results achieved and recommended the European Council to grant Georgia candidate status. This is a truly historic day, this is a historic decision from the European Commission. I would like to thank the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, I would also like to thank European Commissioner Oliver Várhelyi, who is a great friend of our country. This period was very busy, quite emotionally so, too, because we did a lot of work. I would like to thank our united, strong team - the Parliament of Georgia, each member of our team, the Chairman of the Parliament, the chairman of our party, since this was the result of our joint work. As you know, for the last year, we were working 24 hours a day to imple-



ment the 12 recommendations."

This significant step caught the attention of European leaders, among them Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who congratulated the Georgian people on the European Commission's positive assessment of both Ukraine and Georgia's efforts toward EU membership. He took the opportunity, in his call to President Zurabishvili, to express his appreciation for Georgia's participation in the recent Peace Formula meeting in Malta and to raise concerns about access to medical treatment for Ukrainian citizen Mikheil Saakashvili.

Rasa Jukneviene, a prominent figure in European politics, voiced her thoughts on the EC decision, highlighting the role of the Georgian people in preserving Georgia's path to EU membership, and contrasting it with the current government's actions. She lamented the fact that Georgia, once a leader in the process, was not standing alongside Ukraine and Moldova due to the decisions made by the government.

"Georgia's accession to the EU was

saved by the Georgian people - the current Government is the one responsible for the fact that Georgia, once a leader in the process, is not together with Ukraine and Moldova today. That is the greatest wrongdoing of this government against its people," she said.

Pawel Herczynski, the Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia, emphasized the significance of this recommendation during a speech at the Orbeliani Palace. He described the European Union's perception of Georgia as a leading partner in the region, capable of contributing significantly to peace and stability in the neighborhood. This recognition is a testament to the progress Georgia has achieved in recent years.

Pawel Herczynski: "This is truly a historic day. The European Commission recommended that Georgia be granted candidate status. I want to sincerely congratulate you and congratulate all political leaders in Georgia. I want to congratulate the President of Georgia for her efforts, but first of all, I want to congratulate all of you, the citizens of

Georgia. You consistently supported Georgia's European integration. This is a great recognition by the European Union of the progress you have achieved in recent years and support for Georgia's EU integration."

Furthermore, he touched on the tragic killing of Georgian citizen Tamaz Ginturi near the occupation line and the urgent need to end the occupation. He called for unity and support from both the Georgian people and the European Union in ending the tragic division in Georgia.

The European Commission's recommendation to grant Georgia the status of a candidate for EU membership marks a historic and pivotal moment in Georgia's European integration journey. The unwavering commitment of the Georgian people and the continued support of European leaders are essential in shaping the future of Georgia within the European Union. As the European Council decides in December, many around the world will be watching closely, hopeful that Georgia's path to the EU will soon become a reality.



## President Asks Georgians to Sign Petition for EU Candidacy ahead of December Decision

BY TEAM GT

Salome Zurabishvili on Wednesday launched a signature campaign titled Our Voice to Europe, calling on European leaders to grant Georgia the European Union membership candidate status in December. She hosted the citizens of Georgia and diplomatic corps accredited in the country at the Orbeliani Palace residence following the Commission's decision, where she once again congratulated the Georgian people: "This is everyone's victory, this is our answer to Russia and occupation!"

At the time of the announcement, President Zurabishvili wrote on Twitter that she "will continue more than ever

to play [her] role as a pro European leader".

"I rejoice with the people of Georgia and welcome the positive recommendation of the EU Commission to grant Georgia the candidate status. As President, I will continue more than ever to play my role as a pro European leader to facilitate and push for the still needed reforms," she tweeted.

The Presidential Administration on Thursday explained how citizens can sign the petition Our Voice to Europe, a campaign which President Salome Zurabishvili has already signed herself.

Citizens of Georgia can sign the document both online and by visiting the Orbeliani Presidential Palace.

The petition reads:

"We, the citizens of Georgia, Address you, the leaders of Europe,

while awaiting your historic decision [this] December. We want to bring to you our voice, the united voice of our people, and to let you see the depth of our united motivation.

"We call on you to grant our nation the candidate status, in accordance with the longstanding aspirations of the Georgian nation and the unyielding will of its people. Nothing has been able to alter the determination of the Georgian people despite the dire challenges, neither war nor occupation. We have long been bound together by our shared past and our common values. Therefore, our future lies with you - in Europe. This future has no alternative!

"In accordance with the provisions enshrined in the Constitution of Georgia, we pledge an unwavering commitment and our unrelenting efforts towards our



goal. Irrespective of diverse political affiliations and views, we are united hereby in signing this petition and are therefore pleading to receive the candi-

date status," the petition reads.

The petition can be signed here: <https://president.ge/index.php?m=256&lng=eng>.

## POLITICS

## Int'l Community Condemns Russian Killing of Georgian Man on Occupied Territory

BY TEAM GT

On November 6, near the village of Kirbali, Gori municipality, Georgian citizen Tamaz Ginturi was shot dead by Russian occupation forces on occupied territory, during an attempt to illegally detain him. Another Georgian citizen, Levan Dotiashvili, was illegally detained.

"A most heinous act took place in the Russia-occupied territory near the village of Kirbali, Gori Municipality, following an attempt to illegally detain a Georgian citizen, with the man killed by a representative of the Russian occupant forces with a firearm," Georgian Prime



The boundary line separating the occupied region of Tskhinvali from Georgia proper.

Minister Irakli Garibashvili announced on Tuesday. "This incident reaffirms the dire security situation on the ground and bears witness to the severe conse-

quences of occupation; unfortunately, along with the Georgian Government, peaceful citizens are also forced to deal with these consequences."

"I extend my condolences to the family members and loved ones of the deceased and join them in grieving over this tragedy. At this time of sorrow, the state is standing by them. All relevant mechanisms have been set in motion, and international partners have been duly informed. Active work is underway to ensure the prompt release of the second Georgian citizen, who has been illegally detained by the occupying forces. We urge the international community to duly assess and respond to the incident and call on the occupation regime's representatives to cooperate with all parties in order to identify and punish the culprit," the PM stated.

Georgian President Salome Zurabishvili said she was "profoundly outraged by the Russian occupying forces' fatal

shooting of a Georgian citizen during an unlawful arrest."

In her statement, the President went on to say that "This blatant attack on Georgian statehood once again exposes the true nature of the 'coreligionist brother.'

"I urgently call on the international community to unequivocally condemn Russia's actions, which have blatantly and shamelessly violated all international norms," she stated.

"We condemn in the strongest terms the use of force in any form, and express our utmost concern over the deadly shooting incident," the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia stated, calling on all parties involved to exercise restraint and to take all necessary measures to prevent any further escalations.

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# Ukraine Latest: US Senate Democrats Block Republican Bid to Aid Israel, not Ukraine; NATO Rebukes Russia for Withdrawing from post-Cold War Treaty



The Democrats stressed the importance of providing aid to Ukraine as well as Israel

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

**U**S Senate Democrats on November 7 blocked a Republican effort to win quick approval for a bill providing emergency aid to Israel that passed the House of Representatives last week but which provides no assistance for Ukraine's war against Russia.

The Democrats stressed the importance of providing aid to Ukraine as well as Israel, in addition to humanitarian aid, border security funding and money to push back against China in the Indo-Pacific that was in a \$106 billion funding request President Joe Biden sent to Congress last month.

Pitching hard for aid to Ukraine, State Department officials told the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee that failing to support Ukraine would help Russia and undermine US credibility worldwide.

"It's clear President [Vladimir] Putin is now playing a waiting game," said James O'Brien, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs

on November 8. "He thinks if he can wait for our elections, or for Ukraine to get tired, Russia can prevail."

Asked about a future off-ramp to war in Ukraine, O'Brien said negotiation is inevitable.

"All wars end with a negotiation," he said. "We've made clear we'll do that with Ukraine, [and] not [go] over Ukraine's head. "It takes two parties to negotiate the end of a war. President Putin is not serious about negotiating. He has said he wants to wait and see what happens in November '24, after the US presidential election."

### NATO ALLIES CONDEMN RUSSIA'S WITHDRAWAL FROM CFE TREATY, WILL SUSPEND ITS OPERATION

NATO allies on Tuesday condemned a decision by Russia to withdraw from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which was a key post-Cold War treaty, adding that, as a consequence, they intended to suspend the operation of the treaty as long as necessary

"Allies condemn Russia's decision to withdraw from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE),

and its war of aggression against Ukraine, which is contrary to the Treaty's objectives. Russia's withdrawal is the latest in a series of actions that systematically undermines Euro-Atlantic security," said NATO in a statement.

"Therefore, as a consequence, Allied States Parties intend to suspend the operation of the CFE Treaty for as long as necessary, in accordance with their rights under international law. This is a decision fully supported by all NATO Allies."

Earlier on Tuesday, Russia formally withdrew from this landmark security treaty which limited key categories of conventional armed forces, blaming the United States for undermining post-Cold War security with the enlargement of the NATO military alliance.

### UKRAINE'S ATTACKS ON CRIMEAN SHIPYARDS COULD PROMPT RUSSIA TO CONSIDER RELOCATION, UK SAYS

Ukraine's "capability to hit" shipbuilding infrastructure in Russian-occupied Crimea will likely prompt Russia to consider relocating such infrastructure further away, delaying the delivery of new vessels, the UK's Ministry of Defense said Tuesday.

