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ISSUE 59 OCT.-NOV. 2017

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INVESTMENT NEWS

INVESTOR.GE PROVIDES A BRIEF UPDATE ON INVESTMENTS AND CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT POLICY THAT COULD IMPACT THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT. THE INFORMATION IN THIS ISSUE WAS TAKEN FROM AGENDA.GE, A GOVERNMENTSUPPORTED WEBSITE, AND OTHER SOURCES.

NEW AIRPORT ARRIVALS' TERMINAL OPENED

Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili opened the new, 12,000-square-meter arrivals terminal at Tbilisi Shota Rustaveli International Airport on September 26.

"Development of aviation has always been and remains as one of our main priorities, because the percise development of the air market, airports and navigation infrastructure, as well as increasing the inflow of tourists and new flight destinations, are the preconditions for the development of tourism in the country," Kvirikashvili said.

The new terminal will be able to serve four million people a year, according to the report. 42 air companies fly to 45 destinations from Tbilisi International Airport, agenda.ge said.

HIGH-SPEED INTERNET INSTALLED IN GEORGIA'S REMOTE TUSHETI REGION

Twenty-four villages in Georgia's remote Tusheti region have high-speed internet access thanks to a $40,000 project implemented by the Tusheti Development Fund and the organization Internet Society, agenda.ge reported on September 12.

"The 'internetization' of the country, and especially of the regions, is one of the priority directions of the government. Today we already have high-speed internet in Tusheti, which will support the social-cultural development of the region and will meet the needs of tourists that visit Tusheti," Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Giorgi Gakharia was quoted as saying.

GEORGIA'S AIRPORTS SEE UPTICK IN PASSENGERS

More passengers traveled through Georgia's three main airports in the first eight months of 2017 than compared to the same period last year, agenda.ge reported on September 8, citing statistics from the Georgian Civil Aviation Agency.

A total of 2.7 million passengers have passed through Tbilisi Shota Rustaveli International Airport, Batumi International Airport and Kutaisi David Aghmashenebeli International Airport in the first eight months of the year—a 47.92 percent increase compared to the same period last year, the report said.

Tbilisi Shota Rustaveli International Airport has seen the most passengers—slightly over 2 million, a 42.78 percent increase y/y. The biggest increase—82.59 percent—was recorded at Batumi International Airport. Batumi International Airport has experienced a 66.36 percent increase in passengers in

the past eight months compared to the same period last year.

The report noted that smaller airports in Georgia have also seen more travelers this year: Queen Tamar Airport in Mestia, Svaneti region, has served 4,933 passengers, which was a 98.03 percent increase y/y, agenda.ge reported.

OVER $300 MILLION IN FDI IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 2017

Georgia received $346.6 million in foreign direct investment (FDI) in the second quarter of the year, agenda.ge reported on September 8, citing preliminary data from the National Statistics Office. The country attracted $445 million in the same period in 2016.

The top three countries for FDI in Georgia in the second quarter were:

- Azerbaijan: $126.9 million (36 percent of all FDI)
- The Netherlands: $42.9 million (12.4 percent of all FDI)
- Turkey: $39.3 million (11.3 percent of all FDI)

The majority of the foreign investments (66.3 percent) were made in three sectors: transport and communications: $130 million (37.6 percent of FDI); construction: $70 million (20.2 percent of FDI); and hotels and restaurants: $29.3 million (8.4 percent of FDI).

MILLION-LARI INVESTMENT PLANNED IN KUTAISI

Indian investors plan to invest 1.5 million lari in Kutaisi, the agenda.ge website reported on September 1.

The investors will build a five-story business and residential complex in Kutaisi, according to the report.

The project will be implemented with the support of the government's Produce in Georgia program and will be completed in September 2018, the report said, adding that 20 jobs will be created at the new complex.

OVER A MILLION VISITORS TO GEORGIA IN AUGUST 2017

Over a million people visited Georgia during the month of August 2017, agenda.ge reported on September 4.

Georgia's Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that 1,080,449 people arrived in the country in August, an increase of 27.4 percent compared to the same period last year.

Out of the total number of visitors, over half a million—573,368—were tourists, the report said, and 25.4 percent—274,878 people—were traveling through the country.

The highest number of visitors arrived from Armenia, followed by Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Ukraine and Iran.

GEORGIA TO PRODUCE JEANS FOR FAMOUS BRANDS

A new factory in Georgia's western Guria region will produce jeans for famous brands like Zara, Mango and Massimo Dutti, agenda.ge reported on September 1.

The factory, which will open in the town of Ozurgeti in 2018, is part of the government's Produce in Georgia program. An estimated 350 people will be employed, the report said, and the Turkish investor behind the project will invest 1.7 million lari.

The investor is part of the Turkish textile production network Baykanlar; no additional details were provided in the report.

TURKEY, RUSSIA AND CHINA ARE GEORGIA'S TOP TRADE PARTNERS

Turkey, Russia and China are Georgia's top trade partners in 2017, according to official statistics, agenda.ge reported on August 21. Georgia's trade turnover with European Union member states has increased 11 percent compared to the same period last year.

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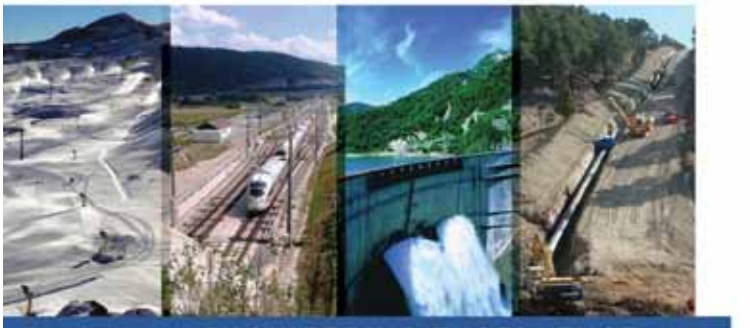

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One Investment, Eleven Projects, Cleaner Air

BP AND ITS OIL AND GAS CO-VENTURERS FUNDED A THREE-YEAR PROJECT TO SUPPORT 11 ENERGY EFFICIENT PROJECTS THAT WERE LAUNCHED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MUNICIPALITIES IN EIGHT CITIES IN GEORGIA. THE CLEAN ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES INTRODUCED IN VARIOUS MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS AND OTHER FACILITIES IN THE COUNTRY HAVE HELPED TO REDUCE ENERGY BILLS, IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE SUPPLIED ENERGY, AND REDUCE AIR POLLUTION.

The quality of the air, especially in capital Tbilisi, has increasingly become an issue of concern.

Georgia's Environment Minister Gigla Agulashvili told parliament earlier this year that the air quality situation in the country "should not be satisfactory for us, and we are working to improve the situation," OC Media reported.

The ministry's report on air quality found that there was a higher than permissible volume of harmful substances in the air in six cities Georgia in 2016. Nitrogen dioxide levels were high in all the cities monitored; Tbilisi was the only city where the study found high levels of carbon monoxide, according to the report.

REDUCING POLLUTION

Innovative projects financed by BP throughout the country have helped reduce pollution and energy costs in eight cities in Georgia.

The project, "Renewable energy and energy efficiency project for Georgian municipalities," was launched three years ago and focused on projects in eight Georgian cities: Tbilisi, Rustavi, Telavi, Gori, Zugdidi, Kutaisi, Batumi and Akhaltsikhe.

It was funded by BP and its oil and gas co-venturers and implemented by the Energy Efficiency Center Georgia.

Funding recipients introduced a variety of changes to help reduce pollution and energy spending in their communities: replacing inefficient lighting systems with modern LED lighting; installing solar thermal systems and solar PV systems; and improving energy performance of buildings.

Results from the activities indicate that, by December 2016, as much as 2,440,300 kWh energy have been saved, about 406,000 Kg CO2 emissions have been reduced, and energy bills have been reduced by up to 253,000 lari.

"Partnership with the municipalities within the three-year energy efficiency project allowed us to combine the efforts to reduce CO2 emissions and helped introduce renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies in Georgia," Chris Schlueter, general manager for BP in Georgia, said.

"Energy efficient projects launched in eight cities will continue to bring significant benefits for many years to come. These projects are good examples of BP's successful partnership with local municipalities and long-term commitment to Georgia."

BP and its partners have supported a total 34 projects that support energy efficiency in Georgia, resulting in up to 4,354,500 kWh energy saving; about 1,012,000 Kg CO2 reductions in emissions; and up to 590,000 GEL saving in energy bills. From 2008 up to today, the company has invested $2,453,000 in the energy efficiency projects across the country.

Eka Grigalava, Deputy Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia believes that clean energy projects will help Georgia's long-term sustainable development.

"Despite Georgia's ample hydro resources we have an obligation to develop other alternative energy sources to respond to the climate change. I am delighted that thanks to BP and its partners the electricity generating solar photovoltaic micro power station connected to utility grid was installed in the Youth Palace," she said.

"This is a great venue for a demonstration project. I am sure that every student of the Youth Palace who spends a lot of time studying here will learn about this micro solar station, the new source of clean energy."

Deputy Minister of Energy of Georgia, Marika Arabidze noted that public-private partnerships are important for the development of the cleaner energy sources.

"I would like to thank all parties involved in the project. Only by acting together we will be able to play our part in the development of the cleaner energy sources contributing to Georgia's energy independence," she said.

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New Awards Program to Encourage Innovation

Photo by George Surguladze and Social Impact Awards.ge

IMPACT HUB AT FABRIKA IS HOSTING THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL IMPACT AWARDS, A COMPETITION FOR STUDENTS IN TBILISI AND TELAVI. THE AWARDS AIM TO ENCOURAGE INNOVATION AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN GEORGIA. STORY BY INGE SNIP, PHOTOS BY GEORGE SURGULADZE AND SOCIAL IMPACT AWARDS.GE

SOCIAL IMPACT AWARDS: INNOVATIONS FOR SOCIETY

The winner of the social impact award was announced on September 28. Here is a list and brief description of all the finalist projects. The information was taken from the website www.socialimpactaward.ge.

Book AR – A mobile application, based on augmented reality, which helps students to understand and visualize information from textbooks. The project includes a website that allows designers, freelancers and developers to create content for our application and earn additional revenue.

Braille Reader – A special eBook reader for blind people, which, by changing the shape of its screen's surface depicts Braille letters in any language. The, goal of the project is to equip schools with desks, which have Braille Reader technology built in. This will let anyone to learn Braille much easier.

Ecoland – A garbage bin with several chambers that can automatically sort waste. As a motivation to use this particular garbage bin, Ecoland created a score system. Collected points can be bartered for different kind of products and services, such as free minutes for mobile phones, cinema or theater tickets, etc.

IKids – A free website that enables children with atypical development to gain necessary skills and adapt to the irenvironments. All of this will happen with games and video lessons. It will be fun, colorful and most importantly it will be available for everyone.

Make Up and Make Alive – "Magic" pencils with special capsules that dissolve in water. In each capsule there is soil and seeds of plants, which are really easy to sprout. This project aims to give a chance to the "digital" generation to interact with the environment.

Sign and Sound – Innovative gloves that translate sign language into voice. The project is a new opportunity for people with hearing impairments. With these gloves they will be able to effectively communicate in society.

Spectrum – Gray walls, blocks from Soviet times, black-and-white environment – these are an essential part of our everyday routine. The project aims to color gray buildings in the city by involving private companies and talented artists. New generations will grow up in a better environment and artists will have a chance to express themselves about any topic they care about. Let's make Tbilisi more colorful.

INSPIRING STUDENTS TO ACTION

"We decided that we wanted to contribute to the development of social entrepreneurship in our country," Elene Jvania, one of the organizers, tells *Investor.ge*.

"Through the Social Impact Awards, we are trying to build a community of students that transform intentions into action," she explains.

Social entrepreneurship is when a company is created to solve social, cultural, or environmental issues. It differs from an NGO in that it does not rely on grants by donor organizations, but instead develops a self-sustaining business plan, either B2C (business to consumer), or B2B (business to business), or a combination of both.

