Survey Results: Do Georgians Know What the EU Is?

By Maka Lomadze

On October 10, the Europe Foundation (EFF) presented its recent survey report titled ‘Knowledge and Attitudes towards the EU in Georgia, 2009 – 2017’. The presentation was held at the Marriott Hotel in Tbilisi. The report presents the results of a study into Georgian citizens’ knowledge of and attitudes towards the European Union. It looks at the results of five waves of surveys conducted in 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017, and attempts to identify trends and highlight changes in both knowledge and attitudes of the population of Georgia.

“It is always useful to have an opportunity to learn about the sentiments of the people,” said Carlo Natale, the Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Georgia. “For us policy-makers, it’s a sort of reality check. A lot is going on between the EU and Georgia, and both sides are committed to taking this further”. He claims that a lot of work is being done on a daily basis by the Georgian government, civil society and the EU in order to bring benefits and real results to citizens. “We have to be just as effective in our communication efforts as in the implementation of our projects and programs. Democracies would not be called democracies if they worked against the will of the people. So, it is important that the ordinary people approve of the actions of the governance,” he said.

Such surveys help to assess mandates and support greater cooperation and deeper integration. Natale said he was “pleased that for a consecutive eight years, the EFF surveys had shown the enthusiasm of Georgians towards EU integration at a consistent high”.

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Georgia & EU Launch Strategic Dialogue on Security Issues

Georgian Passengers to Fly to Barcelona, Rome, Paris Direct with Wizz Air

Wizz Air plans to add further destinations from Kutaisi International Airport, including Rome, Paris, Barcelona and Prague. The decision was announced by George Michalopulos, Wizz Air’s CFO, while at a meeting with the Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Kvirikashvili last week.

Wizz Air is one of the leading low-cost air companies in Central and Eastern Europe, and is currently operating flights to 12 European countries from Kutaisi International Airport in western Georgia. Flights to Rome, Paris, Barcelona and Prague will start from May 2018. Wizz Air is also set to double the number of already existing flights operated by the company from Kutaisi, for which another A320 type aircraft is to be based at the airport.

25 Bodies of Abkhazian War Victims Identified & Brought to Georgia

Georgian Ministry of Refugees reports that 25 bodies of high-rank figures of the 1990s Georgia and other victims of the Abkhazian War have been identified and returned to Georgia.

24 years after the Abkhazian war, among the deceased were identified the bodies of Security Colonel Mamia Alasia, Sokhumi Mayor Guram Cabukaria and members of the Council of Ministers of Abkhazia, Vakhtang Gegrishvili and Arshaul Shengelia.

“all these 25 people are heroes...They had a chance to save themselves. However, they decided to fulfill their roles until the end of their lives and fight for Georgia’s independence,” Refugee Minister Sozar Subari said.

The Minister thanked the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Abkhazian side for its fruitful work.

The Refugees Ministry reports that a civil funeral for the deceased will be held on October 16 in Holy Trinity Cathedral (Sameba), Tbilisi, and the following day the bodies will be buried with military honor at the Dighomi Brothers’ Cemetery.

Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, has appealed to anyone possessing information on people who were missing during the 1992-1993 war in Abkhazia region and 2008 Russia-Georgia war to inform the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

As Kvirikashvili noted at the government session on Wednesday, more than 2,400 people have no information about their relatives that went missing in the reported period.

The initiative of launching the dialogue was raised by the Georgian Prime Minister, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, last year at the session of the Association Council.

The Prime Minister also commented on the activation of dialogue with the EU, noting that the Russia-Georgia conflict and ways towards peaceful resolution would be among the key issues of the dialogue.

He added that the dialogue is a very important achievement, making Georgia a significant component of the European security system.

“This is the result of long-term work and is a great honor and responsibility for us. This is an unprecedented step from the European Union and Europe confirms interest in Georgia as well as its role in terms of strengthening regional stability and security,” Kvirikashvili stated.
Survey Results: Do Georgians Know What the EU Is?

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“If it is a very challenging task to be a successful and sustainable, democratic reforms need to be based on a broad, inclusive and fact-based discussion about what society should look like, what choices need to be made and why.”

She added that the EPF survey is an important contribution to the EU reform process, assisting in the understanding of just how informed Georgian society is about the EU and what gaps need to be filled.

“One of the Government of Georgia must decide how to carry out the reforms, but in order to ensure sustainability, it is important to build on a firm ground of correct and updated information and inclusive debate about what this integration can mean to Georgian society,” Quick said.

The report draws some interesting conclusions. Support for the EU integration process among the Georgian population continues to be strong, but rests on hopes and expectations rather than on genuine knowledge of what integration really means. This is the challenge on genuine knowledge of what integration continues to be strong, but rests on hopes and expectations rather than on genuine knowledge of what integration really means. This is the challenge that the Georgian government, together with the EU and the member states, have been working to address.

The survey also shows that knowledge of the EU integration process is developing “rather slowly.”