Ukrainian and Russian sources both reported on November 4 that a newly built Russian naval corvette was almost certainly damaged after being struck while alongside at the Zaliv shipyard in Kerch, in occupied Crimea.

"The Karakurt-class Askold, launched in 2021, had not been commissioned into the Russian Navy. The incident is farther to the east in Crimea than most previous Ukrainian-claimed long-range strikes," the ministry said in an intelligence update on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"Ukraine's capability to hit Crimean shipbuilding infrastructure will likely cause Russia to consider relocating far-

ther from the front line, delaying the delivery of new vessels," the UK said.

### RUSSIA SAYS IT HAS DESTROYED MULTIPLE DRONES OVER CRIMEA

Russia's Defense Ministry said Tuesday that it has destroyed multiple drones over Crimea, the Ukrainian peninsula it has occupied since 2014.

"On the morning of November 7, an attempt by the Kyiv regime to carry out a terrorist attack using seventeen aircraft-type UAVs on objects on the territory of the Russian Federation was stopped," the ministry said on Telegram. A UAV is an unmanned aerial vehicle, or drone. "Duty air defense systems destroyed nine Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles and intercepted eight over the Black Sea and the territory of the Republic of Crimea," it added.

Ukraine has not publicly commented on the alleged attack.

The war between Russia and Ukraine has been typified by the use of drone warfare. Drones continue to be vital weapons for both sides, used as both explosive devices and for surveillance and reconnaissance.

### UKRAINE CONFIRMS 19 DEAD AFTER RUSSIAN STRIKE ON AWARDS CEREMONY

Ukraine's 128th separate Transcarpathian Mountain Assault Brigade confirmed Monday that 19 of its soldiers died in a Russian strike on an awards ceremony last Friday.

"The missile attack by an insidious enemy took the lives of 19 fighters of the 128th separate mountain assault brigade," it said on Facebook.

"Now, a thorough check of all the circumstances of the tragedy is being conducted. Until it is completed, we call you not to spread unverified, fake information." "Our best fighters have died... We

express our sincere condolences to their relatives and promise to pay back 100 times more for our brothers," the post concluded.

The deaths have stoked public anger given that Russia attacked the brigade during an awards ceremony, an event that was seen as an easy target.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky took the unusual step of addressing the incident and losses in his nightly address on Sunday, admitting that the "tragedy could have been avoided."

### 'WET FROM HEAD TO TOE': RUSSIAN MORALE REPORTEDLY DROPPING AS WEATHER CHANGES

Eyewitness accounts from deployed Russian troops in Ukraine suggest that the soldiers' battle against the elements remains a major preoccupation for Russia's army, Britain's Ministry of Defense said Sunday.

In an intelligence update on X, the ministry said Russian soldiers who had recently returned from Ukraine, speaking at the Ogakov Readings military affairs conference in Moscow on November 1, described being "wet from head to toe" for weeks on end on the front line.

"One soldier highlighted that the risk of fire alerting Ukrainian forces meant that they 'couldn't even boil a mug of tea.' They spoke of living and eating 'monotonous' food in pervasive mud," the UK noted.

Maintaining a decent level of personal comfort and sound administration in defensive positions is challenging for any army, the ministry noted, "however, open-source evidence suggests a generally very poor level on enforcement of basic field administration amongst Russian forces."

"This is likely partially caused by a deficit in motivated junior commanders as well as variable logistical support."



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## The Biltmore Tbilisi Hotel Honored with UN Global Compact Corporate Sustainability Award for Decent Work and Economic Growth

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# Amanda Paul - Georgia Can't Afford to Make Any More Mistakes. They Need to Do the Work Now and Deliver, Because this is a Once in a Lifetime Opportunity

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

Senior Associate Research Fellow at the International Center for Policy Studies in Kyiv, Ukraine, and a Senior Policy Analyst in the 'Europe in the World' Program at the EPC, Amanda Paul is an expert on issues related to security and conflict resolution in the Black Sea region, Russian foreign policy in the former Soviet space, EU enlargement, and foreign policy in its Eastern neighborhood. It was only natural, then, for Radio Free Europe/RFL's Georgian Service to approach her with some questions following the European Commission's momentous decision this week to recommend Georgia for EU candidacy status.

## HOW MUCH REASON DO WE HAVE TO HOPE THAT THE EC RECOMMENDATION WILL BE FOLLOWED THROUGH AND THE COUNTRY WILL GET CANDIDATE STATUS?

I think there's a good chance of achieving that. The European Council usually follows the recommendations of the Commission, so I do believe there's a good chance that Georgia will be given the candidate country status, but of course, between now and then, there are still several weeks. And as was indicated in the report, there's still many things that Georgia needs to do. So we shouldn't lose time. It's good to celebrate, but we need to see the momentum from the government to continue pushing ahead with the reforms. This will send a very strong signal ahead of the council meeting. So don't take the foot off the accelerator, put your foot down even more strongly and crack on with the reforms!

## PRESIDENT VON DER LEYEN UNDERScoreD THE EUROPEAN ASPIRATIONS OF THE MAJORITY OF GEORGIAN PEOPLE AND NOTED THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REFLECT THOSE ASPIRATIONS. WHO ACTUALLY GOT THIS RECOMMENDATION? GEORGIANS AS A PEOPLE, OR THE GOVERNMENT?

Honestly, we should first and foremost say a big thanks to the Georgian population. The Georgians are amazing. They've always stood behind the goal of EU membership, and also NATO membership. And they have gone out onto the streets to protest for it. They have a very loud voice, Georgians, they do, and they're not afraid to speak out. And the government have of course done something, but they



Amanda Paul. Source: European Policy Center

could have done more, much more, because the Georgian government is very capable of very quickly meeting all of the criteria. To be honest, they did something in the last five minutes, which is very Georgian, in a way. So what I would like to see now is a really big push from this government to get this over the line, and to bring this candidate country status home for Georgia and the people, because they really, really deserve it.

## WHEN YOU SAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS ABLE TO DO MUCH MORE, BUT THEY DIDN'T, WHAT EXACTLY COULD HAVE BEEN DONE, AND WHY DIDN'T THEY DO IT, DO YOU THINK?

They could have done things quicker. A few weeks ago, much less had been done than today. I mean, Georgia does have a track record of doing things at the last minute, but this problem didn't need to be a problem. They could have carried these reforms through a year ago. People say it's because the Georgian government is pro-Russian. It's difficult to believe that all of the Georgian government is pro-Russian. I mean, this goes against the DNA of Georgia. But for whatever the reason they had, they made a lot of mistakes over the last year or so. Georgia can't afford to make any more mistakes. They need to do the work now and deliver, because this is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

We could never have imagined that Georgia would receive candidate country status one and a half years ago. Let's not lose the opportunity. We're at a very unique geopolitical watershed moment, and this applies to the South Caucasus too. I mean, Georgia doesn't have a border with the EU, it's on the other side of the sea, but that doesn't mean that this neighborhood is any less important than the direct neighborhood. There is a big question mark as to what will happen if Georgia doesn't receive it, if we don't take

this step, not just for Georgia and the Georgian people, but for the South Caucasus as a whole, for the EU's influence as an actor in the region. All of these things are being taken into consideration.

Georgia is a European country. For me, this is not even a question. It may not share a border with the EU, but it's a European country. Georgians are European, it's in their DNA, it's in their hearts, it's in their minds. So I think all of these issues were taken into consideration when the Commission made this recommendation. Now, the Council, the 27 EU Member States, need to be smart enough to actually give Georgia candidate country status.

## 9 CONDITIONS, SOME NEW, SOME REMAINING FROM THE PREVIOUS 12 - HOW MUCH DEPENDS ON FULFILLING THOSE BEFORE THE DECEMBER DECISION?

I think it's important that we see an immediate effort to fulfill these criteria, particularly some of the big ones - the de-oligarchization, judicial reform. Depolarization is still a huge issue in Georgia. And it's one of the issues you can't just blame on Georgian Dream. This is also the responsibility of the main opposition party, the UNM. They also need to be responsible and take steps to help depolarize politics in Georgia, because it's very toxic, to put it mildly. They all need to crack on with the reforms and deliver what the Georgian people deserve.

## DEOLIGARCHIZATION WAS ALREADY FEATURED IN THE 12 CONDITIONS, AND IT'S STILL THERE IN THE NINE NEW ONES WE'VE BEEN GIVEN. BUT NOW BRUSSELS SAYS "STRUCTURAL DE-OLIGARCHIZATION." WHAT EXACTLY NEEDS TO BE DONE IN LAYMAN'S TERMS?

Notably, this de-oligarchization doesn't

just apply to Georgia- it's also still an issue for Ukraine and Moldova. So we should remember that. Basically, Georgia needs to follow the recommendations of the Venice Commission when it comes to the de-oligarchization, as it has a sort of roadmap on what needs to be done. But once again, it's something that all three candidates have struggled to effectively do. In fact, Georgia's history with oligarchs is much less powerful than either Ukraine's or Moldova's, so it should be easier, if anything's easy in this life.

