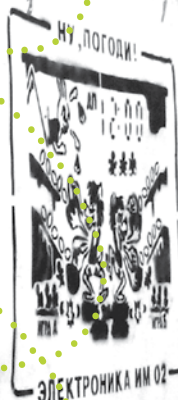
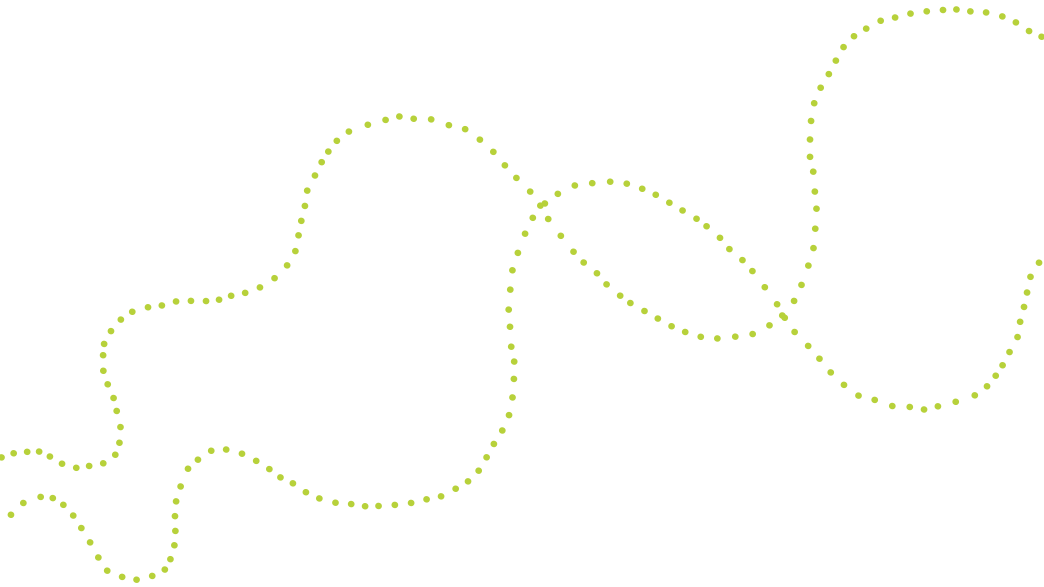



Volunteering in Georgia

A Handbook







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ACADEMY FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT
ჩვენთვისაც მშვიდობისთვის

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Printed by The NewsPaper “Sakartvelos Matsne” Ltd.
Tbilisi, Georgia.

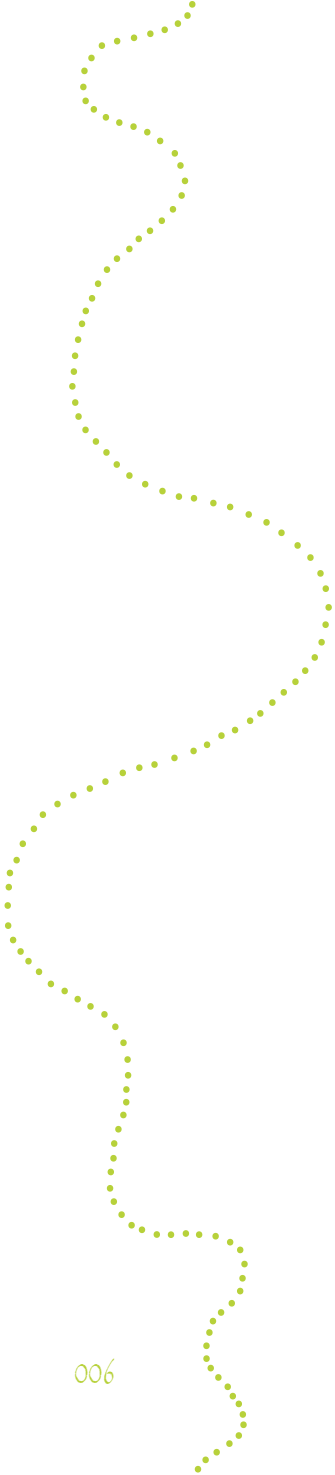
Cover: Graffiti, Tbilisi.

ISBN 978 9941 0 0725 5



Volunteering in Georgia

A Handbook



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Preface

SALTO-YOUTH
EASTERN EUROPE AND CAUCASUS
RESOURCE CENTRE

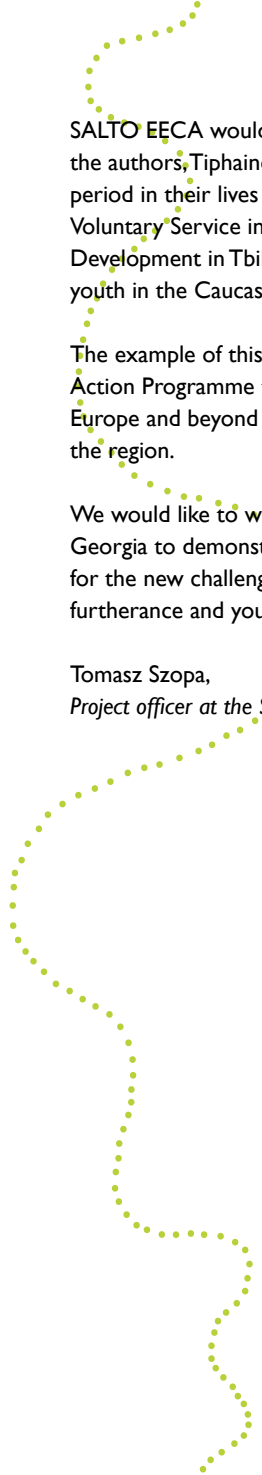


Dear volunteers going to Georgia,

Your upcoming experience of the European Voluntary Service (EVS) is certainly going to be one of the most adventurous and personality-enriching periods in your life. Not only because you are going to the Southern Caucasus, far away from your home country and culture, but also because you will support the local community where you are going with your work, because you will help other people from your heart!

By being an international volunteer you will definitely learn a lot and experience both the bright and dark sides of the local culture you are moving to. Nevertheless your work will also be directed towards people there. You will need a lot of responsibility and surely will face great moments of success shared with others. Being a member of the large family of EVS volunteers makes you an actor of positive change in Europe and beyond. Assume this fully and enjoy a mindful of heartfelt emotions!

The Handbook you are just about to read will be very helpful with your preparation for and awareness of many obstacles that you will meet along the way. The Handbook might also help you a lot to identify your own objectives for your upcoming EVS project. Altogether the Handbook can make your life and work in Georgia easier. Enjoy reading it and remember that every EVS experience is unique and personal.

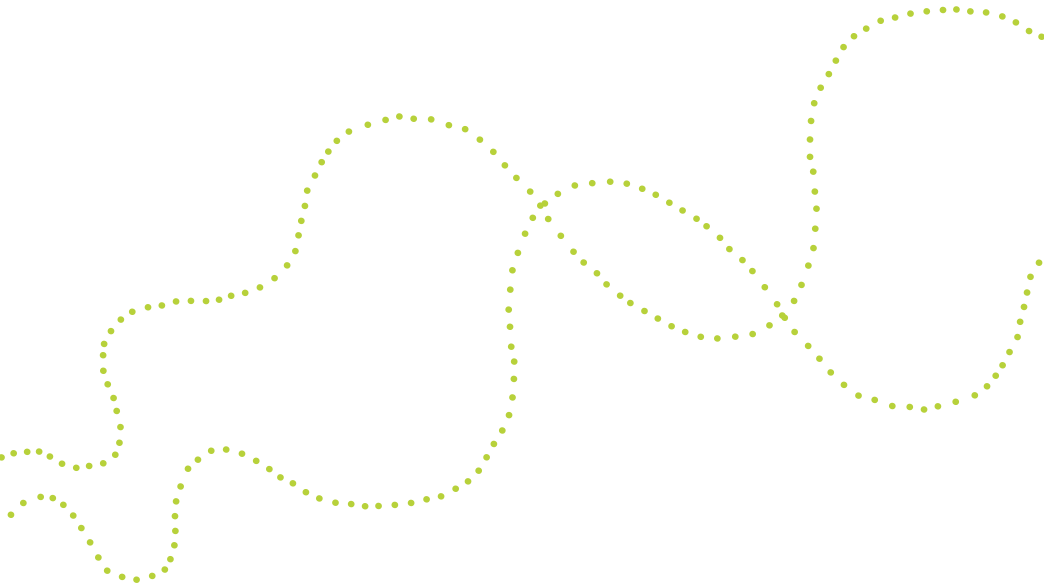
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SALTO EECA would like to express their deepest gratefulness and esteem to the authors, Tiphaine Coulardeau and Sebastian Schweitzer, who have dedicated a period in their lives to the development of Georgia in general and the European Voluntary Service in particular. Many thanks also to the Academy of Peace and Development in Tbilisi which for many years have supported the development of youth in the Caucasus with great success.

The example of this Handbook clearly shows that the efforts of the Youth in Action Programme to bring the intercultural dimension into youth work within Europe and beyond is not only a priority but also a reality of many EVS projects in the region.

We would like to wish all EVS volunteers who are going to their placements in Georgia to demonstrate all the enthusiasm, energy and open-mindedness required for the new challenges they have chosen to face. Good luck as for your personal furtherance and your welcome contribution to local communities in Georgia.

Tomasz Szopa,
Project officer at the SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre



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Background

This handbook is inspired by the wish to motivate young people to come as European Volunteers to Georgia to experience what will become a lifelong memory.

The European Voluntary Service (EVS) of the European Union offers from our point of view a unique opportunity to meet those personal and cultural challenges that can be found in foreign countries. The EVS programme provides a safe and supportive structure and the financial help needed by volunteers. With this handbook we want to encourage young people to join the European Community of volunteers in Georgia to experience life and work in a different cultural environment, acquire knowledge, improve their skills, undergo personal changes and simply spend a great time.

Living and working in a foreign country anywhere in the world brings a lot of adventure and challenges, particularly in Georgia where you have to face them every day. Often amazing, sometimes terrific or unforgettable but also frustrating and daunting, these daily surprises have an enormous impact on volunteers during their stay in the foreign country but also on their life afterwards.

It has been often noticed that even after having read a lot about cultures and living styles, you still encounter cultural surprises. At first glance, Georgians seem to belong to European culture as many other societies of Post Soviet Union and indeed there are many similarities to be found. But under this Western appearance, considerable cultural differences exist. Keep in mind that Georgia is not only facing a political and economic transition, but is also confronted to Western influences that deeply question their traditional norms and values, and you will understand that even Georgians find it difficult to choose between tradition and modernity or to adapt to the fast development in their society. Consequently, being a foreigner living and volunteering here creates plenty of confusing situations for which we believe some cultural background information and practical advice would be helpful

to avoid problems and difficulties in daily life.

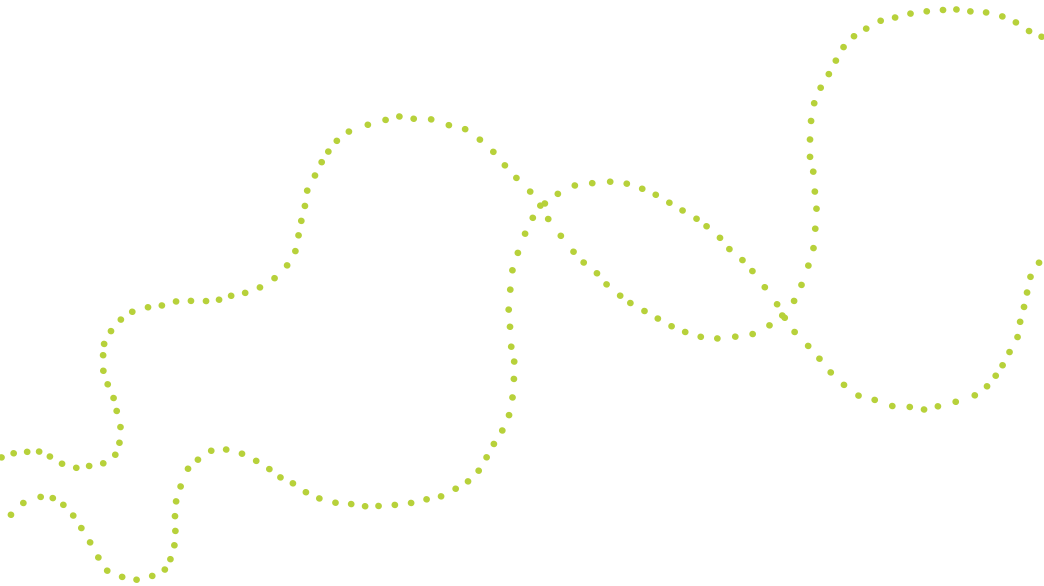
Therefore this handbook has been made for future volunteers or foreigners planning to stay longer than just a holiday in Georgia. It raises up practical, cultural and volunteering issues about living in Georgia, because using public transportation may be insignificant in your own country whereas using public transportation here might be an adventure in itself.

This handbook does not have the pretention to replace the few existing travelling guides for this region of the world. Consequently, it does not contain touristic information as such, it only covers it when it is relevant to integrate Georgian culture.

Instead, this handbook's topic is volunteering in Georgia and it is structured along this line. It starts with a short chapter about volunteering that outlines the main challenges to volunteers in a foreign country and Georgia, and it gives a brief overview of the EVS programme. The next two chapters are dedicated to Georgia as a country, providing basic facts and highlighting cultural characteristics to give a true image of this destination. The following three chapters together are the core of the book addressing those three basic challenges encountered by any volunteer: daily life, cultural differences and working in a Georgian organisation. At the end further readings and other resources can be found widening information on Georgia, volunteer work and Intercultural Learning.

We hope that book will make you curious about coming here, for a short while or a longer stay, and motivate young people to discover the spirit of Georgia. Enjoy reading this book and come along to live and work here.

As the handbook is dedicated to current or future volunteers it is available as a free download on the webpage of the Academy for Peace and Development, Georgia, www.apd.ge, and of SALTO-EECA Resource Centre on www.salto-youth.net/eeca





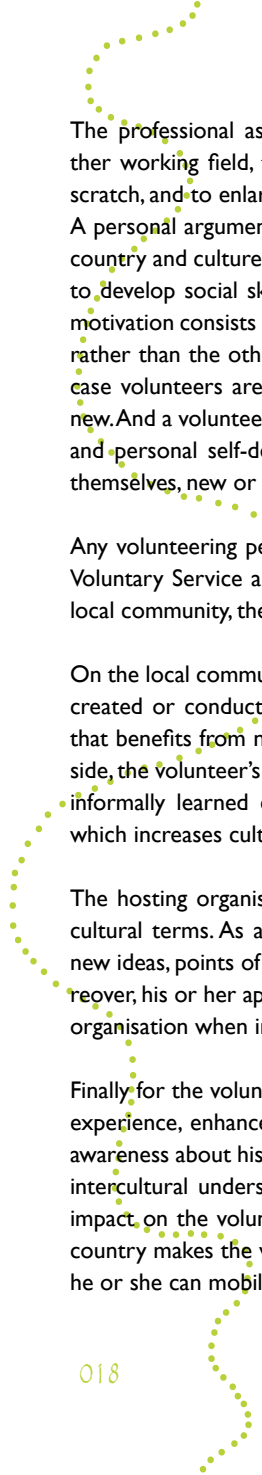
Volunteering in Georgia

A volunteer is a person who works for free for the benefit of a given community. Volunteers are acting on their own will - they are not forced to volunteer. They do not receive any financial compensation for their work, except out-of-pocket expenses.

The concern of most young people is to find a job which corresponds to their expectation and to create a family. Consequently, every single action is often taken in order to fit it into their Curricula Vitae (CVs) with their career in view. Westerners particularly think ahead, plan their life and they have little time left for other concerns, whereas volunteering - if not considered as a CV entry or a logical step for a future job - can be taking some time for these other concerns. It is dedicating time to oneself and to others, to think upon one's personal aims, one's own values or even the world as a whole. Volunteers are generally seeking challenges, they spend some of their time to what they believe in and to implement their own ideas in the real world. On the way they receive a lot from the people they work with. This makes volunteering what it is: a process of giving and receiving.

One can volunteer everywhere, at home or in foreign countries. The difference between volunteer activities at home and foreign countries is very small and depends more on the sectors in which the volunteer decides to get involved. But to be a volunteer in a foreign country definitely adds a cultural dimension to the project making intercultural dialogue and learning key elements in it and it enriches the experience. The European Voluntary Service of the European Community offers this combination of voluntary work and intercultural exchange by providing a well-established structure for Europeans to work and live in other countries.

International volunteers usually express several reasons for volunteering, but generally these can be divided in two broad categories: personal and professional motivations.



The professional aspect is mainly explained by the motivation to discover another working field, to support on-going projects or to implement activities from scratch, and to enlarge experience and widen knowledge in an already known area. A personal argument focuses more on the following objectives: to discover a new country and culture, to define personal aims and one's own identity more precisely, to develop social skills, or to help others in general. Commonly each volunteer's motivation consists in a mix of professional and personal elements, while one aspect rather than the other may be emphasized by each particular volunteer. But in any case volunteers are looking for something new or aiming to discover something new. And a volunteer period is exactly giving that opportunity to them: professional and personal self-development, increased awareness about the environment and themselves, new or strengthened skills and satisfaction.

Any volunteering period in foreign countries with any organisation, the European Voluntary Service among others, creates an impact at three different levels – the local community, the hosting organisation and the volunteer himself or herself.

On the local community the impact has mainly two sides. On one side the activities created or conducted by the volunteer concretely affect the hosting community that benefits from newly set up initiatives that address public issues. On the other side, the volunteer's living and working creates an intercultural exchange with some informally learned elements for those who interact with the foreign volunteer, which increases cultural awareness.

The hosting organisation too is not only affected by the volunteers' presence in cultural terms. As a supplementary worker the volunteer contributes his or her new ideas, points of view and initiatives to on-going or newly created projects. Moreover, his or her approaches, methods and skills can improve the work of the host organisation when imported and implemented.

Finally for the volunteer going to a foreign country provides him or her with work experience, enhances his or her skills and knowledge, but also raises his or her awareness about his or her own culture and the hosting culture leading to widened intercultural understanding and tolerance. The entire volunteering period has an impact on the volunteer's self-confidence, because living and working in a foreign country makes the volunteer feel and understand which of his or her own abilities he or she can mobilize.

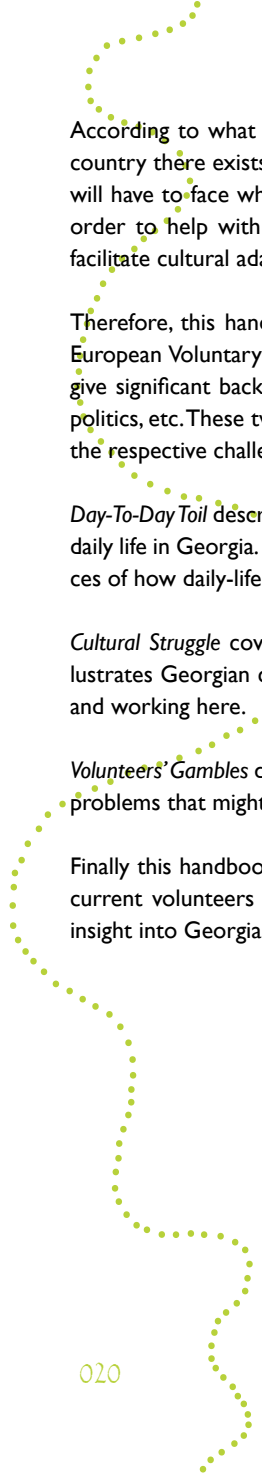
Of course too, unexpected results may come out of a volunteering project. The projects implemented by the volunteer can fail to comply with the community's needs or simply when not well conducted they may locally give a bad reputation to the hosting organisation. The volunteer can get frustrated because he or she cannot reach his or her personal and professional goals.

These impacts, positive or negative, are not specific to volunteering in Georgia. They occur in most international voluntary projects, but we must emphasize here that these impacts are amplified by the particular challenges a volunteer assigns to himself or herself when going to an emerging country like Georgia. Georgia offers to each volunteer coming here the satisfaction of both their personal and professional goals and above mentioned expectations.

Georgia being a country in transition undergoing a shift from a socialist economy to capitalism, we can find elements from both systems. This and the fact that the country is in a permanent state of development endows daily life with a specific set of adventures and logistic questions that are unknown in Western countries. Public transportation, supply infrastructures or simple shopping require more attention from a foreigner than commonly expected.

As Georgia is located at the meeting point between Asia and Europe the culture features particularities that make volunteering here an intercultural experience, too. A volunteer will be confronted to a society in which traditions still play an important role and in which the concepts of time and interpersonal relations have a different meaning. To discover Georgian culture and to adapt to it when coming from Europe will require much more thinking than requested when staying within Western Europe for an EVS project, but it will on the other hand also enrich the person's perception of cultural differences and their value.

Due to the Post-Soviet heritage of the country and the chaotic early 1990s Non-Governmental Organisations are still developing and that is why volunteers have the unique opportunity more than in Western Europe to bring considerable contributions to local activities and to the organisations themselves. This is challenging since a lot will depend on the initiatives of the volunteer himself or herself. However, original opinions and points of view, different working styles and rhythms, and new ideas for projects are highly welcome here.



According to what has just been said, for every volunteering project in a foreign country there exists a challenge containing three sub-challenges which a volunteer will have to face when coming to Georgia. This handbook is dedicated to them in order to help with integration in the country and the hosting organisation and facilitate cultural adaptation.

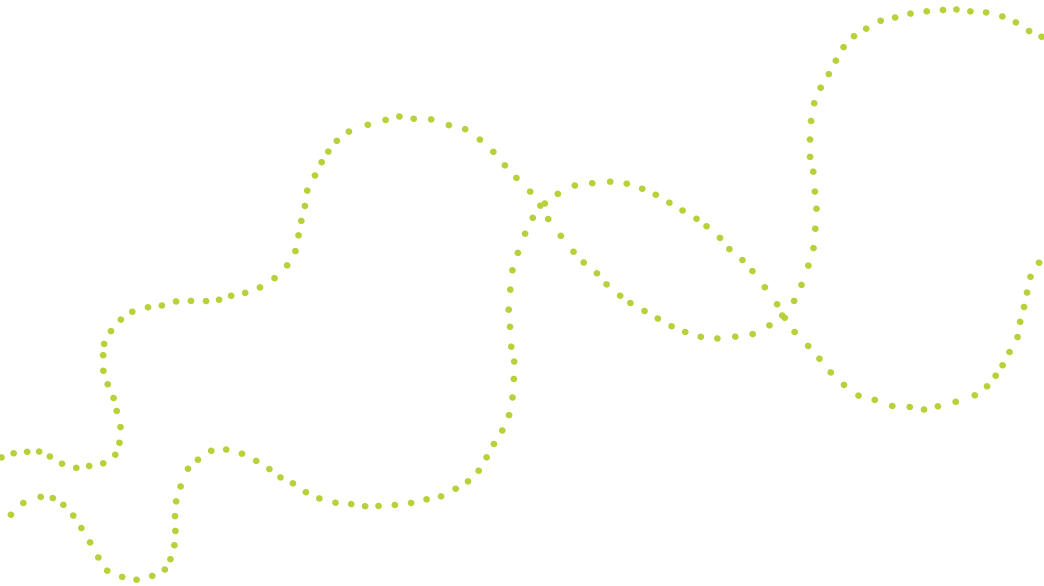
Therefore, this handbook is organised as follows. After a short overview on the European Voluntary Service of the European Community, the first two chapters give significant background information concerning Georgia, its history, traditions, politics, etc. These two chapters are followed by three more chapters dedicated to the respective challenges listed below that are deeply interconnected.