The awards in Tbilisi attracted over 200 workshop participants, which eventually sorted into 48 teams of about 180 students. "This means 48 new social business ideas were created!" Jvania says enthusiastically. On September 28, an independent jury selected two winning teams, while a third winning team was chosen through online community voting.

BRIDGING A COMMUNICATION DIVIDE

Among these teams is Sign and Sound, gloves for deaf people that translate sign language into spoken words. The team, consisting of Free University students George Bestavashvili, Davit Targamadze, and Beka Banunashvili, decided to develop the glove to enable deaf people to speak with hearing people.

"We live close to the only deaf school in Tbilisi, on Nutsubidze," Bestavashvili explains to *Investor.ge*. "Growing up and seeing them talking to each other vividly in sign language, we realized that [deaf students] can easily communicate with each other, but really face problems when communicating with others [who are hearing]."

The team worked closely with the deaf community to understand their needs. For example, Banunashvili notes that the team "created a Bluetooth connection, instead of an app, as they told us that most deaf people do not have the financial resources for a smart phone."

MARRYING ART AND COMMERCE

Another team is trying to give urban areas more color by giving street artists the possibility to portray their art on gray building blocks built during Soviet times, while giving advertisers the possibility to contribute as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility programs.

Spectrum, the name of their project, consists of Liza Kartvelishvili, Tornike Petriashvili, Kristine Nachkebia and Tsotne Davlianidze. They decided to create their potential social enterprise in response to urban decline.

"Your environment has a direct influence on your health, and depressing surroundings have a negative impact on your mental health," Petriashvili explains to *Investor.ge*.

Other teams who have made it to the top seven in the finals are Braille Reader, an eBook reader for the blind; Ecoland, a self-sorting garbage can; IKids, a playful platform helping children with learning disabilities through games; and Make Up and Make Alive, a magic pencil with gardening seeds to promote playing in nature.

ENCOURAGING CONNECTIONS

Strategy and social change consultant Maggie Osdoby Katz, who works from Tbilisi, tells *Investor.ge* that the awards are a great way to expose Georgia to new ways of doing business and to connect students and entrepreneurs to a global

community.

"It's not just about learning how to develop a business plan—the process is about building a culture of innovation, collaboration and mentoring, all of which are still (rapidly) developing here," Katz explains.

The awards will be organized next year on a larger scale throughout Georgia in cities, towns and villages, Impact Hub co-founder Jvania tells *Investor.ge*. Impact Hub had hoped to scale up the awards throughout the whole country this year, but could only organize them in Tbilisi and Telavi due its limited capacity.

Katz believes expanding the competition to other cities and towns in the country will have a real impact.

"Helping students throughout the country explore this idea of doing well while doing good—and being part of a global community committed to it—could plant a powerful seed," Katz says.

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BITCOIN FARMING—THE PROCESS OF USING COMPUTERS TO MINE THE DIGITAL CURRENCY—IS SLOWLY CATCHING ON IN GEORGIA, ESPECIALLY AMONG IT SPECIALISTS. STORY BY NINO BAKRADZE

Farming for Currency:

Georgians Wade into Bitcoin Mining

No one controls Bitcoins. They aren't printed like dollars or euros and manipulated by a central bank; they're produced by people and businesses all over the world—and have become a new source of income for a growing number of Georgians.

Bitcoins are created by running computers with software that solves mathematical problems.

Very strong servers can solve these problems quickly and their given owner periodically gets a new Bitcoin in his or her wallet account.

One bitcoin currently costs $4,450.

GEORGIAN BITCOIN FARMERS

The digital currency is gaining popularity in Georgia: the leading Bitcoin-mining company in the world owns two facilities in Georgia and says the business is successful.

Today, Georgian entrepreneurs are also generating digital currencies by the help of machines installed in their homes. The Bitcoins they mine can be converted into Georgian lari.

There are no statistics on how many Georgians are mining Bitcoins or other forms of digital currency, but anecdotally, the number is increasing. Gaga Chikhladze has been generating Ether, another type of digital currency, for six months out of his home in Kutaisi.

Ether is the second most valuable form of digital money after Bitcoin. The technology it runs on is called Ethereum, which was first described by 19-year-old Bitcoin programmer Vitalik Buterin in 2013. Like Bitcoin, it is a decentralized payment network, which is not controlled by a bank or other third party. Like Bitcoins, Ethereum uses the same blockchain technology, and transactions are visible for everyone on the network.

Chikhladze said he decided to generate—or "farm"—Ether because the process is less expensive than Bitcoin mining. "This process requires less electricity and time, so it is more profitable. It was easier to buy the video cards that the computer needs to generate the currency when I started this process. Now a lot of people want to start this activity and the price of video cards has increased. Today it is very difficult to find the [necessary] video card and if you still find it, it is so expensive that it is no longer worth buying. In recent months, there has been a boom in generating cryptocurrency. In Kutaisi alone, I assisted my six friends to arrange a "farm" at their houses," Chikhladze told *Investor.ge*.

SURFING FOR BITCOINS

Dato Natsvlishvili, who created the web and Facebook page called "How to Earn Bitcoins" for people interested in this activity, tries to generate digital currency without expensive equipment. Currently, his page has over 300 followers.

Natsvlishvili calls the process "surfing" and explains the rules and procedures to newcomers through his Facebook page. To earn Bitcoins through "surfing," people visit different web-pages and watch advertisements. In return, they receive Satoshi (a small amount of Bitcoin) in their digital wallet (account). "Generating Bitcoin may take up to one year through surfing, but you do not have any costs. I started my Facebook page for people who do not have enough money to buy special equipment for mining, but still want to earn Bitcoins," Natsvlishvili told *Investor.ge*.

He says he decided to create a web-page about the process in August because people were asking him for help. Now demand has increased and he has plans to further develop his site and Facebook page—and perhaps start earning money from the advice he provides.

Three other Facebook pages run by Georgians also publish information about the Bitcoin industry to over 15,000 followers, collectively. Mostly the so-called "farmers" are IT specialists, who are skilled enough and know how to mine

digital currency. They treat mining as an additional income and worth investing money in.

BITCOIN CASH VS BITCOINS

On August 1, some of the miners and developers initiated—effectively created—a new currency: Bitcoin Cash. Bitcoin Cash has implemented an increased block size of 8MB, to accelerate the verification process, through which miners could get more cryptocurrency in less time.

On the other hand, Bitcoin Cash requires more computer storage space from people who want to take part in the mining process.

"Bigger players with access to server farms and big budgets will have no problem running bigger nodes, but smaller operators could be squeezed out," said Dr. Garrick Hileman, research fellow at the Cambridge Centre for Alternative Finance, to the BBC.

Bitfury Group is one of the biggest Bitcoin mining-companies, which runs two such facilities in Georgia, one in Gori and another in Tbilisi, where thousands of servers are working.

Giorgi Efremidze from the Bitfury Group told *Investor.ge* that his company is focused only on Bitcoin mining and they do not treat Bitcoin Cash as Bitcoin's competitor.

"Two days after the split, the price of Bitcoin Cash was already up to 400 dollars. It even cost 700 dollars within the first 72 hours. However, the equilibrium point was found quickly and the price of Bitcoin Cash is ten times less than the price of Bitcoin.

Bitcoin Cash is an independent cryptocurrency like the other 900 cryptographic currencies on the market today; the basic alignment on price is still in relation to Bitcoin as it is the world's largest cryptocurrency with the highest capitalization," says Efremidze.

Generating Bitcoin Cash is not very popular with Georgian miners yet, *Investor.ge* found, although many say mining for digital currency is worth the time and cost. Gaga Chikhladze, the Ethereum miner, says that he can generate $200-300 dollars' worth of Ethereum monthly, which he later converts into Bitcoins. He is saving this money for the future, when Bitcoins will hopefully be worth even more.

A Brief History of Bitcoin

Bitcoin dates back to 2008, when the paper "Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System" was posted on a cryptography mailing list under the name Satoshi Nakamoto.

The paper outlined how a peer-to-peer network could creat "a system for electronic transactions without relying on trust," according to a Wikipedia article on Bitcoin.

The digital currency was first mined in 2009 by Nakamoto, which is believed to be a pseudonym for one or several people; the same year the first open source Bitcoin client was released.

By 2011, other cryptocurrencies were being created and traded.

In the same year, Bitcoin began to be accepted as payment by some organizations, including WikiLeaks.

Over the next two years, Bitcoins gained in worth and popularity. By 2013, some governments were already declaring them illegal. The same year, the US became the first government to announce it had seized Bitcoin.

In 2014, a casino in Las Vegas announced it would accept Bitcoin, Wikipedia cited USA Today as reporting.

The digital currency continued to gain acceptance around the world in 2015 when Barclays announced it would be the first UK high street bank to accept Bitcoin. Wikipedia said that, as of August 2015, it was estimated that 160,000 merchants accepted Bitcoin payments.

By 2017, Japan passed a law accepting Bitcoin as a legal payment method.

Dynamism among the Young with Retirement Planning in Georgia

MARIAM SIKHARULIDZE AND DUSTIN GILBREATH

The pension system in Georgia is facing challenges. According to the World Bank, in a country with a declining working-age population, a retirement system in which the state is solely responsible for providing pensions—as in Georgia—is inadvisable. Yet, the findings of a March 2016 Caucasus Research Resource Center/National Democratic Institute (CRRC/NDI) survey suggest that young people have a greater diversity of plans for retirement than simply relying on state pensions. This dynamism among the young has the potential to ease the financial burden on society of providing pensions for the elderly in the medium-to-long term.

The government of Georgia, with the help of international organizations, has been working to reform the country's pension system, with the latest pension reform plan approved in spring 2016. The government is set to launch the new system in 2018. With the new plan, in addition to the basic "universal" pension still provided by the government, each employee, his/her employer, and the government will each make contributions to the respective employee's retirement savings account. Each of the contributors will pay at least 2% of each employee's monthly salary, totaling a minimum of 6% of a given employee's salary in a given month. Hence, an individual's retirement savings will consist of, at a minimum, these contributions and the interest accumulated on the retirement account.

According to the March 2016 CRRC/NDI survey, a plurality of the population of Georgia plans to or is supporting themselves in their old age with state pensions (49%) and/or assistance from their children (31%). Roughly a quarter (27%) of respondents reported that they have done nothing, have never thought about it, or don't know what they are doing or plan to do to support themselves in old age.

One should note that a show card was used for this question. Up to three answer options were accepted per interview. Answer options "Saved or plan to save money in the bank" and "Rely or plan to rely on support from my relatives (besides my children)" were named very rarely and are thus combined with the answer option "Other."

Younger people, however, more frequently plan to rely on sources of income other than state pensions than older people do. A majority of the population 56 years old and older (72%) name government pensions as a means to support themselves in old age. In contrast, only 29% of young people between 18 and 35 years old report planning to rely on government pensions when they get old.

One should nopte that answer options "Made or plan to make investments, "Saved or plan to save money, but not in the bank," "Saved or plan to save money in the bank," and "Bought or plan to buy a house/apartment for rent or sale," were combined with the answer option "Other."

In terms of geography, people living in rural areas most often report they plan to rely on the state pension (55%), followed by those living in urban areas (47%), ethnic minority settlements (47%), and the capital (42%). Although "support from children" is the second most frequently cited source of financial assistance in Georgia, people living in the capital and other urban settlements express more willingness to earn independently in their old age and cite other income sources, such as working when old, buying a house/apartment for rent or sale, or making other investments, more

frequently than in rural areas. This might indicate a lack of earning opportunities for the elderly in rural areas and highlights the socioeconomic gap between different settlements.