## AND WHAT WOULD THAT MEAN FOR OLIGARCHS IN GEORGIA?

It means the oligarchs should have no place in political life, in the government, or influencing any policies or whatnot. We've seen a similar situation in Ukraine, where oligarchs were presidents of the country, such as Poroshenko, and he wasn't the only oligarch with an influence on politics. They can't have a role of any sort in the political life of the country.

## AND HOW REALISTIC DO YOU THINK IT IS TO EXPECT THAT TO HAPPEN IN GEORGIA? DO YOU EXPECT THE OLIGARCHS TO WASH THEIR HANDS OF IT AND NO LONGER BE INVOLVED?

That's up to the government. It requires political will to do it. It's not straightforward, that's the short answer. And I don't imagine that the change will happen overnight. But we need to keep the eye on the prize here. So in the long term, it's in Georgia's interest to show the necessary political will. It is in the government's interest as well.

## THE GOVERNMENTS' OR THE COUNTRY'S?

Let me put it this way: The government says it wants European integration, that it is a priority; it says that it really wants to be an EU candidate country, wants to start accession negotiations and is ready to take steps to achieve this. Therefore, they need to show the political will, to transform words into concrete action, and to do it properly. It's not easy, but it's doable.

## POLARIZATION REMAINS A CHALLENGE, HAS BEEN FOR MORE THAN A DECADE NOW. IT'S SAFE TO ASSUME WHAT COULDN'T BE ACHIEVED IN THE LAST 12 YEARS WON'T BE ACHIEVED IN THE MONTH AND HALF REMAINING. SO WHERE DO WE STAND?

It takes two to tango, right? And as you mentioned, it's not going to happen in the next month or so. But still, there should be some signals given from both

sides that they're ready to do it for the sake of the country. I mean, at the end of the day, both the government and the opposition say that they want to be a member of the EU, that it's Georgia's long term priority. So each side needs to take a step back and make some efforts in this direction. Otherwise, nobody will win and they'll just find themselves damaging the country.

## AND IF THOSE STEPS ARE NOT TAKEN, THEN ONE CAN SURMISE THAT WHOEVER DOESN'T TAKE THE NECESSARY STEP HASN'T BEEN TRUTHFUL ABOUT IT BEING THEIR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY, RIGHT?

Absolutely. If it's the top priority for both the government and opposition, then they both need to take the necessary steps. I mean, one can't do it alone. They both need to do it.

## THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDED STARTING ACCESSION TALKS WITH UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA THIS YEAR. IF YOU WERE TO PUT A TIMEFRAME ON IT, HOW LONG DO YOU THINK THIS PROCESS WILL TAKE?

I would say at least a decade, because there's no fast track into the EU. Probably for Moldova, it will be quicker than Ukraine, because it's a small mouthful, right? Ukraine is a big country. And the process will take time. And it also depends not just on the candidates, but on the EU, because in parallel, the EU needs to actually carry out internal reforms. And these things need to happen simultaneously. I mean, the EU needs to get fit for enlargement and the candidates need to get fit to join. So the both of them have work to do.

## WILL THERE BE A DATE FOR GEORGIA AS WELL, IF IT IS GIVEN CANDIDATE STATUS?

I would imagine that once Georgia actually achieves candidate country status, then the EU could potentially talk about the need for opening accession negotiations. I just feel incredibly happy that Georgia has this opportunity, probably not as happy as you are, as a Georgian, because it's something that we could never have imagined before. I'm just sorry that it took a war to actually wake up the EU, to have them understand the necessity of integrating these countries.

## BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

Yes. It's for European security and stability. These countries need to be in, not out, and certainly not in a gray zone.

## Salome Zurabishvili Leaves for France to Participate in the "Paris Peace Forum"

President of Georgia Salome Zurabishvili left for France to participate in the "Paris Peace Forum", which will be held on November 10-11.

The President's Administration reports that tomorrow the President of Georgia, together with the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and the President of the Swiss Confederation, Alain Berset, will participate in the panel, which will discuss the issues of conflicts and crises: "From Multicrisis to Multi-conflicts: How to stop the vicious circle". Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili will also attend the Forum.

The Administration of the Government says that the President did not address the government regarding her visit to France.

This is Salome Zurabishvili's first visit abroad since the start of the failed impeachment procedure.

During her speech at the gathering held near the Orbeliani Palace on November 8, Salome Zurabishvili noted that she would continue to lobby for Georgia's candidacy, and was going to Paris to attend the Peace Forum.

"I will continue to lobby for Georgia's candidacy! Tomorrow I will go to Paris, where the Peace Forum is being held, and where I will participate in a panel with Charles Michel, which will discuss crises and conflicts. I will attend this forum, and as has been planned, the Prime Minister will also attend. In this regard, willingly or unwittingly, both of us will set an example of depolarization," said the President.

## Global Corruption Index: Georgia Leads Region With Low Corruption Risk

The Swiss leading analytical center, Global Risk Profile (GRP), released the Global Corruption Index 2023, the Government Administration reports.

Georgia has moved up two places in the world ranking and now occupies 43rd place, in the top 25% of 196 countries and territories.

"In the Black Sea region, the Caucasus and Central Asia, Georgia took first place with low-risk corruption status. Georgia is the only country in the mentioned region to have this status. Georgia is ahead of all EU membership candidate countries, eight EU, and NATO member states," the Georgian government states.

The Global Corruption Index (GCI) covers 196 countries and territories and measures the state of corruption and



Source: risk-indexes.com

white collar crimes around the world. Based on as many as 42 internationally recognized variables, it encompasses two sub-indexes for both a global risk overview and a more nuanced risk

assessment. The Index was designed to be in line with anti-corruption and anti-bribery legislations such as the FCPA, the UK Bribery Act, the French law Sapin II.





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# Int'l Community Condemns Russian Killing of Georgian Man on Occupied Territory

Continued from page 2

"The EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) confirms that an incident occurred at the South Ossetian Administrative Boundary Line, resulting in the tragic loss of a Georgian citizen's life. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the family and loved ones of the deceased.

"We condemn in the strongest terms the use of force in any form, and express our utmost concern over the deadly shooting incident. It is imperative that such incidents are prevented to maintain peace, security, and stability in the region.

"We call upon all parties involved to exercise restraint and to take all necessary measures to prevent any further escalations. We are monitoring the situation closely, and are working to diffuse tensions, including through the extensive use of the EUMM-managed hotline to exchange information about the shooting," they wrote.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs launched an investigation under Articles 109 and 143 of the Criminal Code of Georgia, referring to premeditated murder and illegal restriction of freedom.

"On November 6, 2023, near the village of Kirbali, Gori municipality, in the occupied territory, during an attempt to illegally detain a local resident, a Georgian citizen died as a result of shooting by the Russian occupying forces, and another citizen was illegally detained.

"Active communication is underway using all the tools available to the central government of Georgia," reads the infor-

mation disseminated by the State Security Service.

On November 6, according to the available information, Tamaz Ginturi and Levan Dotiashvili were at the Church of Lomisi intending to light candles and pray when the representatives of the Russian occupation forces opened fire. As a result, Tamaz Ginturi was killed, and Levan Dotiashvili was kidnapped.

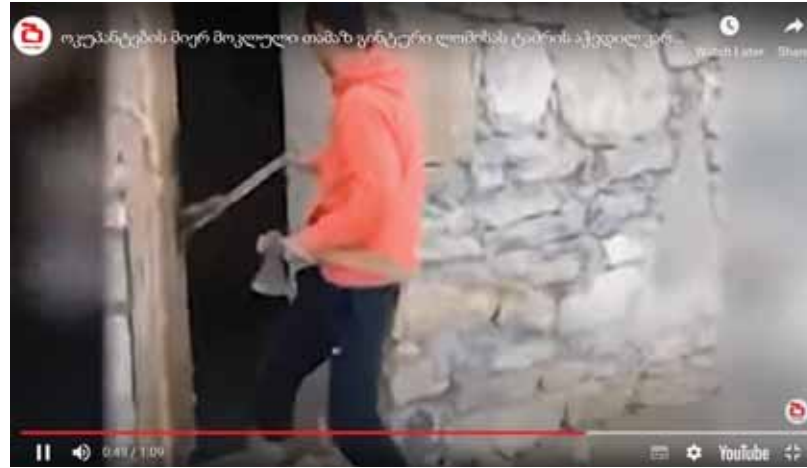
Representatives of the international community responded to the shooting and kidnapping.

The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell, stated that Russia's military presence in the occupied separatist regions of Georgia - Abkhazia and South Ossetia - is illegal.

"The EU strongly condemns the killing of a Georgian citizen and the detention of another by the Russian border guards in Kirbali. We call for an immediate release," Borrell tweeted.

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejcinovic Buric, also demanded the return of the detained Georgian citizen: "Saddened by deadly shooting of a Georgian citizen by Russian officers close to ABL of the Georgian region of Tskhinvali/South Ossetia. Condolences to the family & Georgian authorities. Calling for the release of a second abducted," she wrote.

"Russians kill," Viola von Cramon, European parliamentarian, wrote on X. "It kills in Ukraine, in Syria, and, of course, in Georgia. Georgia has 200 years of experience under occupation to know that appeasing a bully never works. Only



Still from the video released by the "South Ossetia security service" showing the moment Levan Dotiashvili breaks into the Lomisi church on occupied territory.

by standing together against evil can we defeat it. My condolences to the family of yet another victim of Russia."