Day-To-Day Toil describes the obstacles a volunteer has to overcome in arranging his daily life in Georgia. It addresses the smaller or bigger but surely significant differences of how daily-life logistics are organised here.

Cultural Struggle covers the intercultural aspect of volunteering in Georgia and illustrates Georgian cultural particularities volunteers have to deal with when living and working here.

Volunteers' Gambles deals with the working environment of the volunteer and tackles problems that might occur when volunteering in a Georgian organisation.

Finally this handbook contains real life testimonies and anecdotes from former or current volunteers in Georgia in order to share experiences and to provide an insight into Georgian volunteering reality.





European Voluntary Service




The European Voluntary Service (EVS) is part of the Youth in Action programme set up by the European Union. It gives the opportunity to young people to experience life in another country for a few months by living and working there. This chapter presents the main lines of the EVS programme.

The European Voluntary Service (EVS) is a programme established to offer a “learning period” to young people, meaning that the volunteer does not need any background education, specific skills or language knowledge to participate. The intention is that every young person aged 18 to 30 - in some specific cases from 16 onwards - can take part in a non-profit activity in order to enhance their personal, professional and also intercultural skills. The main goal of the European Community’s giving this opportunity to young people is to build peace by creating intercultural bridges across Europe and having a direct impact on local communities.

A European Volunteer can take part in the activities of organisations committed to different goals: the environment, social care, education, culture, Human Rights, youth, arts, etc. While spending up to 12 months in the foreign country, the volunteer is supposed to interact with the local community of his hosting country in order to increase tolerance and European awareness. The Youth in Action programme especially focuses on young people with fewer opportunities, hence socially impaired young people from isolated areas, with a disability or any characteristic decreasing their chances to be fully integrated into their local community.

The European Voluntary Service can take place in most of the world’s countries, but

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it mainly targets European Union countries plus Turkey, Lichtenstein, Iceland and Norway (so called Programme Countries) and Neighbouring Countries - Eastern Europe and Caucasus (EECA), the Mediterranean region (EuroMed) and South East Europe (SEE). During this learning period volunteers are supported with different training programmes helping them to face challenges and to multiply the impact and effect of their volunteering period, by sharing experiences and impressions with other volunteers - the different training programmes and supportive measures are detailed in the chapter entitled *Framework*. The living expenses of the volunteer are fully covered and the EVS budget also takes care of sharing and spreading experiences in Europe by organising, when possible, specific events connected with the volunteering period.

In order to learn more about it, you will find below a short description of the EVS programme. Future volunteers will discover basic elements and, if necessary, the chapter entitled *Resources* will provide you with further documentation and addresses.

“Youth in Action!” This is the name of the programme dedicated to youth by the European Community for the period 2007-2013. It contains different types of activities all dedicated to informal education and Intercultural Learning. The European Voluntary Service is listed as Action 2 in this programme.

Eastern Europe and Caucasus (EECA). This region which includes seven countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine - is a partner region for the Youth in Action programme. It is possible to develop European Voluntary Service projects with organisations located in these countries. A Resource Centre dedicated to the cooperation with this region has been set-up by the European Community in order to support activities - contacts are detailed in the chapter *Resources*.

Sending Organisation. Volunteers are sent by a given organisation from their own country. This organisation helps them to find an EVS placement in the destination country - the sending organisation applies to get the funds for the EVS project in most of the cases of an EVS project taking place in EECA. During the volunteering period, the sending organisation keeps contact with the volunteers and follows the evolution of the project.

Hosting Organisation. This is the organisation that hosts the volunteer by providing a work placement and some specific and appointed tasks within or outside its own structure. The hosting organisation is responsible for the arrangements concerning the volunteer's stay - accommodation, local transportation, food, etc. They also appoint the mentor and the coordinator of the volunteer and prepare them concerning their duties and responsibilities.

Coordinator. This person, working in the hosting organisation, acts in cooperation with the volunteer. The coordinator gives tasks to the volunteer and supports the development of the volunteer's own project. The coordinator is the main person the volunteer refers to within the working environment.

Mentor. This is the person who helps the volunteer to settle in the new environment, to get to know locals and to support him in case of difficulties. The mentor knows the hosting placement and plays the role of mediator in case of conflict.

Costs. The EVS programme fully covers travel costs from home to the hosting placement, as well as visa and vaccination costs, if needed. All costs need to be listed beforehand in the budget in order to be covered.

Volunteer Allowance. It is the money the volunteer receives as personal pocket money. This amount is €80 per month for Georgia in 2008.

AXA Insurance. A European volunteer has insurance coverage at AXA Insurance Company - every volunteer receives an insurance certificate before leaving. The volunteer needs to inform AXA when going under medical treatment in order to be reimbursed. In case of planned treatment, AXA may provide pre-paid care. The insurance covers diverse fields and the volunteer is advised to read the insurance contact before leaving in order to fully know his coverage.



European Volunteer's Testimony.....

"I have spent half a year in Georgia and it is hard to say something about it in a few words! But what I can say is that I have never felt in my life so many different emotions: sometimes devastating and sometimes magical like in fairytales. Who knows if it is because of Georgia or EVS?!"

Georgia! A country with many faces: marvellous mountains, the Black Sea, marshrutkas, homemade wine, crazily organised traffic, romantic streets and houses in Tbilisi, joyful people and a lot more. If you decide to forget for a while the way you used to live and to move to Georgia, you will experience a lot! You think this disorganised society will eat your last grit and stamina: it might well just be the first impression! Take a deeper look and you may learn the joy of life...

People! Georgians have kind of "easy going", hard to catch, life approaches that you might have forgotten because of the lack of time in our Western societies...or maybe just because of a different use of time. We have only one life and it is important to enjoy it: you will learn a lot from Georgians!"



Facts and Figures

Facts and Figures offers basic information concerning Georgia, its history, its current situation and its perspectives. It wishes to create motivation and widen knowledge about the country. These basic facts are valuable for a newcomer because they are the groundwork for further understanding, and therefore for better integration in the country and its culture. The *Open Questions* section closing the chapter, states the challenges Georgia is presently confronted to and which volunteers will be, if not directly involved with, at least facing.

This part, by depicting Georgia's situation, wishes to give an idea of where volunteers can contribute energy, time and ideas.

Land of Medea

Georgia, often known as the Land of Medea, possesses a long and rich history. The earliest proof of settlements in Georgia is circa 1.8 million years old. Georgian history is characterised by invasions from different neighbours who brought cosmopolitan influences to the country - nevertheless Georgia kept its own specificities through the centuries. Having a short overview on where the people and the land come from is the keystone for understanding the country today. The main historical lines are described below.

Antiquity. There are proofs of a developed Georgian civilisation as far back as the 7th century BCE thanks to urban, metallurgic and goldsmith heritages. However, the actual territory of Georgia has been inhabited since the early Stone Age. The Ancient Greeks and Romans record Georgia to be then divided into two Empires, known as Iberia on the East and Colchis on the West. Colchis is associated by Greek Mythology to the place where Jason and the Argonauts sought the Golden Fleece. In this period of history, both territories

received strong cultural influences from their neighbours – Persians, Greeks and Byzantines. The Georgian Kingdom adopted Christianity in 335.

Medieval Times. The Persians and the Byzantine Empire struggled about the region and control switched back and forth several times between them. Several fragmented feudal regions were the result of this instability and opened the way to invasion by Arabs in the 7th century. However, Kartli-Iberia remained very independent and Eastern and Western Georgia were united in the 11th century, which initiated the Georgian Golden Age. The young King from the Bagrationi Family, David IV (Aghmashenebeli, also called The Builder, c. 1089 - 1125) drove the Seljuk Turks out of the country and expanded the territory southwards and eastwards.

Thanks to its unity and its prosperous exchanges with the Christian and Islamic Worlds, Georgia advanced in various cultural fields such as literature and politics. This brought the united Georgia into a real Renaissance in

the 12th and 13th centuries, about two hundred years before the similar Renaissance in the Western World. This Golden Age was possible thanks to the political consolidation of the State in the 11th century. Then, under the reign of Queen Tamar (r. 1184 - 1213), the epic poem of Rustaveli *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* was written as an ode to humanist values. The Renaissance brought significant improvements in state organisation, secular politics, culture, philosophy and literature, as well as religious and ethnic tolerance. The effects of the Golden Age are still visible in the cathedrals, fortresses and the romantic literature.

The Golden Age was brought to an end by the Mongol invasion in the 13th century which marked the beginning of a period of Persian and Turkish invasions which will last six centuries. During that period, the present Georgian territory was entirely fragmented.

Russian Empire. In 1783 Georgian representatives signed the Treaty of Georgievsk with the Russian Empire that established a protectorate. This agreement was broken a few years later and Georgia was annexed by the Russian Empire in 1801. This date marks the end of the Bagrationi Dynasty.

One century later, at the end of the 20th century, the Georgian nation experien-

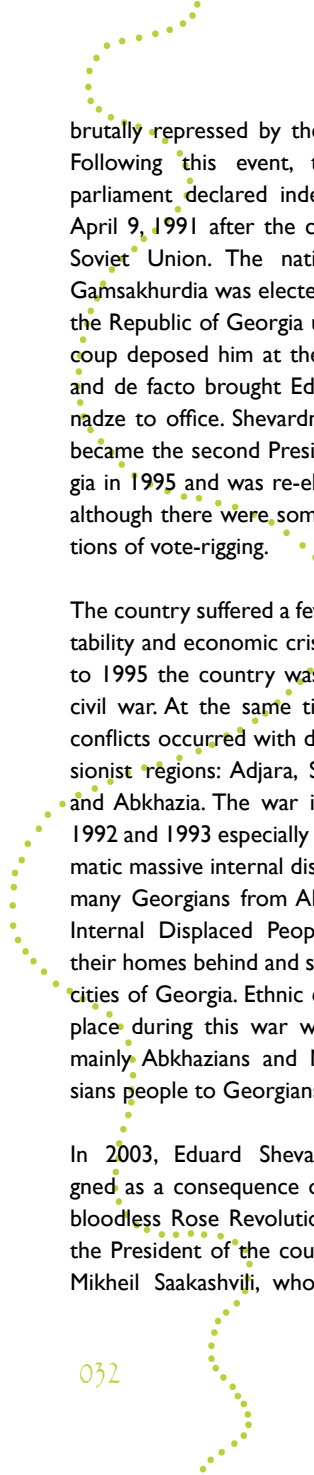
ced a revival in the increased awareness concerning culture and language. Driven by the nationalistic elite, mainly brought up by the writer-journalist Ilia Chavchavadze and the poet Akaki Tsereteli, this movement led to the independence of the Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1918.

Soviet Union. The independent state lasted three years from 1918 to 1921 when Georgia was invaded by the Red Army and integrated into the Soviet Union.

In 1922, Stalin, a son of the country, became General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He stayed in power until his death in 1953. During these decades Georgians, like everyone in the Soviet Union, suffered from political repression and persecution - the Great Purges of 1937-1938, directed by Stalin, deeply affected the country. During WW2, Georgians fought on the side of the Red Army.

During the Soviet era, Georgia developed significantly, especially in the fields of education, industry and urbanisation. However, from the 60's onward, nationalist movements claiming independence for the Georgian nation became more and more popular among Georgians.

Independence. On April 9, 1989, a peaceful Georgian demonstration was

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brutally repressed by the Soviet army. Following this event, the Georgian parliament declared independence on April 9, 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The nationalist Zviad Gamsakhurdia was elected President of the Republic of Georgia until a military coup deposed him at the end of 1991 and de facto brought Eduard Shevardnadze to office. Shevardnadze officially became the second President of Georgia in 1995 and was re-elected in 2000 although there were some clear allegations of vote-rigging.

The country suffered a few years of instability and economic crisis. From 1991 to 1995 the country was in a state of civil war. At the same time territorial conflicts occurred with different secessionist regions: Adjara, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The war in Abkhazia in 1992 and 1993 especially provoked dramatic massive internal displacements of many Georgians from Abkhazia. These Internal Displaced People (IDPs) left their homes behind and settled in many cities of Georgia. Ethnic cleansing took place during this war which opposed mainly Abkhazians and North Caucasians people to Georgians.

In 2003, Eduard Shevardnadze resigned as a consequence of the popular bloodless Rose Revolution. Since then, the President of the country has been Mikheil Saakashvili, who was elected

in 2003 and re-elected in 2008. The government - mainly West-oriented - aims to join NATO and tries to recover control over the whole Georgian territory. Since 2006 foreign relations with Russia have deteriorated unequivocally.

Georgia საქართველო

Georgia is called *sakartvelo* საქართველო by Georgians themselves, their language is *kartuli* ქართული, and Georgians name themselves *kartvelebi* ქართველები. This name comes from Kartlos who, according to the legend, is the father of Georgians. The international name Georgia can be explained in several ways - the Greek and Latin roots of Georgia mean “tiller of the land” or “agriculture” but it might also come from Saint George, the most admired Saint in the country.

Below basic facts about the country are detailed giving a general picture about present Georgia.

Geography. Georgia is situated in the Trans-Caucasian region, between Europe, Asia and the Middle East, on the territory located between the Black and Caspian Seas. The country is naturally bordered on the North by the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range and on the South by the Lower Caucasus Mountain Range.

Georgia has four neighbouring coun-

tries: the Russian Federation North, Azerbaijan East, and Armenia and Turkey South. The Black Sea borders Georgia on the West. Due to the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South-Ossetia, there are internal borders which are recognised by neither the international community nor Georgia.

The climate in Georgia is very diverse considering the small dimension of the country. Georgia is protected from the cold air mass in the North by the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range and from the dry and hot air masses in the South by the Lower Caucasian Mountains. In the Western part of the country the climate is considered as humid subtropical while in the Eastern part it varies from humid subtropical to continental. Some areas in the mountainous areas are snow-covered most of the year. Due to these various climates, the country features an amazing collection of extreme landscapes: high mountains, semi-deserts, semi-tropical forests with luxurious vegetation, rivers, lakes, the Black Sea coast, etc.

Around 4.5 million people are estimated to live in Georgia. The main emigrated Georgian communities are in Turkey, Russia, the USA and Western Europe. An unknown amount of refugees are also living in Georgia: they mainly come from Chechnya. The two main minorities living in Georgia are Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

The demographic density of Georgia is about 64 inhabitants per square kilometre. The Netherlands in comparison have a density of 393 and Malta Island of 1272. In some remote mountainous Georgian areas, nobody can be found.

The capital city is Tbilisi. The number of inhabitants is usually estimated to be 1.8 million. However it is difficult to find the exact number of people living in the capital due to the high number of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Politics. Georgia became independent from the Soviet Union on April 9, 1991.

Georgia is a Republic which is administratively divided into nine regions, one city and two autonomous regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The political system is semi-presidential with a directly elected president for a five years term as the head of the state and of the government.

The actual President is Mikheil Saakashvili. Brought to power by the Rose Revolution he was re-elected on January 5, 2008 in the first round of the election with about 53 % of the votes. In 2008 during the elections some fraud and irregularities were observed, but the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) confirmed the results. Mikheil Saakashvili is one of the youngest Presidents in Europe.

The legislative branch consists of a unicameral parliament with 150 members of which 75 are elected by proportional representation and 75 from single-seat constituencies. The parliament serves for five years.

Economics. The currency is called Lari ლარი and is usually written GEL. 100 Tetri თეთრი correspond to 1 Lari. Notes of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 GEL and coins of 5, 10, 20, 50 Tetri and 1 and 2 GEL can be found. The currency was launched in 1995 by President Shevardnadze in order to replace the temporary currency Kupon Lari chosen for the period following the independence. The exchange rate to the Euro varies from €2.15 up to €2.40.

In 2006, the official rate of inflation was 8.8 %. This high inflation rate has some impact on daily life - e.g. the price of a bus or metro ticket doubled on July 1, 2007 from 20 Tetri to 40 Tetri, or the

price of bread increased by 10 to 20 Tetri during the second semester of 2007.

The median salary is fairly low in comparison with European averages: a university teacher, according to his rank, earns between 200 and 400 GEL a month. Considering that salaries are often low and not increasing, using public transportation or buying daily products are too expensive for some people.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Georgia, according to the World Bank, was US\$1,560 in 2006. Considering the economy by sectors shows figures of a developed country with a contribution to the GDP of 13.5 % for agriculture, 25.9 % for industry and 60.6 % for services. However, the statistics indicating employment by sectors tell us a different story: about 50 % of the working population is employed in agriculture while only around 9 % is in industry.

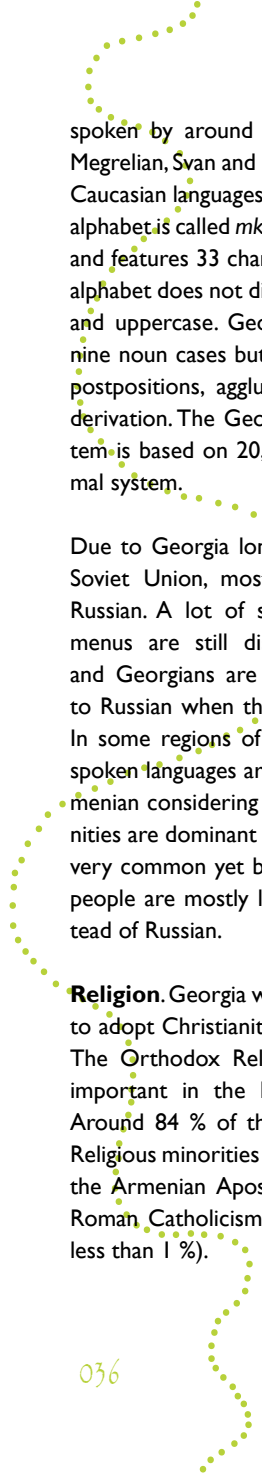
The rate of unemployment in Georgia is around 12 % but differs a lot among regions and cities.

The Human Development Index (HDI) of Georgia is considered to be average (between 0.750 and 0.799 on a scale of 1). In comparison Poland is scaled between 0.850 and 0.899 and France over 0.950.

Education. School education is organised in two stages: primary and secondary education. While primary education that includes primary and basic school, is compulsory for nine years, secondary education is optional and leads to a diploma that gives access to higher education. The primary school enrolment rate is 93 % while the secondary enrolment rate is about 82%. The literacy rate is similar to the literacy rates in Western European countries - unfortunately due to difficulties to measure literacy in Georgia, UNICEF does not publish any official literacy rate for the country.

Higher education is provided by a broad range of public and private institutions. Since Georgia entered the Bologna Process in 2005, academic studies have been divided in a three year Bachelor's degree, a two year Master's degree and a three year Doctoral degree. Since the reform of higher education, bribing which was common before for entering university or passing exams, have mainly disappeared. Universities and higher education schools are still developing and implementing the new academic structure.

Languages. Georgia has two official languages: Georgian and Abkhazian, due to the autonomous status of Abkhazia. Georgian ქართული (*kartuli*), the most common South Caucasian language is



spoken by around 4.1 million people. Megrelian, Svan and Lza are other South Caucasian languages. The currently used alphabet is called *mkhedruli* მხედრული and features 33 characters. The written alphabet does not distinguish lowercase and uppercase. Georgian language has nine noun cases but no articles. It uses postpositions, agglutination and word derivation. The Georgian counting system is based on 20, known as a vigesimal system.

Due to Georgia long belonging to the Soviet Union, most Georgians speak Russian. A lot of signs or restaurant menus are still displayed in Russian and Georgians are switching naturally to Russian when they meet foreigners. In some regions of Georgia, the most spoken languages are Azerbaijani or Armenian considering that these communities are dominant there. English is not very common yet but nowadays young people are mostly learning English instead of Russian.

Religion. Georgia was the second state to adopt Christianity in the 4th century. The Orthodox Religion remains very important in the lives of Georgians. Around 84 % of them are Orthodox. Religious minorities include Islam (10%), the Armenian Apostolic Church (3%), Roman Catholicism and Judaism (both less than 1 %).

Holidays. The Official holidays are:

- . New Year (January 1st)
- . Orthodox Christmas (January 7th)
- . Epiphany (January 19th)
- . Mother's Day (March 3rd)
- . International Women's Day (March 8th)
- . National Unity Day (April 9th)
- . Orthodox Good Friday, Great Saturday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday (following the Julian calendar)
- . Victory Day (May 9th)
- . Saint Andrew's Day (May 12th)
- . Independence Day (May 26th)
- . Dormition Day (August 28th)
- . Day of Svetitskhoveli Cathedral of Mtskheta (October 14th)
- . Saint George's Day (November 23rd)

In Georgia, the Orthodox Church follows the Julian calendar. Religious events take place according to this calendar, and not according to the Gregorian calendar, which is followed by Catholics or Protestants. Therefore Christmas and New Year happen on different days according to the calendar you refer to.

Open Questions

Georgia since its independence from the Soviet Union has been having difficulties at diverse levels. Besides economic problems and poverty, the country faces difficulties in its democratic development and hardly reaches its goals concerning human rights, regional conflicts, gender equality, etc.

Below the challenges that Georgia presently faces are listed and they are those the volunteer will be confronted to.

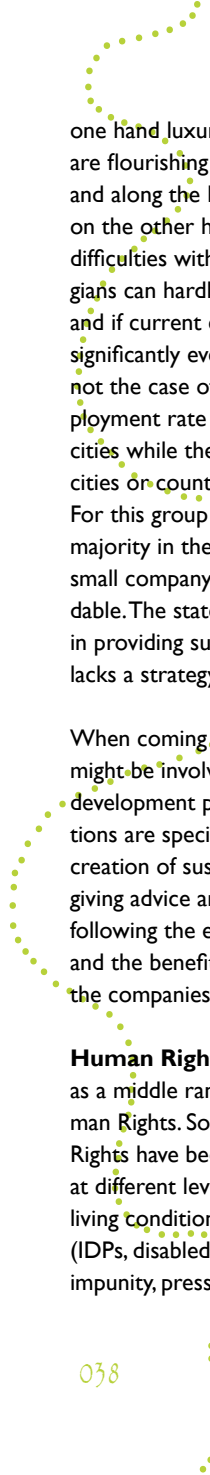
This part should be used as an orientation sheet for future volunteers - it states possible working fields for volunteers.