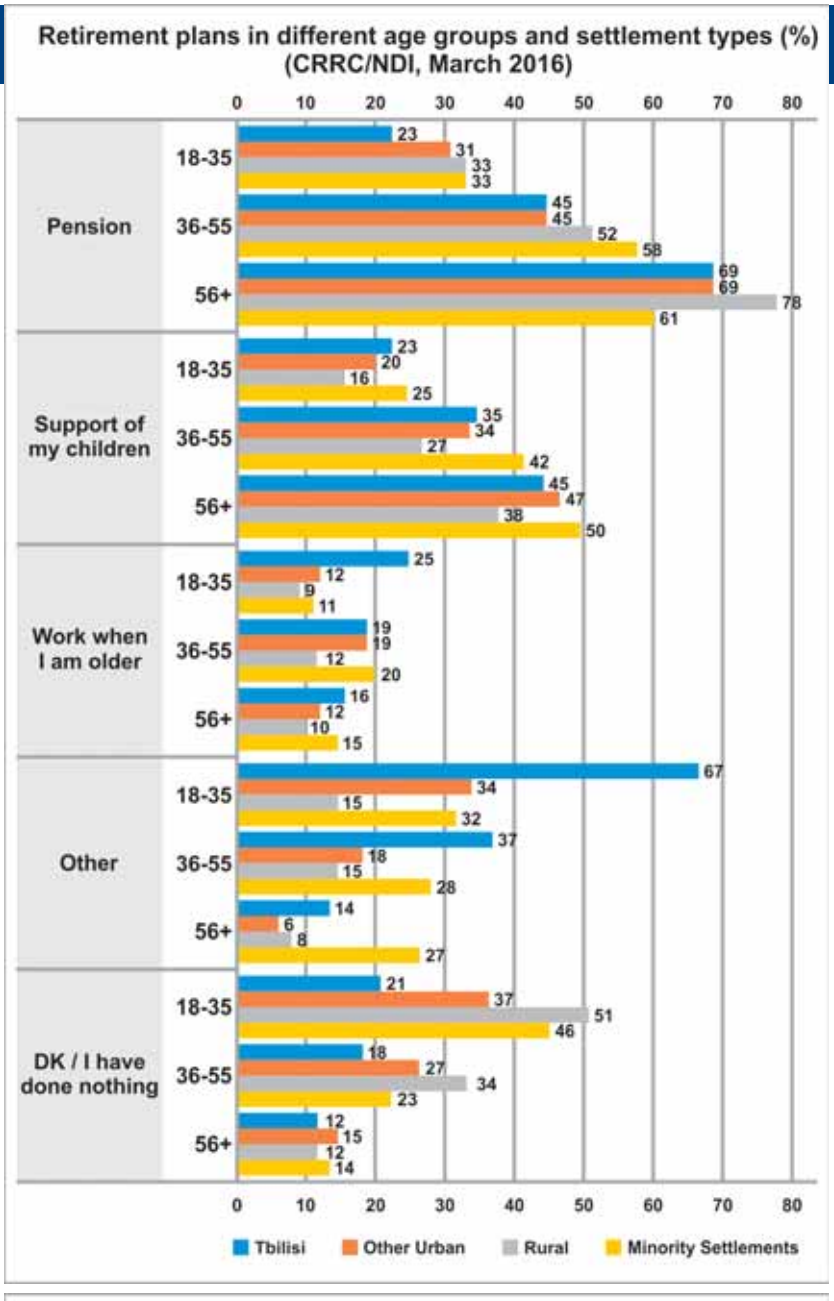
The diversity of retirement plans among younger respondents is driven in large part by those in Tbilisi: a full two thirds of 18- to 35-year-olds in Tbilisi report that they plan to rely on sources of income in retirement besides their state pensions or their children. Young people in Tbilisi are also more likely to report that they will work when older. In contrast to only 21% of young Tbilisians, 51% of young people in rural areas have never thought about their retirement, have done nothing to prepare for it, or don't know what they will do to support themselves in their old age.

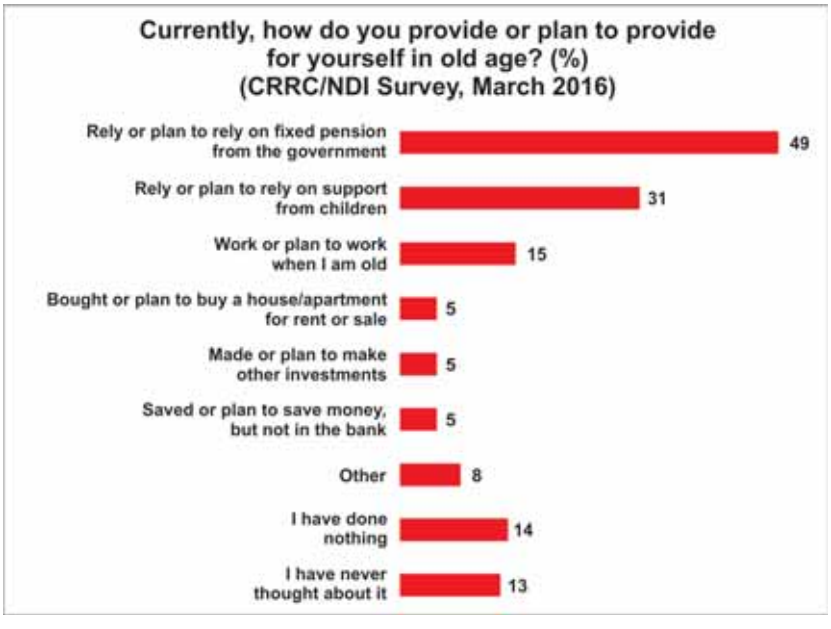
There is clearly a diversity of retirement planning in Georgia, and particularly in different age groups. The government should encourage this diversity, particularly among young people, as it has the potential to reduce dependence on state pensions and place less pressure on the state in the long term. Awareness-raising campaigns about such options are also important for supporting citizens in making informed decisions, and could be integrated into the campaigns already planned before the launch of the new pension system.

Mariam Sikharulidze was the Public Relations Manager at CRRC-Georgia until September 2017, and is currently a graduate student at University College London.

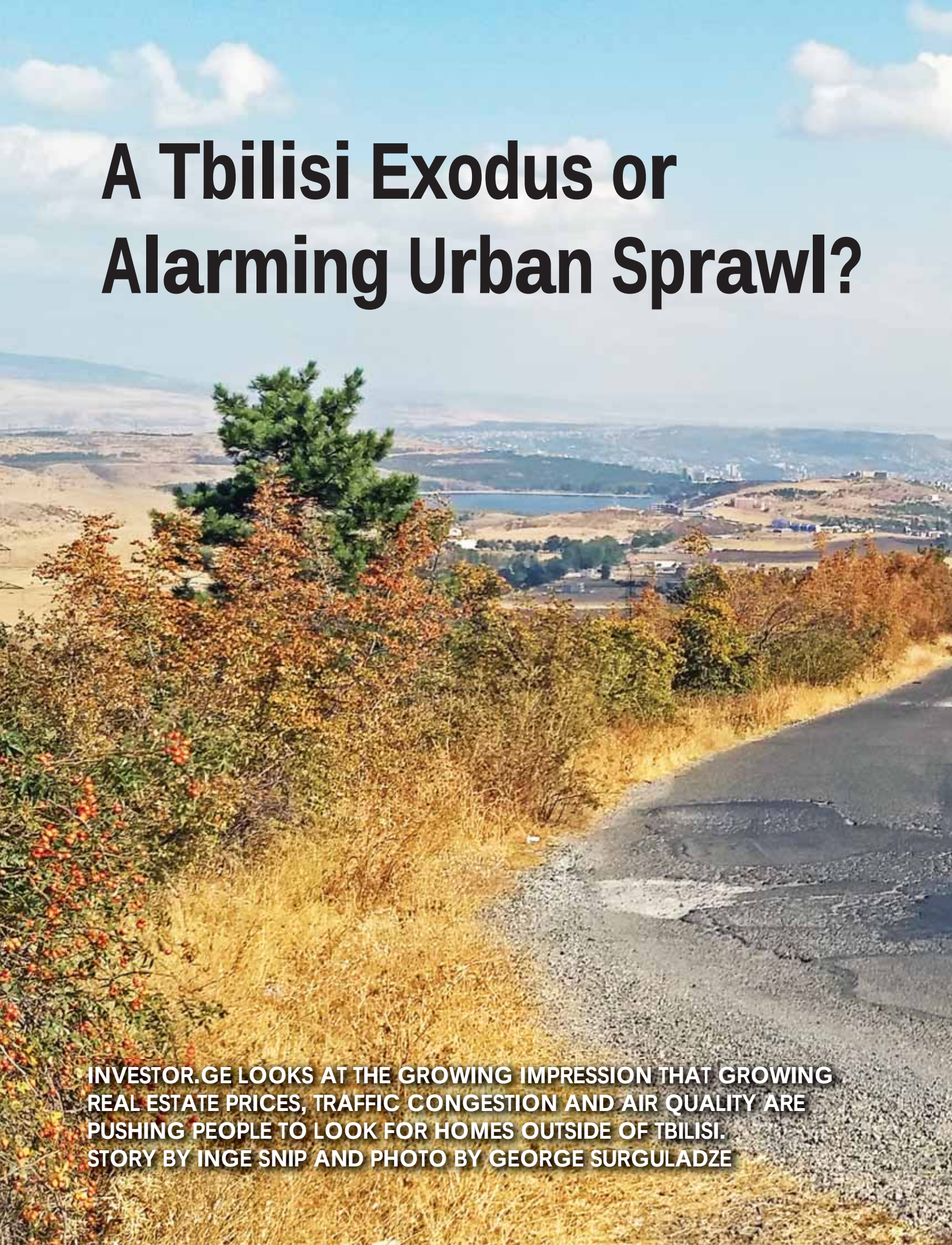
Dustin Gilbreath is a Policy Analyst at CRRC-Georgia.

The data presented in this article is available at CRRC's Online Data Analysis (ODA) tool: http://caucasus-barometer.org/en/.

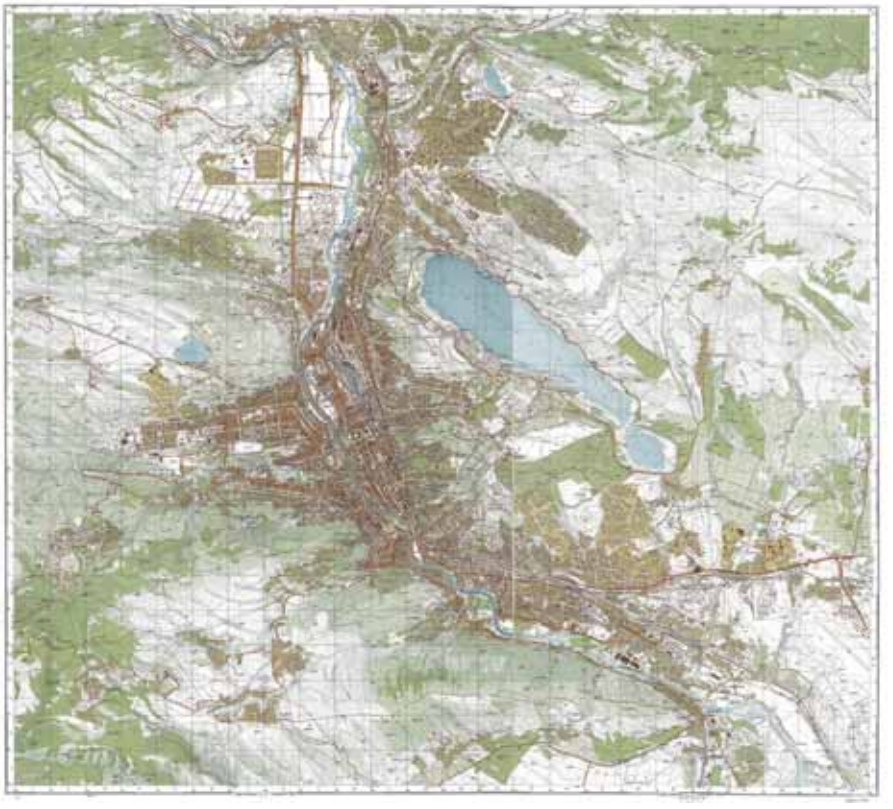




A Tbilisi Exodus or Alarming Urban Sprawl?