"Tragic news from Kirbali. Responsibility fully lies with the occupying power for this heinous act. Only the full ending of Russian occupation of Georgian territories can ensure that such a despicable incident is not repeated ever again," wrote Miriam M. Lexmann, Member of the European Parliament of the European People's Party.

UK Ambassador to Georgia Mark Clayton wrote that he was shocked by the killing of Tamaz Ginturi by Russian forces: "I offer my condolences to his family and relatives. Russia should end its illegal presence on Georgian territory and release all detainees," he said.

A statement was also issued by the

Embassy of Estonia in Georgia: "We strongly condemn the fatal incident that happened near the Georgian occupation line, the murder of a Georgian citizen! The use of force by the border guards of the Russian Federation is unacceptable. We sympathize with the family of the deceased."

"We strongly condemn the killing of a Georgian citizen and the abduction of another in the Tskhinvali region by the Russian occupation forces," stated the Foreign Minister of Lithuania Gabrielius Landsbergis. "The Russian occupiers will continue to kill until the territorial integrity of Georgia, as well as that of Ukraine, is fully restored," Landsbergis noted.

The US State Department also condemned the killing of Georgian citizen

Tamaz Ginturi by Russian occupation forces, saying his death is a clear example of the devastation caused by Russia's occupation of Georgia's sovereign territory.

The "South Ossetian" TV and radio company released footage showing Tamaz Ginturi, who was killed by the Russian occupation forces, and Levan Dotiashvili, who was abducted, forcing their way into the sealed-shut Lomisi temple.

The released footage, taken by Tamaz and Levan, shows the sealed door of the church. They are seen to break in by force, using their boots and an axe. They enter and begin to pray, at which point the video stops.

The "security service" of occupied Tskhinvali responded to the deadly shooting by claiming that the so-called "border violators" were drunk and resisted the "border guards" during their arrest.

"While trying to arrest them, they resisted the border guards, threatening the life and health of the border guards. The border violators used an axe. Later, they tried to hit the border guard with their car and drove toward Georgia. To prevent these illegal actions and to prevent the illegal crossing of the state border of the republic of South Ossetia, the border guards fired a warning shot in the air, and after the violators did not obey the legal orders, they opened fire on the tires of their car," the statement reads.

They claim that one of the "border violators" was seriously wounded and was taken to the "territory of Georgia" for emergency medical assistance, while the other was arrested.

## Marriott INTERNATIONAL

### GCAW 2023

Marriott International is celebrating Global Customer Appreciation Week! Within the framework of this week, (5-12 November) Sheraton Grand Tbilisi Metechi Palace Hotel hosted its loyal customers and partners for a Lazy Sunday breakfast\* at the ATI Rooftop Restaurant located on the 10th floor of the hotel.

**We appreciate our partners valuable cooperation and we thank them for their support!**



\* Try Lazy Sunday Breakfast at ATI Rooftop Restaurant every Sunday from 11:00 to 14:00



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# MONTHLY TOURISM UPDATE

## September 2023

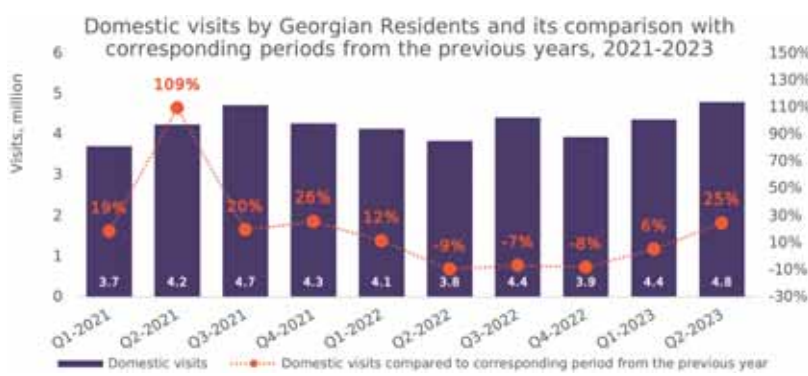
### Georgia

# Georgia: Domestic Tourism in the First Half of 2023

Research

# Monthly Tourism Update - September

## Georgia: Domestic Tourism in the First Half of 2023



In the first half of 2023, the number of domestic visits amounted to 9.2 million which was 15% higher compared to the corresponding period of 2022. Notably, in Q2 of 2023, growth in the number of domestic visits (25%) was much more pronounced than in Q1 of 2023 (6%). This marked a notable turnaround from the decline

recorded in domestic visits observed throughout Q2-Q4 of 2022. In the first half of 2023, the number of domestic visits was 38% higher than for the same period of 2019, while the number of international visits was still short of the pre-pandemic level, reaching 78% of the figure for the corresponding period of 2019. In the first half of 2023, the average

number of nights spent per visit was equal to 1.3, which is 11% lower than in the first half of 2022 (1.4 nights). Notably, in the periods after the COVID-19 pandemic first broke out, the average number of nights spent per visit were higher in 2020 (2.1) and 2021 (1.7).

The distribution of domestic visitors by visited region in the first half of 2023 was similar to previous periods. In particular, the main destination for domestic visits was Tbilisi (24% of total visits), followed by Imereti (18%), and Adjara (10%). To compare the dynamics, the number of visitors decreased in Shida Kartli (by 12%) and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti (7%), while the number increased in Samtskhe-Javakheti (by 23%) and Tbilisi (11%).

In the first half of 2023, the main purpose of visits (48%) was visiting friends/relatives, followed by shopping (18%), and staying in a second/holiday home (10%). Notably, compared to the first half of 2022, the share of visitors who named shopping as the main purpose of their visit increased by 6 percentage points, exceeding the share of those who cited staying at their second/holiday home.

In the first half of 2023, the total expenditure of domestic visitors amounted to GEL 1.4 billion, which is 14.2% higher compared to the same period of 2022. However, that increase in expenditure by domestic visitors is comparatively modest when contrasted with the 45.9% increase recorded for total expenditure by international visitors during the same period in 2023.

The expenditure distribution in the first half of 2023 was similar to recent years with most expenditure going on shopping (36% of total expenditure), food and drinks (23%), and transport (21%). In the first half of 2023, compared to the first half of 2022, there were significant increases in the expenditure of domestic visitors on shopping (by 17%) and food and drinks (25%).

### HOTEL PRICE INDEX IN GEORGIA - SEPTEMBER

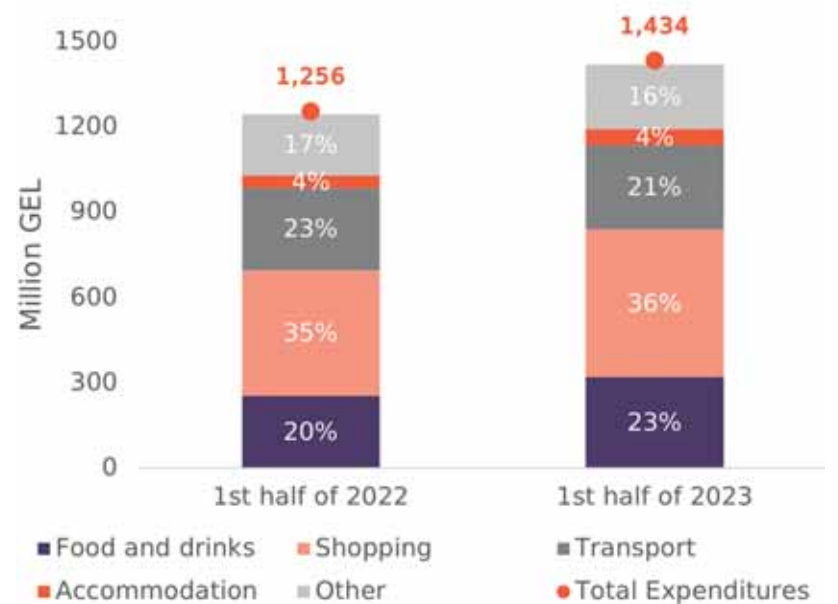
In September 2023, in Georgia the hotel price index decreased by 6.2% compared to August 2023. The 3-star, 4-star, and 5-star hotel price index decreased by 6.6%, while for guesthouses, the price index decreased by 5.9%. The monthly HPI was the highest in Racha (26.6%) and lowest in Adjara (-21.4%).

In September 2023, compared to September 2022, hotel prices in Georgia decreased by 10.0%. The prices of 3\*, 4\*, 5\* hotels decreased by 9.8% and the prices of guesthouses decreased by 14.3%. The yearly HPI was the highest in Guria (33.4%) and lowest in Shida Kartli (-16.3%).