“What is encouraging to see is that a large and an increasing part of the population is interested in learning more,” Quick said. “What is perhaps less encouraging but still useful information for all of us, only a small percentage of the respondents answered that they received information from the government, the EU delegation and member state embassies. It means that we have to approach the issue a bit differently, especially in minority regions, where the level of knowledge is significantly lower. We can still see from the survey that there is still a perception in the Georgian society that EU integration is threatening to Georgian traditions. This perception has decreased, but it is still widespread. This is an obvious result of the lack of information and in some cases, of incorrect information being deliberately spread”.

“If it is the case that only 45% of the population knows about the EU,” said Johannes Douma, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Georgia, “This is a very negative signal for me. We will go on.”

The following are some of the findings that EPF highlighted:

• Georgian citizens associate the EU with democracy. A vast majority of citizens agree that the EU is a source for peace and security in Europe.

• The citizens are now better aware of the EU than they were in 2009. However, the population’s knowledge of a number of issues is still limited; for example, Georgians require more information about EU institutions, agreements reached between Georgia and the EU, and interventions implemented in Georgia with support from the European Union.

• As expected, there are disparities between the levels of knowledge between the country’s rural and urban populations.

• The majority of Georgian citizens believe that they do not receive sufficient information about the EU, with almost half of respondents noting that they would like to receive more information about it.

• The majority of the Georgian population believes that, compared with the United States and Russia, the EU can better assist Georgia. However, a large segment of ethnic minorities disagrees with this view.

• Georgian population’s support for the EU integration, that decreased to 63% in 2013, has increased to 71%. This proves again that the overall attitude towards the EU is highly positive and Georgians strongly support the country’s European integration.

• The current state of Georgia’s market economy is named most commonly as the factor endangering Georgia’s accession to the EU, followed by the rule of law, the approximation of Georgian legislation to EU legislation, the protection of human rights, the development of democratic institutions and the protection of minority rights.

• A large majority of the Georgian population is somewhat informed about visa liberalization. However, only 16% are confident that they will enjoy the visa-free regime within the next 12 months.

• A large majority of Georgians are concerned about the approximation of Georgian legislation to EU legislation, the protection of human rights, the development of democratic institutions and the protection of minority rights.

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• The share of Georgian speakers and ethnic minorities who think that the government should be like a parent rather than an employee hired by the citizens, remains unchanged since 2009.

• Over 2000 (2258) respondents were questioned in three languages: Georgian, Russian and Armenian and Azerbaijani. The survey was commissioned by the Europe Foundation and conducted by CRRC Georgia with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Georgia, and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA).

The statistics cover the 9-month period up to August 31, 2017. The official data reads that, at present, the number of asylum seekers in Georgia is 253. Specifically, citizens of the following countries are requesting shelter in Georgia: Afghanistan - 22, Algeria - 1, Australia - 1, Azerbaijan - 7, Bahrain - 1, Bangladesh - 11, Belarus - 2, Cameroon - 2, Congo - 7, Egypt - 49, Ethiopia 2, Ghana - 7, India - 9, Iran - 50, Iraq - 27, Côte d’Ivoire 1, Jordan 2, Kenya 2, Lebanon 4, Moldova 2, Morocco - 2, Nigeria - 22, Pakistan - 15, Russia - 38, Saudi Arabia - 1, Sierra Leone - 2, Somalia - 4, Sri Lanka - 4, Turkey - 31, Ukraine - 9, Uzbekistan - 1, Yemen - 4, Zimbabwe - 2, without citizenship - 3, a person with an uncertain citizenship - 5.

The number of persons who have been granted an asylum in Georgia is 1498. Only Russian citizens enjoy PRIMAFA CE status and their number is 240 at present. 202 foreigners were granted the status of refugees in Georgia and 1047 foreigners have humanitarian status in the country.

News

353 foreigners ask for asylum in Georgia in 9 months

The Informational-Analytical Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs has published the statistical data of asylum seekers in Georgia.

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BY THEA MORRISON

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Russia’s Karasin Calls on Georgia to Fulfill Terms of Cargo Monitoring Agreement

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin has called on the Georgian side to fulfill the terms of the mutual cargo monitoring agreement, "instead of demanding only that Russia follow the agreement.

The statement was made by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister in his interview with Russian news agency Ria Novosti. "We call on Tbilisi to express readiness to honestly meet its international commitments," Karasin said.

The official explained that the document mandates Russia and Georgia, with the participation of a Swiss company, to use special customs administration rules for trade flows. According to him, Georgia is not following the terms of the agreement and expresses high demands of Russia.

Georgian Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze has responded to Karasin’s statement, saying Georgia was ready from the beginning to fulfill the commitments imposed by the agreement.

“We expect the Russian Federation to make the relevant steps to fully meet the cargo monitoring agreement. We are also ready to sign a contract with a mediator company to implement the agreement. We expect the basic agreement and relevant contract to be fulfilled by all parties. It is impossible to fulfill them unilaterally," he stated.

State Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Georgia, Victor Dolidze, said that since the agreement was signed, Georgia’s commitment and responsibility towards the issue has not changed.

