

EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS IN TBILISI

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER: 'CHRISTMAS EDITION'

EDITOR REMARKS

Is there anything more tiresome than seeing Christmas decorations being sold when it is only October? We say yes! That thing is: reading about Christmas events in spring.

Following a quarterly schedule, this newsletter should have been published by the end of November. However, it has been pushed back several weeks to include some Christmas-related events. In this way, we can be more in-tune with the events that occur during this festive month. The contents of this newsletter are structured in the same way as always, however, the layout has been updated.

This design will also be used in future editions, if response is positive.

FOREWORD BY THE AMBASSADOR JOS DOUMA

On December 21, it was three months ago that my wife and I arrived in Georgia. Since then we've been both thrilled and impressed. Thrilled by beauty and variety of Georgia and impressed by progress made on the one side and traditions cherished on the other.

The activities of the Embassy over the last four months – subject of this newsletter – symbolize these aspects. The Embassy staff, together with their network, were involved in lots of activities in the field of approximation to the Euro-Atlantic structures, social development, economic and commercial affairs, good and open governance as well as rule of law. For me it was a true pleasure to participate, to continue where my esteemed predecessor had to stop, to lead where appropriate and to meet many of you at several occasions. I'm happy to see the Embassy's activities as a collective effort.



What you see in this newsletter mostly deals with activities on the stage. Also behind stage the Embassy was active. You get a sneaky view on some internal changes, but very important is that our annual plan for next year foresees 'more of the same' - simply because we have identified that we're on the right track. Both in Georgia and Armenia we hope to go on promoting bilateral relations in a sound and sustainable environment.

For now we wish you 'happy Christmasses' wherever you are and whichever calendar you use and a good and successful 2016, both personally and professionally.

HELLO GOODBYE

Several changes in our employee roster have occurred since the last edition of the newsletter. The Embassy team said goodbye to our Ambassador Hans Horbach, who after several years of service has left Tbilisi.



Moreover, our very helpful and active temporary colleague Masha Bontje left to finish her studies in the Netherlands. She will be missed by the team who wish her all the best in her future endeavors.



Replacing Masha is Thom, who has joined the Economic Department this past November. Seen here caught off guard while making coffee, he is looking forward to his time in Georgia and contributing to the work done at the Embassy.



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EMBASSY NEWS - ECONOMIC SECTION

RETHINKING ARCHITECTURE TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The Embassy, in collaboration with architecture firms UNStudio from the Netherlands and Studio L from Georgia, organized a one-day seminar where the issues of sustainability and quality of life in Tbilisi were explored. The aim of the seminar was to exchange knowledge in regards to increasing living standards through interventions in the build environment. The day consisted of four lectures and two workshops.

LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS

Four lectures were given by several speakers and included people from UNStudio, a Dutch engineering company and Georgian architecture students talking about various topics related to their field of expertise or interest. The lectures provided attendees with an interesting take of both design, engineering behind the design and problems and potential of the build environment in Tbilisi.

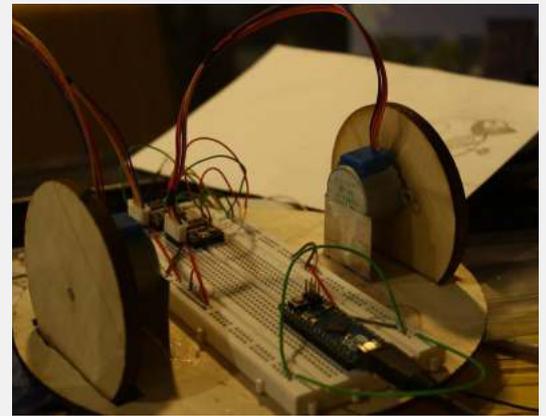


For the workshops, people split up in groups of eight, to work on the central question of defining core issues in Tbilisi using a method of approaching or solving problems by framing them by using contradictions as explained by the the speaker who organised the workshops. In the second part, the idea was to create a story with your partner by each using one word at the time. This makes you then realize that you cannot always decide how the story continues, but that it is necessary to trust your partner and by doing so coming to places (i.e. solutions) that you wouldn't have otherwise.