Territory. The territorial integrity of Georgia is one of the main issues here: Abkhazia and South Ossetia are two separatist regions which declared their independence but did not acquire it because of the lack of recognition from the international community and from Georgia itself - their status remains unclear. As long as the territory will not be fully under control or offi-

cially split, Georgia will encounter unsolvable problems. Understandably, the frozen conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the estimated 280,000 Internally Displaced People (IDPs) living in Georgia, are the main political question marks. It is unclear when and how the conflicts will be solved, if the IDPs will safely go back to their homes or if the independence of these two secessionist regions will be recognised by the international community, and if that happened, how the governments then in charge would deal with the IDPs and their belongings.

Volunteers will be confronted with the existence of the two frozen conflicts. Even if they are not directly involved in activities for the peaceful resolution of these conflicts, they will surely be in contact with groups connected to the conflicts, especially if the hosting organisation has IDPs as target groups.

Economic Development. Georgia, since the independence, has undertaken deep changes to transit from socialism to capitalism. Unfortunately, on

A decorative graphic consisting of a series of small green dots connected by thin lines, forming a curved path that starts at the top left and ends at the bottom right, framing the text on the left side of the page.

one hand, luxurious hotels and shops are flourishing in the centre of Tbilisi and along the Black Sea coast, while on the other hand, remote areas have difficulties with supplies delivery. Georgians can hardly manage their finances and if current expenditures increase significantly every month, it is definitely not the case of salaries. The unemployment rate is fairly high in major cities while the only activity in smaller cities or countryside areas is farming. For this group of people - who are the majority in the country - setting-up a small company or business is not affordable. The state encounters difficulties in providing support to people and lacks a strategy for employment.

When coming to Georgia, a volunteer might be involved in small business development projects. Some organisations are specialised in supporting the creation of sustainable companies by giving advice and micro-loans, and by following the evolution of the projects and the benefits for the families behind the companies and the community.

Human Rights. Georgia is classified as a middle ranking country as for Human Rights. Some violations of Human Rights have been and are still observed at different levels: freedom of speech, living conditions of vulnerable groups (IDPs, disabled, etc.), illegal arrests and impunity, pressure on Non-Govern-

mental Organisations, torture and so on. The Human Rights of minorities or fragile groups like religious and ethnic minorities, refugees, homosexuals, disabled people, women and children are, according to international organisations, often violated. Nevertheless it seems that the general situation is improving, even when journalists encounter some restrictions of their freedom of expression since Saakashvili became President of the Republic of Georgia.

Raising awareness on Human Rights in Georgia is a great challenge for volunteers, considering that the few organisations existing and working on this issue are lacking workers and/or professionalism. Even in an organisation non-specifically focusing on Human Rights, some actions might be undertaken.

NB: Because Human Rights concern a lot of different subjects and interests, several issues - which are included under the Human Rights title - are developed below. They are of a particular importance for the country and volunteers, and therefore need to be mentioned in more detail.

Integration of Minorities. Several minorities are living in Georgia - the main two are Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Minorities are most of the time


living among themselves - cooperation and contacts between the different communities are not frequent. In some regions of Georgia even closed minority settlements are to be found in which the inhabitants do not speak any Georgian. In those regions, the minority languages are the communication languages among the members of these communities. While in Soviet times Russian linked Georgians and the minorities together, nowadays children do not learn Russian at school anymore. These Georgian citizens, like their parents already do, might meet difficulties for further integration - the first of these difficulties is clearly the language barrier. To solve this current problem the government is trying to implement closer cooperation and specific educational structures. But the issue survives nevertheless.

Some organisations are actively working on building bridges between communities. Volunteers might be involved in minority issues if working in an organisation targeting minorities. Being involved in activities aiming at enhancing the awareness of the differences and similarities between communities is a real challenge for volunteers because plenty of stereotypes exist among Caucasians.

Gender Equality. Considering the different commitments of genders in

Georgian society, it remains easy to state that gender equality is an issue here. Men and women do not have the same influences and roles in spheres like politics, the economy or education. Knowing that this is also an issue in Western countries, it is needed to add that the gap between genders is a lot wider in Southern Caucasus. The emancipation of women is a challenge: working outside the family, living alone, marrying a chosen person, going out or visiting friends are not as free as in Western countries. Besides, gender roles are usually divided as follow: a man is considered as the one providing money to the household while a woman should take care of children and house chores. Because these roles are currently undergoing deep change, you can commonly hear some very ambivalent statements from Georgians about their future household. Nevertheless women can get to very high positions in politics or business, often thanks to hard work and family concessions. Finding compromises between reality, tradition and Western influence is definitely hard for the present generation.

As a volunteer being just and fair as for gender equality in Georgia is personally and professionally challenging. Even if volunteering projects are not directly gender-related, volunteers will for sure face situations where overcoming prejudice and negative behaviour

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is needed. More directly, some training and gender equality workshops open to Georgians of all ages are highly needed.

Democratic Development. Georgia has undertaken some deep reforms in the political field since independence, and even faster since Saakashvili came into office. Some significant reforms have been undertaken successfully like for example the Police reform which put a final stop to daily corruption. However some illegal actions against democratic principles were and are still observed: election rigging, pressures on political parties, low freedom of speech on internal affairs, etc. Because the Western-oriented government allows international investment to enter the country easily, international authorities often ignore these transgressions of democratic principles - e.g. the observation of election rigging by OSCE in 2008 was somewhat minimised.

Volunteers will be confronted with this issue especially if their activities takes place in an organisation surveying, observing or criticizing democratic processes. Monitoring elections, observing corruption at different levels, or simply following politics in the media are of high interest for volunteers to understand the state of democratic development in Georgia.

Citizenship and Participation.

Georgians are in general not very motivated to take part in public life as active citizens. Creating events, volunteering or participating in informal activities are uncommon. The lack of active participation in non-profit activities is probably due to the state of the economy in the country and to cultural and historical characteristics, but it is somehow a factual reality. Beyond the first impression of frustration and no hope you may get at first, you will find young people particularly, when opportunities arise, can seize them ingeniously and be able to participate or implement projects and activities. If initiative is stimulated and information on what is possible spread, Georgian society will most probably evolve into a society with less poverty and more equality.

Being a volunteer in Georgia gives the example that it is possible to learn differently from studying in schools and universities or from working professionally. Furthermore, a volunteer, through his or her commitment to the implementation of grass-rooted projects and through his or her will to take responsibilities in the local community will pass around his enthusiasm for informal education and will probably generate initiatives from and for Georgians.

Non-Governmental Scene.

In Georgia plenty of Non-Governmental or Governmental Organisations are registered: officially around 4,000. But registration does not mean activity and only a few hundreds of them are actually active. According to Western standards the structure of a lot of organisations is very often unclear. Workers might not have specific tasks or positions. They are very often volunteers, combining this activity with other non-paid or paid activities. This often decreases the sense of involvement or responsibility. Organisations might be active only a few months a year. Moreover, an organisation might lack internal coordination and communication. Finding or giving support, or even sharing ideas and experiences with the workers is a challenge in itself. There is a real need for developing structured activities and cooperation within Georgian organisations.

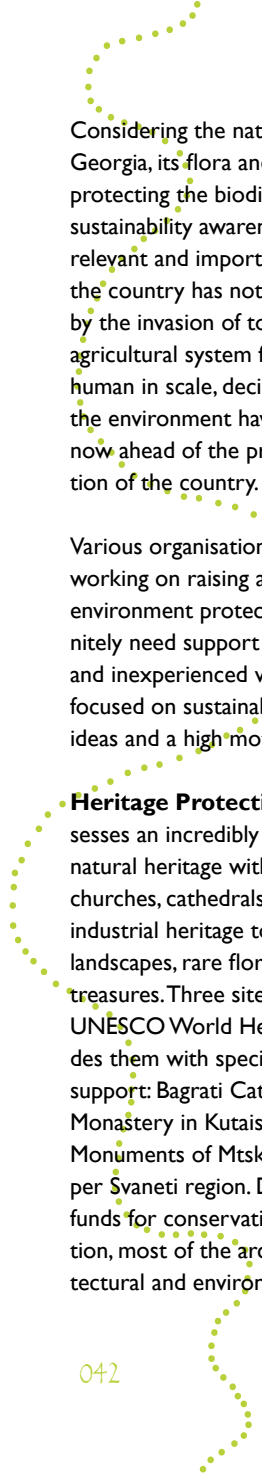
As a volunteer, it might be hard to deal or cooperate with an unorganised structure, but on the other hand, it gives you great freedom to take initiatives and develop activities or projects from scratch or to enhance cooperation among workers by taking part in already existing projects.

HIV/ AIDS Prevention. The actual number of HIV positive persons in Georgia has been increasing signifi-

cantly over recent years, in the same way as in most so called “developing countries”. Infection is mainly due to unprotected sexual relations and the exchange of used IV needles. Since sexual relations among young people go against social norms almost no prevention or information is available for young people on HIV/ AIDS, the infection routes and consequences. Also information is hardly available to prevent the common practice of sharing IV needles for drug users. Both issues - drug use and sexual relations - can hardly be addressed in schools because they remain taboos among Georgians and therefore prevention can only be implemented slowly.

Volunteers can get directly involved with this issue by organising and/or conducting discussions on HIV/ AIDS prevention. They will encounter difficulties to deal with gender roles, sexual relations or drugs abuse among the participants, but these activities are highly needed and important.

Environment. In Georgia, the consciousness of ecology or the environment is still developing. As a Westerner you will probably be shocked to see taps wasting litres of water an hour or people throwing their trash out the window of their cars. Everything has to be developed here concerning ecology and sustainability.

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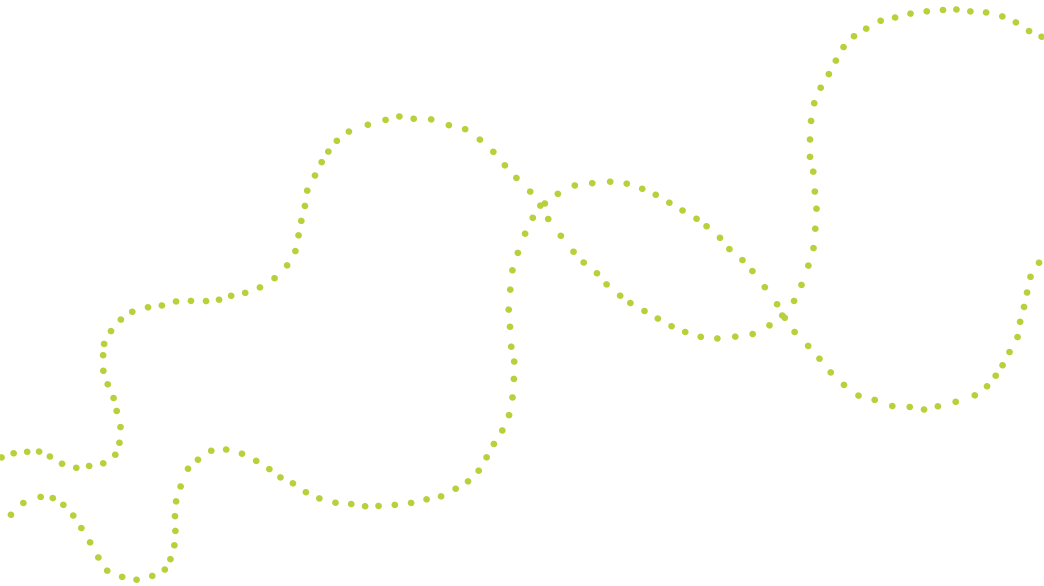
Considering the natural treasures of Georgia, its flora and fauna, working on protecting the biodiversity and raising sustainability awareness is particularly relevant and important. Also since the country has not yet been spoiled by the invasion of tourism, and the agricultural system for instance is still human in scale, decisions in favour of the environment have to be taken right now ahead of the present modernisation of the country.

Various organisations are already working on raising awareness on environment protection and they definitely need support from experienced and inexperienced volunteers clearly focused on sustainability with creative ideas and a high motivation.

Heritage Protection. Georgia possesses an incredibly rich cultural and natural heritage with castles, fortresses, churches, cathedrals, medieval towers, industrial heritage too, as well as landscapes, rare flora and many other treasures. Three sites are registered as UNESCO World Heritage which provides them with specific protection and support: Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery in Kutaisi, the Historical Monuments of Mtskheta and the Upper Svaneti region. Due to the lack of funds for conservation and rehabilitation, most of the archaeological, architectural and environmental sites suffer.

The priority of the government, which is to develop a touristic infrastructure, does obviously lack a policy concerning heritage protection leaving that task to Non-Governmental Organisations or international missions.

Volunteers in Georgia can have a direct and indirect influence on heritage preservation. By showing their respect to sites of high common interest, they will first of all help to raise awareness about the importance of heritage. They can also directly participate by working on renovation or conservation sites or by supporting a museum or an archaeological site.





European Volunteer's Testimony.....

“European Voluntary Service...To be honest I had never heard about it, until I came to Georgia for voluntary work. And to be even more honest, I had never even contemplated going to Georgia either. My decision to go there came out of the blue, but hey, I had finished my studies and I had no real further plans, so why not go?”

After a few weeks imagining I was on a very long holiday, reality hit me. ‘Why did I decide to come to Georgia?’ My projects were not developing the way I wished, I didn’t have the impression of doing anything useful, and I missed my friends and family. Georgia’s strange ways could only make me angry and feel even more depressed. All I wanted was to go home.

But as weeks went by, my activities as a trainer started to pick up, I met new people and started to feel more at home in Tbilisi. I noticed how good it felt to show the city to friends who came over, and when I returned from a short trip to Armenia I realised I was very happy to be back. Georgia and Tbilisi had become my home.”



Arts, Crafts and Customs

Arts, Crafts and Customs offers fundamentals about Georgian culture and you will never come to the end of it in Georgia. This part gives therefore a short tour on what Georgia has to offer, in terms of legends, customs, cuisine, architecture or renowned people. At the end, a short directory is given, featuring places and events which will help you to become familiar with diverse aspects of Georgian culture.

This chapter aims at giving basics concerning culture for further understanding Georgian cultural particularities.

Once Upon a Time

Georgia is the country of legends and stories. Thousands of myths exist and each of them illustrates different aspects of Georgian culture, creating together an immense mosaic of hidden memories. It is the truth to say we can find a legend about every single stone we come across.

Below are three of the most famous legends that Georgians would proudly tell to newcomers.

The Creation of Georgia. This legend is the most famous in Georgia. It features diverse endings or components according to the story-teller. It is very similar to the legend told by other ethnic groups in the Caucasus, like Armenians, Abkhazians or Circassians.

God created the universe, the earth and all the beauties that our world offers. All nations came to God in order to ask for a piece of land, to settle, to build their homes and develop their civilisations. All of them came and God found a perfect place on earth for all

where they would raise their children. Every group, except one.

When every human was busy finding a place to settle, one group of people was just enjoying themselves by eating delicious dishes, drinking the nectar of grapes and sharing their emotions with their closest relatives. They all praised God together. These people were Georgians.

After having enjoyed their Supra, they came to God and asked, last but not least, for a piece of land where they could settle for good once and for all. God, annoyed, replied that He did not have any space left. He had already given everything.

But, one special piece of land had been left for God himself. It was like Paradise. It was the only place in the world where the sea met with snow-capped mountains, where the soil from deserts, forests, grasslands offered the most delicious fruits, where the most beautiful species of birds, butterflies and bears were living in harmony,

where there was always enough water for nature and where the sunshine and the moon revealed the hidden beauty of every single stone, tree, waterfall and flower...

Although He had prepared this Paradise with specific care and love for Himself, God saw the good in those latecomers and recognised that they truly believed in his grace.

And since that time this Paradise is inhabited by Georgians.

Jason and the Golden Fleece. This legend or myth characterises different aspects of Georgian culture and is one of the prides of Georgians.

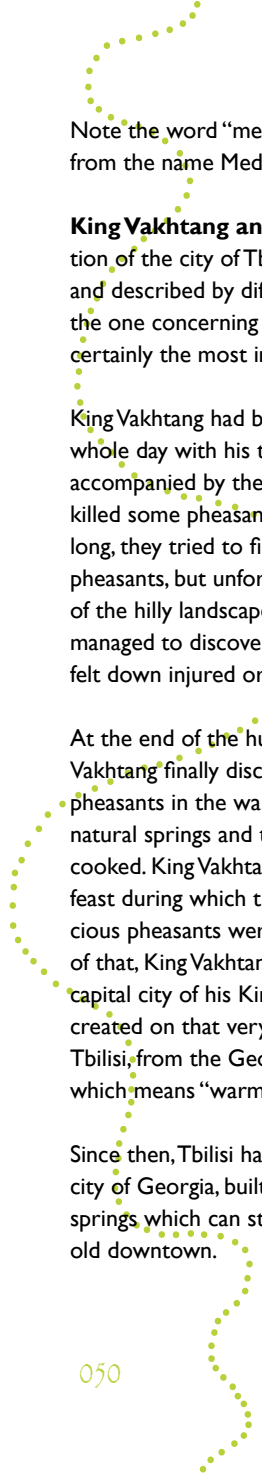
Jason, a Prince of Thessaly, had been challenged by his uncle, Pelias, to travel to the land of Colchis, on the Eastern shores of the Black Sea in order to find the Golden Fleece. Jason accompanied by forty-nine Greeks crossed seas and storms thanks to the ship named "Argo" built especially for that mission.

Jason and his sailors, known as Argonauts, arrived in Western Georgia, probably in Poti and sailed into the Phasis River, the actual Rioni. Welcomed by the King Aetes, Jason was told that he would get the Golden Fleece if he fulfilled the following tasks: to yoke fire-breathing bulls to a plough, pull

out a dragon tooth and fight with the army of men who would come out of it. Medea, the daughter of King Aetes, who was skilled in potion making and magic, had fallen in love with Jason and she promised to help him if he married her. Jason accepted the agreement and thanks to Medea's potions he managed to survive Aetes' challenges and steal the Golden Fleece from the dragon that guarded it. Medea and Jason fled then to Greece where they got married and had two children.

The legend features different endings. The most popular and common one is based on the lore of the Greek tragedian Euripides. Medea, suffering from destructive jealousy because her husband left her for Glauke - the daughter of the Corinthian King Creon - killed Glauke and the two sons she had had with Jason in order to save her pride and take revenge.

The actual city where King Aetes welcomed Jason and the Argonauts has not officially been identified, but a lot of evidence brings us to the conclusion that it might be the town of Vani, 40 km West of Kutaisi or the town of Sikhagodji between Poti and Kutaisi. These two places, where archaeological excavations are currently under way, display evidence of settlement as far back as 3500 BCE.



Note the word “medicine” derives from the name Medea.

King Vakhtang and Tbilisi. The creation of the city of Tbilisi is explained and described by different legends, but the one concerning King Vakhtang is certainly the most important.

King Vakhtang had been hunting the whole day with his troop on horses accompanied by their dogs. They killed some pheasants. The whole day long, they tried to find those killed pheasants, but unfortunately because of the hilly landscape, they could not managed to discover where these birds felt down injured or dead.

At the end of the hunting day, King Vakhtang finally discovered the pheasants in the warm sulphuric natural springs and they were perfectly cooked. King Vakhtang sat down for a feast during which the magically delicious pheasants were eaten. Because of that, King Vakhtang declared that the capital city of his Kingdom would be created on that very spot and called Tbilisi, from the Georgian word tbili which means “warm”.

Since then, Tbilisi has been the capital city of Georgia, built on the sulphuric springs which can still be visited in the old downtown.

Guest and God

Georgians are famous all around the world for their sense of hospitality. Newcomers might be surprised or feel awkward about how Georgians take fully care of their guests. Hence, hospitality is very different here from Western cultures. The symbol of this hospitality, the “Mother of Georgia” is presenting a bowl and a dagger: a guest is treated as a King while Georgians will fight to death against an enemy.

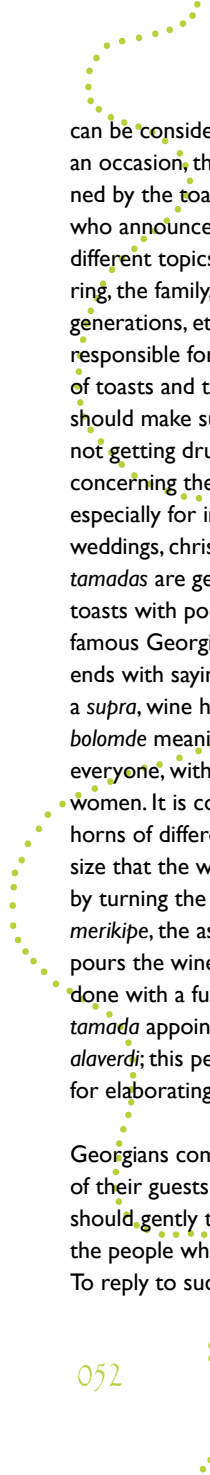
A guest is considered to be sent by God and therefore Georgians treat him as such. From dawn to dusk food is offered, help provided in any situation and entertainment where they reside. Georgians spend the best they have and do the best they can for their guest. It happens often that what is presented is something that the hosts cannot afford for themselves. However, Georgians enjoy the present moment fully by spending savings and belongings to honour guests and people they love. Therefore guests should deeply honour what they receive.

Refusing what is presented or offered

is not common and it is even harsher when you are a foreigner. In some specific cases it might be taken as rude when e.g. refusing to drink for a special toast during a dinner. Georgians usually organise everything for their guests so that they can relax and do not need to worry about any issue. Therefore they often use the saying “don’t worry”, meaning that they are taking care of the coordination of activities and that the guest does not need to be concerned. Guests are not expected to help with house chores, especially if these guests are men.

The Georgian sense of hospitality is also reflected in their curiosity towards foreigners. Georgians commonly ask where a foreigner is from, what he is doing in Georgia, why he is in Georgia and sometimes even how much he earns. This attention is pure curiosity.