“We have no problem about the issue and are ready to start this process. The statement of Karasin is unclear," Dolidze stated.

The Georgian Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality, Ketevan Tkachelashvili, also noted that the Georgian side has fulfilled all its obligations, and added that “now it is Russia’s turn to make steps towards the implementation of the agreement.

Georgia and Russia signed the agreement on Cargo Monitoring on November 9, 2011, in Geneva, with the participation of Switzerland.

At the meeting, Georgia and Russia agreed to involve a neutral company to monitor the movement of goods. The Swiss Confederation was tasked with selecting a neutral private company in consultation with Georgia and the Russian Federation.

The sides agreed to create a mechanism of customs administration and monitoring of trade in goods. The mechanism’s functions included gathering and sharing information, ensuring transparency, data transfer, crime and smuggling prevention, and examining suspicious cargo.

Georgia and Russia decided that the mechanism would entail both an Electronic Data Exchange System (EDES) and International Monitoring System (IMS).

Separatism: Healer or Killer?

Separatism: Healer or Killer? Of course, both! It heals but it also kills; it only depends what it heals and how much it kills. Take, for example, one of the most destructive samples of separatism of recent history: the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It not only changed the lives, to better or worse, of hundreds of millions of people, but mightily shook the world with its power of destruction.

In that totally unexpected, and hardly universally desired, geopolitical metamorphosis, the healing part was that a number of nations acquired freedom and independence, which sounds good in generally accepted terms. The killing part of it was that, after almost 80 years, the fundamentally shaken one-sixth of the planet is still recovering from that debilitating and decomposing shock.

Incidentally, our beloved Georgia has suffered almost more than any other former Soviet republic as a consequence of the separatist feelings and deeds instigated by the soviet breakup: we have lost almost one-third of our territory and the possibility of restoration of its integrity is not even looming on our darkened horizon. Moreover, the noticeable separatist movement in the world might even solidify the geopolitical status quo in Georgia.

The worst harbinger of further solidification of the bitter status quo could very well be the separatist incident in Catalonia of Spain, if the incident is ever turned into a geo-political reality in favor of separatism. We know the story well: Spain has been ‘one nation under God’ since the middle of the 19th century and the currently working constitution of the country clearly opposes any separatist endeavor. Catalanians still want and have voted for separation from the mother country. The healing part of this freshly formed event is the enhancement and strident celebration of ethnic pride, but the killer could be the pernicious domino effect on the European continent, saying nothing about those legitimate doubts about Catalonia’s future.

Separatism has already damaged Ukraine even worse than Georgia, and it may easily become the reason for its final destruction as a solid independent state. The salvaging and perpetuation of all those separatist attitudes started with the Kosovo separatist move, which ended in its factual independence as a result of one of the most imprudent decisions by the world’s leading powers. The separatist sentiments were unleashed so badly that the disintegration of the entire world now becomes not only a theoretical perspective, but a practical geo-political reality.

Is the world going to be a better and a safer place to live in if it breaks up into hundreds of different new units? How can the world go on functioning that way? Is the recent tendency to unite the world into groupings of countries declining and something contrary to that is on the offensive?

There are scholars out there who think that separatism and the consequential disintegration of the world is dangerous, that it threatens the global security which has been achieved through very painful efforts by the world community, and which is still flimsy enough for us to be scared of. So, what to do? Answer: Just stay where you are and be good enough to create a high-quality life using the resources closest to you. Too much meddling in how the world is built and working might end up in disaster. And if catastrophe happens, it is going to hit all Earth-dwellers. Let’s think carefully before we do something serious. Haven’t we already tasted enough fruits of separatism? Give me one, just one example of separatist moves that have resulted in human wellbeing and elementary happiness. Don’t look for it in vain. There are none!
Shota Gvineria: Georgia is Not a Consumer of Global Security but a Contributor

INTERVIEW BY MAEGOSIA KRAKOWSKA

Shota Gvineria is the Deputy Security of the National Security Council of Georgia. We spoke to him about Georgia’s NATO aspirations and Russian interference in the process.

“Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan are three independent states which emerged from the former Soviet Union in 1991. After the collapse, each took a different political path as forces with Russia, Azerbaijan’s goal is to remain neutral, while Georgia is seeking closer relations with the West. Why?”

Historically, Georgia is strongly rooted in the European civilization. In the fourth century, it is said to have adopted Christianity. Since then, it has always been a part of Europe. Christianity created an identity for Georgia, which was later adopted by other European countries. Our first and foremost priority is joining NATO and the European Union. It is a natural choice for us.

Support for NATO is widespread in Georgia. Surveys show favorable views of Georgia’s prospective NATO membership. Georgia does not have any other alternative than joining the transatlantic security community. During the 2016 Georgian Defense and Security Conference, our political establishment made it clear that the most damaging anti-western propaganda is aimed at strengthening nihilistic sentiments among our citizens. The only effective way to deter soft-power is to provide a constant update of Georgia’s progress on its path to European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Russia’s foreign policy strategy is based not only on coercive but also on soft-power methods, which are used by Moscow to reject the post-Cold War world order. How does Russian disinformation target Georgia today?

