

Governments of Georgia and Germany Sign Agreement on Migration and Mobility

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia, Vakhtang Gomelauri, held a meeting with Nancy Feser, the Federal Minister of Internal Affairs of Germany, who is on an official working visit to Georgia.

During the meeting, the Government of Georgia and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany signed an agreement on migration and mobility. The purpose of this agreement is to enhance cooperation between the two nations in the realms of labor migration and education. As part of this collaboration, educational and internship programs will be implemented more intensively, benefiting Georgian students and researchers.

The agreement envisions strengthening the efforts against illegal migration, which implies enhancing cooperation to ensure the readmission and reintegration of Georgian citizens who violate the visa-free travel regime.

During the meeting, the parties also discussed the prospects for future cooperation, focusing on efforts against illegal migration and organized crime.

Vakhtang Gomelauri highlighted the significance of Germany including Georgia in the list of safe countries of origin. He emphasized that this decision by the German government reaffirms Georgia's status as a democratic country, where state bodies ensure the proper protection of human rights.

During the meeting, the Ger-



man side acknowledged that Georgia is successfully implementing the readmission agreement signed with the European Union. Additionally, they positively evaluated the measures taken by Georgia in response to the challenges of visa-free travel with the European Union.

As Nancy Feser said at the briefing held together with the Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia Vakhtang Gomelauri, Georgia and Germany have a very close, partnership cooperation.

"First of all, I would like to

emphasize the granting of candidate status to Georgia. This was a very important decision of the European Council, and Germany actively supported it. Congratulations! Besides, I am very happy that we have signed an agreement on migration, which strengthens and intensifies cooperation in this field. We emphasize what is important: the very close, partnership cooperation of our countries, targeted employment and education of specialists, and the so-called return of asylum seekers and persons without real residence,"

Faeser said.

Faeser acknowledged the positive impact of the migration agreement, expressed appreciation for cooperation, and highlighted the importance of the partnership between the two countries in the face of broader geopolitical challenges.

Gomelauri explained that the draft agreement within the framework of cooperation in the field of labor migration envisions promoting the orderly migration of the labor force and skilled workers in the following directions: strengthening circular

migration and seasonal labor migration in the German labor market, and expanding opportunities for Georgians to engage in labor activities.

"This means that work visas, which are relatively problematic today, will be easier to obtain from now on. Our citizens will be able to legally work and stay in the country, and this visa will also be issued there. For this purpose, the draft agreement envisages the creation of a bilateral expert group with the participation of relevant ministries and institutions," Gomelauri said.

Papuashvili Explains Georgia's Refusal to Join European Magnitsky List Due to Non-Support for Sanctions Against Russia

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Josep Borrell, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign and Security Policy, announced that the European Council has decided to extend the "European Magnitsky List" until December 8, 2026. Georgia is not on the list of countries that supported the extension of the Act.

The Chairman of the Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, explained Georgia's refusal to support the 'European Magnitsky List' by stating that Georgia does not join the sanctions against Russia.

"This list of sanctions doesn't only apply to Russia; it also includes several countries, including Georgia, which has taken a stance on issues related to North



Korea and Transnistria. Regarding sanctions against Russia, Georgia maintains a declared policy, and we will adhere to this stance. This policy has resulted in a stable situation in Georgia, ensuring our economic development and earning us candidate status.

For information and specifics regarding the decision, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will provide you with the necessary answers. As reiterated, our stance on sanctions is well-known — we do not align with sanctions against Russia. This decision has ensured that Georgia avoids the risks of war and economic collapse, leading to the attainment of candidate status," Papuashvili said.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6822; Euro - 2.9338; GBP - 3.4064; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9761; Swiss Franc - 3.0951

Papuashvili Explains Georgia's Refusal to Join European Magnitsky List Due to Non-Support for Sanctions Against Russia

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In relation to the extension of the 'Magnitsky List', the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

released a statement, affirming that Georgia has adhered to the established practice concerning the mentioned document in recent years.

"Georgia has maintained the recent practice regarding the mentioned document, and our partners are informed. In general, statistics on joining the

statements of the European Union have sharply increased in the last year, up to 50%," stated the Foreign Ministry.