A Georgian dinner, called *supra*, is another characteristic expressing hospitality. Every meal which gathers people around a table where cold and warm food and beverages are served

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can be considered as a *supra*. On such an occasion, the guests are entertained by the toastmaster, called *tamada*, who announces improvised toasts on different topics - the present gathering, the family, peace, Georgia, future generations, etc. The toastmaster is responsible for the recurring cycle of toasts and their themes and he should make sure that the guests are not getting drunk. Some rules do exist concerning the order of the toasts, especially for important events like weddings, christenings, etc. The best *tamad*s are generally introducing their toasts with poems and quotes from famous Georgian writings. Each toast ends with saying “*gaumaradjos!*” During a *supra*, wine has generally to be drunk *bolomde* meaning in one single gulp by everyone, with special exceptions for women. It is common to drink out of horns of different sizes and to emphasize that the whole content is drunk by turning the horn up-side down. The *merikipe*, the assistant to the *tamada*, pours the wine so that every toast is done with a full glass. Sometimes the *tamada* appoints another person for *alaverdi*; this person is then responsible for elaborating the *tamada*'s toasts.

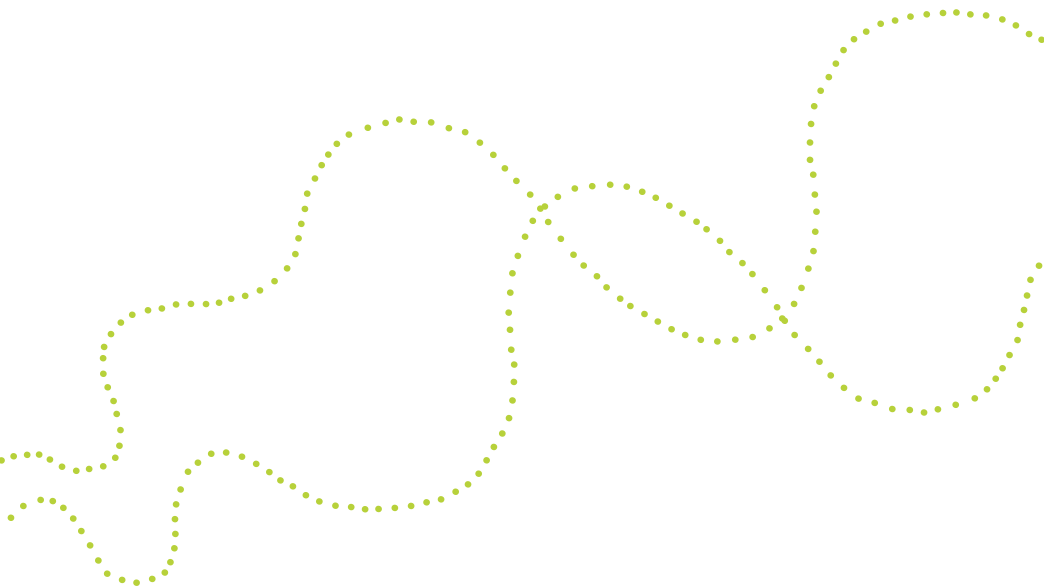
Georgians commonly toast in honour of their guests. In that case, the guests should gently thank the *tamada* and the people who are adding comments. To reply to such a toast or to express

any kind of gratitude in form of a toast, the agreement of the *tamada* is needed - he is the master of the *supra*.

Another particular characteristic of Georgian culture is the role of spirituality. Georgians display a high level of spirituality, they believe in God and mainly do not question his existence. Therefore, religious conventions influence social life deeply - the breakdown of the Soviet Union has brought a revival of Orthodox traditions in Georgia. Even though it is not common for everybody to regularly attend services, many people go to church for exceptional events like Easter, Christmas or Dormition Day. Many Georgians cross themselves three times when going by a religious place, but only a minority fast during holy periods. However the life of a Georgian is cadenced by religious ceremonies from birth to death - christenings, weddings and funerals always take place in an Orthodox Church. Georgians refer to the Bible and a Priest's words count a lot concerning a plenty of issues.

One of the first questions a Georgian might ask a foreigner is if he believes in God. Georgians are generally surprised or disappointed to hear that the foreigner is an atheist while every other Christian religion seems fine to them - at least the person believes in God. No matter whether the foreigner is an

atheist or not, Georgians will always take a foreign guest to one of the famous churches or monasteries.



Taste of Georgia

As described in the former chapter, Georgians are hospitable and guests are considered to have been sent by God. Guests are getting all the family can afford, from attention to support, through food and beverages - it is highly important for Georgians to propose a feast with vast quantities of quality food.

Georgian cuisine is diverse and rich. It is the central element of the traditional Georgian feast, called *supra* სუპრა. The cuisine features specific regional and familial influences but is generally very tasty and spicy. Meat has got the main place on the table but plenty of vegetables, cheese and cereal-based dishes are proposed too.

The Feast. A Georgian feast features no specific order - usually the cold dishes come first, the warm dishes after, but they are all staying on the table all along. Several hot courses are generally served. Everyone garnishes their own plates as they wish. Dishes cover the table fully and it may even become hard to find some empty space. The

long table is fully surrounded by the sitting participants who usually are in great number. No specific rules exist for the beginning of the dinner. The meal is always cadenced by the toasts brought by the toastmaster, *tamada*.

Khachapuri. The most specific Georgian dish might be *khachapuri* ხაჭაპური. This kind of flat cheese-pie or bread is eaten at anytime, anywhere: for a quick lunch, during a *supra*, for breakfast, etc. Every region possesses a variant of it. The regional variation from Adjara has the shape of a long piece of bread which offers an egg, some butter and cheese on top. The guest should take small pieces of bread from the sides and moister them in the egg in the middle. In Samegrelo, the pie features cheese on the top as well. Similar to *khachapuri* is *lobiani* ლობიანი which is a pie filled with beans, common in South Ossetia. In Svaneti *khachapuri* is filled with meat.

Meat. *Khinkali* ხინკალი are very common and appreciated in Georgia. These dumplings are made of a mix

of different meat, generally pork and beef with spices and herbs, cooked in dough. The final shape looks like a middle-sized mushroom. They are served alone and it is not needed to add anything except pepper. Eating them is a real ceremony: after having made a hole into the dough, the eater should drink the juice, and **only** then eat the whole *khinkali* without letting drops of juice fall onto the plate. The guest should not eat the top of the dough, which is not totally cooked, and should keep it on the plate for it to be possible to count how many *khinkali* someone ate - less than fifteen per person is considered as improper. In fasting periods or for vegetarians, Georgian *khinkali* also exist filled with mushrooms or potatoes.

Other meat dishes mainly include *kababi* კაბაბი, a mix of meats of different origins (lamb, beef, etc.) rolled up in lavash bread, and *mtsvadi* მწვადი, barbecued meat, also called *shashlik*.

Vegetables. Several vegetarian dishes are also part of the Georgian table. Cucumber and tomato salad is the main salad served with or without walnuts, green leaves, and green or red peppers. *Badrijani* ბადრიჯანი is a dish made of walnut and garlic pasta rolled up in eggplant slices. Potatoes, cooked in different ways, also have a place on the dinner table. *Pkhali* ფხალი

is a dish of spinach or beetroot with walnuts, garlic and pomegranate seeds. Mushrooms სოკო (*soko*) are a very important component of Georgian cuisine. They are cooked in clay pots, with herbs, cheese and spices.

Sauces. Georgian cuisine features a lot of different sauces always present on the table. Different types of *tkhemali* ტყემალი exist which are made from red or green plums. Both variations use coriander, garlic and other herbs and feature diverse tastes from sour or sweet to spicy. Then *adjika* აჯიკა, is a hot chilli paste that suits grilled meats perfectly. This paste is based on a mix of spices which has the same name.

Cheese and Yoghurt. Georgian cuisine proposes different kinds of cheese. Cheese has its own role in cooked dishes or can be proposed as a side dish. Commonly Georgian cheeses are salty with a strong taste. Megrelian *sulguni* სულგუნი can be served plain or smoked. *Matsoni* მაწონი, Georgian yoghurt, is commonly eaten for breakfast on a slide of bread, but is also mixed with fresh mint leaves and spices. In the same way, *kefiri* კეფირი, liquid yogurt-like fermented milk, is healthy and tasty, especially after abuses of food or alcohol.

Breads and Cereals. Georgians eat bread everyday. Bread is flat and

circular or long according to the regions the baker is from. Called *puri* პური, it is cooked in a grounded or semi-grounded oven called *tone* თონე. Corn is also used as a base for different dishes - e.g. the small *mchadi* მჭადი bread or the porridge called *ghomi* ღომი. Moreover, specific dishes like *kababi* are accompanied by very thin and flat bread, like pancakes, called *lavash*.

Sweets. Georgians are delighted by chocolate, caramel and walnuts' cakes that women cook on special occasions like birthdays, Christmas or for special guests. The main Georgian sweet is called *churchkhela* ჩურჩხელა: some walnuts or nuts are lined up on a very thin cord and covered by white or red grape syrup. Dried, these sweets can be found everywhere, in shops and supermarkets, or on vending stalls along countryside roads.

Beverages. Different types of mineral water exist in Georgia: they are mainly salty and sparkling. The most famous are Borjomi ბორჯომი and Nabeghlavi ნაბეღლავი. Regarding alcohol, Georgians are producing a traditional strong spirit called *chacha* ჭაჭა. Vodka is also commonly used. The most famous Georgian vodka is called Gomi გომი.

This tour of Georgian cuisine could

not be complete without mentioning the importance of wine in Georgian society. Almost every family is producing a homemade wine from white or red grapes with a specific old technique using grape peels, which requires patience but enhances the healthy properties of the produced wine. Due to the archaeological evidences, one can say that Georgia is one of the first countries of the world where wine was made. Currently more than 500 different grapes are cultivated across the country, making Georgia one of the countries with the most diverse wines.

Mukuzani მუკუზანი, Saperavi საფერავი, Kvanchkara კვანჭკარა - this last Stalin liked best - are considered as the best red wines, while Tsinandali წინანდალი is recognised as a great white wine. Some sparkling wines do also exist: Bagrationi ბაგრატიონი, named after the Royal family, is the main one. Red, white, sweet, dry, semi-sweet, Georgia is the paradise for wine tasters and lovers.

Architecture Directory

Architecture Directory aims at giving a general idea of the state of architecture in Georgia. Visitors in Georgia are encouraged to overcome the first glance and the current state of the constructions and to consider shapes, materials, structures, and mostly the interrelations between inhabitants and spaces.

By describing different architectonic elements of the country, awareness concerning history, culture and influences will be enhanced. Dwellings as well as urban structure are direct sources for feeling, discovering and analysing the cultural background of a country. Too often, Georgia suffers from negative stereotypes due to the impact of Soviet architecture on its urban environment, whereas multiple influences created a wide diversity of architecture - monasteries and fortresses, housing blocks, single wooden houses, defensive stone towers, etc.

Therefore *Architecture Directory* offers a short overview on Georgian architecture and its treasures.

Urban Structure. Urban density is quite low in Georgia. Cities are spread horizontally, often along a river or a road. Cities habitually feature a main square from where the main avenues are departing from. Along the roads and near bus and train stations, street-markets are common. Single houses usually feature their own courtyards or gardens, useful for growing fruits and vegetables but covering a wider territory. This space organisation raises a transportation problem, especially in the capital, where going from one end to the other can take up to two hours, traffic jams being very common in the centre of Tbilisi.

Housing. Houses differ a lot with the regions, because of the differences in climate, natural resources and landscape. However, still nowadays, regional houses are built as much as possible in function of the climate and environment. The wind and the sunshine, the soil, the views, the materials and their characteristics are elements which are taken into consideration for the orientation of the houses and the

A decorative graphic consisting of a series of small, light green dots connected by thin lines, forming a wavy, vertical path that runs down the left side of the page, partially overlapping the text.

construction itself.

Regional houses commonly feature a ground floor used for keeping tools and materials or for harbouring animals at night. This functions as insulation for the first floor where the family lives. In regions with a humid climate, like in Western Georgia, houses are very often built on pillars not higher than one meter allowing good ventilation under the house. In the same way the veranda on the first floor, running the whole length of the house, is used as an entrance area and as a social place where children play and adults spend their time.

Inside dwellings differ from region to region but some essential similarities can be observed. Most of the houses do not feature any small-sized rooms - generally all rooms are of similar size even if they have different uses. Spatial functions are interchangeable. A specific room does not correspond to a particular use but can host different activities. During the day a room can be used as a living room, while during the night it is transformed into a sleeping space. It is rare for a person to have his or her own room, several people stay in one room. The lack of space in an apartment, the high differences among incomes, the prices of flats or rental costs as well as family structures are probably four of the several factors

for this lack of personal living space. While it is common for Georgians to own their dwellings, rented apartments are usually fully furnished including cutlery.

Finally, because of the diversity of natural resources and climates, Georgian houses are built from very different types of materials. In Tbilisi, the old centre features great examples of wooden or brick houses, while most of the constructions of the last century or today are made of concrete. Facades of new buildings are mostly covered by different types of plasters. It is rare to see some other materials used on facade like for example wood which is becoming popular only in high-standard housing in the capital or on the Black Sea coast. Metallic structures are very rarely employed in the capital but are common for the balconies of single houses in the regions where metallic sheets are also used for roofs.

Exceptional Sites. Georgia offers a high number of sites with historical and architectural value. The several places below hold a particular importance to understand the way of living of Georgians through history.

First, Georgia features several cave towns. These cities, situated inside rocks, used to host thousands of inhabitants. The most famous cave town

in Georgia, which is considered as a national pride, is Vardzia, situated in South Georgia. This cave town hosted Queen Tamar during the 12th century and accommodated about 50,000 people. Moreover, David Gareji's cave town in the East of the country features very well preserved frescos back from the 10th century while Uplistsikhe cave town near Gori features visible supply installations - see picture on page 104.

Likewise, few regions in Georgia feature some defensive medieval towers: Svaneti, Tusheti, Racha. These towers, which were built with plaster made of egg whites and yolks, were intended to host the whole family in case of invasions, hide personal treasures and be a defence against enemies. Built from the 9th to the 12th century, only the towers of the Upper Svaneti region are listed under the UNESCO World Heritage List - see picture on page 126 - but all of them are built in the breathtaking landscapes at the feet of the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range.

Georgia possesses hundreds and hundreds of places dedicated to spirituality - monasteries, churches, cathedrals, etc. Very often quite well preserved and still functioning as such, religious places can be found in large numbers in the capital and in the regions. Evidently with this rich heritage, surrounded by beautiful nature, Georgia has a great

potential for architectural, historical and religious tourism. Page 016 is presenting a picture of the Gergeti Trinity Church, one of the most famous monasteries in Georgia because of its exceptional location at an altitude of 2,400m, facing the 5,047m high Mount Kazbeg.

Another site of exception is the old centre of Tbilisi which is significant because of its structure and its constructions. Buildings obviously suffer from lack of funds for rehabilitation and the earthquake of 2002 additionally damaged a lot of constructions, especially those situated on fragile bases or instable soil. Constructions are in real and urgent need for renovation and reinforcement. There, different religious buildings, a mosque, a synagogue, an Orthodox church and an Armenian church, are situated next to each other, demonstrating the tolerance and multiculturalism of the city. Tbilisi, which was situated on the Silk Road, underwent many influences, and that is visible in its old centre: positioned along twisting streets, homes feature wooden balconies and loggias, hidden courtyards and crafted doors. Styles and proportions of facades are of a great quality of conception and execution. Dwellings are mostly organised around a courtyard where social exchanges can take place all day; in the same way apartments feature common balconies - as

shown page 138 - encouraging informal contacts with neighbours.

Georgia, furthermore, offers plenty of castles, fortresses and fortified cities of significant interest. These are present all across the country and differ in their accessibility, recognition, and current state - from ruins to brand newly renovated. In Tbilisi, Gori or Telavi, such fortifications are present.

Soviet Architecture. Georgia, by having been part of the Soviet Union for several decades, has been affected by deep changes in its urbanisation and housing. Connected with the socialist ideology, most of Soviet constructions do not feature any ornaments on facades; others clearly exhibit their structure on their facades - e.g. the inside stairs of a building give the shape and proportions of the facades.

During Soviet times, due to the urgent need for cheap living quarters, blocks and towers were built in every middle-sized town and in the capital, intending to give every family living places with the same size or, at least, a similar value. Surrounded by green areas, this type of building frequently features balconies and in some cases on two different sides, allowing natural light inside apartments. Because of the lack of financial resources and living space, it is common to observe that

balconies were closed up to create an additional room. The potential of these towers and blocks is unfortunately too often underestimated. The concrete structure provides possibilities for the redistribution of inside living space by moving or adding walls thus creating more diversity in the size and organisation of apartments. On page 072 the picture of two towers constructed during the Soviet era situated on a hill offer a panoramic view of Tbilisi.

Moreover, Georgia has a great number of exceptional buildings, which were built during the Soviet era: the best known of them are the governmental buildings - the Parliament, the current Post Office, or the former Constitutional Court now turned into the Kempinski Hotel, etc. The building presented on page 106 is located on a sloped area along the river Mtkvari. The composition of parallelepipedic blocks assembled together at right angle used to host some government offices and was granted some award for its spectacular architecture.

In the same way, Georgia features an industrial heritage from the Soviet era. Factories and industrial buildings are generally simple parallelepipedic blocks of huge scale, which do not feature any particular qualities, but which are potential and admirable structures for office purposes, for example. Never-

theless, in some specific places, huge constructions can be found which feature interesting architectural elements with original shapes and proportions or ornaments. Often abandoned, they possess an exceptional potential for renovation and would be perfect places to harbour regional youth centres, exhibition halls or youth hostels.

A Run to Modernisation. Urban areas are currently evolving very fast. New constructions are appearing everyday everywhere. Mostly in the shape of skyscrapers or tower blocks of flats or offices, these new constructions do not, unfortunately, have any particular architectural interest. They are often low quality as for design as well as techniques. It is common to see, for example along the Black Sea coast, some constructions that are built at the beginning of the touristic season and which look terrible at the end of that same season. Though most architecture movements around the world advocate a form of sustainability, this is not yet the case in Georgia.

Personalities

Georgians are very proud of their famous personalities and they surely should. In order to understand Georgian culture and nation, it is impossible not to look at their renowned people.

Plenty of Georgians became famous across the country, in the Soviet Union or the whole world - getting to know the actions they undertook and what they brought to the world is a great start to understand the Georgian psyche.

The following personalities are known and some admired among Georgians because of their political, religious and/or artistic legacies.

ს

Nino Ananiashvili ნინო ანანიასშვილი (1963 - ...). A Georgian ballerina, she graduated from the Moscow Choreographic Institute in 1981. She then entered the Bolshoi Ballet and was promoted to the rank of soloist in 1983. In 1988 she was the first ballet dancer from the Soviet Union, together with Andris Liepa, to perform as

a guest with the New York City Ballet. She was allowed to perform outside the Soviet Union due to the opening policy of Mikhail Gorbachev.

Davit Aghmashenebeli დავით აგმაშენებელი (1073 - 1125). Davit IV, called The Builder belonged to the Bagrationi Dynasty and was King of Georgia from 1089 to 1125. He is considered to be the most successful Georgian King because he united Georgia by liberating it from Turkish occupation. His historic victory in the battle of Didgori in 1121 - he defeated with 56,000 Georgian soldiers a much bigger Seljuq Turkish army - opened the way to liberate Tbilisi. Afterwards he appointed Tbilisi as the new capital of Georgia. In his multiethnic Kingdom, religious freedom and tolerance were introduced.

ლ

Lavrentiy Pavlovich Beria ლავრენტი ბერია (1899 - 1953). A Soviet politician who was the head of the People's Commissariat for Internal

Affairs from 1938 to 1946, the secret police of the Soviet Union during the Stalinist era. Besides being responsible for the repression of the Georgian nationalist uprising in 1924 when up to 10,000 people were executed, he was also involved in the Great Purge in the late 1930's and played a leading role in supervising the Soviet atomic bomb project.

ბ

Nona Gaprindashvili ნონა გა-
ფრინდაშვილი (1941 - ...). A famous
Georgian chess player, who was the
first woman to be awarded the title of
Grandmaster. She became at the age of
21 the women's world chess champion
and defended her title until 1978. She
was one of the strongest female chess
players of her generation and she
was awarded the Grandmaster title
following her impressive performance
in 1978.

Zviad Gamsakhurdia ზვიად
გამსახურდია (1939 - 1993). As the
first democratically elected President
of independent Georgia, Gamsakhurdia
stayed in office from April 1991 to
January 1992. From December 1991 to
January 1992 heavy fighting took place
in Tbilisi which ended with a coup
d'état. Gamsakhurdia escaped from the
country and was de facto replaced by
its opponent Eduard Shevardnadze. He

died in unclear circumstances in a vil-
lage located in the region of Samegrelo.

Lado Gudiashvili ლადო გუდაშ-
ვილი (1896 - 1980). Gudiashvili is
one of the most famous Georgian
painter. His work, mainly inspired by
ballets, operas and theatre plays, was
clearly influenced by the work of his
fellow painter Pirosmiani. After a stay
in Paris, where he met artists like
Modigliani, he returned to his native
land and belonged for a while to the
Georgian poetry group named "The
Blue Horns". His work includes mainly
paintings, but also some ink drawings,
book illustrations, and settings for
theatre plays and the cinema.

კ

Kakhaber Kaladze კახაბერ კა-
ლაძე (1978 - ...). A famous Georgian
football player, who started his career
in Dinamo Tbilisi Football Club and
moved then in 1998 to Dinamo Kyiv.
He got in 2001 a contract as a defen-
der in AC Milan. Within this team, he
has been the first and only Georgian
player who won the title of the Cham-
pions League.

ს

Saint Nino წმ. ნინო. She is the Saint
who converted Georgians from Paga-
nism to Christianity in the 4th century.

Georgia is the second country that officially adopted the Christian faith in 335. The legend said that she used to live and pray at the place where the present Svetitskhoveli Cathedral in Mtskheta stands.

რ

Shota Rustaveli შოთა რუსთაველი. The main Georgian literature figure of the 12th century, Rustaveli wrote the classic *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* ვეფხისტყაოსანი (*vepkhistaosani*) during Queen Tamar's reign. One of the most famous quote from this epic poem might be “რასაცა გასცემ შენია, რაც არა - დაკარგულია” (*rasatsa gastsem chenia, rats ara - dakargulia*) which means “that which we give makes us richer, that which is hoarded is lost.” (Translation by Venera Urushadze) – a quote which truly illustrates Georgian culture.

ს

Mikheil Saakashvili მიხეილ სააკაშვილი (1967 - ...). The present President of the Republic of Georgia was elected after the bloodless Rose Revolution in 2003. He replaced Eduard Shevardnadze, the former president. He was re-elected on the January 5, 2008 in the first election round. Mikheil Saakashvili is married to a Dutch linguist and writer, Sandra E.

Roelofs.

ო

Queen Tamar თამარ მეფე (1160 – 1213). The Queen of the Kingdom of Georgia during the Golden Age (r. 1184 - 1212), she belonged to the Bagrationi Dynasty. She is considered as the best monarch ever in Georgia. Her subjects named her “King of Kings and Queen of Queens”. During her reign, significant advancements have been done concerning politics, secularity, literature, architecture, etc. A legend says that she was buried in Gelati Monastery near Kutaisi.