Russian encroachment in the Black Sea region is a result of the Kremlin’s blatant claim to a renewed sphere of influence and Russian historical revisionism is a looming threat to Georgia. We witnessed Russia’s alleged meddling in the French and American elections. German domestic intelligence services were also expecting Russian interference in the upcoming elections to the Bundestag. Georgia is not an exception.

The Kremlin influences our country through various media outlets and civil groups. In this regard, Georgian citizens emerge as the biggest target for Russian disinformation. The disinformation narrative is simple as it needs to be easily understood. Russians know that they cannot offer any clear and credible alternative to NATO or the EU. For example, Russian media claim that Georgia’s aspirations to NATO are not a viable option and that our foreign policy is in disarray.

The same applies to Syria, which is cut off from the rest of the Mediterranean by a desert stretching to the Mesopotamia (modern Iraq and Iran). The only connection Syria has to the rest of the world is through northern Iraq. Surely, modern technologies and the world’s increased interconnectedness makes the Aramco, Balkan, and Pyrenees less of a barrier, but these geographic features are still there and throughout the centuries they have shaped the behavior of the Mediterranean peoples. The geography also integrated the territories of the three continents into one economic space. Take the example of the Phoenicians, who established colonies in northern Africa, modern Spain and controlled many islands in the Mediterranean. This enabled the Phoenicians to create a trade empire where all the colonies and territories they possessed were more related to each other than to inland territories of the Middle East and North Africa.

The same was done by the Greeks with their colonization of the Mediterranean and the Black Seas. Connectivity through seafaring facilitated the creation of a trade empire with metropolises in mainland Greece getting most of the economic benefits. However, the seafaring Phoenicians, Greeks, and later on Carthaginians, still did not have enough human resources to politically dominate the Mediterranean coast and they could not manage to shut off the Mediterranean sea to other rising powers.

And this brings us to the Romans. The Roman Empire was a perfect example of how the Mediterranean world was interconnected geographically. The Romans added to trade their military virtue and essentially closed off the sea to outside powers. How geography dominated the Mediterranean is explicitly shown in the extent of the conquest the Romans carried out. Roman legions did not go beyond the rich North African provinces deep into the heart of Africa, as the territories were not economically worth controlling.

The Mediterranean World at the Mercy of Geography

GEORGIA TODAY
OCTOBER 11-16, 2017

OPEO BY EMIL AVALAIA

Continuing the discussion on important geopolitical developments in the world, having a direct impact on Georgia, I wanted to have a look at the migration crisis in Europe; the crisis which followed the war in Libya and Syria, sparked debates in Europe how to protect its southern borders and what can be done to resolve the Syrian and Libyan problems. This comes at a time when Georgia is moving as close as it has ever been to the European Union, a time when Europe can expect to continue facing large tides of migration from the Mediterranean and when that potential migration from Georgia will only be dwarfed by the former.

What we see now in the Mediterranean world is essential. It has been lost in the region for centuries due to different political and economic systems which existed in the Middle East and North Africa on one hand, and the European continent on the other. Perhaps one way to explain the current process of reconstruction in the Mediterranean world is to revisit its geography.

A look at the map of the region shows that although the Mediterranean Sea is one of the largest non-NATO member and troop contributor.

Georgia has invested and will continue to invest in international security. We are not consumers of global security. We significantly contribute to it.

In the same text, Wilson says that “the EU and NATO failed to integrate Georgia in 2008, which has disillusioned many Georgians of their country’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations.” What does that mean exactly? Absolutely not. During the 2016 Warsaw NATO summit, the Alliance reiterated its readiness to continue mobilizing resources needed for the successful implementation of the SNGI, which aims at enhancing Georgia’s defense capabilities and helping Georgia advance in its preparations towards NATO membership.

PROMISES MADE DURING THE 2008 NATO SUMMIT IN BUCHAREST. DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT?

“Absolutely not. During the 2016 Warsaw NATO summit, the Alliance reiterated its readiness to continue mobilizing resources needed for the successful implementation of the SNGI, which aims at enhancing Georgia’s defense capabilities and helping Georgia advance in its preparations towards NATO membership.”

Yes, we are not disillusioned. On the other hand, I can admit that Georgians were frustrated by Europe’s failure to see the 2008 war as a threat to European security. Aside from the later president Lech Kaczyński, the majority of the European political establishment failed to see the invasion as a conflict with global implications. Six years later, the Russian invasion and illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 proved that Europe was wrong.

Małgosia Krakowska is a Polish journalist focusing on international affairs and security issues.

Interview first published on: http://neweasterneurope.eu

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IMAGINE
First New York Skyscraper in Tbilisi

LOBBY
An ideal place for business meetings with a dedicated concierge service.

SECURE AREA
Open park with secure access points.

FITNESS CENTRE
All-day gym with experienced trainers.