### THE AVERAGE HOTEL PRICES IN GEORGIA - SEPTEMBER

In Georgia, the average cost of a room in a 3-star hotel was 168 GEL per night in September 2023, while the average cost of a room in a 4-star hotel in Georgia was 268 GEL per night and the aver-

### Expenditures of domestic visitors in the first halves of 2022 and 2023



Region	Hotel		3*, 4*, 5*		Guesthouse	
	2023 Sep/2023 Aug	2023 Sep/2022 Sep	2023 Sep/2023 Aug	2023 Sep/2022 Sep	2023 Sep/2023 Aug	2023 Sep/2022 Sep
Kakheti	-0.8%	5.8%	-12.2%	-1.8%	4.8%	9.3%
Imereti	0.2%	2.5%	0.4%	6.6%	-0.1%	-2.6%
Guria	-6.8%	33.4%	-19.8%	43.9%	8.4%	14.7%
Kvemo Kartli	8.5%	-	0.0%	-	17.6%	-
Adjara	-21.4%	-11.9%	-20.1%	-11.4%	-26.0%	-11.6%
Racha	26.6%	-0.5%	-	-	26.6%	-0.5%
Shida Kartli	-5.9%	-16.3%	-9.1%	-14.1%	-4.6%	-18.5%
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	-0.5%	7.2%	-6.2%	-0.2%	3.8%	13.8%
Samtskhe-Javakheti	-8.7%	13.8%	-1.7%	11.0%	-13.7%	15.5%
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	-5.6%	-7.2%	-3.4%	-1.1%	-9.9%	-20.8%
Tbilisi	-0.3%	-15.8%	-0.6%	-15.1%	-2.3%	-23.0%
Overall Price % Change	-6.2%	-10.0%	-6.6%	-9.8%	-5.9%	-14.3%

### THE AVERAGE PRICES OF 3\*, 4\* STAR HOTELS AND GUESTHOUSES BY REGIONS (SEPTEMBER 2023, IN GEL)



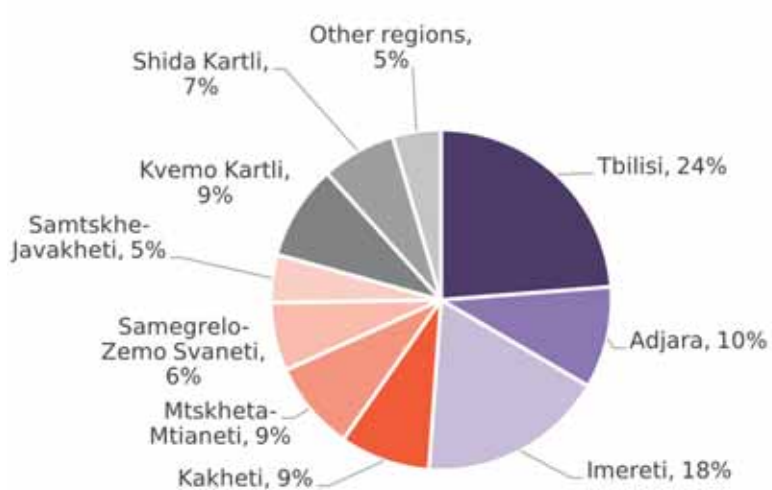
age cost of a room in a guesthouse was 124 GEL per night. price was 780 GEL, followed by Tbilisi - 623, Kakheti - 514, and Adjara - 460.

The average cost of a room in a 5-star hotel in Georgia in September 2023 was 495 GEL per night. In Guria, the average

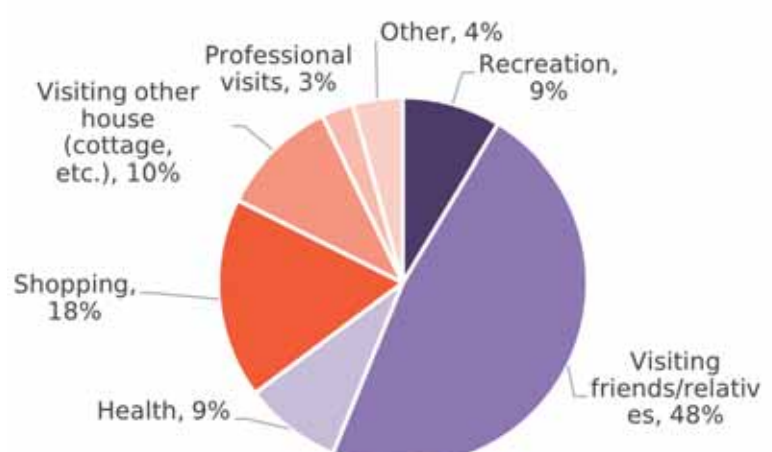
### BASIC ECONOMIC INDICATORS IN GEORGIA

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	H 2022	H 2022	H 2022	2022	I 2023	H 2023
GDP in current prices for Accommodation and Food Service Activities (mln)	1800.0	2223.0	1294.3	1701.6	360.3*	530.2*	811.1*	946.2*	2374.3*	436.8*	838.8*
Number of International Travelers (thousand persons)	6079.5	8357.8	1747.1	1881.3	576.5	1049.4	2266.7	1334.3	5426.9	1206.5	1651.70
Number of Tourists (thousand persons)	4756.8	5080.5	1087.0	1377.5	456.0	799.3	2082.8	948.9	3652.9	945.3	1085.2
Revenue from International Travel (mln USD)	3222.1	3268.7	541.7	1244.9	393.7*	748.8*	1374.7*	999.5*	3016.6*	795.4*	1006.1*
The Expenditures of Georgian Travelers Abroad (mln USD)	324.7	657.2	180.5	184.7	72.2*	103.5*	118.6*	114.7*	408.6*	109.0*	88.1*
Foreign Direct Investment in Hotels and Restaurants Sector (mln USD)	106.0	119.3	-247.2	-7.4	21.0	15.5	24.0	6.6	67.3	30.2*	-1.48*

### Distribution of domestic visitors by visited regions in the first half of 2023



### Distribution of domestic visitors by purpose of visit in the first half of 2023



\* Preliminary data



# International Tourism and Business Forum to Unlocks Georgia's Potential

**A**head of The International Tourism and Business Forum, we had the privilege of interviewing Bassam Jaafar, Owner and Director of Pro Vision and Aya Travel. The forum is a premier event in Georgia that aims to bring together experts and practitioners from various industries. The convergence of these sectors not only showcases the country's potential but also highlights the synergies that exist between them. In this article, we'll delve into the industries and sectors represented at the event, the forum's structure, the achievements of Aya Estate, the role of foreign direct investment in Georgia's economic development, and key speakers and topics of discussion at the upcoming event.

## KEY INDUSTRIES AND SECTORS AT THE FORUM

The International Tourism and Business Forum stands as a pivotal platform, uniting an array of industries that contribute significantly to Georgia's economic landscape. Among the sectors brought under its expansive umbrella are travel and tourism, real estate and development, and industry and trade. These industries, while distinct in their operations, share a web of connections that knit them together in the grand tapestry of Georgia's economic growth.

Consider the interplay between real estate investments and the thriving tourism and travel sector. Real estate developments, be it hotels, resorts, or residential properties, hold a profound influence on the choices and experiences of travelers. The availability and quality of accommodations often dictate the success and attractiveness of a destination. Thus, it's no surprise that investments in real estate become integral to enhancing the tourism and travel industry. This symbiotic relationship contributes significantly to the country's economic prosperity.

Moreover, the convergence of these diverse sectors creates a dynamic platform to explore the vast potential of Georgia's real estate and investment landscape. It is within this forum that experts and practitioners from various domains gather to discuss, share, and envision the future. The collaborative exchange of ideas and insights fosters innovation and opportunities, propelling the nation toward a brighter economic horizon.

## STRUCTURE OF THE FORUM

This event, spanning two immersive days scheduled for November 13-14, is a treasure trove of insights and opportunities. The first day sets the stage with a lineup of speeches delivered by esteemed government representatives, associations,



Georgia's reputation as a secure and stable investment destination further adds to its allure

and Destination Management Organizations (DMOs). Their words resonate with authority, shedding light on the strategic directions and policies that underpin the economic landscape. The second day unfolds as a whirlwind of workshops, discussions, and invaluable networking opportunities. Workshops, meticulously curated to cater to a diverse audience, span an extensive spectrum of topics. Whether it's unraveling the complexities of travel and tourism, delving into the intricacies of real estate and investment, or exploring the realm of security and safe investments, each workshop stands as a pillar of knowledge and a catalyst for growth.

These discussions that transpire within the forum's walls serve as a fertile ground for the exchange of experiences, insights, and ideas. They foster a climate of collaboration, where partnerships are forged and visions aligned. Attendees, spanning various industries and sectors, find common ground to explore innovative strategies and chart the course for a brighter economic future. In the midst of this knowledge exchange, the forum orchestrates a platform for B2B (business-to-business) meetings. This tailored space invites investors from around the world to engage with Georgian companies, weaving a web of connections and collaborations. These interactions not only enhance the potential for successful partnerships but also amplify the impact of the event on Georgia's economic landscape.

## AYA ESTATE'S IMPACT ON THE GEORGIAN MARKET

Aya Estate embarked on its journey into the Georgian market with a compelling vision – to harness and capitalize on the vast real estate and investment potential that the country had to offer. Now, as we look back after a year of operations, it becomes abundantly clear that Georgia stands out as the quintessential destination for such ambitious endeavors. The real estate market in Georgia has experienced nothing short of a meteoric rise this staggering growth isn't merely a statistic; it's a testament to the robust and dynamic nature of the Georgian real estate landscape. The country's property market has been a beacon of opportunity, attracting the attention of investors, both local and international, who recognize its immense potential.