ბ

Galaktion Tabidze გალაკტიონ ტაბიძე (1891 - 1959). Mostly known under his single name Galaktioni, he is the most famous Georgian poet in the 20th century. He deeply influenced Georgian poetry and literature with his thousands of writings and poems. One of the most famous might be *The wind blows* ქარი ქრის (*kari khris*). Under heavy pressure from Soviet authorities, Galaktioni felt into depression and alcoholism and committed suicide in 1959.

ფ

Pharnavaz I ფარნავაზი I. He is known as the father of the medieval

version of the Georgian alphabet. He was also the first King of Iberia. He probably reigned in the 3rd century BCE.

Niko Pirozmanashvili ნიკო ფიროსმანაშვილი (1862 – 1918). Commonly known under the name of Niko Pirosmani, he was a Georgian fresco painter. His quasi-naïf paintings represented Georgian daily life and culture but never religious themes which were more common in that period. His talent was recognised only after his death.

Zakaria Paliashvili ზაკარია ფალიაშვილი (1871 - 1933). The Georgian composer studied composition at the Moscow Conservatory, and returned back to Georgia where he played an important role in the development of national music by collecting folksongs and creating the Georgian Philharmonic Society. He was the director of the Tbilisi Conservatory. The most famous of his compositions are *Abesalom and Eteri*, *Daisi* and *Latavra*.

Vazha Pshavela ვაჟა ფშაველა (1861 - 1915). Pshavela is the pen-name of the poet and writer Luka P. Razikashvili. Translated in more than 20 languages around the world, he is considered as a classic of Georgian literature. He was involved in the National-Liberation movement of

Georgia.

ფ

Eduard Shevardnadze ედუარდ შევარდნაძე (1928 - ...). Shevardnadze was the second President of Georgia from 1991 to 1995 de facto - following the coup d'état - and from 1995 to 2003 officially. He resigned following the Rose Revolution of 2003. Before getting into office, he used to work in Mikhail Gorbachev's government as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union.

ქ

Ilia Chavchavadze ილია ჭავჭავაძე (1837 - 1907). A Georgian writer, poet, journalist and lawyer, and considered as one of the fathers of modern Georgia. He fought to increase Georgian national awareness by defending the Georgian language and culture. His writing career was dedicated to Georgian culture. He was shot to death near Mtskheta in 1907.

წ

Akaki Tsereteli აკაკი წერეთელი (1840 - 1915). A prominent Georgian writer and poet, he is considered as one of the fathers of modern Georgia together with his friend and colleague Ilia Chavchavadze. He was involved in

the Georgian national movement.

Zurab Tsereteli ზურაბ წერეთელი (1934 - ...). Graduated from the Academy of Arts in Tbilisi, Tsereteli is known for his works as architect, sculptor and painter. Currently the President of the Russian Academy of Arts, he realised the sculpture of *Peter the Great* - which is about 90m high - on the Moskva riverbank in Moscow and the *Tear of Grief*, a sculpture dedicated to the victims of 9/11.



Ioseb Besarionis Dze Jughashvili იოსებ ბესარიონის ძე ჯუღაშვილი (1878 - 1953). He was famous under the name of Joseph Stalin. Born in Gori in 1878 (officially 1879), he was the head of the Bolshevik party of the Soviet Union and the de facto leader of the Union from 1922 until his death. His chosen name “Stalin” came from Russian and basically means “Man of Steel”.

Inspirations

Inspirations is dedicated to give some indications for delving into Georgian culture. The following places and events are recommended to those of you who desire to get to know the country and understand its culture and people. What's more, a few activities which will increase the social interactions between foreigners and locals are proposed - e.g. board games or traditional dances and singing.

These tips for cultural inspiration are not a list of places of entertainment - e.g. it does not contain the most common gathering places for foreigners - but should be taken as an orientation for further personal cultural discoveries.

Plays and Shows. In all main cities in Georgia there is at least one theatre proposing regular plays. Below performing places in Tbilisi are presented which are of relevant interest for foreigners to learn more about Georgian culture and art and which are linguistically accessible.

Every Tuesday and Friday, shows are presented at the Pantomime Theatre. A group of young people, in a very friendly ambiance, perform different Pantomime plays, mostly under the direction of Amiran Shalikashvili. Probably due to budget restrictions, the facilities of the theatre are of low-quality, but it does definitely not affect the quality of the plays and actors. The entrance fee is 5 GEL and it is generally not needed to book in advance. *Rustaveli Ave. #37 რუსთაველის გამ.* 37

Directed by the famous stage director R. Sturua, the Rustaveli Theatre shows Georgian and foreign plays almost every evening at 7.00. Plays are usually in the Georgian language but on some specific dates a simultaneous English translation is proposed by the British Council. A ticket costs between 3 and 10 GEL, depending on the seat. English translation is available for additional 5 GEL. *Rustaveli Ave. #17 რუსთაველის გამ.* 17

The Tbilisi State Opera and Ballet Theatre, which has been recently

renovated, is proposing ballets and operas almost every day. Tickets cost between 5 and 20 GEL, depending on the seats, and are to be bought during daytime office hours in the ticket office on the right side of the main entrance. Ballet performances do not require any linguistic skills but operas are generally presented in the Georgian language without subtitles or translations. *Rustaveli Ave.* #25 რუსთაველის გამ. 25

The Tbilisi State Concert Hall, commonly known as philharmonia, is the biggest Music Hall in Tbilisi. It is located right in the city centre up Rustaveli Avenue. The Tbilisi State Concert Hall is a great place to see traditional Georgian dancing and concerts. What's more, every year it hosts a Jazz Festival. The ticket range from 20 to 200 or more GEL.

Open Air Museum of Ethnography. The Open Air Museum presents a mosaic of traditional architecture and folk arts from all around Georgia. Every region is represented by some instances of their traditional architectures, which have been deconstructed from its original site piece by piece, then transported and reconstructed in the park of the Museum. The Museum features around 70 different buildings but unfortunately only a few of them are open to the public. The other houses are under renovation

or construction. The Museum which occupies 52 hectares of the hill top west to Turtle Lake, called *Kus Tba* in Georgian, was founded in 1966 by the ethnographer Giorgi Chitaia. It can be reached on foot from Chavchavadze Ave., or by cable car available in front of Vake Park, or by taxi. The Open Air Museum of Ethnography entered a new renovation programme with the support of UNESCO in March 2008 and will be restructuring during the coming months.

At the end of July, the Museum hosts the Art Gene Festival. In the daytime Georgian dances, folksongs and traditional fighting performances are on show. Groups from different regions and villages are competing. In the evening, concerts of famous Georgian singers perform while Georgians are gathering, singing, around barbecues, drinking home-made wine in a very friendly atmosphere. More information about the festival on www.artgeni.ge. Open Air Museum of Ethnography, on the way to Turtle Lake კუს ტბას (*Kus Tba*)

Tbilisoba, the Celebration of Tbilisi. Every city in Georgia has an annual party which lasts one or two days. Tbilisi's is called Tbilisoba and takes place at the end of the third week of November. During that Saturday and Sunday, it is possible to see some boat

battles and traditional Georgian dancing and singing. A concert is organised on Freedom Square. On that occasion all Rustaveli Avenue is closed to vehicles and the ambiance downtown is really easy-going.

Traditional Georgian Dances and Singing.

When in Georgia, a lot of volunteers are willing to learn about the local culture and particularly the dancing and singing traditions. Unfortunately it is hard to find a place where beginners are accepted, because most of the Georgians get their skills when they are kids in family gatherings.

However, with other interested foreigners, it is possible to ask a teacher for group dancing lessons or to form an informal singing group. In some specific cases, it is also possible to be present at the rehearsals of singing groups and thereby to learn step-by-step the lyrics and melodies.

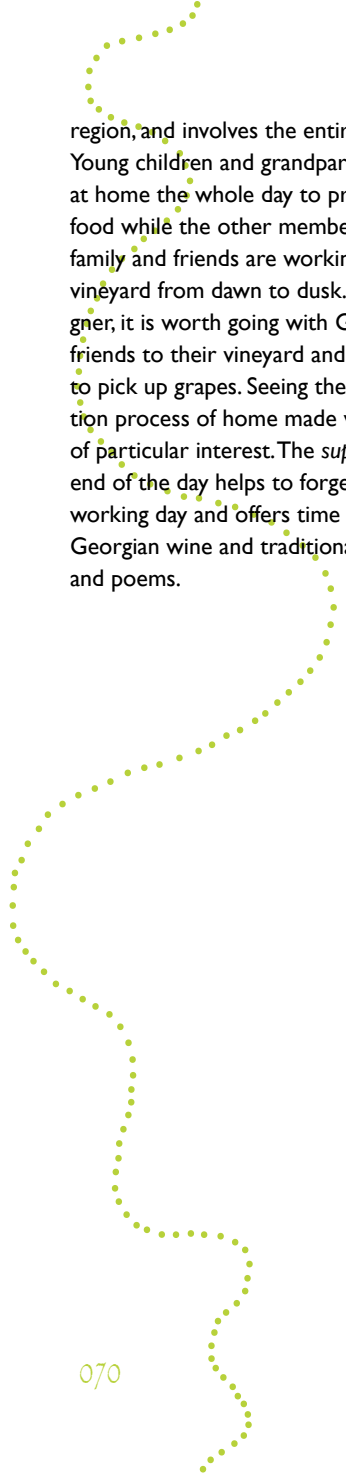
Board Games. Playing chess is part of Georgian socialising. When living in Georgia, some foreigners might want to join the Georgian chess community. The World Chess Federation FIDE has a listing of all Chess Clubs existing around the world on www.fide.com

Like chess, Backgammon, called *nardi* in Georgian, is very common and popular. The game itself can be traced back to

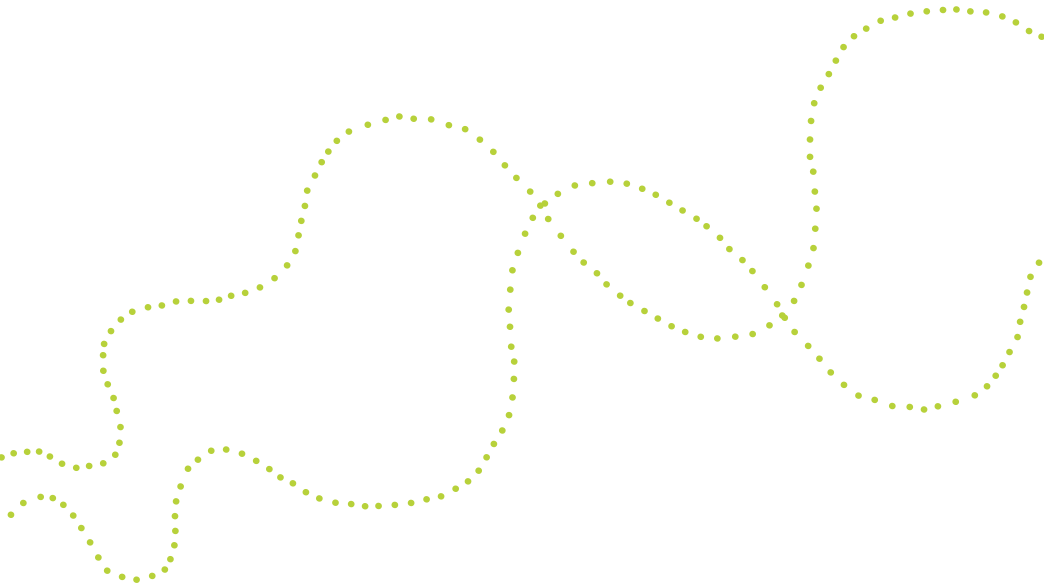
a circa 5,000 year old Iranian game. In Georgia, people are playing *nardi* everywhere - at home or in streets - and everybody seems to know how to play. Two main variations exist: a so called "long" and "short" *nardi*, which differ mainly in the positions of the stones at the beginning of the game. Everyone coming to the Caucasus area will have the opportunity to learn how to play this game, and it is great for socialising and getting to know locals of all ages.

Sulphur Baths. After sports or after a cold long winter day, relaxing in the sulphuric baths downtown is definitely great. Different places are accessible, the same Alexandre Dumas or other writers delved into hundreds of years ago. Renting a small room with a bath for one hour costs between 30 and 100 GEL - depending on the place and size of the room. Having a scrubbing energetic massage costs about 10 GEL. It is as well possible to go to the public room were a bigger bath is available for the cheaper 2 GEL admittance price. Going to the sulphur baths can definitely be seen as a cultural experience. *Abano Str.* აბანოს ქ.

Grape Harvest რთველი (*Rtveli*). In a wine country like Georgia, the grape harvest is of course a cultural event of particular importance. *Rtveli* usually takes place in September in the wine regions, particularly in the Kakheti



region, and involves the entire family. Young children and grandparents stay at home the whole day to prepare food while the other members of the family and friends are working in the vineyard from dawn to dusk. As a foreigner, it is worth going with Georgian friends to their vineyard and helping to pick up grapes. Seeing the production process of home made wine is of particular interest. The *supra* at the end of the day helps to forget the hard working day and offers time to enjoy Georgian wine and traditional songs and poems.





European Volunteer's Testimony.....

"I never expected all the changes which took place in the way I perceived the world. I thought the European Voluntary Service would be a great experience but I never expected something like this to happen in my life. I can say I will never be the same as before. Both at the professional and personal levels, I developed a knowledge and an awareness of myself that I had never even dreamed of before.

Georgian culture is extremely exacting and rich. It gives so much that I just feel like giving as much as I can too. My daily experience gave me to feel a life not based on the future like in most of our Western countries, but on the present. The relation Georgians entertain with God and other beliefs caused in me a totally unexpected deep change: I do not believe anymore. And this alone changed all perspectives I had on life in general and on my own in particular.

I recommend going to Georgia to everyone, because life here is rich and intense. I finally experienced the life I always wanted to have: a life of wonderment, a life of pleasurable work and interpersonal relations. I don't have to wait for tomorrow to be happy anymore: Georgia proved me that I should begin with being happy today..."



Day-To-Day Toil

Day-to-Day Toil provides useful information and advice about living in Georgia to assist volunteers in organising and enjoying their daily life. Therefore, it contains a section *Practical Tips* about things like shopping, communication, leisure and free time activities and using public transportation.

It is relevant to be aware of practical daily issues in any country. Knowing how to find a plumber, which bus to take or simply where to buy a specific product, helps to feel comfortable in a new living environment. Consequently, this chapter shall give volunteers a sense of orientation needed in the reality of Georgia which seems to be chaotic and confusing at the beginning but which possesses a logic of its own.

Practical Tips

Every country is characterised by a slightly different organisation of daily life arrangements. Georgia is no exception as for that. This chapter therefore provides practical information concerning staying in Georgia in order to make the newcomer's daily tasks easier.

You will find below the general information every volunteer should know before going to Georgia: the immigration policy, insurance coverage, etc. It also contains some explanations on practical arrangements that can be helpful for your daily life in Georgia.

Immigration Policy. Entering the Republic of Georgia by crossing a land border or by landing at an airport is easy and safe. European Union citizens can stay without a visa up to 90 days. Since volunteers usually stay longer, it is possible to ask for a temporary resident permit based on an affidavit from the hosting organisation. This permit costs about 180 GEL, is quite simple to obtain and will be delivered within less than a month after application. If not a European Union citizen, please

approach a Georgian embassy near your home to get more information about visa application detail.

Foreign Representation in Georgia. In Southern Caucasus, Tbilisi remains the city where most foreign Embassies and Consulates are situated. For safety reasons, the ministries of foreign affairs of every country recommend expatriates to register at their embassy. Each embassy provides advice and recommendations in case of an emergency and takes care of their citizens, for example, if repatriation is needed. The contact data of embassies and consulates are listed on the website of the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs at www.mfa.gov.ge

Personal Safety. Georgia is a safe country to live in. In the capital as well as in the regions, Georgians are hospitable and ready to help any time. Nevertheless incidents can happen and a few recommendations will be given here. Intermeddling in a fight between Georgians should be avoided. Going to remote areas or crossing land borders

alone especially by night should be, if possible, avoided. Some female volunteers encountered some minor incidents in such situations. Moreover it is always recommended to avoid high-risk situations - mass-protest demonstrations, very old cable-cars, not wearing seat belts, etc. Volunteers should also remember that any injuries contracted when taking part in a demonstration are not covered by AXA-Insurance.

Furthermore, volunteers are often interested in the two conflict regions of Georgia - Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It is here reminded that both are conflict regions, meaning that they are unsafe for foreigners. Firstly embassies have no influence on situations their citizens might encounter there, and secondly European volunteers are not insured when travelling in high-risk territories.

Emergency Numbers. In case of an emergency, the following phone numbers might be useful. Be aware some explanation about the concerned situation has to be given either in Georgian or in Russian. Volunteers can also safely approach any police officer in the street if they need help. Police officers are helping foreigners very efficiently.

. Fire Station: 011

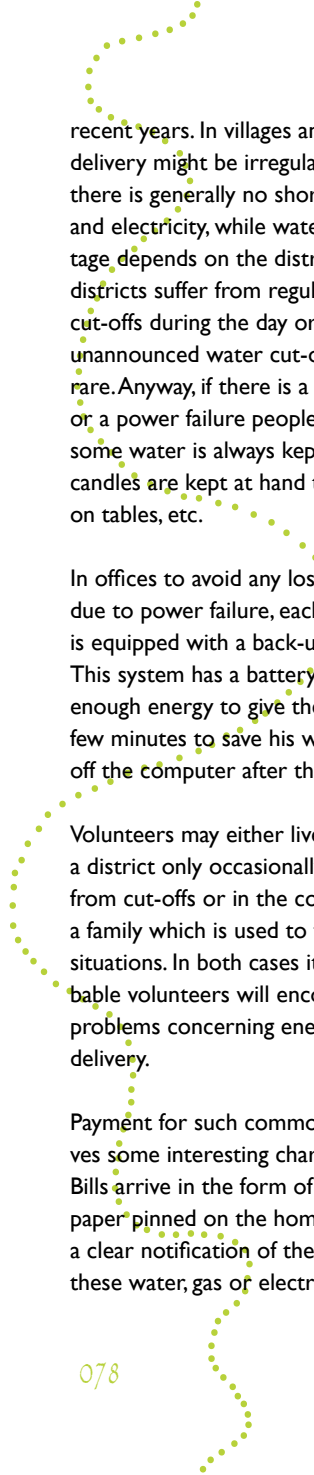
. Police: 022

. Ambulance and 24/24 Emergency: 033

Insurance. Every European Volunteer is totally covered by AXA Insurance (European Benefits) for free. It is recommended to check contract detail to be aware of what is insured, and what is not. In Georgia, if any medical treatment is needed, it is necessary to indicate the doctor's name, the treatment, the cost and the volunteer's name on the bill in English or Russian for reimbursement. The bill has then to be sent to AXA Insurance at the address noted below. To prevent postal loss it is advised to have the originals of all documents copied before sending them. In case of an emergency or any serious treatment, AXA Insurance should be contacted as soon as possible. The insurance company might appoint one of their doctors to check the volunteer's medical state and organise repatriation if necessary. In case of some expensive planned treatment, AXA Insurance might pre-pay the costs.

European Benefits (Plan SVE), 82 Rue Villeneuve, 92587 Clichy Cedex, France
Phone: +33.1.44.71.50.29
evs@euroben.com

Energy and Water Supply Infrastructures. The situation in Georgia concerning water, gas or electricity has definitely improved a lot over

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recent years. In villages and small cities, delivery might be irregular. In Tbilisi there is generally no shortage in gas and electricity, while water shortage depends on the districts. Some districts suffer from regular water cut-offs during the day or at night but unannounced water cut-offs are very rare. Anyway, if there is a water cut-off or a power failure people are prepared: some water is always kept in barrels or candles are kept at hand to be set up on tables, etc.

In offices to avoid any loss of data due to power failure, each computer is equipped with a back-up system. This system has a battery and is saving enough energy to give the worker a few minutes to save his work and turn off the computer after the shortage.

Volunteers may either live in Tbilisi in a district only occasionally suffering from cut-offs or in the countryside in a family which is used to facing such situations. In both cases it is improbable volunteers will encounter many problems concerning energy and water delivery.

Payment for such commodities involves some interesting characteristics. Bills arrive in the form of small slips of paper pinned on the home door. With a clear notification of the deadline, these water, gas or electricity bills

have to be absolutely paid in due time because without any second notice the concerned company will shut down the supply. Payments have to be made in different offices depending on the district of the city in which the home is situated. Addresses are indicated on the bills. What's more, common expenses for corridor lights, the lift or common areas cleaning have to be paid by residents. The money is collected by the residents themselves using a rotation system which divides the responsibility for payments among all people living in the same building.

Phone Calls and the Internet. The use of cell-phones is quite easy: by signing a contract and giving a local home address, one can acquire a SIM Card for about 30 GEL. It is possible to get cell-phones which cannot read a foreign SIM Card due to a SIM Lock unlocked for a few GEL in practically all shops selling cell-phone numbers. Some operators may propose you a pre-paid system: Geocell, Magti, Bali, etc. They more or less charge the same price. Sending an SMS to a Georgian or foreign cell-phone costs about the same - between 6 and 12 Tetri - and calling is very cheap in comparison with prices in Western European countries.

Landlines are divided in two categories - "Old" numbers which use the former

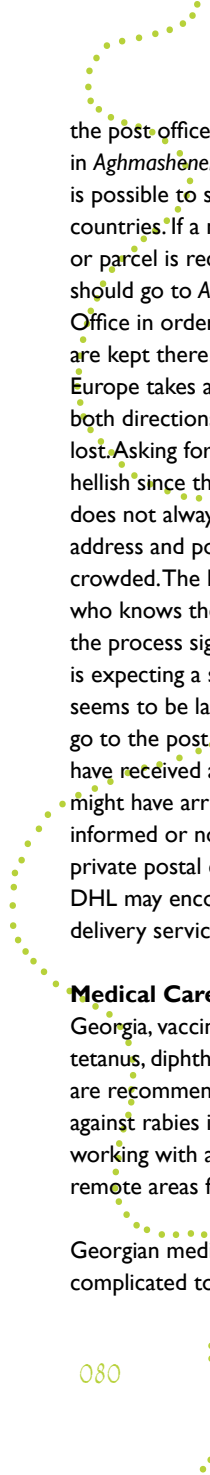
phone system and “New” numbers which are installed with the new system. You can freely call landlines from a working landline for a certain duration of time per month. In any case, you have to pay for a monthly contract in order to get your line open and then pay your phone bill regularly at the Telecommunication Office. There is a Telecommunication Office for each district. To get the address of this office, the best way is to ask your neighbours. It can take a few months before the landline is turned off for non payment of the contract and bills.