POOL
Olympic-size and kids swimming pools.

KINDERGARTEN
A colourful environment and caring teachers for the tiniest residents of Tbilisi Gardens.

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National Interests & Georgian-Armenian Relations

OpEd by Zaza Jgarkava

The Mediterranean World at the Mercy of Geography

Caesar, August, Diocletian and other Roman leaders were also not particularly keen on capturing entire Germany as the Rhine and Danube rivers were seen as good defensive barriers to rely on. The same could be said about the Middle East, where the Romans (sharrong some instances) did not think to permanently occupy the lands beyond the Euphrates River.

**CONNECTION TO THE MODERN ERA**

We see the Mediterranean world had been united before. For the Phoenicians, Greeks and particularly the Romans, what was going on in North Africa and the Middle East was of major importance as, economically and militarily, the lands were connected to one another.

The Arab conquests limited this connection. In the 7th C. North Africa and the Middle East came under Islam while the rest of the Mediterranean remained Christian. Throughout the following centuries, the economic and military development of these regions varied, while there were cases (for instance, the Crusades) when clashes occurred. Europe experienced industrialization in the 18th-19th cc., but the Middle East and North Africa lagged behind. European colonization, followed by two devastating world wars, again increased the interconnectedness of the Mediterranean world. Germans and Italians were in Africa while the British were defending themselves in Egypt. In short, it mattered to Europeans what happened in North Africa. But, again, the interconnectedness of the Mediterranean world diminished thereafter, until the Syrian and Libyan conflicts in the early 2000s.

Thus, although we live in a highly connected world with modern technologies at times trumping geography, geographic features still play a powerful role in shaping human behavior. What we now see in the Mediterranean world with the migrant crisis is what has been happening in the region for centuries with various intensity. Today, it has again become clear that Italy, Spain and Greece, although participating in the grand European project of the European Union, are nevertheless now very much linked to what happens in North Africa and the Middle East.
Sharing Success: 661 Companies to Participate in 2017 Business Awards

BY NINO GUGUNISHVILI

Participants of the 2017 Business Awards, a project launched by TBC and Geocell, gathered at the National Museum in Tbilisi this week to hear the intermediary results. The Business Awards aim to promote the idea of doing business in Georgia, with its main slogan being #sharethesuccess (share the success). The companies enrolled in the project share their success stories through social and other media with the above hashtag.

661 companies are registered as participants of the Business Awards 2017, the winners in seven categories to be selected by a jury and announced in December. The finalists are to be shortlisted in the coming days.

233 companies are registered in the Startuper of the Year category, 230 companies are listed in the Small Business of the Year category, 142 in Innovative Business of the Year, 152 in Georgian Product of the Year, 95 in the Tourist Business of the Year and 42 as the Agro Business of the Year.

Each category is to have three finalists selected by an independent jury, with the PR and marketing campaigns for the finalists to be run by project organizers TBC and Geocell. While all the winners will be selected and announced at the TBC Business Awards Ceremony in December 2017, the Startuper of the Year winner will be chosen through the online voting which is to start in November.

"The fact that we're continuing the Business Awards as an annual event and thanking Geocell for the good work behind the Business Awards project, a number which, as Kurdiani pointed out, is pretty impressive. The benefits are the same for us as organizers and for the companies enrolled in the Business Awards," he said. "We want to stimulate and motivate them more through sharing their success; we're using all our resources to promote the idea of doing business successfully."

Henry Ford to illustrate the idea behind the Business Awards project, focusing on supporting as many business initiatives in the country as possible.

"It is critically important that most of the companies registered to participate in Business Awards are startups, and it shows how increasingly active startups are," Kurdiani said, going on to confirm that the Business Awards will continue as an annual event and thanking Geocell for partnership in making the project possible.

"You're the new wave of Georgian business; you're the new entrepreneurs who are creating more jobs and empowering the development of our country, you, with your ideas, will soon become one of the major players in the region," Khazaradze added, wishing success to all Business Awards 2017 participants.

"We decided to participate in the Business Awards 2017 to raise awareness about our business, and of course if we happen to win in any nomination, that would be an extremely pleasant surprise. Being a participant also brings you new opportunities for potential business partnerships," Sopo Balanchivadze, founder and owner of the online shop zanduki.ge told us.

"We want our brand to gain more exposure and we hope the Business Awards will help us with that," she added. During the event at the National Museum, was announced that a new working space will open in December, a new project from TBC enabling startups and other business representatives to meet within a specially organized space where trainings, masterclasses, and consultations organized by TBC will be held.
Quintessentially Group Expands with New Offices in Caucasus Region

Global luxury brand Quintessentially is expanding its presence to the Caucasus region by opening full-service offices in Tbilisi and Baku. A reception to mark the fact was held in The Biltmore hotel on Monday with the British Ambassador to Georgia, Justin McKenzie Smith, in attendance.