INVESTOR.GE LOOKS AT THE GROWING IMPRESSION THAT GROWING REAL ESTATE PRICES, TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND AIR QUALITY ARE PUSHING PEOPLE TO LOOK FOR HOMES OUTSIDE OF TBILISI.
STORY BY INGE SNIP AND PHOTO BY GEORGE SURGULADZE



In a radius of 20 kilometers around Georgia's capital city Tbilisi are several small towns that are mostly deserted in winter. Kojori and Tskhneti in the south, Mukhatsk'aro and Tsodoreti in the west, and Saguramo and Buriani in the north are just a few of the many "dacha" towns.

Only a few years ago, the majority of the houses in these settlements, with the exception of those in Tskhneti, were completely run down: windows gone, roofs caved in, brick walls falling apart. An occasional cow would roam through the streets going up in elevation to find fresher grass, and birds would chirp vividly while nesting in the rooftops of the houses.

You can find these so-called summerhouse towns all over Georgia, but it is the ones near Tbilisi that have seen an exponential increase in renovation and rebuilding over the past few years.

The house my husband and I bought a year and a half ago in Mukhatsk'aro is one of them.

Dacha towns are a legacy of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. It started with the Tsars giving small plots of land for summer residences to the elite, and the tradition continued during Soviet times—with academics, artists and prominent bureaucrats given their own summerhouses.

They are easy to spot. As a rule, during the Soviet Union, their plots of land could not be more than 600 square meters and their living areas no more than 60 square meters. However, attics were not considered living space, so the houses are often slightly out of proportion, with large mansard roofs being built on top of them.

NEW DEMAND

And while during the dark 1990s in Georgia the dachas were left to fend for themselves due to harsh economic conditions, lately Tbilisi's population is rediscovering the charm of living outside the city, in nature—but not only during the summer.

Over coffee, I recently asked some of my colleagues at a large international donor organization if they knew people who had decided to either revamp their summerhouses or bought a summerhouse to live in year round. Without hesitation, they all jumped in to tell me their stories of renovating their summerhouses and plans to move there to live the whole year.

"The congestion, the pollution, because of those problems, the people who can afford it spread out to greener areas around Tbilisi," Irakli Zhvania, an architect and MIT-trained urban planner, explains.

Tired with the increasing air and

noise pollution, unavoidable traffic jams, and decreasing green areas in the city, my husband and I decided as well that we wanted to give our then nine-month-old son a garden to play in. But to be fair, the rising dollar—and our simultaneously rising rent—were also a major factor in our decision.

AND WE ARE NOT ALONE.

Mariam Asatiani, RE/MAX Tbilisi Capital Broker/Owner, told *Investor.ge* that moving out of the city is becoming more popular, especially as people seek cleaner air and more green space.

"We clearly see an increase in demand from people moving from rural areas looking for apartments in Tbilisi's center. But, simultaneously, we see a huge demand from people who have apartments in the city center seeking to move outside of the city, a 25-minute drive away, to be in a cleaner environment," she said.

"Of course, I should mention this is a more premium segment. Unfortunately, the infrastructure in these places is not suitable yet, but I am confident that, with this increase in demand, developers and others will start investing in upgraded infrastructure as well," Asatiani explained.

Vasiko Tsotadze, one of the first developers of modern housing outside of the city, agreed that suburban living is the future for Tbilisi.

He added, however, that shifting from apartments to private homes is a "change in mentality" that takes time.

Currently most homeowners at his development, SunCity, are families who have moved out of the city center for the fresh air and cleaner environment.

"The minute you have a house outside of Tbilisi, and you have land and your kids are running in the yard, it is almost impossible to go back to living in an apartment. But it is a stereotype that Tskneti is a dacha and you have to have a summer home, but you have to have an apartment here[in Tbilisi]. So, we really have to change the mentality of Georgians," Tsotsade said.

On our little street, constant construction work is underway to prepare dachas for all-year-round habitation. Our neighbor Zura, a 40-something entrepreneur, says he's currently figuring out how to install central heating in his dacha. Two other houses across from our place were deserted when we bought ours, and have now been converted into full-fledged houses with anything you could wish for.

In the small corner shop at the entrance of Mukhatsk'aro, Lia—the lady who runs it—tells me how her business is flourishing. As a side job—besides being named by me as the informal mayor of our 500-plus person town—she operates as a real estate agent. Through her we found our place as well. And prices have gone up.

"A few years ago, houses here would go for $50k, but now it will be hard to find something like that," she explains to me. We bought our fixer-upper for $30,000, but recently friends of ours were unable to find anything below $70,000.

FIXER-UPPERS

But even if you find a place for the right price for you, all these houses need to be renovated. They were never meant to be lived in all year round, so they are lacking sufficient insulation, heating systems, and, often, even water resources.

After workers ruined our new roof last year, and our tile worker was drunk on the job, forcing us to re-tile large parts of the house, we decided to do everything ourselves. And horror stories from people around us confirm such problems are widespread.

"You can't leave the house if you have workers," my mother-in-law tells me. "You have to be there 24/7 so they do it how you want it." And friends who had their house renovated a few months ago tell me how one day they came to check up on the progress, only to find their walls green instead of white: "They told me it was a nicer color."

EARLY SIGNS OF URBAN SPRAWL?

The trend of people moving from urban areas to nearby rural settlements is a development that worries urban planners and environmentalists.

The phenomenon, often referred to as urban sprawl, usually involves moving to car-dependent communities—environmentally unfriendly and only affordable for those with at least upper-middle-class incomes—segregation, and can result in empty city districts.

"The city center starts to die when people escape to places outside the city. Open spaces and green spaces outside the city are eaten up. More money is spent on infrastructure, and you have much more traffic because all these people need to commute by car back into the city center for work," Zhvania explains.

With the Vake-Saburtalo district discussing incorporating Mukhatsk'aro and Tsodoreti, now part of the larger Mtskheta district, I am part of the urban sprawl problem. We even bought a car specifically to get to town more easily, as there is only one marshrtuka driving up and down three times a day. And that's not very environmentally friendly, even though, as freelancers, we do not have to commute on a daily basis.

But with a growing Tbilisi, high-rises popping up like mushrooms, and stuffy low-on-oxygen air, the decision to sell one's place in Tbilisi for a larger, greener, and cleaner place up in the mountains near the city is, unfortunately perhaps, not a difficult one to make.

FROM THE EXPERTS:
Are Tbilisians leaving the city?

INVESTOR.GE SPOKE WITH THREE EXPERTS IN THE GEORGIAN REAL ESTATE MARKET, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF COLLIERS INTERNATIONAL GEORGIA IRAKLI KILAURIDZE, IRAKLI BURDILADZE, CEO OF M² REAL ESTATE AND NINA KIPIANI, THE PARTNER AND HEAD OF COUNTRY AT CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD GEORGIA, ABOUT WHETHER TBILISI'S CITY DWELLERS ARE MOVING OUT TO THE 'BURBS AND HOW THE PARKING PROBLEM IS AFFECTING DEVELOPMENTS.

CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD

Colliers INTERNATIONAL
Accelerating success.

TRAFFIC. AIR POLLUTION. PARKING.

Every day, especially around rush hour, there seems to be a hundred new reasons not to live in the city.

But are people really moving out? There are also new apartment buildings and developments popping up all over Tbilisi, so where do Tbilisians want to live?

The answer, according to real estate specialists, depends on whom you ask. While demand is growing for private homes – including homes in the villages and communities surrounding Tbilisi – there is still a healthy demand for apartments, especially in popular Vake and Saburtalo.

"During the last decade, demand for private houses notably increased. Besides the sub-districts of the city, such as Dighomi 7-9, Village Dighomi, Didi Dighomi, etc. The process of development has moved into settlements in the surroundings of Tbilisi – Tabakhmela, Shindisi, Tsavkisi, Okrokana, and the neighborhoods surrounding Lisi Lake and Tbilisi Sea," noted Irakli Kilauridze, Mmanaging Director of Colliers International Georgia.

He added that, as of July 2017, 901 private houses have been sold this year, which is 23 percent higher than the same time last year.

"The main drivers of increased demand are clients' desires for an ecologi-

cally clean and peaceful environment, protected area, greenery, etc. The most popular townhouse type projects are Lisi Veranda, Tsavkisi Valley, SunCity, American Village, Delta Tabakhmela, and more," Kilauridze said.

"Generally, the average price of a townhouse project is much higher than for flats. However, due to the previously mentioned criteria, a certain segment of society prefers private houses."

Nina Kipiani, Head of Country at Cushman & Wakefield Georgia, noted the Millennial generation has been more interested in leaving the city.

"As Millennials start families, they tend to head for the suburbs. Crushing the old local tradition of up to 'three generations living in the same central Vake apartment,' the newer generation runs counter to the previous quintessential city-dwellers, hence the average household size of 4.2 in 2006 has decreased to 3.6 in 2016," she said.

"A number of developers have taken advantage of such trends and offered gated community housing in the suburbs including the Lisi Lake, Bagebi/Kaklebi, Krtsanisi, etc. Demand here has therefore been supply led and considering the pricing of these developments being rather high, cost-savings could not have been the driver for the buyers. As an example, Lisi Lake has seen a spurt of sales starting in 2012 and increasing by an average of 5 percent annually. In addition to the gated communities, the sales of land plots in the popular residential areas have been on an increasing trend, led by the sales in Dighomi."

As of July 2017, 901 private houses have been sold this year, which is 23 percent higher than the same time last year.

Irakli Burdiladze, CEO of m² Real Estate, told Investor.ge that growing incomes are one of the drivers in the new demand for private homes.

"It's natural to expect that economic growth and increase in disposable income will stimulate demand for single family houses in suburban areas as lots of families prefer to live away from busy city centers," Burdiladze said in an email interview.

"This is the trend we observe in more developed economies. It's a matter of affordability. In our country a single family house is still a luxurious product that few can afford thus demand is limited. It should be noted, however, that this demand for houses has grown in the past year, which is in direct correlation with economic growth and increase in family income."

CARS, CARS EVERYWHERE AND NO PLACE TO PARK

The parking problem in Tbilisi requires no introduction. But how is it impacting how developers build – and how people buy – apartments?

Kilauridze said that the parking issue has started to impact not just the residential market but other sectors of the real estate market as well.

"Since 2012, according to our observation, approximately 80 percent of new developments include underground parking in the project. However, only a few developers are selling parking lot spaces with apartments. In central districts, such as Vake and Mtasminda, the selling price of parking lot spaces ranges from $7,000 to $10,000. On average, in the suburban parts of the city this figure varies between $3,000 to $6,000.

Kipiani noted that while there are some developments offering allocated parking spaces, there is not enough evidence to judge if that is influencing buyers. She added that developments in Vake tend to sell up to two parking spots per apartment.

"Notwithstanding the high demand [for parking spaces in the city], especially in central districts, developers tended to save on parking construction, which has resulted in a [parking] shortage and overcrowded yards and pedestrian lanes. With the new regulations put in action, developers are obliged to allocate a parking lot per 130 square meters of living space, which should by all means act as a solution to these problems," Kipiani said.

m² Real Estate noted that demand differs depending on people's income: while those with more disposable income "demand at least two parking places per apartment," people in the market for less expensive real estate would rather spend money "on purchasing extra square meters of living space rather than spending money on parking lots", Burdiladze said.

During the last decade, demand for private houses notably increased.

"When designing our projects we always study potential traffic and parking demand and take this into consideration in preparing the final master plan," Burdiladze noted.

ALPINE GOLD:
Swiss Cheese Made in the Georgian Mountains

A GEORGIAN-SWISS PARTNERSHIP IS REVIVING A LOST TRADITION OF ALPINE CHEESE MANUFACTURING IN THE GEORGIAN MOUNTAINS.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY TATJANA MONTIK

The history of Swiss cheese in Georgia dates back to over 100 years, when immigrants made cheese in Tsalka, a town south of Tbilisi. Their creamy cheese became well known both within the Russian Empire and abroad, winning honors at international exhibitions.

More recently, two Swiss entrepreneurs, Frances Belser and Daniel Wuethrich, have spent the past two years reviving the tradition together with their Georgian partner, Zurab Macharashvili.