FABRICATION LABORATORY

Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency (GITA) is establishing Fablabs and iLabs to build knowledge and stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship in the IT sector. The Embassy is funding 3 months of training given by Dutch experts to the Georgian side. The project was launched at Ilia State University on the 25th of November with the opening of Georgia's first Fablab. The main goal of the project is to make the Georgian IT sector less dependent on import of expertise and more internationally competitive. The project aims to contribute to the modernization of the knowledge infrastructure in Georgia with a focus on new media and rapid prototyping services.



'TBILISI ON TWO WHEELS'

This event was designed to inform students, municipal government representatives and interested parties of the benefits of cycling in cities and the way the Dutch have handled infrastructural challenges related to bicycles in cities. The event was organized



as a series of lectures followed by a Q&A session.

As part of this event, some of the attendees, including the speaker from the Dutch Cycling embassy and our Economic Policy Officer; Thomas de Winter, went on a bicycle ride from the house of Justice to the Embassy. During this trip it became apparent that a lot of work needs to be done in order to make Tbilisi more bicycle friendly. Hopefully, the

event inspired relevant actors to become committed to making these improvements.



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EMBASSY NEWS - POLITICAL SECTION

EU WEEK OF CULTURE 2015

The EU Week of Culture 2015 took place from 31 October until 8 November. Several events such as exhibitions, concerts and performances were organised across Georgia to emphasize the cultural bond between the country and the EU. In terms of Embassy involvement during this week, CineKID is worth mentioning.

CINEKID

The Embassy organized activities for children in cooperation with Cinekid. In the 'make your own Oculus Rift' workshop, children got acquainted with different kinds of media while they enjoyed using virtual reality head-mounted displays. In the LEAP-experience, participants explored the world of virtual reality as they wore an Oculus Rift goggle and had to pass several obstacles in a virtual environment where one's perception got manipulated. The Embassy and Cinekid visited Tbilisi's Writer's House, Rustavi's Giga Lortkipanidze Theatre and Signaghi's Center of Culture and Arts. More than 200 children went home with their own Virtual Reality glasses and, not in the last place, an improved perception of Europe. The EU Week of Culture was organized to promote the European Union culturally and move away from the political aspects of it. A large-scale survey of the impact of the event revealed a high level of satisfaction in all cities we went, and moreover a positively improved attitude towards the EU.



CINEDOC

The International Documentary Film 'CineDOC' was held this year from 22-25 October. Several Dutch directors had submitted their movies for a screening at the festival. The movies and their directors were: Black & White / Dir. Susan Koenen (2014), Giovanni and the Water Ballet / Dir. Astrid Bussink (2014), My Dearest F#cking Phone / Dir. Eef Hilgers (2014), A Goat for a Vote / Dir. Jeroen Van Velzen (2014), Gabriel Reports on the World Cup / Dir. Els van Driel (2014), Solo – Out of a Dream / Dir. Jos De Putter (2014)



WATER SANITATION CONFERENCE

Dutch organization "Women of Europe for Common Future" and their Georgian partners organized a closing conference of a Dutch-funded four-year project Water, Sanitation,

Energy and Gender-equal Development. Both the Georgian Minister of Environment and our Ambassador addressed the conference participants, thus highlighting the importance of this project.



TBILISI PHOTO FESTIVAL 2015

This festival, which ran from September 25 to October 1, opened with an exhibition called: "Post War Stories" by a Dutch-German photographer Claudia Heineremann

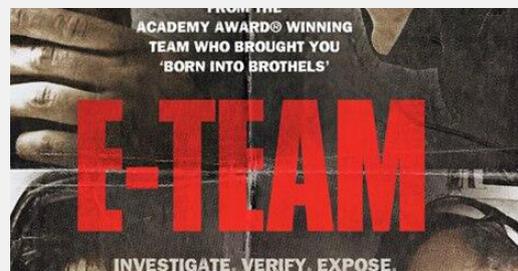
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OTHER NEWS AND VISITS (1)

'MOVIES THAT MATTER' (10&11 DECEMBER)

Human Rights Center and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Georgia presented a screening of the documentary film: E-Team, on 10 and 11 December to mark the International Human Rights Day. The movie is directed by Ross Kauffman and Katy Chevigny. Screenings were held in Gori and Gurjaani, which were attended by a great deal of interested students.