Quintessentially Caucasus partners are the Georgian Hospitality Group, led by Saba Kiknadze, uniting the leading hospitality service companies, with 25 years of experience in the industry, and Aydin Baghirli, owner of AL Travel, successful tourism, luxury travel, MICE and hospitality service companies, with expertise across diverse industry sectors.

Quintessentially now has five regional hubs in London, New York, LA, Hong Kong and Dubai and over 60 global offices. Quintessentially Lifestyle Managers are multi-lingual, knowledgeable and highly proactive with deep-rooted relationships and Aydin Baghirli, who have extensive experience in elite luxury travel, allowing them to specialise in this offering for members, alongside over 25 brand services offered by Quintessentially.

From education and investment to giftmg and travel, members have access to expert advice and guidance from the Quintessentially team. Day to day, Quintessentially offers full lifestyle assistance across household, family, business and social needs and with thousands of exclusive benefits.

Founded in 2000, Quintessentially was launched as a London-based lifestyle management service for high-net-worth individuals, and now leads from the front with expertise across diverse industry sectors.

Quintessentially now has five regional hubs in London, New York, LA, Hong Kong and Dubai and over 60 global offices. Quintessentially Lifestyle Managers are multi-lingual, knowledgeable and highly proactive with deep-rooted relationships.

Trend Micro Incorporated hosted an information event dedicated to security trends and the problems regarding information safety and critical infrastructure.

“The Development of Information Security and its Outcomes in the World” was discussed by attendees including representatives of the leading Georgian companies in the fields of IT, system integration, software development, information systems, energy, telecommunications, retail and public sectors.

The list of speakers included the executives and experts of Trend Micro Inc: Dhanya Thakkar (Managing Director, APAC Regions, Trend Micro Inc), German Pozankov (Regional Director Trend Micro in CIS, Georgia, Mongolia), Michael Kondrashin (Technical Director Trend Micro in CIS, Georgia, Mongolia) and Nikolay Romanov (System Architect Trend Micro in CIS, Georgia, Mongolia).

Trend Micro speakers discussed important topics such as “Inspiriting Your Digital Transformation, Innovations against Cyber Attacks. The Modern Threat Landscape. Protection against targeted attacks for large enterprises and Public Sector, and Building High Performance Protection for networks.” The development of technologies and the progression of information dynamics requires that businesses pay more attention to security measures. Cyber threats are ever-changing, so the requirements of security systems and methods become different. The development of cloud services, creation of new services and decisions made in business have attracted the attention of cyber-criminals.

The number of attacks conducted by cyber-criminals is on the rise. Don’t forget the hackathon, Singapore. Cyber well-known WannaCry, which damaged the systems of European companies. Cyber attacks are among the top 5 risks which can hit global businesses. According to The Global State of Information Security Survey, 63% of cyber-sphere professionals believe they can enter any enterprise’s system.

The speakers at Security TRENDs 2017 said that corporate networks and cloud systems, as well as devices such as smartphones, clearly attract cyber-criminals. Circumstances thus require the development of special protection tools aimed at preventing interference in corporate systems within the most vulnerable areas.

At the end of the conference, a Q & A session was held to answer questions such as: which threats are enterprises and organizations ready to handle? What are the risks? Which processes and procedures should be implemented and more.

“The biggest thing the world has learned is that all software is written by humans, so there will always be vulnerabilities,” said Dhanya Thakkar. “Organizations should be looking at solutions like vulnerability shielding, allowing them to protect themselves from vulnerabilities. The second thing organizations need to have is a multilayer strategy. These vulnerabilities come in through an infection vector, e-mail, USB, etc. When the infection gets in, the system locks down and ransomware is detected. The shocking thing was that a number of organizations did not have such protection in any of their layers. So, organizations need to be thinking about what layers they can provide or deploy so that they can have the necessary protection.”

“We are living in an era where we can’t predict what will happen in two years, in three years, in future; we only know what happens, we will be there providing the solutions to secure our clients from threats,” said German Pozankov. “We have some ideas but we don’t know exactly what will happen. The Information Technology era is rising, so we are working on solutions that will secure our customers and this new world will be fulfilled by smart devices. We see that cyber threats penetrate social media, social networks and become ever more complex. It’s not only the pure technical attacks, it’s complex activity which involves media, social and technical spearfishing. I think that’s the main challenge for the modern world, how to deal with the complex and complicated cyber threats.”

Trend Micro Incorporated, global leader in cybersecurity solutions, helps to make the world safe for exchanging digital information. Its innovative solutions for consumers, businesses, and governments provide layered security for data centers, cloud environments, networks and endpoints. All its products work together to seamlessly share threat intelligence and provide a Connected Threat Defense with centralized visibility and control enabling better, faster protection. With more than $20 billion employers in over 80 countries and the world’s most advanced global threat intelligence, Trend Micro enables organizations to secure their journey to the cloud. For more information, visit www.trendmicro.com.
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The Harvesters

They get up before dawn, fire themselves up with Turkish coffee and climb into a beaten-up Kolhoznik (jeep).