CHEESE AS ART

I visited the Swiss couple's cheese production site high in the mountains of Metekhi, in the western Georgian village of Chorchani near Adigeni. Giorgi, a young driver who works in the enterprise, took us to the alpine meadows at an elevation of 2240 meters in a Soviet jeep built in 1968. The road was difficult, with huge boulders scattered unexpectedly along the route. "This car is so good that it doesn't need any road at all," Giorgi told us proudly. From the top of the mountain we could see another gorge where the famous Abastumani Observatory lies hidden in the forests below.

Macharashvili, Belser and Wuethrich founded the company Alpuri Oqro, or "Alpine Gold," two years ago. Macharashvili, an artist, said the business is a form of art. "Cheese making is like making wine every day. But you only make wine once a year. It's as if here every day you have a harvest, and every day you make wine," he said.

Macharashvili showed me a beautiful two-story wooden chalet where the cheesemakers live during the summer season from mid-June to early September. They built it last summer with the help of a Swiss carpenter. A mobile cheese-making station is an integral part of the business and, as with the Swiss tradition, the alpine cheese is produced exclusively with milk from cows that graze in alpine meadows.

Macharashvili's family is from Chorchani, so he has access to the meadows in this area. According to Georgian law, alpine lands can only be used by local

villagers—and only for agricultural purposes. "A relative who doesn't live here anymore allows us to use this land. We have transformed an old storage house into a cheese cellar and brought up our mobile cheese station. At the end of the season, we load our cheese station on a truck and bring it back to Tbilisi, where we have a second cheese cellar," he explained.

In Georgia, farmers usually own the cows that produce milk for cheese, but Alpine Gold does not own cattle. Instead, it buys milk from local farmers who meet certain quality standards. "We show them how to clean the cows' udders and filter the milk properly. We also provide our suppliers with specialized milk cans," Macharashvili explained.

A LITTLE SWISS VILLAGE IN GEORGIA

Rosemarie Minder has come from Switzerland for two seasons to help with production. She learned cheesemaking in Switzerland and worked for eight seasons in her home country as a cheesemaker. She said she feels at home in the mountains of Georgia, as it resembles the Swiss mountain village where she grew up.

At 7 a.m. the next morning, I follow Minder to watch the entire process of cheese making. The extraordinary sunrise gave us the impression that this high mountain village was floating above the clouds, which lay much lower down the mountain in the early morning. A bit later, the mist from higher peaks descended to cover the village. The air was crisp and fresh, and the unique smell of meadow flowers imbued every breath.

"I love these early morning hours here," Minder said, "and for me the cow bells are very special morning music." Every day she works with one of her two Georgian assistants, Nanuka Narimanidze and Salome Gigashvili. Both young women have Bachelor's degrees in food processing from the Georgian Agricultural University in Tbilisi and all remain in the village for the summer season.

Every day they receive milk from the farmers and pour it into a huge copper kettle for pasteurization. Then they clean the farmers' milk cans and filters with pure spring water from the mountain. "Hygiene is very important for us," says Minder, "and we work with solar energy to run the air-conditioning for the cheese cellar and to heat water. We use a special lactose tester to check our milk regularly for fat and protein content. We also test the water to be sure that it contains no bacteria, or we have to boil it before use."

SWISS STANDARDS

On the wall, documents are posted that the cheese makers fill in daily, noting the times of cleaning and kinds of antiseptic measures.

Some of the farmers who supply milk spoke to us as they delivered their morning milk. Nana and Zaza Kvidjinadze care for their 30 cows and participate in the project. "After Alpine Gold production came to our village, work was easier, as we can sell them all our milk. Of course, we need to meet their standards. For example, we have to skip the first few squirts of milk from the udder as it contains more bacteria; also, we use a special material to clean the udders. Then we have to filter the fresh milk properly," the farmer said. "But on the other hand, at the end of the season we can get a bonus of additional 10 tetri per liter if we have worked according to all the guidelines."

An hour later, I accompanied Minder and Gigashvili through the cheese-making process. They showed the fermentation process and explained the necessary temperatures and the importance of time management. "In cheese making, you must be very precise and punctual, keeping to the schedule, otherwise you won't get a good-quality product," Gigashvili said.

"Another essential factor for good-quality cheese is how we take care of it during the ripening process," said Minder. "In France, for example, this is a profession in itself." She took me to the cheese cellar located near the entrance of the cheese station, and explained that the room temperature must be kept between 12 and 16 degrees centigrade with a humidity level above 90 percent. "No fluctuations are allowed," she said.

For Swiss cheese production, 10 liters of milk are needed to produce each kilogram of finished product. Compared to this, Georgian cheese only needs 6 liters of milk to produce each finished kilogram of cheese. Depending on the season, Swiss cheese makers take in between 270 to 400 liters of milk daily, and thus can produce up to ten "wheels" of cheese per day, each weighing five to six kilograms. Another difference is the long ripening period for Swiss cheese, which can last up to five months, before consumption. It is very labor intensive, which of course influences the price of the end product.

Both assistants of Alpine Gold admit they are "addicted to cheese." Narimanidze said that in the future she would probably establish her own cheese-production facility: "I gained a lot of knowledge here and learned to be detail-oriented and time-efficient. I also learned that I can express my own opinion and my bosses listen. Here, I feel like part of a team, not just an employee, and I can help solve problems. This is very important, because when five people think together, it's powerful!"

In the evening, we sipped amber-colored Rkatsiteli wine while tasting ▸▸

young Muchli cheese that Minder sliced for us. "Muchli needs only six weeks to ripen," she said. "Each wheel is around 1 kilogram and has a nice moist, reddish crust. When we cut it, we can feel it is still soft and creamy. We say this cheese has a creamy consistency. It also has some holes, but this is ok, as it has not been pressed under a cheese stone and its taste is mild. Mutchli goes well with bread and wine. In Switzerland, we eat it with boiled potatoes and yogurt or curd sauce. It's also good as a dessert cheese."

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

In Chorchani, I learned that to produce a good-quality Swiss cheese you need to work hard. "What else do you need for a successful agricultural business in Georgia?," I asked Macharashvili. "First of all, we need stability in the country. Our people have forgotten how to live in stability. Most think only about today and maybe tomorrow, but not more. This is why they cannot work using a business plan. In our business, we need to plan at least three years ahead, but if we consider our suppliers, none of them know for sure what tomorrow will bring, and cannot even guarantee they will work with us next year. So you need stability first of all, and of course time and patience, as well as good relationships with people, including your partners and suppliers," he said.

Back in Tbilisi, I met Frances Belser in her cheese cellar in Okrokhana to learn more about Alpine Gold. She told me that before she and her husband decided to invest in Georgia, they studied the market thoroughly for a few years. Two years ago, they decided to take a risk and establish the Alpine Gold business using their own capital of 100,000 lari. They have continued to invest, building up the infrastructure and production process at the mountain farm, and in two years they have managed to double their cheese production from 1,000 kilograms last year to 2,000 kilograms this year.

Belser described the mid- and longer-term plans for the company. "We plan to continue working in Chorchani village, as it is close to the sea and has a good annual rainfall and optimal climate for mountain cheese production. This is why we plan to stay and intensify our work with local people.

We are thinking of ways to offer possibilities to young people and encourage them to come back to their lands to work with us.

We pay the best milk prices in the region (up to 0.9 GEL per liter) and provide our suppliers with modern working tools from Switzerland.

In the medium-term we want to improve the local infrastructure and to make up to 4,000 kilograms of cheese per year. In the long term, we plan to build an agricultural cooperative with local farmers, a project that corresponds to the development plans of the Georgian government. Our goal is to build a fixed cheese and milk station and to have decent water reservoirs."

"Of course, there are always risks in this kind of business," she continued, "but we have experience. Since 1992, we've launched new products in the Swiss market successfully, and to succeed in a foreign country you first need to succeed at home. Besides this, you need to realize that sometimes it means taking two steps forward and one step back. You must be present at the production site yourself and not delegate everything to someone else. All this will ensure success."

BLC
Law Office

THREE-YEAR DEFAMATION SAGA ENDED – SUPREME COURT OF GEORGIA RULES IN FAVOR OF TBC BANK AND MAMUKA KHAZARADZE

We are pleased to announce that three-year dispute against the local newspaper Asaval-Dasavali is finally resolved in favor of our clients – TBC Bank JSC and its shareholder Mr. Mamuka Khazaradze. On 26 July 2017, the Supreme Court of Georgia rendered its final decision on the case upholding the decision of the Tbilisi Court of Appeals in favor of TBC Bank and Mr. Mamuka Khazaradze and ordering the newspaper to reject false and defamatory statements disseminated by the newspaper and pay compensation for moral and reputational damage totaling to GEL 5,000. The decision continues the trend set by the Supreme Court of Georgia and the European Court of Human Rights on defamation cases and bears vital importance for development of responsible journalism in Georgia.

COMPULSORY TPL INSURANCE UNDERWAY

The bill on Compulsory Civil Liability Insurance of Foreign Vehicles on the Territory of Georgia was lodged to the Parliament of Georgia in June 2017. The bill was drafted by the Government and aims at pooling of the local insurance companies in an exclusive scheme of third party liability (TPL) insurance of the vehicles registered in foreign jurisdiction, whilst in Georgia. The scheme shall be administered by an insurance center - a non-commercial legal entity to be established by the insurance companies participating in the scheme. Vehicles driving into Georgia shall be obligated to purchase the TPL insurance. Failure to do so will be an administrative felony and will be sanctioned accordingly. Damage inflicted on life, health or property of Georgian population will be covered by the insurance companies through the center administrating the above compulsory insurance scheme. If adopted, the scheme will fully come into force from January 2018.

NAMING ARBITRATION INSTITUTION AS A PREREQUISIT FOR A VALID ARBITRATION CLAUSE

While Georgian arbitration practitioners strive to keep up with ongoing rapid developments in arbitration world, the courts of Georgia drag the practice back with conservative approach. The Supreme Court of Georgia in its decision on case No.A-887-SH-21-2016 published on 19 July 2017 applied restrictive interpretation of an arbitration clause and denied recognition and enforcement of an arbitration award rendered in London. Georgian courts were generally coherent in requesting the arbitration clause to be clear and unambiguous, however this time the Supreme Court went even further saying that if an arbitration clause does not indicate the exact arbitral institution, it is invalid. This interpretation of an arbitration agreement ignores an ad hoc arbitration, which is yet another way of administering arbitration proceedings, regularly practiced worldwide and even envisaged under the Law of Georgia on Arbitration. Unfortunately, as it appears, Georgian arbitration practice still has a long way to go.

SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN NOTARIZATION COSTS

On 20 July 2017, Notary Chamber of Georgia issued a recommendation to the public notaries to notarize signatures of the parties on each page of the document. Certification of signatures of the parties on each page significantly increases notarization costs, since the notaries charge for each signature on the document. Notably, this recommendation does not apply to the cases where the notaries certify the content of the document. However, in the latter case the notary fee is charged as a percentage of the transaction value, which is exactly the reason why parties used to favor the cheaper solution of having a signature page notarized.

For more information and advise please contact us:

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Baadur Jobava, a Georgian grandmaster and three-time Georgian champion

Georgia's Chess—A New Generation

GEORGIAN CHESS PLAYERS—PARTICULARLY WOMEN—HAVE LONG ENJOYED TREMENDOUS SUCCESS IN THE GAME DESPITE LIMITED BUDGETS AND TRAINING FACILITIES. BUT THE COACH OF THE NATIONAL TEAM WARNS MORE SUPPORT IS NECESSARY TO CONTINUE THE COUNTRY'S TRADITION OF STRONG GRANDMASTERS.

LIKA JORJOLIANI

In September, top male chess players from around the world flocked to Georgia to compete in the World Chess Federation (FIDE) World Cup.

The event was a major coup for Georgia—it competed against South Africa to host both the September World Cup and the 2018 Chess Olympiad, which will be held in Batumi.

But for chess advocates at home, the FIDE World Cup was also a stark reminder of how Georgian chess has struggled to maintain its tradition of strong players and generations of grandmasters.

Three out of the four Georgian players competing left in the first round.