An internet connection at home is easily and rapidly installed. The quality of the internet connection varies from day to day and from place to place. An internet company should be able to tell you if the district you are concerned about is part of their coverage. Opening a line should cost between 80 and 120 GEL and an ADSL Internet connection should cost around 80 GEL a month. However, plenty of Internet cafés are available in Tbilisi itself but also in small cities for a few GEL an hour and some bars provide free Wi-Fi connection. Unfortunately, most computers in Internet cafés are often infected with viruses. Hence, very good regularly upgraded anti-virus protection and anti-spam software are needed if any kind of digital data is frequently shared with others via flash

disks.

Shopping. Shopping in Georgia differs quite a lot from what it is in Western countries. While it is common in Europe to shop in cheap big supermarket chains, in Georgia local market places are the best option to get not only fresh and local but well priced products. Any attempt to survive with the EVS monthly food allowance by buying products at the Western style Populi or any other supermarket will fail. In Tbilisi shopping on the big market *Bazroba* near the main railway station is demanding and at least two things should be considered: first, the place is very crowded, so it takes a lot of time to buy everything in one go and to avoid going there several times a week; second, to take one’s own scale to check if the weight of tomatoes, apples or potatoes that was charged is correct is common. Of course, if specific products like yoghurt, cereals or any specialties from foreign countries are needed, bigger supermarkets like Goodwill or Populi XXL should be considered.

Getting and Sending Post. All post offices feature national and international services. Some of them also provide phone, fax or internet services. *Davit Aghmashenebeli #44* Post Office is considered to be number 1 Post Office and provides the same services as

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the post office on *Rustaveli #31*. Only in *Aghmashenebeli #44* Post Office it is possible to send parcels to foreign countries. If a notification for a letter or parcel is received the volunteer should go to *Aghmashenebeli #44*. Post Office in order to ask for it: parcels are kept there. Post delivery from Europe takes about three weeks in both directions, and mails get regularly lost. Asking for parcels can become hellish since the needed notification does not always arrive at the proper address and post offices are often crowded. The help of a Georgian friend who knows the system can accelerate the process significantly. If a volunteer is expecting a specific package, which seems to be late he or she can directly go to the post office and ask if they have received anything. The parcel might have arrived and nobody was informed or notified about it. Also private postal companies like TNT or DHL may encounter difficulties in their delivery services.

Medical Care. Before going to Georgia, vaccinations against polio, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A and B are recommended while vaccination against rabies is only advised for those working with animals or staying in remote areas for long periods.

Georgian medical system may look complicated to foreigners. In the case

of a health problem, it might be best to contact a close Georgian friend or colleague who can help to find an appropriate place for medical treatment. There are multiple hospitals and clinics specialised in different fields. Doctors speak Georgian and Russian, but only rarely other languages. Embassies provide lists of doctors who speak other languages, so volunteers are advised to contact their own embassies to find a doctor speaking their language or English. Bringing basic medications for headaches or for digestive problems, or the necessary medicines you need on a regular basis, is anyway recommended.

Technical Specialists. To get a plumber, a locksmith, a heating engineer or any other technical specialists, volunteers should contact the hosting organisation or a good Georgian friend. The hosting organisation is responsible for your lodging and therefore they should be informed first. Getting a professional technician alone can be complicated due to the fact that technicians are not listed anywhere – such workers are mainly to be found at *Eliava* market where they are waiting for work proposals.

Laundry. It may sound strange to a newcomer, but finding a solution for washing clothes is not as easy as it is in Western Europe. In Georgia a mino-

rity of households possess a washing machine at their home. Therefore volunteers might have to find other solutions for washing clothes. The most common way to do one's washing in Southern Caucasus is by hand. Some laundries where service is commonly paid per kilo or per item can be found in Tbilisi but they may be too expensive for volunteers.

Trash and Recycling. In Georgia, no trash sorting exists yet. In remote areas, compost is commonly used for recycling vegetable rejects but in cities even recycling glass is not common. It is frequent to see people throwing trash on the street, while more and more trash bins can be found particularly in cities. In remote areas, no processing of trash exists, so it is common to see open-air unofficial dumps in the countryside.

Public Bathrooms. Public bathrooms are rare and badly taken care of. The facilities themselves as well as the cleaning schedules differ a lot as compared to European standards. Most public toilets are squat toilets, commonly called "alla turca". These allow basic hygiene, which is not the case for sitting toilets. Especially on marshrutka or train trips, it is always advisable to "plan" your visit to a bathroom.

Leisure and Free Time

Besides the previous practical tips volunteers are also interested in information about possible free time activities. You will find recommendations to obtain news or literature in foreign languages and to find sport activities below.

Worldwide News. The Internet is an infinite source of information concerning global politics, the world's economy and international cultural events. By checking national newspapers' websites volunteers can stay informed about what is going on in their home countries and around the world.

In Tbilisi on 102.9 FM at different times Radio France International and Deutsche Welle broadcast news, debates and music in their respective languages.

Some weekly English publications which give political news as well as artistic information about Georgia exist: Georgia Today, The Messenger, etc. They are available at newsstands or in shops and bars where foreigners commonly go.

A few websites are also webcasting up-to-date information about Georgia:

. Georgia Today www.georgiatoday.ge

. UNA-Georgia Online Magazine www.civil.ge

. The Georgian Times www.geotimes.ge

. Information concerning Tbilisi www.info-tbilisi.com

. Web Portal on Human Rights in Georgia www.humanrights.ge

. The Messenger Online www.messenger.com.ge

Georgia also has several television channels in Georgian language. With a satellite dish it is possible to receive channels in Russian, Polish, English, French, etc., and common cable TV features the BBC and the CNN in English besides plenty of Russian channels.

International Bookstores. A few places provide books in English in Tbilisi.

Prospero's Books is a combined café-cum-bookstore which offers a great choice of English books and movies to buy and rent. Situated in a hidden

courtyard off Rustaveli Avenue, it is a very nice place to grab a coffee and a piece of cake and to enjoy some good reading. *Rustaveli Ave. #34* რუსთაველის გამ. 34

Literaturi is a friendly place for a coffee or a brunch combined with an English-Russian-Georgian library, mostly specialised in literature and poetry. Mainly classics can be found here. It is situated near Tbilisi State Concert Hall at the beginning of *Tamanishvili Str.*, თამანიშვილის ქ.

The New Art Cafe, a restaurant set up by the Non-Governmental Organisation New Art Union, features a bookstore, mainly oriented on arts and literature, and also exhibits drawings, photographs and paintings. *Orbeliani Str. #31*, ორბელიანის ქ. 31

Cultural Centres. Different cultural centres are located in Tbilisi. They all provide well developed libraries with weekly and monthly newspapers and magazines, books on diverse topics, DVDs or VHS tapes of films. Cultural centres are generally proposing all level language courses and they organise cultural events like lectures, conferences, festivals, concerts, or exhibitions related to their respective countries. Registration is easy but the fees differ from one centre to another. The three main cultural centres are stated below.

. British Council (www.britishcouncil.org/ge.htm) *Rustaveli Ave. #34*, რუსთაველის გამ. 34

. Centre Culturel Français Alexandre Dumas (www.ccf.tbilissi.caucasus.net) *Gudiashvili Str. #7 and #10* გუდიაშვილის ქ. 7 და 10

. Goethe Institut (www.goethe.de/ins/gel/tif) *Zandukeli Str. #16* ზანდუკელის ქ. 16

Cinemas. Cinemas in Tbilisi and in small cities mainly propose movies in Russian and sometimes in English with Georgian subtitles.

In Tbilisi, the only cinema that regularly shows - every Wednesday and Friday at 8.00 p.m. – English movies is the Kolga Cinema House. The programme can be found on <http://kolga.geoweb.ge> . This cinema has a very nice ambiance and it is even possible to suggest some movies. The entrance fee is 5 GEL. *Kakabadze Str. #2* კაკაბაძის ქ. 2

Sports. A lot of possibilities exist as for sport in the country, especially outdoor activities.

Speed walking, walking, running can be practised everywhere in the countryside or cities. For specific hiking excursions, it is important to rely on professional guides. If hosted in Tbilisi, a volunteer can take part in the biweekly excursions with the club called “Tbilisi

Hash House Harriers". The group goes to the countryside and follows specific itineraries with group rituals along the way which bring easygoing and friendly mirth. More information on <http://tbilisi3.com>

For winter sports Georgia is well equipped. The two main ski resorts are Bakuriani and Gudauri. Bakuriani is more family-oriented than Gudauri. However both resorts have good skiing infrastructures, developed lodging facilities and equipment renting shops. Going to Bakuriani or Gudauri by marshrutka lasts at least two hours. The budget per day should be at least 70 GEL for accommodation, ski rentals, cable cars and food. Furthermore, during the winter a skating rink is set up in Tbilisi next to the Sports Hall. The fee including the renting of ice-skates for one hour is 10 GEL per person. The skating rink is situated on *26th May Square*, 26 მაისის მოედანი

Two Football stadiums exist in Tbilisi. The national stadium on *Chavchavadze Ave. #2*, ჭავჭავაძის ქ. 2, hosts games between national teams, or friendly matches between international teams. The clearly more impressive stadium, called *Dinamo Stadium*, is located next to the Central Railway Station and is mainly used for international venues. It is worth going at least once to appreciate the ambiance, because

Georgians are highly motivated when supporting their teams and being in the public is very entertaining. Furthermore, you can play soccer with a group of friends almost everywhere - small football fields are common and can be used free of charge. During the winter, renting a covered football field costs about 40 GEL an hour. At Turtle Lake renting a small open-air football field costs 45 GEL for 90 min, near the *Dinamo Stadium* 30 GEL for 90 min.

Tbilisi also counts several swimming pools, but the only one within a volunteer's budget is *Laguna Vere* laguna vere. It was renovated and reopened recently with new opening hours. The single entrance fee is between 8 and 10 GEL according to the client's status. A 12 month membership costs 90 GEL. *Laguna Vere* is situated on *Kostava str. #34*, კობცავას ქ. 34. The entrance is at the back of the building.

Travelling

Transportation in Georgia, inside Tbilisi or outside, seems to be at first glance unorganised and chaotic. In fact, a variety of means of transportation exist and after a while one can see the system is working quite well. There may be no official schedule, but it is regular.

The most important aspect to consider when travelling on Georgian roads is the driving style. Car and even mini-bus drivers display a specific driving attitude that commonly leads to overtaking in dangerous places like in bends, driving on the wrong side of the road, slaloming between cars and most of all using their horns at every single junction. Volunteers, used to the calm European driving style, are usually surprised, if not shocked or scared, but they get used to it quite rapidly.

Another important remark concerns safety. When driving in cities, a majority of people do not use seatbelts, and a taxi driver might stare at those passengers that want to use the seatbelts and who by doing this dare to imply that

they do not trust the driver. On the other hand, outside cities, the use of seatbelts is obligatory.

Stations. In general, every Georgian city possesses a main bus station. Main cities possess as well a train station. In Tbilisi, different stations are appointed for different destinations and different means of transportation. When preparing a trip outside the capital, checking beforehand from where the transportation is leaving is always a gain of time, or at least no waste of it.

. Railway Station ვაგზლის მოედანი (*Vagzlis Moedani*). Day and night trains can be found going to main cities in Georgia, to Armenia and Azerbaijan and mini-buses to main cities in Georgia. There are also day trains and buses available going to the Airport. This station is interconnected to the Metro.

. Didube დიდუბე: Mini-buses and buses to almost all main cities in Georgia are leaving from this station which is interconnected to Tbilisi's Metro.

. Isani ისანი: Mini-buses and buses leave from this station mainly to the Eastern part of Georgia and to Azer-

bajan. This station is interconnected to Tbilisi's Metro.

. Ortachala ორთაჭალა: Mini-buses and buses to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey are leaving from this station.

Inter-City Mini-Buses and Buses.

Mini-buses (commonly called *marshrutka* from its Russian name) and buses are linking almost all cities in Georgia. Drivers are waiting for passengers at the station and commonly leave when the vehicle is full - buses usually feature time schedules. You can cross the country for up to 20 GEL. A trip between Batumi and Tbilisi costs 18 GEL and between Tbilisi and Bakuriani 10 GEL. The prices are less expensive when travelling by bus, e.g. Mtskheta -Tbilisi by bus costs 70 Tetri, while it is around 1 GEL by *marshrutka*. The driver is going from station to station but commonly passengers stop the *marshrutka* or bus at any place.

Trains. Trains are crossing the whole country from the Azerbaijani border to Batumi and from the Armenian border to Zugdidi. All lines go through Tbilisi. A trip from Tbilisi to Batumi by night lasts between 8 to 10 hours and costs around 18 GEL, depending on the travelling class. There are three classes:
. *Platskartny* (3rd class): collective sleeper with 54 beds per coach
. *Kupé* (2nd class): 4-berth compartment
. *Spalny Vagon* (SV, 1st class): 2-berth

compartment

Generally, trains are a very safe means of transportation and the police is usually present in trains travelling in Georgia. However, if you are travelling with friends it is recommended to take a *Kupé* compartment together for your own comfort, while when you are travelling alone *Platskartny* seems to be the best solution in order to avoid any trouble.

Flying to and from Georgia. The main airport is situated at a 30 minute car-ride distance from Tbilisi downtown centre. A few travel companies propose flights mainly to European and Middle-East countries. It is possible to reach it by taxi for a minimum of 15 GEL or in the daytime by train or bus from the Railway Station. From the airport to the city a taxi costs 25 GEL. Smaller airports are situated in Batumi and Kutaisi. Flights to Turkey or Ukraine are scheduled there.

Tbilisi Metro. In Tbilisi itself, two underground lines are meeting at the Central Railway Station. One trip costs 40 Tetri (price in 2008). The stations and directions are mostly indicated in the Georgian alphabet, but in some stations the Latin alphabet is used too. The Metro is crossing the city fast and is currently being renovated.

Tbilisi Buses. In Tbilisi, buses are

quite slow and crowded but useful to go to specific places. The process is as follows: the passenger enters the bus through the backdoor and pays the driver when leaving through the front door. The government has been trying to organise a ticket system since July 2007, but unfortunately it is not working very well. Nevertheless, a ticket seller may approach each passenger to sell tickets at the beginning of the ride. A ride costs 40 Tetri. No official map or time schedule exist so far even when the government did a survey in 2007 in order to set up schedules for 2008, but so far the implementation of itinerary timetables is postponed to an unknown date. The only way to find out which bus to take is either to read the sign on the bus windscreen in Georgian or to ask someone.

Tbilisi Mini-Buses. Mini-buses, also called *mashrutka*, are used as public transportation across the capital. Even though the government tried to limit the *marshrutka* routes by reorganising all lines and prohibiting the access to specific main streets like Rustaveli Avenue, the *marshrutka* system is still well developed and very useful. To go from one specific point to another, it may be the fastest option. The directions are written in Georgian on a sign in the windscreen of the mini-bus. This makes it quite complicated for non-Georgian speakers as it is required to

read very fast where the vehicle goes. Therefore, it is recommended to ask Georgians for the right line in order not to get lost. To take a *marshrutka* along the road people just stop it with a hand sign. A short but loudly spoken “*gaacheret!*” will make the driver stop and the passengers can pay and go out. A ride costs generally 50 Tetri, but it may cost 20 or 40 Tetri, depending on whether it is a district or city-crossing *marshrutka*.

Taxi. In every city in Georgia it is possible to catch a taxi for a few Lari. Taxis are very useful to get to unknown districts, but also at night or in areas where no buses are available. It might be useful to make sure that the taxi driver knows the destination because it happens sometimes that drivers do not know the place at all and just drop off passengers anywhere. The increasing price of petrol also brings up the prices of taxi rides. For a ride in Tbilisi between different districts, the price may be up to no more than 8 or 10 GEL (price in 2008). Downtown, a 4 GEL prices is quite normal. It is common to negotiate the price of a taxi ride beforehand not to be surprised about the amount afterwards. Taxis are also a good option for going to remote areas which are not connected to a public transportation network like the David Gareji monastery, or the Uplistsikhe cave town, etc.



European Volunteer's Testimony.....

"In a short period of time, my EVS in Georgia changed my life in a lot of ways. Initially, I just wanted to leave my country for a while - I have been here now for already two years. I never expected this to happen and I never planned it so, but my European Voluntary Service here was so full of new impressions, new discoveries and wonderments, that I just decided to stay.

It is hard for me to point out the most important things that made me stay. It may be the kindness of the people, the easy-going way of life - just let things be what they are for a while and enjoy the instant - but it may be too the opportunity to really change things in my own environment and to see Georgia developing everywhere.

I do not want to say that everything is perfect here. In Georgia a lot of things still drive me mad and sometimes it goes too far and I want to leave right away and forget all the disappointments I have experienced here. But if you look for an intense time in your life, if you want to test your own opinions and if you are ready to challenge yourself daily with a totally different approach to life, interpersonal relations and work, then I can only recommend you to discover Georgia and its people."



Cultural Struggle

Cultural Struggle provides basics about Intercultural Learning. During his stay in a foreign country, a volunteer goes through different emotional states of mind which are here described. Georgian culture is highlighted - cultural particularities are indicated to minimize misunderstandings and problems by raising the awareness of volunteers.

In order to support the volunteers' cultural adaptation, this chapter contains a *Cultural Guide* for first orientation in the new environment.



In a Foreign Country

During the EVS, volunteers will have to adapt to the local environment and culture. Generally volunteers are going through different emotional and intellectual awareness stages that are the same for all volunteers. Volunteers may experience the stages described below with varying intensity and at slightly different times in their stay. Some of these stages may also remain beyond the experience of one particular volunteer. However, being aware of the adaptation process may help to overcome temporary difficulties.

First Reactions. In this stage volunteers are unaware of cultural differences which they do not perceive as such and find it difficult to estimate the necessary adaptation to the new culture. The volunteers' first feeling can be different but generally there are two options: amazement or fear. Both emotions are much more intense during the first days and slightly lose intensity as weeks pass. During that period, volunteers generally do not understand a lot of things happening around them.

Most newcomers are in a state of great enthusiasm during the first days and weeks of their volunteering period. Newcomers feel surprised and totally amazed. Every single cultural particularity seems exceptional. Foreigners feel curious and great and have the impression they could stay there forever. In some cases, newcomers even begin to behave differently from what they used to - e.g. accept events they would not have liked. People and colleagues are in general very friendly during these first moments, and volunteers feel comfortable in the new environment.

Totally opposite to this state of amazement, volunteers may panic completely on arriving. They have the impression that everything and everyone is dangerous, and are not able to overcome that feeling to meet others or to accomplish daily actions on their own - e.g. going shopping, taking a bus, etc. That reaction - like in some ways amazement about everything - is out of proportion as there generally is no more threat or danger than at home. This first shock might be hardly

understood by others, especially locals, and can even create a gap between the community and the newcomer, who then only wishes to leave.

This stage is often emotionally very intense. The newcomer is sensitive and he feels deep emotions for everyone and everything. His reactions and behaviour are often driven by emotions and do not involve much rationality. Because of this emotional vulnerability, it is common to observe newcomers falling in love.

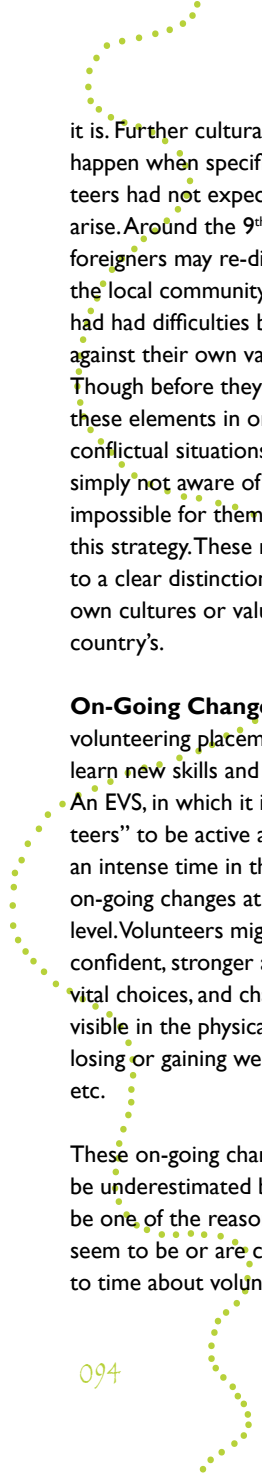
Recognition. After spending some time in the host country - usually in the 3rd or 4th months - volunteers suddenly recognise not only that there actually are cultural differences, but that some of them are not easily acceptable for them. Small elements and facts might, at this stage, bother volunteers easily. Volunteers may feel homesick and is still in a period of vulnerability. He is highly aware at that moment of most cultural differences.

At that same moment volunteers, if they had not recognised it before, understand that the volunteering period is indeed no long holiday. Volunteers might feel frustrated, because still every single action or interaction with locals requires a lot of efforts and they might feel dependent because orientation within the hosting community and

communication are still problematic and exacting. Volunteers cannot behave the same way they would at home without causing troubles but anyway refuse to adopt some of the local's behaviour. On one hand, volunteers know cultural flexibility is required in order to overcome the current difficulties in their adaptation. But on the other hand they might recognise that they are not able or not willing to behave the way locals do - that counts particularly for sensitive elements like privacy, gender roles, daily rhythms, etc.

Adjustment. After these first moments, volunteers slowly adapt to the local culture by understanding better some specific cultural particularities. They develop their capacities to react or behave accordingly. This adjustment happens partly unconsciously, meaning that volunteers do not necessary understand how they get used to certain cultural characteristics. At this stage, several cultural aspects are already perceived as normal and volunteers react in a culturally proper way and behave without difficulties and naturally. Volunteers feel more comfortable and independent in daily issues and they establish some habitual routines in their lives in the hosting country.

The deeper volunteers get to know the culture of the hosting country, the deeper their understanding of



it is. Further cultural shocks might happen when specific issues volunteers had not expected or foreseen arise. Around the 9th or 10th months, foreigners may re-discover aspects of the local community with which they had had difficulties because they went against their own values and principles. Though before they were ignoring these elements in order to avoid conflictual situations or they were simply not aware of them, it becomes impossible for them now to go on with this strategy. These new clashes lead to a clear distinction between their own cultures or values and the hosting country's.

On-Going Changes. All along their volunteering placement volunteers learn new skills and new knowledge. An EVS, in which it is “up-to volunteers” to be active and creative, is an intense time in their lives creating on-going changes at the personal level. Volunteers might become more confident, stronger as for their own vital choices, and changes may even be visible in the physical appearance - e.g. losing or gaining weight, new haircuts, etc.