16 DAYS ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE

The Embassy team expressed solidarity with women around the world. Everyone was wearing a white ribbon - a symbol of the 16-day campaign - as a demonstration of our dedication to the principles of gender equality! The days ended on December 10, Human Rights Day, which underpins the fact that violence against women and girls remains the single most pervasive human rights violation today



VISITS: DISCUSSION BEFORE CONFERENCE ON SRHR

The Dutch Special Ambassador for Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights Mr Lambert Grijns visited Georgia and Armenia in September. The purpose of the visit was to discuss with relevant actors from the region the high-level AIDS2018 conference in Amsterdam, and to see whether the Netherlands could be useful in addressing the SRHR topic in the two countries



RAISE THE ROOF

A monumental building behind the Socar Offices in Tbilisi was raised by 3.4 meters. Bresser, a Dutch company specializing in raising and moving buildings, was hired to realize the project. Thom visited the job-site and discussed the work that was being done.



VISITS: 'ROAD TO SUCCESS' CONFERENCE

Our colleague from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mrs. Renet van der Waals – head of the Health and AIDS division – spoke in a panel (together with the Georgian Minister of Health) of the conference "Road to Success" on transition to domestic funding of HIV and TB



EVENT: TBILISI ARBITRATION DAYS 2015

This event was co-financed by our Embassy. The 3-day conference was organized by Georgian International Arbitration Center (GIAC). During the conference, an Agreement on Cooperation has been signed between GIAC and the Permanent Court of Arbitration (The Hague).



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OTHER NEWS AND VISITS (2)

EVENT: ATTENDING WINTER FAIR

The annual Winter Fair organized by the International Women's Association Georgia (IWAG) was held on Saturday December 5 at the Radisson Blu Iveria Hotel. Embassies and Consulates of some 25 countries sold souvenirs, crafts, decorations food and drinks from their home countries. Serving a dual purpose, the Winter Fair raised money for charity while simultaneously giving representatives from the 25 nations that were present an opportunity to inform the people that are present of their culture, heritage and nationally treasured dishes and the preferred beverage accompanying them. The ambassadors wife and embassy staff were selling several Dutch snacks, drinks and keepsakes. The money raised will go to charity.



26TH MEETING OF THE ENERGY CHARTER CONFERENCE

This conference held its 26th Meeting on 3-4 December 2015 in Tbilisi with Georgia as its chairman. The meeting was held in two Sessions over one and half days. A ministerial session with the theme: "Fostering regional cooperation through cross border energy trade" was held on December 4. The aim of these yearly meetings is to meet the goals set for the Energy Charter Treaty; to strengthen the rule of law on energy issues, by creating a level playing field of rules to be observed by all participating governments, thereby mitigating risks associated with energy-related investment and trade.



EU NETHERLANDS GEORGIAN BUSINESS FORUM

Last November 24, the Business Forum took place in The Hague. It was organized by the EU-Georgia Business Council (EUGBC) in close cooperation with the Georgian Embassy to the Kingdom of Netherlands, Netherlands Council for Trade Promotion (NCH), CBI (Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries), PUM Netherlands senior experts and supported by the EUROCHAMBRES. The forum was designed to facilitate contacts between businesses in Georgia and the Netherlands. This included providing companies in the Netherlands with an update on the ways and means to do business in Georgia and giving Georgian businesses an opportunity to meet with Dutch entrepreneurs that are interested in doing business in Georgia.

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OTHER NEWS AND VISITS (3)

DGGF (DUTCH GOOD GROWTH FUND) WILL INVEST IN CREDO

With a loan from the [DGGF](#), the Georgian Microfinance Organization CREDO is able to support over 250 Georgian companies in all regions of the country, but mainly in rural areas. CREDO provides individual loans to small and medium-sized enterprises. Their current project with DGGF is focussed on clients in high risk sectors. Read more about CREDO on their [website](#).



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO GEORGIAN BUSINESSES

For those who do not know about this opportunity for Georgian companies: PUM Netherlands senior experts offers a technical assistance program for Georgian SMEs. The assistance includes bringing Dutch experts to Georgia for a short-term free consultancy mission, as well as arranging business with the Netherlands and the possibility of accessing a small grant. PUM is a non-profit organization funded by the Dutch Government and various donors. PUM has been active in Georgia since 1995, providing technical assistance to around 30-40 businesses each year in wide variety of sectors. Want to know more? Visit the renewed website of PUM at www.PUM.nl.