Baadur Jobava, a Georgian grandmaster and three-time Georgian champion, was bested by reigning U.S. Chess Champion Wesley So in the fourth round.

LEGACY OF WINNERS

The loss stung for Georgian coaches and fans.

Jobava, who is ranked 49th in the world according to FIDE, defeated the world's top chess player, Magnus Carlsen, in 2010. He won a gold medal in the 2016 Chess Olympiad as well, making him one of the latest in a long tradition of world-class Georgian chess players.

His peers, especially on the Georgian National Women's Chess Team, have been winning international accolades

World champion Magnus Carlsen

for years.

"Georgia is well-known for its famous chess-player women. We should name famous Georgian veterans, such as Nona Gaprindashvili, Nana Aleksandria, Maia Gaprindashvili and others. The Georgian Women's National Chess Team is one of the top three teams in the world," noted a coach for the Georgian Men's National Chess Team, Zurab Sturua.

He added that the women's team, which includes players Salome Melia, Nino Batsiashvili, Nana Dzagnidze, Lela Javahishvili and Bela Khotenashvili, won the Women's World Team Chess Championship two years ago, beating teams with more resources and support.

The September competition in Tbilisi, which was for men, included two women, both invited to participate: the world women's number one and former Women's World Champion, Hou Yifan, and also the number one Georgian women's player and current European Individual Women's Chess Champion, Nana Dzagnidze.

Yifan lost to finalist Levon Aronian in the second round after besting grandmaster Kacper Piorun.

Dzagnidze fared worse, losing to grandmaster Anish Giri in the first round.

The September match aside, Dzagnidze—who is also a chess grandmaster—has triumphed at international tournaments since she was a teenager. This year, she won the Women's European Individual Chess Championship, one of three Georgian women chess players to land in the top 20 at the tournament.

Dzagnidze and her teammates are part of a long tradition of Georgian women chess masters that dates back generations.

The pioneer, Nona Gaprindashvili, was the first woman to become a chess grandmaster— the highest honor in chess awarded by the World Chess Federation.

She ruled the game for a generation, holding the women's world championship from 1962 to 1978, when it was won by fellow Georgian Maia Chiburdanidze. Between the two of them, they were the Women's World Chess Champions for 20-odd years.

NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION

But chess advocates warn that Georgia's legacy could be at risk if young people are not encouraged to learn and play.

"Any kind of sport has a star generation; now Georgia has many young people who are interested in chess. But, in my opinion, they can't reach the nec-

Levon Aronian, Armenian chess grandmaster who won the 2017 FIDE World Cup

essary level because interest in chess is gradually falling among young people, perhaps due to other interests," Sturua told *Investor.ge*.

"We should support this kind of sport," he added.

The tournament organizer and President of the Georgian Chess Federation, Zurab Azmaiparashvili, told *Investor.ge* that he has managed to attract $20 million for chess, which has allowed Georgia to offer major awards and prizes for male and female competitions.

In addition, the government is trying to encourage young people to learn and love the game: chess has been introduced as a subject in elementary schools around the country.

Chess has also received support from athletes from other sports: Georgian soccer legend Manuchar Machaidze came to watch Jobava during the World Cup in Tbilisi.

"I played when I was young; I participated in other tournaments. I played in the Tbilisi championship, and was a candidate for master," he told *Investor.ge*.

"We have very strong chess players, which is why this type of sport [in Georgia] has been able to preserve its position [in the world], which I cannot say about soccer," he added.

GEORGIAN WOMEN, CHESS MASTERS

Georgia has produced a number of female chess grandmasters, starting with the first two women to ever hold the title, Nona Gaprindashvili (1962 to 1978) and Maia Chiburdanidze (1978-1991).

Chiburdanidze, who won her first international championship at the age of 13, became the 14th highest rated female player of all time when she achieved her FIDE Elo rating of 2502 in 2011.

Two other Georgian women, Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant and Bela Khotenashvili, are also chess grandmasters.

Today the country also boasts of a strong female team. In 2015 the team became the world chess champions after defeating the Chinese women's chess team – the women's eighth win in a row that year.

The Georgian women's chess team won the Chess Olympiads in 1992, 1994, 1996, and 2008. The Olympiads are a biennial international chess tournament.

A PLACE ON THE TEAM: A NEW PUSH FOR EQUALITY IN SPORTS

GEORGIAN FEMALE ATHLETES HAVE BROUGHT GLORY TO THEIR COUNTRY FOR DECADES AT THE OLYMPICS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS—FIRST COMPETING UNDER THE SOVIET FLAG AND NOW UNDER THE GEORGIAN FLAG. BUT AT HOME, GIRL ATHLETES, ESPECIALLY IN COMPETITIVE TEAM SPORTS, HAVE STRUGGLED TO FIND SUPPORT AND FINANCING.

Archery, ice skating, skiing, shooting, trampoline, tennis—there are few sports in which Georgian female athletes have not made their mark in international competition.

But at home, women's sporting teams have struggled to find the same level of support that the men's teams enjoy, both in terms of financing and in terms with how they are accepted by society.

For example, Eka Kartsivadze, the team manager for the Tbilisi's under-19 girls' soccer team, has been frustrated by the lack of money for necessities, including footwear and medical support.

Players on the team have also faced problems the boys do not experience: they often have to put up with relatives who don't understand why they want to play a rough-and-tumble sport like rugby or soccer—or rules that stipulate how long their hair should be (long, not short) and the modesty of their uniforms, according to a report on Georgia's Rustavi-2 TV channel.

OVERCOMING STEREOTYPES

Team member Salome Dimopulo told Investor.ge that it was easier to play when she was living in Greece, where girls' soccer is more developed and more accepted.

Other girls on the team also spoke about resistance, either from parents or other people in their lives, to the idea they could play soccer—and play it professionally.

"The problem is that sports are not very popular and there are some prejudices. Unfortunately, parents and school-teachers do not support girls in sports. Girls are less welcome in sports because they say 'girls should better go to music or to drama class,' or whatever. But concerning sports—like football [soccer], for instance—[the girls hear] 'your feet ▸▸

will look ugly,'" UN Women Georgia Communications Analyst Gvantsa Asatiani told Investor.ge.

Asatiani noted that the gender gap in how sports are viewed motivated UN Women Georgia to highlight the issue as part of the global He for She project.

The He for She project is about promoting men as defenders of women's rights. But the meaning was hard to pass on to a Georgian audience, she said, since "it wouldn't come close to the heart of the Georgian population. They wouldn't understand what it means."

Instead, UN Women in Georgia opted to use the particularities of the Georgian language, in this case the fact that it is a gender-neutral language with no gender-specific pronouns, to send the message that there is no place for gender prejudice in any aspect of Georgian culture.

The result was the campaign "Georgian language has no gender prejudice, get it out of your head!"

"We are promoting women in different spheres . . . we just decided to kick off this campaign using sports as the means to showcase how successful women can be there . . . We thought it could be thematically close if we would approach the sportsmen and the sportswomen in different sports and get out their messages about why do they think that it is equally important to have women in sports," Asatiani said.

"Sports is more connected to masculinity rather than a healthy lifestyle and rather than to the skills that you can get from sports to be a good leader, to be a good team player, to concentrate, etc.," she said.

The campaign has highlighted successful women basketball players, fencers, soccer players, rugby players, and more—including many sports where there is little public awareness that the women's teams exist, let alone that these athletes are winning internationally.

"Currently, girls and women have equal rights to participate in all kinds of sports in Georgia. In some sports, such as chess, fencing and archery, Georgian women are very successful in the global arena, but only 10 percent of girls and women in Georgia are involved in sport. One of the reasons is related to the widespread stereotypes that divide sports along masculine and feminine lines. Whether selecting, pursuing or even succeeding in a particular sport, girls are continually burdened with barriers and prejudices in their families and communities," UN Women Georgia noted in a report about the campaign.

Asatiani told Investor.ge that while women's successes at sporting events are publicized, issues like this require special outreach to reach the intended audience.

"It is a great success for me to see Georgian women winning gold medals, but I don't know if and how girls actually see this. I am pretty sure they are missing all this information. It is may be well publicized, but it needs a special angle, something like we did—a campaign for promoting girls," Asatinai said.

"Girls should be involved more in sports and parents should know more of the benefits their girls will get. It is crucial to make girls more motivated, more active, healthier, to be good team players, to be good leaders, to better achieve their goals. These are the qualities that sportspeople have I think," she added.

LOSING GIRLS

The UN Women campaign worked closely with the Georgian Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs.

"Partnering with UN Women and this campaign is a great opportunity for us to reach out to the broader community and provide information to every family that it should be no surprise if a girl opts for any stereotyped 'manly' sport(s), for example, weightlifting," Vasili Liparteliani, the head of the Research and Analysis Division at the Ministry, was quoted as saying in a report about the campaign.

"We need to change the mindset that certain sports are intended only for girls or for boys. Girls' involvement in sport is their decision entirely, and it should not be subject to public judgment," he added.

Girls become less involved in sports as they age, according to a 2015 survey conducted by the Georgian Children and Youth National Sport Federation in collaboration with the Ministry of Sport

and Youth Affairs.

A UNESCO-financed survey—"Gender Equality in Sport and Physical Activity"—targeted schoolgirls aged 12-15 and 16-19, parents, physical education teachers, sport instructors, and representatives of municipal services around the country.

The survey found that the number of girls around the country who regularly participate in a sports class of some type drops by 30 percent by the time girls reach age 16.

Girls in the older age group said they drop sports for several reasons, including "sports lessons are only for boys" and "there are no dressing rooms for girls," according to the report.

It also found that 70 percent of girls do not participate in sports because they lack the proper facilities.

The survey included 19 wide-ranging recommendations for the Ministry to improve equality in sports for girls, such as making the issue of gender balance clearer in the state sports development policy; promoting the importance of sports for girls; improving sports infrastructure in rural communities; creating school-based sports competitions; and increasing the number of female coaches.

The recommendations echo some of the steps that were taken in the U.S. after Title IX, the landmark law outlawing gender discrimination in any educational activity that receives federal funding, according to Aaron Heifetz, Press Officer for U.S. Women's National Soccer Teams.

Heifetz told Investor.ge that the real impact of Title IX, which was passed in 1972, started to affect women's sports in the 1980s, when colleges started looking for girls to play on their teams.

The demand for female athletes underscored the importance of "resources, youth programs, coaches and the opportunities to play" for girls, he said.

The path women soccer players follow in the U.S. and other countries—especially soccer powerhouses in Europe—can be a good lesson on how to move forward, but that is not enough, Heifetz noted.

"Girls can be motivated by men players, can be motivated by women players from other countries, but what will really motivate Georgian girls is to see Georgian women playing on the national team," he said.

Liparteliani told Investor.ge that the Ministry has been studying the issue of girls' involvement in sports and, in documents provided by the Ministry, it was clear that increasing girls' access to sports—and prioritizing youth athletics in general—is on the agenda.

What is less clear is how long it will take the changes to have an impact.

For Kartsivadze, the team manager for the Tbilisi's Tbilisi under-19 girls' soccer team, the wait is frustrating.

While there are signs of encouragement, like hosting big international women's soccer events at home—the UEFA Women's Euro 2020 for the under-19s will be in Georgia—there is a feeling the girls' efforts are underappreciated at home.

It is hard to find coaches who are willing—and able—to work with girls, it is difficult to finance away trips, and it is even a challenge at times to make sure that training facilities are suitable, especially compared to the resources allocated for the boys, Kartsivadze said.

For instance, the winning team of the Georgian women's soccer championship received just 4560 lari (approximately $1,846) for a team of 16 players—a small amount for the level of effort they put in the game, she noted in an e-mail to Investor.ge.