These on-going changes should not be underestimated because this might be one of the reasons why volunteers seem to be or are confused from time to time about volunteering and future

plans after the EVS. It is hard for volunteers and the people around them to recognise these inner-changes, because it is a slow process with incrementally changing ideas, visions and perceptions of things.

When going back home, volunteers themselves as well as their relatives and friends might be surprised to discover how much they have indeed changed and how much the people who had stayed behind had changed too. Then reintegration begins, which might be harder than expected.

Cultural Particularities

Cultural Particularities describes various facets of Georgian culture in four successive sections each of which focuses on one particular aspect – the concept of time and the avoidance of uncertainty, collectivism vs. individualism, communication and finally masculinity vs. femininity. This frame has been inspired by the work of Geert Hofstede on cultures. He classified cultures using five dimensions - power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism vs. individualism, masculinity vs. femininity and time orientation - which according to his research, can distinguish cultures from one another.

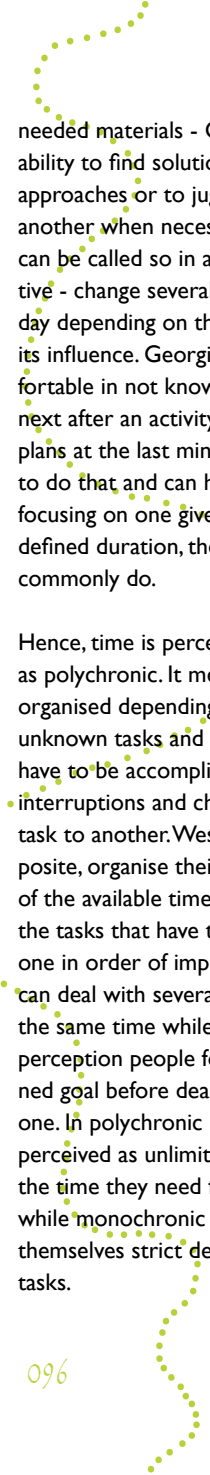
Particular Georgian cultural characteristics are described below which are in a European perspective, those creating confusion, difficulties and/or conflicts. The intention is not to give a full portrait of Georgian culture or to go into a deep analysis of it as professionals of social sciences do. This chapter describes cultural elements as if they were a mosaic from which the reader could pick valuable information making it easier to understand the

Georgian life style.

This chapter should never be considered as complete, because a culture is constantly evolving. Hence, the reader should always keep in mind that the information below is subjective and that to describe a culture is deeply connected to the personal experiences someone goes through. Every volunteer has a different experience of Georgian culture. Therefore, you are invited to develop your own views and interpretations.

Concept of Time and Uncertainty Avoidance. This part refers to how people in a given culture perceive time and how they plan and organise their daily life. It describes how Georgians manage their daily duties and how they cope with time restrictions.

Georgians have an improvised way to organise their daily tasks. Because chores and work can take more time than expected or planned - e.g. energy or water cut-offs, irregular time-lengthened travelling, impossibility to find

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needed materials - Georgians have the ability to find solutions with diverse approaches or to juggle from a task to another when necessary. Plans - if they can be called so in a Western perspective - change several times during one day depending on the environment and its influence. Georgians do feel comfortable in not knowing what comes next after an activity or in changing plans at the last minute. They are used to do that and can hardly consider focusing on one given task for a well-defined duration, the way Westerners commonly do.

Hence, time is perceived by Georgians as polychronic. It means that days are organised depending on known and unknown tasks and activities which have to be accomplished, allowing interruptions and changes from one task to another. Westerners, on the opposite, organise their days in function of the available time and they prioritise the tasks that have to be done one by one in order of importance. Georgians can deal with several objectives at the same time while in monochronic perception people focus on one defined goal before dealing with the next one. In polychronic perception time is perceived as unlimited. Georgians use the time they need for a given task while monochronic thinking people set themselves strict deadlines for specific tasks.

Therefore a particular chore can take various durations in function of interruptions and other events during the execution. In the same way, it is common in Georgia for people to arrive later than set or to work on diverse projects at the same time. In case of deadlines, workers rarely plan their work and usually do not have a strategy to reach a goal step-by-step. Everything is done at the last minute in a “now or never – approach”.

Hence, Georgians have a low level of uncertainty avoidance. They are used to adapting to new and challenging situations and do not need to know how things will be organised in details. Not knowing in advance how to reach a given location or when a needed document will arrive does not worry them.

Collectivism vs. Individualism.

This part describes how people relate with one another. In an individualistic society, people set themselves as their first priority - that is the case in most Western cultures. On the contrary, a collectivistic society emphasizes the community and the group first. Every single person undertakes their tasks to satisfy and take care of every member in the group. That determines social interactions and is the fundament of privacy, inter-personal distance or life priorities. Every culture is not totally

collectivistic or individualistic, but it tends to lean more to one side than the other.

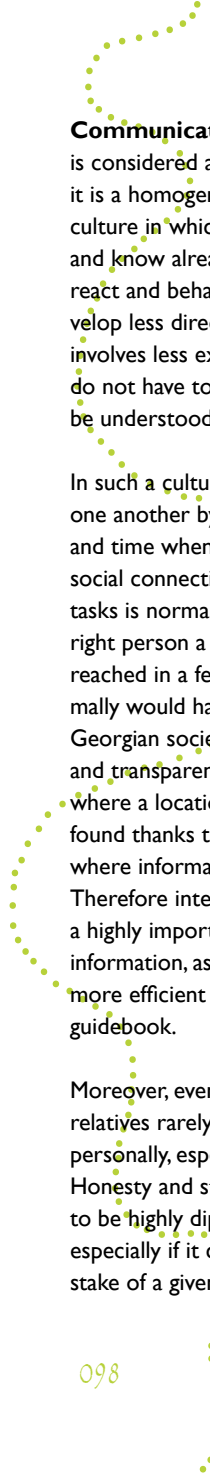
Georgians identify themselves in function of the groups they belong to, and those are varied and diverse - religious groups, ethnical groups, the regions and villages of origin, professions, families and family situations, etc. In Georgian society the group is considered as the first priority. That notion nowadays undergoes a deep change with the transition to a capitalist society. However the importance of belonging to a certain group remains so far highly important and that is visible through intersocial rivalries, within the Caucasus and within Georgia itself.

Family and friends play a major rôle in the lives of Georgians. Ties between family members and friends are strong and close. Family members usually all live together in the same house, even often in the same room. It is not common to have a private room, and as a fact to be alone in general - even when away from home or separated from one another, family members always know where the others are and what they are up to. Several generations live together and everyone has their own rôles and tasks in their communal life. Pensioners' homes do not exist in Georgia, because the whole family takes care of their elderly members. A

child even when a financially independent adult, will rarely decide to settle on his own and leave the parents' home, especially when living in the same town.

Family has always been the first priority - e.g. in most cases, the birthday of a relative will be more important than even a professional deadline. Personal choices are deeply influenced by the family or even performed under family consent - e.g. the marriage of a daughter or the studies of children. Decisions are taken and money is spent for the benefit of the family. Family members are interdependent and feel comfortable like that.

Furthermore, Georgians do not separate private life from professional life. Colleagues are often friends or at least behave like that - e.g. colleagues quite commonly ask private questions from one another. Therefore the working ambiance is generally friendly except in cases of interpersonal conflicts which definitely ruin the atmosphere. There again the group is more important than individual members - e.g. the professional mistake of a given worker is kept unmentioned; the whole group bears the responsibility. This feature has deeply been changing since the collapse of the Soviet Union and it becomes more common to get jobs with strictly-defined responsibilities.

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Communication. Georgian society is considered as a high context society: it is a homogeneous and collectivistic culture in which people understand and know already how others will react and behave. Therefore people develop less direct communication, which involves less explicit statements. Things do not have to be openly expressed to be understood by everyone.

In such a culture, people support one another by sharing resources and time whenever necessary. To use social connections to manage specific tasks is normal - e.g. by knowing the right person a given objective can be reached in a few days though it normally would have taken a few months. Georgian society is not an informative and transparent society - e.g. a society where a location or a direction can be found thanks to a map - but a society where information is known by others. Therefore interpersonal relations play a highly important role - e.g. to get information, asking your neighbour is more efficient than looking for it in a guidebook.

Moreover, even very close friends and relatives rarely criticize one another personally, especially in front of others. Honesty and straightforwardness have to be highly diplomatic and careful, especially if it concerns a personal stake of a given person, while you can

express dissatisfaction or contradictory opinions on topics like politics in a slightly easier way. Pride is an important aspect to take into account to understand the behaviour of many Georgians.

In general Georgians are emotional people, and they express their feelings easily, sometimes even using exaggeration to emphasize how deep their feelings are. Hence, daily situations are experienced in an emotionally very intense way - e.g. debating or discussing involve emotions and might indeed sound like arguing though they definitely are not. Discussions may lack some rational argumentation, especially if they concern sensitive issues. Likewise, ambivalent understanding is rare - a given event is either great or terrible.

Finally non-verbal communication is commonly used by Georgians. Facial language is uncommon with strangers and smiling in public to others is definitely inappropriate. However people are physically very close to one another, which can easily be observed by looking at a queue where people are standing so close to one another that they may touch one another's bodies, even if enough space is available. It is normal to welcome even colleagues by kissing them on their cheeks or to take someone else's hand to show them

the way. Eye contacts are common and shameless - e.g. in public transportation, people do look at other people without feeling awkward, and it is not perceived as an intrusion into their privacy as it might be the case in Western cultures.

Masculinity vs. Femininity. This section concerns relations between men and women, and by extension, their roles and functions within the household and society. Note again that gender relations in Georgia are nowadays evolving very much and that they are different in the capital, in small cities and in villages.

Gender roles are quite set in Georgia. A man is mostly responsible for bringing a livelihood to his household while the woman should take care of the family and home. Interactions between genders are somehow restricted as compared to Western cultures - e.g. during a meal it is usual to see women sitting on one side of the table, men on the other. Going out alone with someone of the opposite gender is generally considered as a sign of showing more than friendship. Dating is common in Georgia - the man usually invites the woman for dinner, to the theatre or to have a walk - but it can last a long time before any intimate contact. A dating young couple is hardly to be seen alone because of

social restrictions. Kissing in public is not very well considered. In the same way, sexual relations out of wedlock, especially for women, are not recommended, because virginity is important, if not for the woman herself, then for the future husband or his family. The only objective of dating is to get married and therefore it is taken very seriously by both partners and their families.

Because getting married and particularly finding a good spouse are important, people commonly propose to arrange meetings among relatives, friends and people from good families - match making is frequent especially outside the capital.



Cultural Guide

Cultural Guide features advice that a foreigner should take into consideration when going to foreign countries for a specific activity like volunteering. This advice is general and specific - some is valid for any destination while some more corresponds to *Cultural Particularities* section. They are supposed to help volunteers integrate.

Cultural Guide focuses, particularly on the cultural challenge. Recommendations concerning the placement, the hosting organisation and the work of volunteers can be found in the chapter *Volunteers' Gambles*.

Respect. First of all, a volunteer has to display a respectful behaviour towards the new culture he is delving into. Respect is present at different levels - e.g. to respect different rhythms and methods, to respect people from different backgrounds, with different skills and opinions. Respect is also to accept that locals might know the environment better and to listen to them. It is the fundament of continued quality cooperation. Volunteers should always

remember that it is not worse, it is not better, it is just different. To respect and not to judge is the toughest part of Intercultural Learning and should never be underestimated.

Responsibility. Foreigners also carry with them a particular responsibility - e.g. the image of their own countries and peoples. Especially in a country like Georgia which had only few contacts with Europeans over recent years, a disrespectful behaviour has a significant impact on locals. A voluntary project aims at breaking stereotypes and one of the most common failures in such a perspective is when the presence of a volunteer and essentially his or her behaviour create stereotypes. Volunteering is no holiday and volunteers should as much as possible remain aware of the impact they have on the environment and especially on the local community.

Observation. Due to the first period of wonderment, volunteers usually miss cultural aspects which are of high importance to integrate in the local

community. It is therefore recommended to take some time to observe all along the volunteering period, but especially at the beginning - e.g. some initial choices or behaviour can influence the stability of the project. Even if the environment seems to be greatly similar, it does not mean that it is. Foreigners often underestimate cultural differences because Georgia looks quite Western at first glance. Consequently, misunderstandings could be easily avoided by the simple fact of observing how things go and how people behave. Asking for advice before taking action is also a good way to get familiar with Georgian culture.

Social Interaction. It is common to observe foreigners staying only with other foreigners mostly of the same nationality as them when in a foreign country. They came to this foreign country to discover a specific culture but by staying always surrounded by people from the same country or world area, nobody really grasps Georgian cultural challenges. Therefore developing social connections with different groups is of great importance. It allows discovering the country from a different perspective and delving deeper into its culture. Sports and cultural activities as well as interactions with their neighbours help volunteers to create private networks, outside the working environment.

Flexibility and Patience. When getting ready to leave for another country, volunteers should definitely be aware that things will be different from the way they are at home. This is an obvious statement that unfortunately people about to go to foreign countries sometimes forget. Expecting Western comfort or living standards in Georgia is unrealistic. By going to foreign countries, foreigners expose themselves to other ways of living and working, but also other ways of thinking and behaving - e.g. different concept of privacy or different gender roles. And indeed they have to be keen to adapt to the new cultural environment sometimes at the most unexpected moments - e.g. problems in energy and water supply, working meetings that are cancelled at the last minute or non scheduled public transportation. By being flexible and patient, such events will go by unnoticed; otherwise it will just ruin one's mood.

Diplomacy. Being diplomatic is of great importance because of the collectivistic character of Georgian society. Stating your own straight forward opinions, especially if they concern someone else, may certainly not be appreciated. Using indirect communication is advisable - e.g. to imply or suggest what is thought, to temper the truth, etc. Particularly at the work place, where colleagues are close to

one another, to keep a good working
ambiance and fruitful cooperation, fo-
reigners should develop their skills to
feel when an issue and a given situation
are too sensitive to be discussed or
should be totally overlooked in silence.

Self Respect. In Georgia, a woman
is expected to behave in specific ways
- e.g. going out late, meeting with male
friends are inappropriate. Foreign
women, due to stereotypes, might so-
metimes face situations which are very
unpleasant like physical or psychologi-
cal harassment. Foreign women should
be aware, when coming to Georgia
that they have to be clearly explicit
on their intentions and wishes. To let
things happen without reacting, to
think it might change all by itself is not
a solution - every time a disrespectful
gesture or comment is done, forei-
gners should clearly stand for their
rights and respect.

Back and Forth. Because of the high
importance for Georgians of making
guests comfortable, it is sometimes
hard to refuse what is offered by them.
To use a gentle tone, to heartily thank
for the proposition and to explain
gratefulness for such hospitality might
help foreigners to eventually refuse a
proposition. To refuse wine in some
festive celebration might be misunder-
stood but will be accepted if clearly and
explicitly expressed - foreigners must

consider that if they accept to drink
the first toast, they will have to drink
the following ones. Likewise, to give
something in exchange of what is pre-
sented by Georgians when being their
guests at their homes is very impor-
tant. Giving very expensive presents
might be problematic knowing that
Georgians are always returning the
favour. To leave some culinary delica-
tessen or small souvenirs from own
countries behind is best. This gesture
will be highly appreciated and valued
by Georgians.

Homesickness and Emergencies.

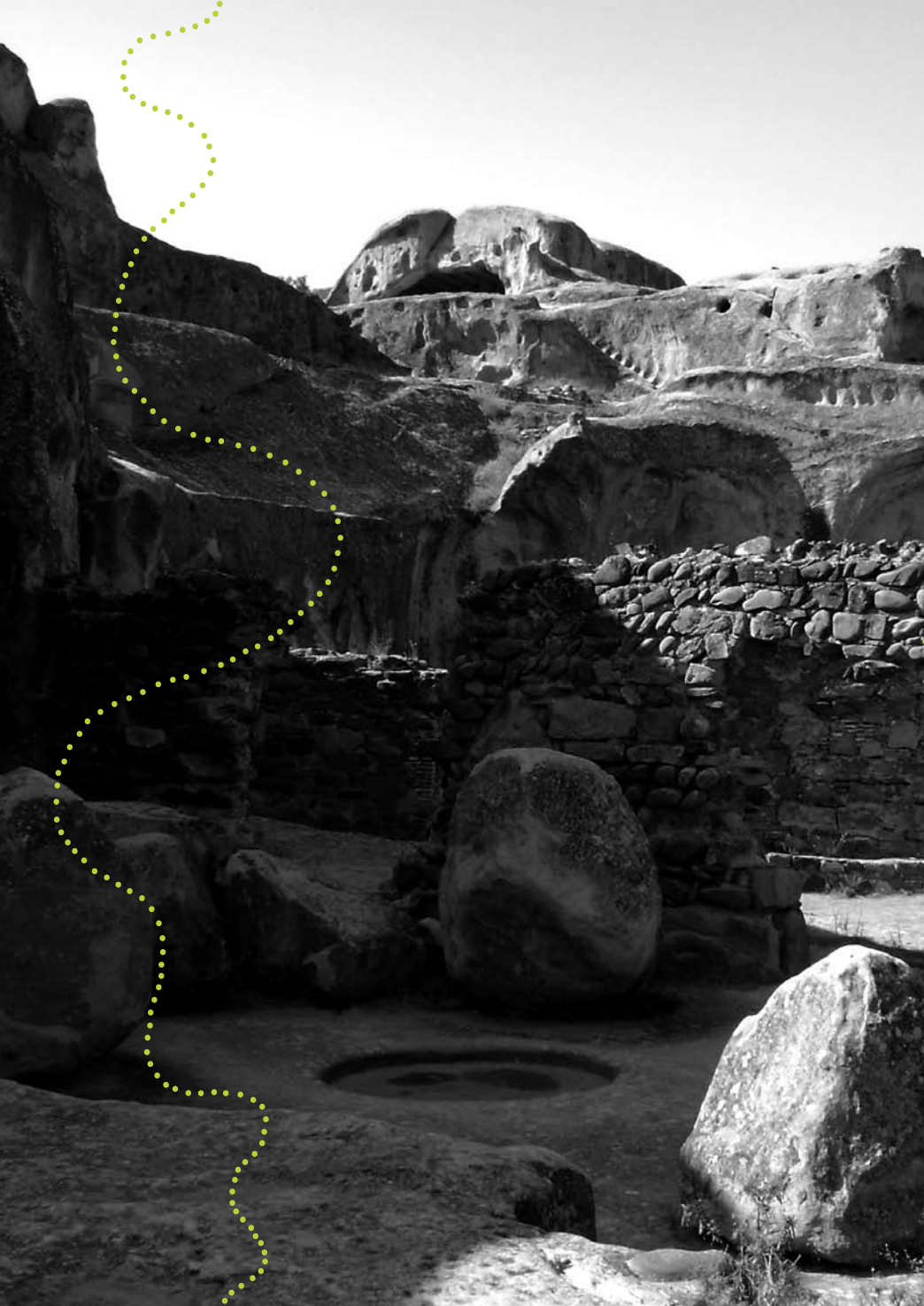
By going to Georgia to live and work
there, volunteers might feel at a total
loss and homesick. To feel low some-
times or get mad at cultural details
and to wish to go home right away are
normal reactions. This feeling should
not be overestimated: it might only be
one bad day. Volunteers should then re-
member why they are here, what they
really want, and to look at the situation
from another point of view or from a
greater distance can help to discover
that after all it is not so bad. Never-
theless feeling homesick should not be
underestimated especially if it spreads
out over days and weeks: to try to get
more social interactions with people
around and to develop activities with
them helps you to feel safe. In the
same way, to meet other volunteers
who might face similar difficulties is

often a good way to relax and ease frustrations and negative feelings.

However in the case of critical incidents or emergency situations, it is recommended to take some time to cool off before calling home to inform relatives. After a few hours or days the situation could be different. It is useless to create worries at the other end of Europe while in fact the situation is already getting better here.

Self-Reflection. A volunteering placement is going very fast and volunteers often feel they are not able to organise their time. To take a rest once in a while for a day or two and to reflect on what has personally and professionally happened is recommended to all volunteers. In the same way to meet other volunteers to talk about the volunteering experience is recommended in order to get different perspectives and views on the EVS project, as well as on your personal development. Especially because being in a foreign country is highly intense emotionally, volunteers often suffer from a lack of reflection and rationality when taking important decisions and undertaking actions. To let oneself be driven only by feelings without stepping back to look at reality from a greater distance might trap foreigners in Georgia into delicate situations.

Finally, to plan or at least to think about the period after the EVS placement might be useful to move back to home reality. Even if it is definitely hard to foresee or plan anything while being in a foreign country, keeping an eye on reality at home may help the re-integration of volunteers.

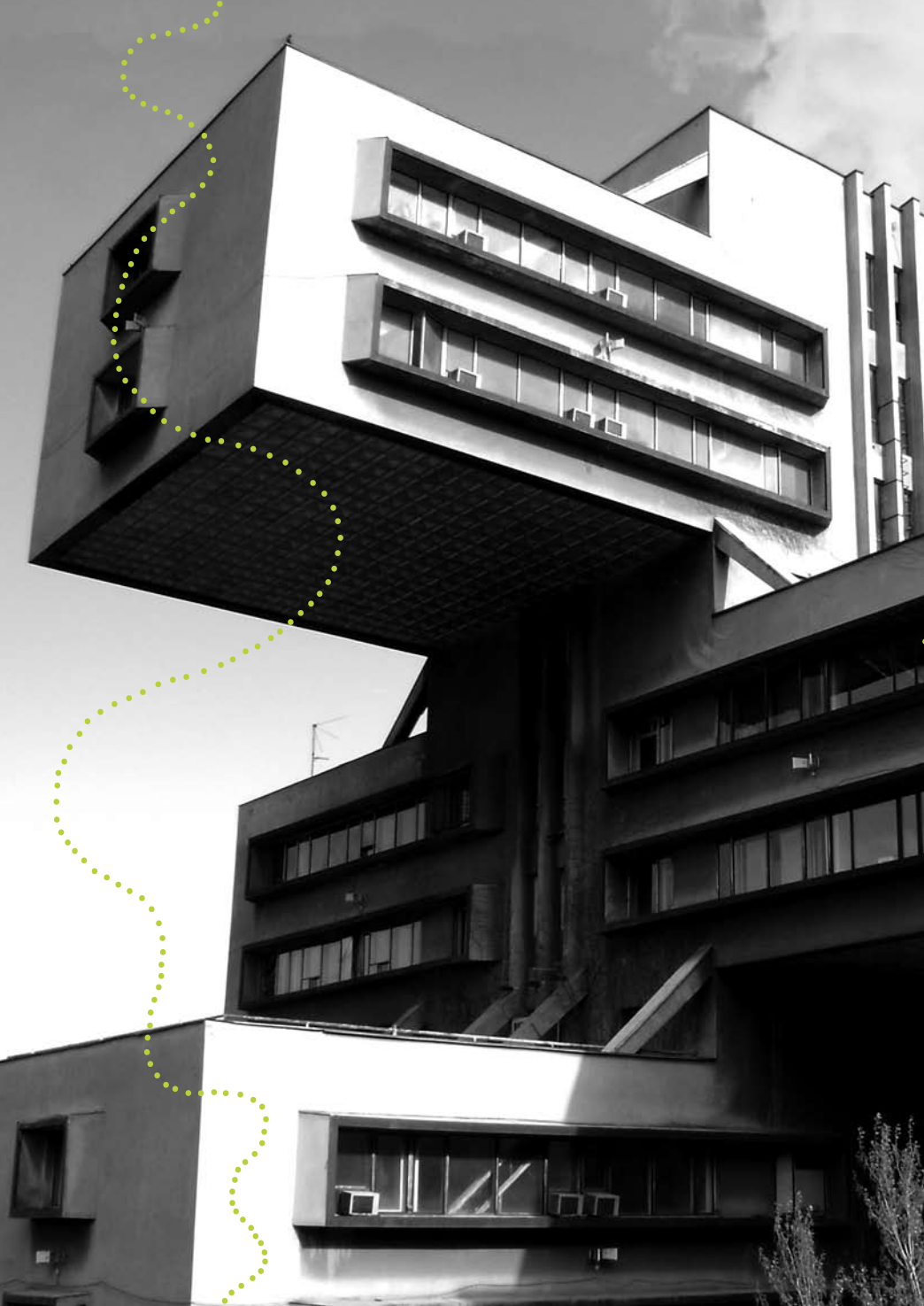


European Volunteer's Testimony.....