There are nine of them: six women and three men. Women are faster pickers than men, whereas men are better able to load the heavy boxes into the trucks as the day goes on.

The air is cool and they are all wearing several layers—mostly black, the older women, some in their sixties, wear long skirts, while the younger ones wear jeans. All are in rubber shoes or boots, ready for the mud.

They’ve been chosen by the owner of the vineyard because he has worked with them before—they got phonecalls, though the usual process is to meet in the village center where the vineyard owners pick out however many people they need for the grape-picking. Most are locals, but some of them have come all the way from Megrelia in western Georgia for the chance to make some money. They get paid “well” by the employers: 25 GEL per day, plus food and wine, which is the upper scale of wages for the harvesters. In a season, the family of vineyard owners will drive the van to Tbilisi. If he’s lucky, he’ll sell the grapes the next day, though sometimes the process can take up to three days. In the meantime, the family’s second van will be loaded and driven to the capital with three tons of grapes—green Rkatsiteli and red Saperavi. They make fast work of loading the boxes—most women can potentially earn.

A few hours before sunset, the women and their host family lay out a plastic tablecloth and load it with home-made fare: bread, cheese, a cucumber-salad sprinkled generously with parsley, boiled beef still on the bone, boiled cuts of fish, pickled flowers and whole heads of pickled garlic.

They cool two 5L plastic bottles of new wine in a 200-year-old tree, soon joined by the mouth-watering aroma of the barbecue. The smell attracts a local stray dog, her ribs showing and eyes bright as she begs for scraps. The younger workers chatanimatedly; the older ones sit quietly, their faces showing their exhaustion as they wait to eat, while the host family’s young children run helter-skelter through the nearby barren peach trees, catching mantis and oohing-and-ahhing at the dragonflies zipping between the branches.

The meat is ready and the feast begins; the long strips of ‘Dedas puri’ (bread) are broken with worn fingers, pieces of barbecue pork are stabbed with forks, wine is poured and the toasting begins: to God, the harvest, the workers, friendship, to Georgia and on.

And as the light begins to dim, the workers leave, with many thanks and begging off the offer to stay and drink longer; this even before the singing has begun, because they have more work to do tomorrow, starting early. As the sun is setting, the host family and their friends get the plates and glasses emptied; the rubbish is collected in bags (which the author then begs they not throw into the bushes—they comply, with an indignant smile, though tomorrow’s fare will no doubt end up strewn around the countryside), and everything is packed in the vineyard owner’s jeep. They’ve left it late to leave: darkness falls and, though they know the way back through the maze of fields, the van loaded with grapes gets stuck in mud along the way, necessitating a trip to the nearby farm to beg use of their tractor. The van is soon freed and while the feast continues in the vineyard owner’s home, the three tons of grapes are driven to Tbilisi.

When the vines are clear of grapes for another year, the harvesters will move on to find another employer. Winter is a quiet time for them. Come summer, they’ll have peaches to pick here, cherries and plums. In other regions are other fruits as well as nuts. This is the fertile land of Georgia: a country based on an age-old tradition of agriculture, and these people are the ones who make it all happen quietly, seriously, year-after-year. Next time you’re picking at a bunch of grapes—spare a thought for the harvesters.
The International Potato Center (CIP) opened its representation in Georgia on October 11. The Tbilisi International Potato Center is to become the regional office, covering Central Asia and the Caucasus. It plans to implement innovative methods of potato growing and will introduce new potato breeds. It will also focus on providing educational and professional development possibilities to scientists, farmers and producers in the sector.

The official opening ceremony was attended by Rusudan Mdvani, Regional Leader of the International Potato Center in Central Asia and Caucasus, who introduced the Center and talked about its importance.

Michael Gerba, International Potato Center’s Director, said that seeing potatoes, like wine, are a part of Georgia’s great culture. “I’m very glad to be in Tbilisi. Our organization will promote potato-growing not only in Georgia, but throughout the region,” he stated.

Head of the Austrian Development Agency Office in Georgia, Gerhard Shaumberger, introduced the agriculture project at the event. “We know that Georgians are big consumers of potatoes. This Center will provide better services, active communication and a new potato breed,” he said.

The Tbilisi International Potato Research Center Head, Nodar Khatiashvili said that by working with the CIP, Georgian scientists will have an opportunity to access modern technologies and new species produced elsewhere in the world. “This process will help our farmers to grow potatoes through locally elaborated seeds instead of imported ones,” he added.

Founded in 1971, the International Potato Center is a member of the CGIAR, an International Agricultural Research Consultancy Group. The Center mission is “to work with partners to achieve food security, well-being, and gender equality for poor people in root and tuber farming and food systems in the developing world, through research and innovation in science, technology, and capacity strengthening”.

A memorandum of cooperation signed between the Georgian Ministry of Agriculture and the International Potato Center on January 26, 2016, led to the opening of the Center in 2017 in Tbilisi.

A five-year work plan and program has been agreed in the framework of the memorandum in order to promote the agricultural sector in Georgia.