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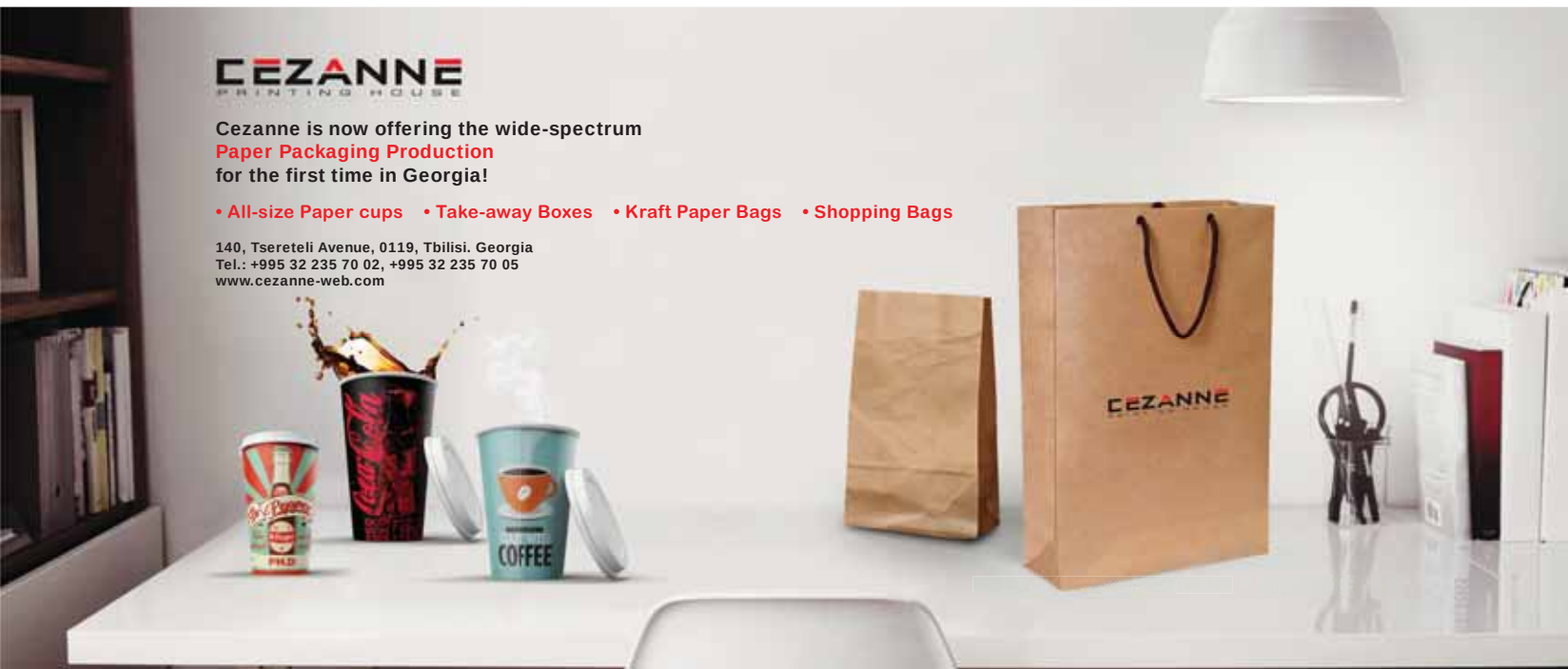

Tbilisi Neighborhoods: Vake

INVESTOR.GE HAS TEAMED UP WITH ANALYST AND HISTORIAN EMIL AVDALIANI TO EXPLORE THE HISTORY OF TBILISI'S GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS. IN THIS ISSUE WE WILL BE EXPLORING THE VAKE DISTRICT.

Effectively a village until 1907, Vake (which means "plain" in Georgian) has transitioned from backwater to the most prestigious neighborhood in Georgia.

Prior to World War II, Tbilisi State University was Vake's only claim to fame.

Following the war, however, development in the district took off thanks to a general plan that envisioned the amenities aimed at attracting the communist elite: new, graceful streets, schools and plenty of parks. Architect Archil Kurdiani is credited with the projects that redefined Vake during that period.

CREATING CHAVCHAVADZE AVENUE

Initially the main street in Vake was known as Tskneti Road (currently Tskneti is the name of a Tbilisi suburb located in the hills overlooking Vake), which was later upgraded to Tskneti Street. The road ran from approximately the Philharmonia concert hall on Melikishvili Street to modern-day Tskneti. The street existed as far back as 1867, according to historical sources and documents, and was renamed University Street in the 1920s.

In 1935 it became known as Nicholas Marr Street and, after reverting back the University street name for a brief period, it became known as Ilia Chavchavadze Avenue in 1957.

That year, the city filled Varazi Gorge, which separated the Vake and Vera districts, closing the natural boundary that separated the two neighborhoods. Parts of Vera were filled in and a new street, Varazi Street, was created. Today the street is famous as the cobblestone road leading from Heroes' Square to Chavchavadze Avenue.

A GREEN DISTRICT

The tree-lined streets, chic cafes, and architecture that Kurdiani envisioned attracting the communist elite have remained popular with Tbilisians and foreigners alike.

A main draw has traditionally been the district's parks, oases of green at the center of the city.

The largest park in the neighborhood, Vake Park, opened in the autumn of 1946 and was named Victory Park in honor of the 1945 victory that ended World War II. The park, which was initially more than 200 hectares (558 acres in size) is located about 2 km from the Tbilisi State University. There is no clear date for when "Victory Park" became "Vake Park" for the city: historians believe it was a gradual change that took place as Tbilisians sought to distance themselves from the city's Soviet heritage. ▸▸

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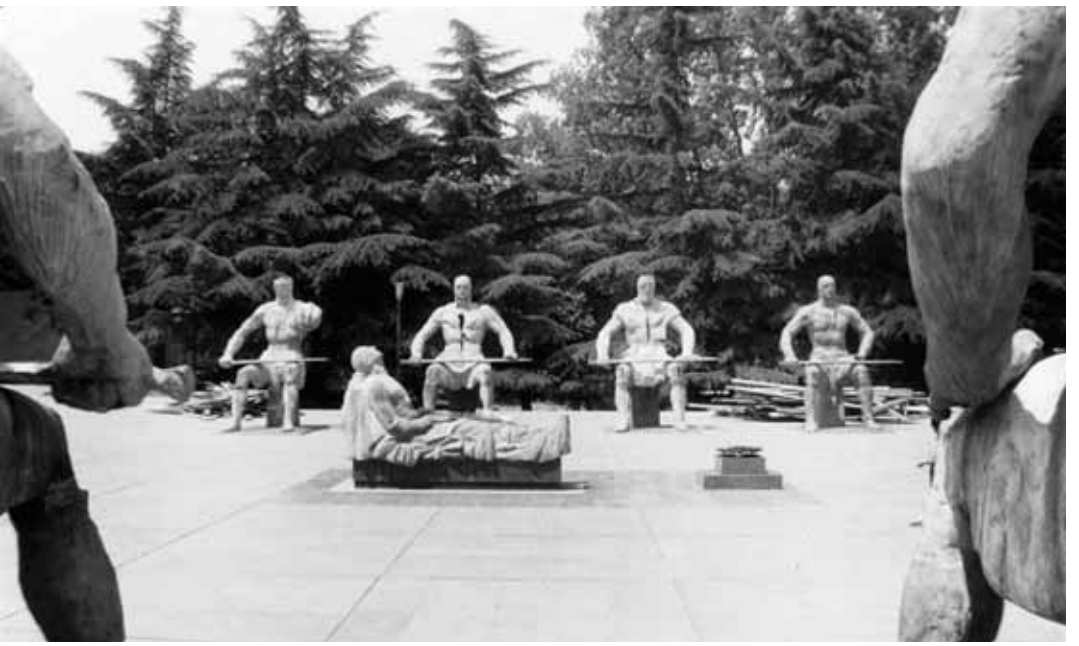

Vake is also home to other major parks and recreation areas in the city, which add to its reputation as the district where Tbilisians go to shop, eat and relax.

A cable car connects Vake Park with Kus Tba (Turtle Lake), a popular spot in the summer for swimming and sunbathing – and a major attraction for runners and walkers all year round. The city's ethnographic museum is also accessible by cable car. The outdoor museum includes examples of traditional houses from every region of Georgia, plus great walking trails.

Vake is also home to Mziuri Park, the labor of love created by Georgian author Nodar Dumbadze, who envisioned it as a paradise for children. The park fell into disrepair in the 1990s, but has since been repaired and, according to some plans for the city, will eventually be expanded to join the city zoo in neighboring Saburtalo.

VAKE – A HOTSPOT IN CONSERVATION DEBATE

Today Vake remains a much-loved work in progress. Its ever-changing array of shops and cafes, and of course its parks, are so popular that the demand for housing in the neighborhood is driving a major building boom – and pushing the neighborhood into the spotlight of a public debate on what should be conserved and what can be changed in the city.

Over the past 200 years, Vake has seen buildings go up and come down. It has experienced the near magical impact of development, the power of a plan and some investment to turn a village into the cultural heart of the city. But it has also borne witness to the power of construction to erase history: Vake Park was built on the site where the newly created Soviet government executed 15 high-level Georgian military officers who fought against the new empire. And a few blocks away, near the building that currently houses the Turkish Embassy, once stood a religious seminary built in the early 20th century when the Tsarist government tried to reduce the influence of seminarians (like the young Joseph Stalin) by relocating them far from the city center.

AMCHAM

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AMCHAM MEMBERS MEET TBILISI MAYORAL CANDIDATES

AmCham Georgia has organized a series of public meetings where member companies can meet candidates for the Tbilisi mayoral election, which is scheduled for October 21.

AmCham members met with independent Tbilisi mayoral candidate Aleksandre "Aleko" Elisashvili on September 11 at Holiday Inn. Mr. Elisashvili gave a presentation about his campaign, his views and future initiatives as a mayoral candidate.

On September 21, at Rooms Hotel Tbilisi, AmCham Georgia hosted a presentation followed by a cocktail reception with European Georgia-Movement for Liberty's mayoral candidate Elene Khoshtaria. Ms. Khoshtaria presented about her future plans and initiatives as a mayoral candidate.

United National Movement Tbilisi mayoral candidate Zaal Udumashvili met with AmCham members at Rooms Hotel Tbilisi on September 28. He discussed his political platform for the city, as well as his vision for social programs and the development of the capital.

Following all three presentations, the candidates engaged in a lively Q&A with members and a cocktail reception.

Other candidates will have the opportunity to present their initiatives for the city at future events.

USTR REPRESENTATIVE, NEW U.S. EMBASSY DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION, DISCUSS BILATERAL TIES

Ed Gresser, the United States Trade Representative, presented on U.S. Trade Policy and Opportunities for Georgia, and Elizabeth Rood, the new Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy, met AmCham members at the business roundtable on September 14 at Holiday Inn Tbilisi. Mr. Gresser and Ms. Rood discussed U.S.-Georgia relations and the wider region. The presentation was followed by a dynamic Q&A session between AmCham members and the guests.

RAFTING ON THE ARAGVI RIVER

AmCham took a group of members and friends rafting on the Aragvi River on August 12. The group enjoyed their rafting adventure, with only a few people falling in, followed by lunch and relaxation by the river. A great day was had by all.

Murphy Group in Georgia: Providing International Solutions to Georgia's Logistics Challenges

Georgia has historically always been one of the most attractive transit routes connecting Asia to Europe. While it has retained its importance as a convenient transit territory, it will inevitably face the challenge of developing an infrastructure to meet the demands of dynamically evolving transport systems, which will require the implementation of infrastructure to provide a secure, fast, reasonably priced, comfortable and environmentally sound transit between Europe and Asia.

Murphy, having been successfully serving the oil and gas industry worldwide over the last 43 years as well as successfully handling large-scale projects, constructing and managing customs-logistics complexes, is currently focused on investment opportunities in creating infrastructure to support the road transportation sector, establishing new and improved transit routes between Asia and Europe and thus significantly increasing Georgia's transit potential.

We understand that in an increasingly competitive environment, Georgia's ability to keep its status as an attractive transit hub will depend on a thorough reform of its existing transit infrastructure and service.

CONTEMPORARY SOLUTIONS

Georgia urgently needs to build modern logistics centers at its borders, comprised of large convenient parking spaces, cafes, restaurants, hotels, specially designated cargo-handling areas, and customs bonded and temporary storage warehouses to accommodate the needs of both commercial and private transport users. It also needs to provide a full range of customs operations in order to prevent the diversion of traffic from its initial planned route.