Several PUM projects are ongoing in Georgia. They offer support to the Technological Development Fund in Tbilisi. PUM provides for recommendations to the fund management and its staff in regard to institutional development and capacity building. Moreover, they provide support to the Economic Affairs Office of the Tbilisi municipality as well as training for the operation of small and medium hotels in Tbilisi.



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UPCOMING EVENTS AND LINKS

EU FILM FESTIVAL 2016

The delegation of the European Union to Georgia will organize a film festival in Georgia in 2016. The date and locations are tentative, however, the proposal for the EU Film Festival 2016 is as follows:

- Indicative dates: 26 February – 06 March 2016
- Proposed Theme: "Turning Points"
- Screenings in : Tbilisi, Batumi, Kutaisi, Bolnisi, Mestia

NEW PROJECTS WITH GEORGIAN NGOS

"Equal Treatment to the Schools of Faith" by the Partnership for Children;

"Combating Corruption by Promoting Increase of Transparency and Accountability in Public Expenditures" by the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association;

"Developing the Concept and Methodology of the Performance Evaluation System of Prosecutors" by Transparency International – Georgia;

"Vote Smart" by the Georgian Center for Security and Development;

"Youth at Promise: Promotion of Youth Participation and Youth-Led Development for Creating Sustainable Communities in Armenia" by the Armenian KASA Foundation

SEASONS GREETINGS

During these festive days, organized events are (thankfully) sparse as people are spending time with friends and family or going on holiday. So, while not an upcoming event per se, our staff would like to take this opportunity to wish all of our readers a merry Christmas (both to those following the Gregorian and Julian calendar) and a happy new year!



USEFUL LINKS

[Competition and State Procurement Agency](#)
[Government of Georgia](#)
[National Investment Agency](#)
[Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia](#)
[Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia](#)
[Ministry of Finance of Georgia](#)
[National Bank of Georgia](#)
[Georgian Statistics](#)
[EBRD](#)
[IMF](#)

[World Bank](#)
[EU Georgian Business Council](#)
[American Chamber of Commerce](#)
[International Chamber of Commerce](#)
[Georgian Chamber of Commerce](#)
[National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia](#)

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ECONOMIC INDICATORS AND LINKS



GEL per 1 EUR;
1 month trend;
22 Dec: 2,63
Source:
www.xe.com



GEL per 1 USD;
1 month trend;
22 Dec: 2,40
Source:
www.xe.com



AMD per 1 EUR;
1 month trend;
22 Dec: 524
Source:
www.xe.com



AMD per 1 USD;
1 month trend;
22 Dec: 479
Source:
www.xe.com

2015:

Real Sector	GEORGIA	ARMENIA
Population (million)	4.5	3.3
GDP per capita (EUR)	2,856	2,881
GDP (EUR bn)	12.7	9.5
GDP (GEL bn/AMD bn)	30.9	5,179
Economic Growth (GDP, annual var. in %)	2.1	2.1
Fiscal Balance (% of GDP)	-2.7	-3.0
Public Debt (% of GDP)	41.8	47.4
Unemployment (2014)	12.4	17.6
Monetary and Financial Sector		
Inflation (CPI, annual variation in %, aop)	4.0	4.8
Exchange rate GEL/EUR, GEL/USD	graph	graph
External Sector		
Current Account Balance (% of GDP)	-10.8	-7.1
Current Account (USD bn)	-1.6	-0.8
Merchandise Trade Balance (USD bn)	-4.1	-1.8
Merchandise Exports (USD bn)	3.8	1.7
Merchandise Imports (USD bn)	7.9	3.4
Merchandise Exports (annual variation in %)	-7.4	-1.7
Merchandise Imports (annual variation in %)	-5.2	-8.8
FDI (USD bn)	1.8 (2014)	0.4 (2014)

Source: FocusEconomics, Geostat, Nat. Stat. Serv. Rep. Arm.

COLOFON

The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Georgia publishes a quarterly newsletter which offers an overview of Georgian economic news as well as activities of the Embassy in previous months. The newsletter summarizes news from various publications and aims to collect as accurate data as possible. The Embassy cannot be responsible for any mistakes or omissions in the information sheet provided.