As an affirmation of Georgia's investment-friendly climate, the nation proudly holds the distinction of being ranked as the seventh easiest country in the world to do business. This accolade is not just a badge of honor but a beacon for discerning investors. It underscores the ease of conducting business in the country, making it a magnet for those seeking not only prosperity but also efficiency and streamlined processes. Furthermore, the stability that Georgia offers, along with its promising economic environment, solidifies the nation's status as a strategic choice for those in pursuit of secure and highly lucrative investment opportunities. In this land where tradition and modernity converge, a world of possibilities unfolds for investors, promising not just returns on investment but a partnership with a nation on the cusp of economic greatness.

## THE ROLE OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

Foreign direct investment emerges as a



The event, scheduled for November 13-14, will be a treasure trove of insights and opportunities

cornerstone in molding Georgia's economic development and illuminating its promising future prospects. The nation's remarkable resilience during the throes of the global pandemic, coupled with its unwavering trajectory of economic growth, underlines its standing as an enticing hub for foreign investors, setting the stage for a transformative journey of prosperity. As the world grappled with the challenges posed by the pandemic, Georgia exhibited a resilience that captured the attention of global investors. Its ability to not only weather the storm but continue its economic growth trajectory underlines its robustness. This resilience, amid adversity, underscores Georgia's status as a beacon of hope for investors, promising a stable and thriving environment even in the face of global uncertainties.

Georgia's reputation as a secure and



Sessions will encourage European and American Muslim-owned businesses to consider establishing factories in Georgia

discussion, a central focus will revolve around the intricate link between security and safety and their profound impact on investments. These discussions, bolstered by the support of official partners and sponsors, promise to deliver invaluable insights for attendees, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of investments in today's global landscape.

As the event unfolds, participants can eagerly anticipate sessions that passionately encourage European and American Muslim-owned businesses to consider establishing factories in Georgia. This call to action is grounded in the advantageous trade agreements and the country's strategically advantageous geographical location, further underscored by the backing of official partners and sponsors. These discussions not only emphasize the immense potential that this partnership presents but also highlight Georgia's unique position in fostering international business collaboration. In this environment of intellectual exchange and cross-border collaboration, the International Tourism and Business Forum becomes not merely a gathering of minds but a crucible of ideas, opportunities, and partnerships. It is here that the future of international business prospects takes shape, where leaders and visionaries come together to chart a course toward a prosperous and interconnected world, buoyed by the support of their official partners and sponsors.

## EXPERT INSIGHT AND COLLABORATIVE GROWTH

The participation of industry experts lends unparalleled credibility to the forum. With their wealth of knowledge and experience, these experts can provide invaluable guidance to attendees. Their insights into market dynamics, emerging trends, and best practices can serve as a compass for investors looking to navigate the complex terrain of real estate and tourism in Georgia. The collaboration and exchange of ideas fostered by the forum contribute to the collective effort of unleashing Georgia's full economic potential. It is through such platforms that diverse industries converge, creating synergies that have the power to drive innovation and foster sustainable development. The forum is not merely an event but a catalyst for forging connections and partnerships that can lead to lasting economic growth and prosperity.

stable investment destination further adds to its allure. Investors seeking safe havens for their capital find solace in the nation's consistent adherence to principles of security and stability. It's a place where investments are not merely nurtured but fortified, promising returns while mitigating risks. Moreover, the distinctive trait of Georgia's consistent economic growth, both before and after the pandemic's upheaval, sets it apart from many other nations. This unbroken trajectory signifies not just a commitment to progress but a reliable partnership for investors. Georgia's economy doesn't merely rebound; it resurges, thriving and adapting to changing global dynamics. In the realm of foreign direct investment, Georgia stands not only as an attractive option but as a wise one. The future unfolds here, rich with potential and rife with opportunities, promising investors a remarkable journey of growth and prosperity in a land of resilience, security, and prosperity.

## KEY SPEAKERS AND TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

The International Tourism and Business Forum, with the esteemed partnership of official sponsors including Sheraton, Sino Group, Bahrain Zari, and Halal CCI, alongside other Georgian and international companies, promises to host international leaders, CEOs, and top managers in a grand gathering of visionaries and thought leaders. The event's agenda encompasses a wide spectrum of subjects, setting the stage for enlightening and transformative discussions. Among the prominent topics slated for



# With the Support of the European Union, Social Enterprise Alliance Successfully Conducted the 12th Social Entrepreneurship Forum in Collaboration with World Vision Georgia



**O**n November 8, Social Enterprise Alliance (SEA), in partnership with World Vision Georgia, hosted the 12th Social Entrepreneurship Forum at the Stamba Hotel.

The Social Entrepreneurship Forum's primary objective is to promote the idea of social entrepreneurship and disseminate information about the sector. This platform serves as an avenue to establish and reinforce partnerships between social entrepreneurs and representatives from diverse sectors.

The Social Entrepreneurship Forum has been a significant annual event since 2012, and since 2017, it has served as a platform for revealing the "Social Enterprise of the Year" for appraising contribution to and success in the sector.

Around 150 representatives from the public, private, and non-profit sectors came together at the 12th Social Entrepreneurship Forum. The event featured a variety of discussions and formats. It allowed key players in the field to engage in panel discussions about the social entrepreneurship ecosystem, while also

providing all participants with the opportunity to collaborate in small working groups. During the first part of the forum, speakers provided a recap of the past year's highlights and discussed the upcoming prospects.

"For the development of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem, we believe

a systematic approach is crucial, from both the side of the state and from the side of supporting organizations. We are pleased that the 12th Social Entrepreneurship Forum plays a pivotal role in this process," said Salome Kusiani, director of SEA.

Irakli Giorbelidze, the coordinator of

World Vision Georgia's youth project, presented forthcoming opportunities in the realm of youth projects to the attendees. He introduced the key directions of the SKYENet project, focusing on the significance of social enterprises and youth engagement in this process, among them the diverse SKYE clubs empowering youth, and other non-formal learning opportunities.

Attendees had an opportunity to listen to speeches from keynote speakers, who elaborated on the topic of artificial intelligence and its application in enhancing work efficiency. New social enterprises that use technology to solve public challenges were also introduced.

The forum's highlight was the announcement of the "Social Enterprise of the Year 2023." After consideration by a seven-member jury, the finalists were "Free Space", "Edena" and "Ikorta"

The social enterprise Ikorta earned the prestigious title of Social Enterprise of the Year 2023, determined through a confidential voting process during the event. As part of this recognition, they received financial support to further

develop the enterprise.

The social entrepreneurship forum was held within the framework of the ongoing project "Advancing Social Entrepreneurship for Sustainable and Inclusive Society," with the support of the European Union. World Vision Georgia was a partner of the forum within the EU-funded project "SKYENET- Skills and Knowledge for Youth Empowerment Network" implemented in Georgia, Armenia and Moldova. The project aims to accelerate the youth-driven social entrepreneurship, with a focus on green and digital economies, through the development of social enterprise business models, cross-border networking, and an improved business environment, as well as enhance opportunities and the capacity of young change-makers to transform their impactful ideas into sustainable social businesses.

The European Union has been actively strengthening the Social Entrepreneurship Forum and, in general, the field of social entrepreneurship in Georgia, making a substantial contribution to its development.



# Green Dating Event Night at Fabrika

BY SHELBI R. ANKIEWICZ

**M**any people in the sustainability world are full of hope after the Green Dating event that took place in the jungle room at Fabrika on November 8.

Parki ar minda is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that focuses on sustainability around Tbilisi and Georgia. They hosted the first ever Green Dating event where international environmental activists came together and presented current projects that they're working on. There were 17 presenters in total, each from France, Germany, or Russia, and all of them focusing on a different aspect of sustainability.

Many of the speakers had started a project in the city which they are from or are living in, then, if applicable, they expanded to other cities.

Sarah Prien is a presenter from Hamburg, Germany. She is a sustainable fashion designer who follows and creates many mottos, one being 'Love design? Unlearn fashion!' Prien said that while she was completing her studies, she realized fast fashion, the institution that enslaves people, was starting to boom, and she had to do something about it.

"After my studies finished, I exploited myself. The conflict between wanting to wear fashion and the fast-moving

world, the fact we keep changing our styles, and sustainability being a luxury - these were my motivation to try and find a new model that overcomes the capitalist issue in this whole thing. The whole system is wrong," Prien said. "I'm motivated to try and find a motto that says it is based on common principles, to try and get people back in touch with what we wear on our skin."

Prien was just one of the many presenters of the night. Others included people from projects such as Textiles Untangled in France; Frea, the first vegan and zero waste restaurant in Germany; and My Cup, Please, in Russia. All presenters had slide presentations with a maximum of only 15 seconds per slide to ensure everyone had time to speak.

Most people attended the event for personal reasons, but Valerie Sidorva was present to discover how she could draw traction to her own project, Sovrator, in Moscow. Sidorva had heard about project Parki ar minda through her friends in Georgia, and decided to make a trip to use its services, among them collecting recyclables. After she saw how they operated, she decided to attend the Green Dating event.

"The field in my company is education. I work as the head of the educational department and my goal is to find different ways to motivate people and provide information, so [here] I thought I would find some ideas for that," Sidorva said. "And I did, because the projects



The introduction of Green Dating night at Fabrika on November 8. Image credit: Shelbi R. Ankiewicz

with innovations were the most interesting to me. It's great to show our customers our community - to show them what else is out there. Technology is moving forward, it's a worldwide situation with everyone moving forward so we need to do the same."