Murphy Kazbegi LLC, a member of the Murphy Georgia Group of companies, is a specially designated company that is currently working on completing phase 1 of a multimillion-dollar 7-hectare customs-logistics complex in the region between Phansheti and Stepantsminda. This project will help regulate the traffic flow on the dual carriageway leading to the border crossing of Upper Lars. The project is designed to ensure a full range of customs operations, including laboratory control and warehousing services. The construction of contemporary cafes, restaurants, a hotel and spacious parking spaces for all modes of road transport is also a part of the plans for phases 1 and 2 of the project. To date, Murphy Kazbegi LLC has invested nearly $10 million into the project.

We plan to implement eleven more projects at Georgia's border crossings: Poti, Sarpi, Lanchkhuti, Kutaisi, Vale, Sadakhlo, Tsiteli Khidi, Lagodekhi, Natakhari, Tbilisi (Airport); Tbilisi (Gez); and the state-of-the-art Murphy Batumi City project.

BATUMI CITY

Batumi is a successful resort. However, it will not be able to achieve the best possible results and compete against well-established Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea resorts if there continue to be industrial, trade and transportation clusters within the city and in the vicinity of its seaside resorts. Moreover, the existing Batumi Customs office does not provide a full range of customs operations: trucks that require full customs checks are being diverted from their original route to Poti, and must travel through resorts and tourist centers along the seaside where the necessary facilities for full-scale customs checks are located.

The best way forward is the construction of a separate business (trading and industrial) city — Batumi City—at a comfortable distance from Batumi, which will allocate space for trade, industry, transportation, shopping, food and accommodation, entertainment and office clusters on a territory of 90 hectares in the vicinity of a fully-equipped customs office that can provide the full range of customs operations.

The customs-logistics complex itself will allow the management of traffic flow and the distribution of goods on the spot.

Batumi City will have a significant impact on the region's social activity, providing training and creating thousands of new jobs.

It will put an end to the further deterioration of Batumi's beautiful landscape by separating the peaceful seaside landscape from dynamic, contemporary, industrial-style architecture and design.

A separate agricultural cluster will be built in the Batumi City project, adjacent to the customs-logistics complex, to provide contemporary facilities for mandarin, satsumsa, orange, kiwi, lemon and other citrus produce handling and further distribution to the world market.

In realizing the Murphy Batumi City project, along with the Murphy Kazbegi project, we firmly believe that both Adjaria and Murphy will not only make an enormous contribution to the region's economy, but will also significantly increase Georgia's transit potential.

PMC Research Hosts Georgian-German Startup Forum

On September 4-5, Tbilisi hosted the 1st Georgian-German Startup Forum, which was organized by PMC Research in partnership with Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency (GITA), with the support of the German Embassy to Georgia and ProCredit Bank.

The forum was held as part of the Germany-Georgia Friendship Year and aimed to share experience between German and Georgian startuppers.

About seventy local startuppers were gathered on September 4 and had a chance to get acquainted with the experience of successful German startuppers. Michael Hübl, cofounder at Flinc, gave a presentation titled as "The Startup Rollercoaster – a Talk about Failure." Hübl told his story, with the emphasize on failures, showing to local startuppers that the beginning is not easy.

Wolfgang Bernecker, Founder and Managing Partner at Pandata, spoke about "Building a Bootstrapped Big Data Company", and Stephan Dabels, Founder at AmbiGate delivered a presentation on "Rapid Production and the Fearlessness of Pivoting."

"The forum is really very interesting for us, as it's an opportunity for networking and a platform to meet experienced German startuppers, who share their opinions regarding our business," said Guja Narimanashvili,a local startupper from Travel Guide.

The second part of the forum was dedicated to presenting Georgia's environment for startuppers. Giorgi Laliashvili, GITA's Chief Strategic Development Specialist dedicated his speech to "Innovation Support Mechanisms in Georgia" and spoke about the Agency's tools and programs for supporting innovation in Georgia. Otar Antia, Head of the Entrepreneurship Support Department at Enterprise Georgia, presented private sector support programs of the Agency.

Local startuppers, David Khosroshvili of "WiFisher" and Mark van Embden of "Traktor," also had a chance to share their success stories with the audience.

Along with the startuppers, representatives of the German Embassy in Georgia, the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, international organizations and institutions attended the forum. During the second day of the forum, German experts held B2B meetings with the selected eleven local startuppers, at Tech Park Georgia. Companies represented a range of various startup fields, such as: marketing, management, consulting, a language learning website, a travel guide application, smart rings, hi-tech acoustic systems and loudspeakers, etc.

The idea behind B2B meetings was to providea platform for both local and German startuppers to better represent their initiatives and discuss cooperation opportunities.

Both parties found conversations interesting and informative. German experts were impressed to learn about startup scene in Georgia, while Georgian entrepreneurs appreciated mentoring opportunities with their German colleagues.

"I met many new people and had very interesting conversations," said Wolfgang Bernecker, adding that he is planning to visit Georgia again and it would be very nice to invite a Georgian startup delegation to Berlin to better introduce them to the local environment.

"After receiving positive feedback on the impact of the first Georgian-German Startup Forum from all parties involved, we are looking forward to continue further development of the experience-sharing platforms and plan activities to support the development of startups in Georgia," explained Mikheil Skhiereli, Project Manager at PMC Research.

Regus: New Office Solutions for Georgia's Growing Economy

INVESTOR.GE SPOKE WITH RUSKA CHAKVETADZE, THE AREA MANAGER AT REGUS, ABOUT ENTERING THE GEORGIAN MARKET AND THE NEEDS OF THE MODERN OFFICE WORKER.

Regus, an international working-space provider, entered the Tbilisi market in June 2017.

The company serves 2.3 million customers, across over 100 countries and 3,000 business centers globally. Since Regus launched its first centre in Tbilisi, international and local companies have been using its flexible office solutions– serviced offices, virtual offices, meeting rooms and co-working spaces.

"We see Tbilisi as a prominent market for flexible workspace solutions. There is growing demand for flexible workspaces, and it is a global trend. We believe that there will be more and more companies in Tbilisi seeing flexible offices as the best choice for them," Ruska Chakvetadze told *Investor.ge*.

Regus enables its customers to acquire, grow or maintain workplace flexibility by helping them minimize their second largest cost of doing business -- the expenses associated with leasing, equipping and staffing their office space.

With the costs linked to workspace representing between 5 and 10% of a company's turnover, corporations of all sizes are increasingly looking at office space needs as a strategic component of their business plan.

In fact, a recent survey by the company found that 81 percent of companies intend to cut or freeze their property/premises costs this year.

"It is really exciting for us to expand our network to Georgia and especially to the bustling city of Tbilisi, where more and more businesses will be able to grasp the benefits and opportunities offered by flexible working. All sizes of business are clamouring for greater flexibility, agility and choice of location.

We are delighted to bring to these businesses and workers in Tbilisi the opportunity to experience workplace flexibility and to work from where they want," Chakvetadze said.

Regus also enables companies to rapidly seize new market opportunities, providing immediate and flexible office infrastructures already in place, which is particularly important for businesses setting up offices in emerging markets.

"Georgia's economy is growing rapidly and the business environment is changing to accommodate an increasing appetite for new ventures and expansion both internally and from external investors. Regus plays a key role in facilitating businesses' growth by offering agility and flexibility in work spaces," she said.

Along with co-working as shared offices, Regus offers a wide range of solutions for businesses of any size: private offices, virtual offices, mobile office solutions such as its "Businessworld programme," which helps people stay productive on the move.

For more information, please contact Regus at www.regus.com.ge

NEW MEMBERS

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Dorche Prefabricated Building & Construction Industry Trade INC., founded in 1982, is a Turkish General Contractor, with vast worldwide experience, and which provides Engineering, Procurement and Construction services for projects requiring high-quality services in extreme environments. Dorche stands out with its ability to quickly mobilize & operate in the harshest conditions in several countries at the same time. Dorche owns one of the largest prefabricated steel structure manufacturing facilities in the world. The manufacturing facility located is in Ankara - Turkey.

dorce.com.tr

Isbank Georgia JSC
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In 2012, the Bank was registered by the National Bank of Georgia (NBG) and began its operations as a branch of a foreign entity, namely, Türkiye İş Bankası A.Ş Batumi Branch. In August 2015, JSC Isbank Georgia -- a fully owned subsidiary of Türkiye İş Bankası A.Ş. -- was established and took over the operations of its parent company in Georgia, serving commercial as well as individual clients with a wide variety of banking products and services. The Bank is operating with one branch in Tbilisi, and one branch and one service center in Batumi.

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Being one of the major international investors in Georgia, Maqro Construction is continuing to leave a mark on Georgia through various investments it has made in the short time since it was founded in 2013. Maqro Construction develops its technical expertise based on honesty and high quality, which are the main features of its business ethics, together with the right strategy of its dedicated management team that monitors the market closely. By these means, it provides its costumers comfortable services, products and brand-new contemporary living areas with unique and affordable terms. In addition, it is a close follower of this new lifestyle that it creates.

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AMCHAM GEORGIA HOSTED AN AMCHAM KYRGYZ REPUBLIC DELEGATION AT A COCKTAIL RECEPTION AT MERCURE HOTEL ROOFTOP RESTAURANT ON SEPTEMBER 6. AMCHAM GEORGIA PRESIDENT MICHAEL COWGILL GREETED THE GUESTS AND INTRODUCED AMCHAM KYRGYZ REPUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES. THE EVENT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR AMCHAM GEORGIA TO TREAT ITS GUESTS TO THE SPECTACULAR VIEWS OF TBILISI'S OLD TOWN AND PROVIDE ITS MEMBERS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET COLLEAGUES FROM GEORGIA AND THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC.

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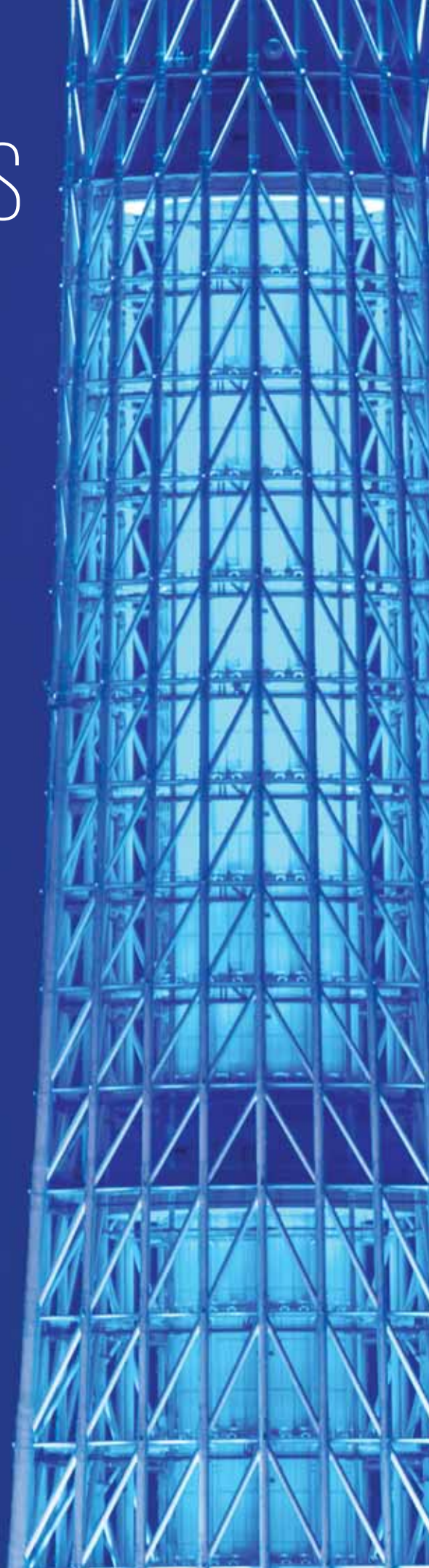

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