The 'Magnitsky Act' was ini-

tially passed by the US Congress in 2012 to hold accountable the Russian authorities responsible for the death of Sergei Magnitsky in a Russian prison.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

European Court Finds Russia Guilty in Otkhozoria Murder Case, Orders 130,000 Euro Compensation



The European Court found a violation of Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights (right to life) in the case of Giga Otkhozoria's murder and ordered Russia to pay compensation of 130,000 euros to

Otkhozoria's family.

The European Court also determined a violation of Article 38, as the Russian Federation failed to submit the relevant criminal case materials to the court.

The decision in the case of Matkava and Others v. Russia (no. 3963/18) was rendered on

December 19 by the European Court of Human Rights.

On May 19, 2016, Giga Otkhozoria was killed near the administrative border between Georgia and the Abkhazia region, within the controlled ter-

ritory of Georgia. The perpetrator, a so-called Abkhaz 'border guard' named Rashid Kanji-Oghli, was responsible for his death.

The family members appealed to the European Court of Human Rights on January 11, 2018.

Venice Commission Deems Prime Minister's Role in Appointing and Dismissing Anti-Corruption Bureau Head 'Problematic'

The Venice Commission has adopted an opinion on the provisions of the law in the fight against corruption concerning the Anti-Corruption Bureau. According to their assessment, the bureau cannot function as an independent entity, given that its head is appointed by the Prime Minister, and they deem it problematic.

The Venice Commission received a request from Parliament Chairman Shalva Papuashvili on September 22, 2023, to prepare a report regarding the anti-corruption bureau.

"In this opinion, the Venice Commission outlines that independence with an adequate level of structural and operational autonomy, involving legal and institutional arrangements to prevent political or other influ-



ence is considered a fundamental requirement for specialised anti-corruption bodies. In this respect, various positive features of the new provisions of the Law have been noted, in particular the fact that the ACB has been established as a separate structure with a high degree of financial independence. Nevertheless,

the Venice Commission finds that the current institutional design does not provide for a sufficient degree of independence of the ACB and considers that its competencies to oversee the financing of political parties and

monitor asset and interest declarations of high-level officials require additional safeguards to be included in the Law. In this connection, the fact that the appointment and dismissal of the head of the ACB is to a large extent in the hands of the Prime Minister is particularly problematic," the opinion reads.

EU4Business 2023 report shows extra Euro 2.5 billion income generated for SMEs in Eastern Partnership region

In 2022, the European Union disbursed Euro 125.4 million to support a total of nearly 78,000 SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) in the Eastern Partnership region, 40% of which are owned by women. This resulted in over 83,000 new jobs and Euro 2.5 billion in extra income generated by EU-supported SMEs in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

This data is presented in the European Commission's annual report on the EU4Business Initiative, encompassing all EU support



to SMEs in the five Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. The 2023 report provides detailed information of EU assistance across the programme's three priority areas: access to finance, business development services and the business enabling environment.

About 30,000 SMEs received financial support in the form of loans, totalling over Euro 530 million, through national partner financial institutions. The average loan size was about Euro 18,000. About Euro 33.7 million was allocated to help EaP SMEs develop their professional skills in 2022, 27% of the total sum disbursed. Around 38,000 consultancy services were provided, and 1,200 business support organisations were trained. Support from EU4Business spans a variety of sectors, from supporting an online teaching

platform in Armenia to a fashion entrepreneur reviving an old, environmentally-friendly dyeing tradition in Georgia.

In addition, the EU disbursed about Euro 26 million to improve the business environment. With this support, over 3,000 government institutions, including policymakers, regulators, and enforcement agencies, were able to improve their capacity, and over 321 laws, regulations, and procedures were reformed. Impressive stories stand behind these figures, such as the producers of Ukrainian cheese going for growth.

EU4Business is an umbrella initiative, encompassing all EU support to small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in the Eastern Partnership countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Wednesday, December 20

Day ☀ Clear
High: 9°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: -1°C

Thursday, December 21

Day ☀ Clear
High: 10°C

Night ☁ Cloudy
Low: 3°C

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therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

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On December 16, the Embassy of Japan in Georgia held a Japanese Language Speech Contest at Tbilisi Free University. The contest provided Japanese language learners with an opportunity to demonstrate their Japanese skills as well as meet with other Japanese language learners, deepen their knowledge about Japan and motivate them to further learn the Japanese language.