Tatiana Remmeva is a co-founder of Parki ar minda who is originally from Moscow but has resided in Tbilisi for the past 11 years. This is the first time they've held an event as such, since the

NGO isn't that big and does not have a lot of funding. Traditionally, Parki ar minda holds events such as public talks relating to different sustainable topics like recycling, sustainable fashion or living, and zero waste living.

Parki ar minda also holds seminars and public events like swap parties and clean ups. At their seminars, they teach people how to recycle in Georgia, what products can be recycled, and how to properly collect waste. Remmeva hopes they can

host more workshop activities in the future with other partner organizations.

"It was a little bit better than I expected because we had around 17 registrations, which usually results in 50% of people actually showing up, but we had many more people than this, so we are very happy with the turnout," Remmeva said. "We host events, not always of this skill because we are a small NGO, but if we have many collaborations. Of course, we want to host more events to raise more awareness, to involve more people, boost collaboration in all things environmental, green, recycling, etc."

The other projects represented at the event were #Iamplasticfree, Fantastic - No Plastic Zero Waste store, Recycle-Hero, Pererabotkinskaya, Dechet Par Jour, MerFerre, Plastic Pirates, 99 Recycle, Ecolabel, "Create a Garden", and Organicpunk.

Parki ar minda is comprised of people from all different backgrounds. The NGO said it's important to be acceptable to everyone since everyone breathes the same air and lives together on a single planet. The organization was created to build bridges, develop an understanding of people, and solve problems related to the environment.

The next event hosted by Parki ar minda is a clean-up at 10:30 in Dendrological Park this Saturday, November 11. The event will be open to the public, and equipment such as gloves and bags will be provided.



# Awhirl

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

A couple of nights ago, the prevailing calm retreated before winds which tore down many of the now loosely attached autumn leaves in my neighborhood. Along with this, they picked up a crazy amount of garbage, likely from the row of dumpsters near our building, and added this detritus to the mix, which they deposited between my block and the next. The street sweepers must have despaired; or simply shrugged their overworked shoulders and got busy. It was quite a mess before they waded in.

I have long wanted to attempt a series of photos which will imitate the in-vogue stacked multiple exposure sets which show murmurations of birds. With the camera mounted on a tripod to stop it from moving, and a shutter going off as many times a second as hardware allows, the trail of each bird is revealed in a glorious dance together. But my series will, instead of elusive bird-flocks, use trees and their falling leaves blown by wind, though to similar effect, says my mind's eye. All I currently have to offer pictorially accompanying this article is a multiple exposure of pigeons outside a temple in Kathmandu from last year; but this, too, conveys something of what I seek. I kept the shutter a bit slow for these shots, though, to show blur (as I am wont to do with motion), and didn't bother with the tripod. Anyway, now's the season to attempt the leaf-murmuration visions I already have in mind.

Linked thematically with these winds and the chaos they bring is the News. Both South Ossetia and Abkhazia have been featured in recent days, sad events and competing versions vying for our attention. Russia/Ukraine, Israel/Gaza



and Azerbaijan/Armenia are not close enough, it seems. We must have confusion and sadness here, right here, as well! And here it comes, right on time. How we're going to clean this up, though, I really don't know.

Is there a perceivable pattern in news events which, like bird murmurations or leaf-falls, can be tracked, recorded, revealed, if one has the right mental equipment? Not from our time-bound, limited perspective, I think, at least not from my own. Maybe, on the other side

of an eternity in which I believe, all of human history will stand revealed for what it really was and has been, and it will All Make Sense. At the moment, from here, inside the dust devils, we groan and mourn and struggle to make sense. Because the garbage stirred up by the winds of Event in our lives is not neutral; it plays on our nerves, drags us down, saddens or infuriates us, sometimes stirs us into some kind of action, useful or futile, just because we find it hard to sit idly by.

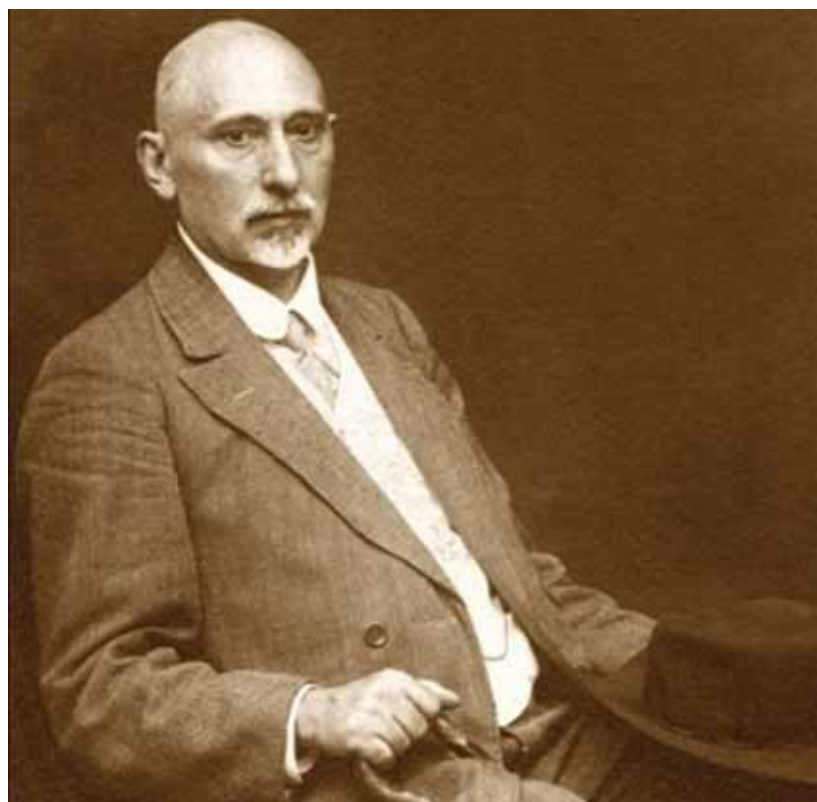
Or we seek an explanation, from someone who has analyzed news-storms and their fallout over time and discovered patterns, revealed them, photographed them in words, frozen them for us all to see. We may not agree with these descriptions; they are less "factual", more opinion-based and debatable, than bird- or leaf-flights revealed across the sky. But we find something with which to agree (or vehemently disagree), because it resonates (or grates) with us, and go with or protest that. Because

we want to understand. I certainly do, anyway.

Tony Hanmer has lived in Georgia since 1999, in Svaneti since 2007, and been a weekly writer and photographer for GT since early 2011. He runs the "Svaneti Renaissance" Facebook group, now with over 2000 members, at [www.facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenaissance/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenaissance/). He and his wife also run their own guest house in Etseri: [www.facebook.com/hanmer.house.svaneti2](http://www.facebook.com/hanmer.house.svaneti2)

## CULTURE

# Georgia Is Certainly into the West



Ekvtime Takaishvili, guardian of Georgia's treasure in France. Source: Wikipedia

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

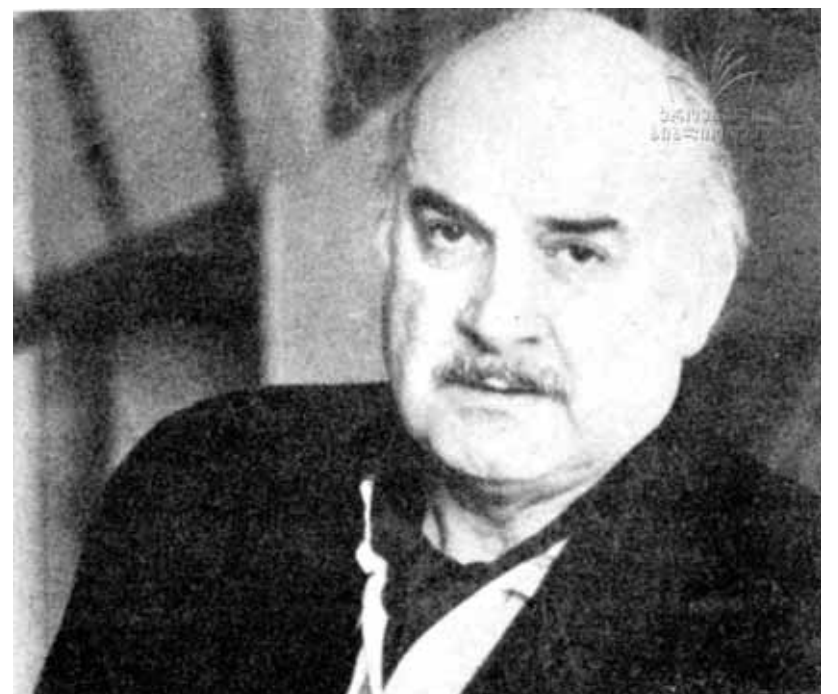
This nation doesn't have to bend over backwards to prove to the world that it belongs in the western family of nations. When we talk about Europeanism in general, we should above all put forward culture and mentality for judgment, not only the official state and social institutions working like a Swiss watch mechanism if wound on time and regularly.