SOCIETY

GEORGIA TODAY
OCTOBER 13 - 16, 2017

BLOG BY TONY HAMMER

Freemanning: Leliani, Kakheti

Ten years ago, I would have husbanded every 35mm film frame, knowing I have only 36 and a couple of extras per roll before having to change and start again. Hours at best, usually days, to see how it turned out. Scan, clean up the dust and scratches on the computer, too much time. Now, in digital freedom, I can shoot, check the results instantly, adjust if necessary, reiterate on the spot, and choose from a much larger number of shots. My learning is still happening, just much faster. And if I'm open and looking for a subject, usually it will come to me, sooner or later.

Tony Hammer has lived in Georgia since 1999, in Svaneti since 2007, and been a weekly writer for GT since early 2011. He runs the “Svaneti Renaissance” Facebook group, now with over 1700 members, at www.facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenais-
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He and his wife own their own guesthouse in Daeve, www.facebook.com/hammehouse. Daeve

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Zudi bridge was but a start- ing point for the “mass exodus,” as Goldwater calls it. Most of the refugees had to begin walking over the Pass; a torturous journey that ended up claiming hundreds of lives. And, even though this was the only way to get to Georgia proper – a torturous journey that ended up being our only nutrition sup- ply – we stayed. Funnily enough over the Chuberi Pass on a tiny aircraft full of bread. “I saw a plane coming in, the answer is a yes,” he recalls. They landed at the other end of the Chuberi Pass on a tiny aircraft full of bread. “I never see so much bread in one place before – we had to put some on our knees to sit” – he recalls. They landed at the other end of the Chuberi passes, with people flocking to the heli-copter. The job was cut out for him, it was all there – the people, the commo- on, the radios – it was a matter of taking off, of decision: those Mars bars and biscuits. It turned out to be a rather wise choice – all he had to do was to take a trip I went over to the airport and bought - the real story, the real deal – so we stayed. Walking over the Pass together with every one of his bodyguards got completely drunk over a bottle of vodka and remember Shevardnadze being exasperated, as even people in his own team didn’t seem to see the significance of what we were about to do, that it was a pivotal moment for their nation’s history and future. But the image of the Chuberi Pass has held up its own and didn’t let him touch that much. After all, he had bigger things to worry about than one bodyguard going down. But it was a rather sad moment.

Looking Back
Abkhazia wasn’t the only conflict Gold- water figured – he went on to portray several crises in Africa, and in fairness, the third world might have been dealt with better. So, after those years of international conflict and a veteran of the craft, has his perspective on his very first conflict gig changed?

What really happened in Abkhazia? This seems to be a question that he himself has pondered over the years, as he switched from documentary to another somewhat more official, “didn’t make no sense”. “It was a privilege to be there. I felt very warm towards Georgia and Georgians. And I really connected to the tragedy that unfolded. So sad to record what happened, but that’s what war is about and that’s what I do. As for what happened… If we look back to the fall of Soviet Union… Russia lost an empire and ever since then, has been shifting away at other countries to regain that empire. The way I see it, Abkhazia was just one unfortunate piece of that jigsaw. Now and again, I listen to Radio BBC – reporting on Abkhazia, how happy or unhappy people are there, and so on… ‘Tsk, tsk, it’s very sad, but it’s very much a client state now of Russia. I can’t claim to be an expert, but from what I saw, the people living in Ochamchire didn’t want to leave, they were very happy there. The war – I don’t believe the war was started by Georgia.”

The Future
There is a question looming: what does the future hold for these two People? The man who has seen it all, at least as much as can be expected from an impres- sive, international third party, seems like a good fit to answer that question. “Everybody want peace. Except for the few who prefer saber-rattling. They want to create conflicts for their inter- ests, for their political gain. That’s why we have so many areas of turmoil in today’s world. Most people want to get on with their lives, forget and forgive, and couldn’t want anything less than that. It’s the same for Georgia and Abkhaz- ia, I believe.”

Wrapping up, we ask whether he’s been to Georgia. “Turns out he hasn’t. ‘I plan every year. I’ll very much like to go there again. Next year I probably will.”

Journey into the World of Beauty & Light: Botticelli & Caravaggio

BY MAKAR LOMAZDE

F rom October 5 to November 29, the Georgian National Gallery is hosting two unique exhibitions, united under the title “Universal Values: Botticelli and Caravaggio – Light.” The event is coordinated by the Italian Embassy in Georgia, and is the result of tight cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, Georgian National Museum, Tourism, National Administration and project of the Georgian government together with the Georgian side.

The exhibition “Venus Pudica” has been implemented with the cooperation of Turin Royal Museums and Culture. “Venus Pudica Metamorphosis” presents Renaissance Era and Florence Humanist Sandro Botticelli’s “Venus”, normally kept at the Turin Gallery, Sabauda. The second exhibition, initiated by the Embassy of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, Agency of Promoting Italian Companies Abroad (ICE) from the Italian side, and Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, Georgian National Museum, Tourism, National Administration and project of the Georgian government together with the Georgian side.

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