The other day, I came across an Imedi television program anchored by Tamar Tsagareishvili, a long-standing, celebrated television journalist. In the capacity of a respondent, the public's favorite show was filled in by Irakli Papava, a well-known filmmaker with a number of outstanding documentaries under his belt about Sakartvelo's national history and ethnic culture. The wonderfully matched host and guest masterfully elicited from the archives the story of Revaz (Rezo) Tabukashvili, a famous Georgian film-director, screenwriter and a translator of Shakespeare's sonnets.

Tabukashvili's contribution plays a valuable role in scholarly research and the unearthing of the life and activity of notable Georgian emigrants, among them Mikheil Tamarashvili, whose story was tracked down by Rezo all the way to his grave in Italy. Tamarashvili, a.k.a. Tamarati, was a Georgian Roman Catholic abbot and historian, doctor of theology and professor, especially well-known for his French-language history of Georgian Christianity. At the age of 53, he gave his life to save the life of another, and his remains were honorably moved to Georgia and interred in the Tbilisi Pantheon of Writers and Public Figures.

Another Tabukashvili masterpiece is his documentary about Ekvtime Takaishvili, the famed Georgian historian, archaeologist and public benefactor. Following Georgia's soviet annexation in 1921, Takaishvili was assigned the task of protecting the Georgian national treasure, which went to Paris with him as part of the political emigration of the time. Not even one piece of the treasure was ever sold, even when lives needed saving from hunger and poverty. It was diligently preserved, taken care of, and brought back to Georgia in 1945, with amazing assistance from the then French President, Charles De Gaulle. The valuable shipment was accompanied back to the motherland by Ekvtime Takaishvili himself, the great guard of Georgia's national treasure – the appellation given to him by Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, the giant of Georgian literature, and another cultural figure with a western background and philosophy.

Revaz Tabukashvili's film about Pore Mosulishvili is just as noteworthy. Mosulishvili was a Soviet soldier, Georgian by birth, and a partisan in the Italian resistance movement during World War II. He was posthumously awarded the Gold Medal of Military Valor and the title of Hero of the Soviet Union for his heroic



Revaz (Rezo) Tabukashvili, a famous Georgian film-director who sought Western connections with Georgia. Source: nplg.gov.ge

and unselfish military and civilian services.

These are just three vivid examples of the sort, but there are many more episodes of the same value and elevation in the history of this country, so diligently and patiently investigated by Revaz Tabukashvili, who never ceased in his search for traces of Georgia in the depths of Western spiritual life. His films about many eminent Georgians who, by certain vicissitudes of life, found themselves in the West, speak volumes about those extremely valuable and organic historical ties of Georgia with European nations, many of them having left very deep marks on Western culture. With Tabukashvili's tireless effort, initiative, and personal participation, Sakartvelo retrieved its significant archival materials, valuable documents and unique photos from various parts of Europe, found in Western libraries and book depositories.

The facts of life and creative activity of our beloved and unforgettably hand-

some Rezo Tabukashvili were given new life in the above-mentioned TV program. Incidentally, that memorable evening, host Tsagareishvili and guest Papava made an earnest effort to apply to the youth of Georgia that the best and smartest among them have to follow in the footsteps of their truly prominent 'grandpa' Rezo, to keep up the valuable memory of those historic Georgians, so well connected with West, so as to make the current and future ties of this nation with Europe even closer and tighter.

The believable enough cliché that Georgia needs Europe as much as Europe needs Georgia is 100% justified if we look and feel deeper into history, history which will unmistakably confirm that the ties between them are natural, organic and promising. As such, it should be to nobody's surprise if Georgia soon receives EU candidacy, and that sooner rather than later, full membership in the cherished Union of the most successful nations of the world will follow.



# De Paris A Tbilissi



Ioseb Grishashvili. Source: Georgian Journal

## Georgian Poetry - The Pillow, by Ioseb Grishashvili

TRANSLATED FROM  
GEORGIAN INTO ENGLISH  
BY KETEVA TUKHARELI

"She will not come!"  
A said and didn't believe  
Myself,  
"She will not come!" -  
The silence was singing  
In return  
Outside it was raining...  
My heart was more  
Heavy, than early.  
Rain was singing,  
Loudly or softly,  
Sometimes it was  
Dancing on the window -  
Glasses:  
And even to-day when  
The breeze sounds  
And it is heard  
On them,  
I think, you've come oh,  
And open my door!  
Pillow! only we know,  
Why I cried so.

**I**blew out the candle,  
It was dark in the room  
And the heart, worn out  
Was waiting for you!  
Waiting...  
A blew out the candle!  
And this is what happened:  
A fell on the pillow, prone -  
My heart gave a moan.  
A was crying! I shed  
Floods of tears and my  
Pillow was wet with dew.  
A was crying, as  
The desert breeze and  
Earring size tears  
Were running down  
My cheeks.  
I said: pillow,  
Only we know,  
How often I didn't  
Sleep all night,  
The silence, I untied,  
And the tears, how  
I cried.  
I blew out the candle,  
It was dark in the room.  
You didn't come, why  
My heart was waiting  
For you then?  
A blew out the candle  
And this is what happened:  
I fell on the pillow, prone -  
My heart gave a moan!

Ioseb Grishashvili was a pen name of Ioseb Mamulishvili, who was born in April 1889. He was a noted poet and historian who set out by studying at the Tbilisi Georgian Gymnasium, although he did not finish the course. He had an interest in the Georgian theater from an early age and at various times worked as a prompter, an actor, wrote small plays and, what he is best known for, poems. He has a history museum named after him, and composer Tamara Antonovna Shaverzashvili used a text of his for her song "Regret." Grishashvili joined the Georgian National Academy of Sciences as a member in 1946. He died in August 1965.

**G**eorgian Immigrant culture, on the one hand, is related to Georgia, and on the other hand, it exists independently in the field of international culture. It is always interesting to meet this culture and its representatives.

Until November 16, Baia Gallery (68 Razmadze Street) is presenting an exhibition of two Georgian artists living and working in France - Daredjane Zourabichvili and Henri Matchavariani. Daredjane presents her sculptures, while Henri showcases his graphic works.

Master of his line and gesture, carving the surrounding void, aware of the qualities of the mediums utilized, Henri Matchavariani has since a long way back been exploring the essentials.

Owing to the fertile inspiration from his Georgian origins, his work with the master of the mime art Etienne Decroux, as well as his exploration of the Japanese art of drawing, Henri Matchavariani has succeeded in finding his personal way and detaching himself from his career as a famous poster designer to follow his path towards a flawless line under the sole guidance of the "mad draftsman" Hokusai.

Familiar with fencing disciplines, his hand, his entire body, shape out the space. His line brings equally the obviousness of flesh and fabric, vegetal and mineral, word and verb. Under Dotremont's tutelage, Henri Matchavariani exudes in form of logograms words finding readily their way on paper. His signs come to life, entering a dialog with the surrounding void, throbbing with an energy confining to otherness.

Daredjane is a French sculptor of Georgian origin. She was born in Belgium and resides in France, where she completed her law studies. She began sculpting 25 years ago, which became her real passion and profession.

She exhibits regularly in France and abroad in solo or art fair exhibitions: Paris, New York, Miami, Brussels, Vienna, Toronto, and Tbilisi.

In 2019, she created the monument "Merani" (First Republic Garden in Tbilisi), which was dedicated to the memory of those who fought in political emigration for the independence of Georgia. One of her sculptures, "Shota," remains in the Georgian National Museum in Tbilisi. Many of her sculptures belong to private collections all around the world.



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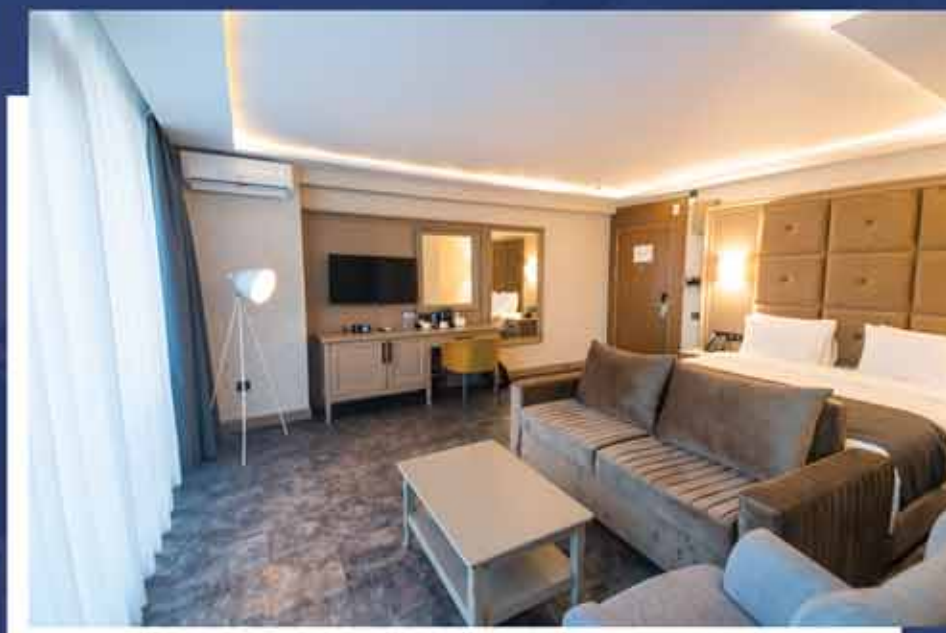




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