“Since I was planning to live ten months in Georgia, everybody thought I was crazy, including myself. However, the idea of living in a country whose customs, culture and language you do not know felt more like a positive challenge. And that’s what it was.

On and after arriving, everything looked and was strange. Everybody was staring at me, the only blond colourfully dressed female in Georgia – at least that was my impression. But now I recognise that I am not the only blond and that people do wear other colours than black. Surprisingly, I have to admit that I am now staring at people while I do not feel observed anymore. Georgia has made me less stressed as for my agenda: It feels as if I had never heard of an agenda. Was I normally the person freaking out if someone was late, and now am I the one arriving a bit late (note the ‘bit’: I will of course remain punctual...).

Living in a foreign country made my vision change ten times faster than it would have at home, it really enriched me and I can recommend Georgia to everybody without the slightest hesitation!”



Volunteers' Gambles

Volunteers' Gambles gives an insight into the challenges volunteers have to face in working for a hosting organisation and points out at obstacles and solutions for fruitful cooperation, and successful integration into the new working environment. Some sections give general advice to volunteers, emphasize the importance of as well as the way to prepare a voluntary placement and exemplifies common mistakes in EVS projects. Furthermore, this chapter describes the specific challenges of volunteering in Georgia and the consequential benefits for volunteers and suggests some personal initiatives or activities.

Volunteers' Gambles describes the most difficult part of the voluntary placement. In the working environment, all daily and cultural obstacles are adding themselves to the difficult integration into the working sphere, thus creating a complex situation. This chapter aims at underlining the obstacles met by an EVS project but it should also awaken the curiosity and eagerness of potential volunteers and their desire to accept this EVS challenge, not in a European country, but in Georgia.



Mind These

Future or current participants of the European Voluntary Service should be aware of different elements. Next to the general structure and support that an EVS project provides, a volunteer should bear in mind his status and his posture.

Volunteers often have a misleading understanding about a voluntary project, especially concerning their own duties and rights and those of the hosting organisation, which as a consequence creates misunderstandings and even unsolvable troubles. Therefore, *Mind These* should be used as a reminder of the posture volunteers should have in mind and follow in order to enjoy a successful EVS project.

Motivation. First, volunteers should be conscious and honest towards themselves and their sending and hosting organisations as for their motivations to go on a European Voluntary Service. Deciding to go to a foreign country for such an adventure, in Georgia or anywhere else, should be motivated by a deep desire to discover

a new life and to dedicate time and energy to others. Motivations coming from the emotional or personal instabilities that prompts the only wish to leave home might hamper the ability to keep motivated in the face of difficulties and lead to problematic EVS projects. Moreover, motivation is twofold - personal and professional – and it enables volunteers to integrate and develop fully all along the entire project.

Since going to another country for a European Voluntary Service is not as easy as it might look at first glance, volunteers should be prepared to delve into a totally new environment in which their former habits and mental orientation points will not exist anymore. That is why the motivation to be a volunteer is very important, because it gives the strength needed to tackle and negotiate obstacles when they appear and the will to lastingly accommodate to the new community.

Status. Volunteers have to be aware of their own duties and rights. By

behaving according to their role within the hosting organisation, especially by assuming their responsibilities and not overstretching those of others, volunteers will avoid troubles. This attitude helps to build trust within the working environment. In some organisations the ideas or initiatives of volunteers may be considered as secondary: volunteers are supplemental workforce and should be aware about the possibility that their actions may be limited due to this status. On the other hand, in dynamic organisations volunteers often receive real responsibilities and a diverse set of tasks forcing them – intentionally or not – into long working days. However keeping one's own role in mind and behaving accordingly is the main basis for further successful cooperation.

Cooperation. Another element to bear in mind during the volunteering period is that volunteers have to work with their hosting organisations. Cooperation might seem evident in theory but it is not so all the time in practice.

Handling different working styles, motivations or interests are not the only challenge to face in working together when coming from diverse cultural backgrounds and being differently skilled. To create quality activities cooperation is needed at every level. It is the only way for volunteers to get

support from the hosting organisation, to create elaborate projects by sharing experience, knowledge and skills, to respond to the actual needs and interests of local communities, and to bring a dimension of sustainability into common initiatives.

Volunteers should never consider implementing activities behind the back of the hosting organisation. First, that may create unsolvable tensions within the hosting organisation, and second the implemented actions will disappear as soon as the EVS project ends. Cooperation makes it possible for the local people who were involved in the activities to decide to go on with the implementation after the departure of the volunteers.

Resources. Volunteers should have a positive attitude towards sharing and using resources. Such resources are knowledge, skills or experience but also materials, time or even optimism.

Volunteers have to be receptive to any kind of advice or support that the hosting organisation proposes: they know the local needs and situations. They also have valuable information about the organisation's history, activities, partners, methods and funds. In any case volunteers should display constructive attitudes, listen and consider all advice given by the host

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organisation.

In the same way, volunteers should contribute with ideas and initiatives based on their own experiences and share their perceptions on the organisation of the running projects. One of the motivations for an organisation to host a volunteer is to get fresh ideas and views. Hence, the volunteer should use that opportunity to contribute to the organisation and, by extension, the community.

A volunteer has to be especially aware of the limited time resource of an EVS project. The volunteering period is set-up for a specific duration, which unfortunately is not extendable. This forces volunteers to focus on their personal and professional aims right from the beginning of their projects. Therefore, volunteers should set up their objectives and action plans with as much detail as possible in order to avoid to run out of time at the end of the projects. With that end in mind, the training sessions during the EVS project might be useful as they do help volunteers to reflect on the needed steps to reach the targeted goals.

EVS Programme. Finally, each volunteer is encouraged to get acquainted to the EVS programme in order to learn the rights and responsibilities of the three contracting parties - the

volunteer, the hosting organisation and the sending one – and, even more important, to understand the EVS philosophy. It has been observed that some volunteers did not properly grasp the philosophy of the European Voluntary Service, and this created some confusion between them and the hosting organisations about the responsibilities, commitments and roles of volunteers. The EVS project is not only about volunteers' preferences. It also considers the needs of hosting organisations and local communities. To know the EVS programme will help you to avoid a lot of misunderstanding about this topic. Moreover, it could clarify how financial, logistical and human support is framed and organised.

Framework

Beside the volunteers' right attitudes, it is essential to have a supporting structure for foreign volunteers helping them to face their work-related challenges and to reach success in their projects. Therefore the European Commission, when setting up the Youth in Action programme, established a couple of instruments that prepare volunteers before going, supports them during their placements and helps them to reintegrate their own communities after the volunteering period.

Hence, besides its financial structure enabling volunteers to spend the EVS period without having to contribute with their own money, plenty of human and logistical arrangements and mechanisms provide long-term and emergency assistance, when necessary.

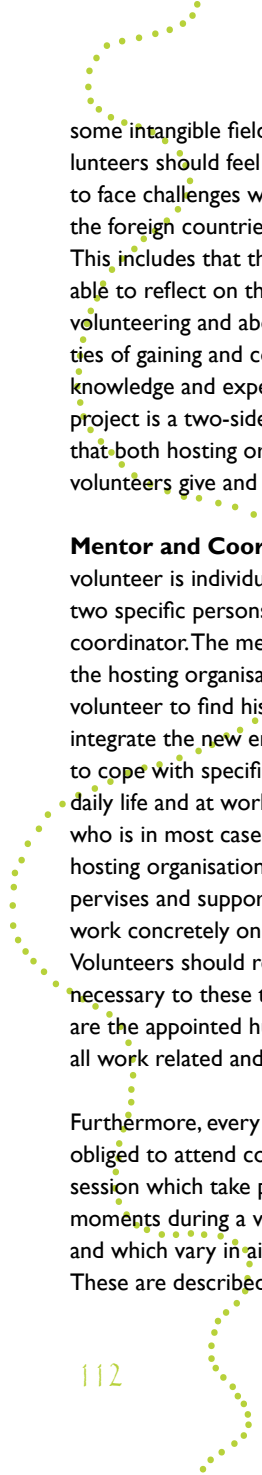
Therefore *Framework* aims at briefly introducing which types of support are available for volunteers, but also which actions volunteers can undertake in order to foresee or solve difficulties.

Personal Preparation. Personal preparation includes several elements. First, it is recommended to get acquainted with the EVS programme, its philosophy, aims and objectives. Bearing in mind the rights and responsibilities of the involved partners is the basis for a productive EVS project.

Likewise, reading or re-reading the concrete project description before leaving might be a good way for volunteers to clarify beforehand what the aims and objectives of their personal EVS project are as well as the concrete tasks they have signed in for.

Direct conversation between volunteers, hosting and sending organisations, is a way to avoid misinterpretations from the beginning. Therefore, at least one month before the beginning of the EVS project, the volunteer and the hosting organisation should get into regular contact in order to set up detailed arrangements for both work and daily life.

Personal preparation also includes

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some intangible fieldwork: future volunteers should feel mentally prepared to face challenges waiting for them in the foreign countries they are going to. This includes that they are ready and able to reflect on their motivations for volunteering and about the possibilities of gaining and contributing skills, knowledge and experience. An EVS project is a two-sided process, meaning that both hosting organisations and volunteers give and take.

Mentor and Coordinator. Every volunteer is individually associated to two specific persons: a mentor and a coordinator. The mentor, who knows the hosting organisation, helps the volunteer to find his marks in and integrate the new environment and to cope with specific difficulties in daily life and at work. The coordinator, who is in most cases a worker of the hosting organisation, gives tasks, supervises and supports the volunteer's work concretely on a day to day basis. Volunteers should refer as often as necessary to these two people as they are the appointed human support for all work related and daily life issues.

Furthermore, every volunteer is obliged to attend compulsory training session which take place at strategic moments during a voluntary project and which vary in aims and objectives. These are described below.

The Pre-Departure Training usually one month before departure, provides general information on the European Voluntary Service and gives an overview about common problems of volunteers. It focuses on practical issues like insurance, volunteers' allowances, etc., and on the EVS programme itself by clarifying elements like the rights and responsibilities of sending and hosting organisations and volunteers. It also introduces cultural challenges volunteers usually meet while being in the foreign country. This training session gives basic knowledge to every volunteer and helps them to envision misunderstandings and problematic situations.

The On-Arrival Training (OAT) is conducted shortly after the arrival of volunteers in their hosting countries and organisations. The main aims of OATs are to make volunteers familiar with their new environment, the cultural particularities of their hosting countries and to reconsider the volunteers' motivations. Moreover, basic facts on Intercultural Learning and crisis or conflict management are provided. This training session allows volunteers to reflect on their first impressions and to determine what they would like to achieve during their EVS placement and how. During that training session, volunteers usually indicate their first problems concerning work which can

be easily addressed with the help and advice of the trainers. In the same way, they get the chance to meet other volunteers involved in different types of projects across the country.

The Mid-Term Meeting (MTM), as the title indicates, takes place halfway in a volunteering period. The main aims of MTMs are to offer some space and time outside the hosting placements to discuss the evolution of the EVS projects in general and to exchange experience with other volunteers in the same country. MTMs are a great opportunity to discuss and to tackle raising conflict situations in the living and working environments. What's more, volunteers get some time and space to reflect on their own personal and professional achievements and to plan their future objectives. Intercultural Learning and conflict management are scrutinized during MTMs. Volunteers also start thinking about their plans for after their EVS projects and are suggested some perspectives and possibilities.

The Final Evaluation of the EVS Activity (FE) is to evaluate the entire EVS periods with volunteers. This evaluation is supposed to be conducted with the sending organisation, but it is recommended to evaluate the EVS project also with the hosting organisation. In the best case a Final Evaluation

meeting with other volunteers who are also in the final stages of their EVS projects can be attended by volunteers. However, the evaluation shall address aims, objectives and expectations and scrutinize the working experience and newly gained skills, the personal contributions to the host organisation and local community, as well as on personal support and care of the host and sending organisations. Time is also spent on the reintegration of volunteers in their own countries.

Conflict Mediation. However, even with all these supportive mechanisms to help volunteers and prevent misunderstandings, some conflicts may appear. Additional support measures for troubleshooting exist. This includes SALTO Multipliers present in the country whose task is to help volunteers and hosting organisations with general advice or mediating in an emergency situation. SALTO Multipliers are youth workers who have been selected by SALTO-EECA Resource Centre for every Eastern European and Caucasian country (see contact details in the chapter *Resources*). If their mediation is not successful, the volunteer can approach the SOS-Volunteer-Helpdesk on <http://ec.europa.eu/youth/archive/program/sos/> which is an online support platform for troubleshooting critical EVS problems.

Structural Obstacles

One of the main factors bringing troubles or failure to an EVS project - besides logistical problems before departure caused by inexperienced sending organisations or the wrong attitudes of volunteers - is definitely the preparation of a volunteer's placement by the hosting organisation. Hosting organisations are responsible for providing an environment that allows volunteers to work on their appointed tasks, to feel comfortable in order to take initiatives and to integrate local communities.

Unfortunately, theory may be far from reality at different levels and different scales. The most common mistakes made by hosting organisations are listed below. Those are accompanied by some related advice to future volunteers that aims at raising awareness about commonly observed problems. This advice is valid for all EVS projects, independently of the destination.

Duties. To understand common mistakes and tackle them, we need to bear in mind the duties of hosting

organisations:

- . To provide decent accommodation to volunteers and set up a budget for the volunteers' EVS projects in terms of food and local transportation allowance.
- . To prepare work schedules for volunteers indicating tasks, learning objectives and time frames for the implementation of their personal projects and to make sure the work load is not too heavy, too light or too monotonous.
- . To appoint a coordinator that helps volunteers to organise their work at the beginning and develop their personal projects later on. This coordinator is mainly responsible for the integration of volunteers in the hosting organisation.
- . To appoint a mentor who is responsible for supporting volunteers in their integration in local communities and for helping them particularly at the beginning in their daily life chores like shopping or transportation.
- . To prepare all workers in the hosting organisation to welcome the newcomer and understand his role. This includes to raise awareness about

cultural differences and the problems that may occur due to different working styles.

At best all the above mentioned aspects will be considered and solved before the arrival of the volunteer. Unfortunately some organisations may not make these arrangements properly or on time. Below some common problems are listed.

Logistics. Logistical problems commonly occur, especially concerning accommodation and food allowance. When the volunteer arrives, for various reasons, no accommodation might have been organised or the appointed accommodation might not be decent enough or might not satisfy the volunteer. In the same way, the volunteer might consider the food allowance is not sufficient because either it is actually too small or the volunteer's usual diet implies an extra cost - e.g. eating imported products as yogurts or cereals.

If the reasons of dissatisfaction are tangible - e.g. there is no bathroom or kitchen available, or the door of the room does not close, etc. - volunteers should raise the issue as soon as possible in order to find an agreed upon solution. As for the food allowance discussing honestly with hosting organisation to find a satisfactory compromise

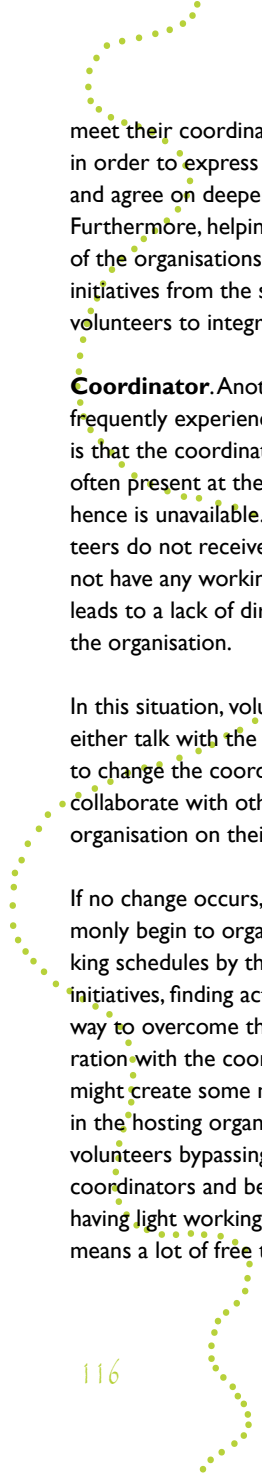
is the best option.

Volunteers should always remain cooperative and should be aware about the socio-economic state of their hosting countries when complaining about logistical arrangements like accommodation or food allowances. Inappropriate attitudes will bring no results and tensions will rise or persist.

Working Schedule. At the beginning of an EVS project usually a lot of attention is dedicated to the volunteer, and the members of the hosting organisation are very curious about the newcomer. The organisation and its members are briefly introduced and the first tasks given to the volunteer may be to check some publications or reports about the organisation in order to get familiar with the organisation's mission, target group and field of action.

Fully busy with cultural adaptation and daily challenges volunteers do not recognise how fast the first weeks run away. After a while, volunteers might realise that they actually do not have working schedules or clearly defined tasks and that they are not integrated in the organisation. A certain feeling of isolation within the organisation could come up then.

In such a situation, volunteers should

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meet their coordinators and mentors in order to express their difficulties and agree on deepened collaboration. Furthermore, helping the members of the organisations or taking small initiatives from the start can help volunteers to integrate.

Coordinator. Another problem frequently experienced by volunteers is that the coordinator is in fact not often present at the working place and hence is unavailable. In that case, volunteers do not receive any tasks or do not have any working schedule, which leads to a lack of direct support within the organisation.

In this situation, volunteers should either talk with the mentor in order to change the coordinator, or begin to collaborate with other workers in the organisation on their own initiatives.

If no change occurs, volunteers commonly begin to organise their working schedules by themselves. Taking initiatives, finding activities is a great way to overcome the lack of collaboration with the coordinator. Anyway it might create some misunderstandings in the hosting organisation: why are volunteers bypassing the authority of coordinators and being stressed about having light working schedules, which means a lot of free time?

When organising working schedules by themselves, volunteers should discuss their initiatives and ideas with colleagues in order to involve interested workers and to get support or advice if necessary. If volunteers inform people around them about their activities and their interests and plans, becoming more independent within the working environment will be better accepted.

Mentoring. A common problem also concerns mentors. Appointed mentors may not fulfil their duties and responsibilities. Not helping volunteers to find their marks, deal with daily life and get to know people and places are minor problems as compared to mentors who do not support volunteers in case of real problems - e.g. going to the police for various declarations, helping with health care and translations, etc.

In the case of troubles within hosting organisations, mentors who do not know the organisations, who do not consider the position of the volunteers or who are totally unavailable might become very problematic for volunteers. However, it is possible, with diplomacy, to talk with hosting organisations in order to change mentors. That should be done cautiously in order not to create any trouble. Another solution is to informally refer to another person when support is needed.

Cultural Misunderstandings. Some problematic situations might rise up because of cultural differences. That usually appears after a few weeks, especially if the workers of the organisations and volunteers had not been prepared enough about the cultural challenge that would appear when working in a multicultural environment.

Working styles might be different, mutual expectations might hardly be understood and the general behaviour might be misinterpreted - e.g. coming on time vs. coming late, having private phone calls during office hours vs. focusing only on work, waiting for tasks vs. taking initiatives. In a tense environment, volunteers should be careful with demands, because claiming rights and responsibilities or requesting tasks, schedules and meetings are attitudes which could have some non-expected negative results.

Collaboration between people from different cultural backgrounds is one of the toughest parts of the volunteering period. Observation at the beginning, patience and respect on both sides and the will and effort to adapt are the best advice available. Signing up for an EVS project means to sign up for working on overcoming cultural barriers in order to set-up sustainable cooperation and projects.

Generally, the main reason for all these problems is usually the lack of preparation within the hosting organisation for hosting a foreign volunteer. But it might also have some roots in or be influenced by the lack of professional experience on the side of sending organisations that do not select and/or prepare volunteers properly, or volunteers with non-cooperative attitudes - these are described in the part *Mind These*.

Worst case scenarios can be easily avoided but they unfortunately still occur. Therefore, volunteers should be aware of the troubleshooting possibilities in such situations which are detailed in the chapter *Framework*.

Challenges and Achievements

Beside the common challenges volunteers meet in foreign countries, volunteering in Georgia makes volunteers face some situations they have not been prepared for or they had never expected to occur. Nevertheless, because of the developing state of the hosting structures in EECA countries, volunteers meet the below listed challenges with fairly regular frequency. Their appearing depends naturally on the experience and preparation of the hosting organisations and the volunteer may not be confronted to any of these situations. Volunteers should anyway be aware that they might occur.

However, dealing with and overcoming these demanding situations creates additional benefits which volunteers will gain from volunteering specifically in Georgia. Hence, for every specific challenge, an overview about the impact they may have and the achievement volunteers may reach are given.

Keep Motivated. Due to different working styles and work organisations in Georgia a lot of volunteers lose

their motivation after a while. Great ideas may be imagined but may not be implemented afterwards, schedules or deadlines may not be kept, or workers may not respect an agreed-upon task division. Frustration and a feeling of fighting against windmills might appear, because no immediate change can be recorded by concerned volunteers.

Impact and Benefit. This challenge if taken as such will let volunteers discover that changes, especially behavioural or social changes, mostly do not occur as fast as we may wish. This helps us to understand that it is worth trying again and again and vain to give up because only continued efforts will eventually produce visible effects and results. It also teaches volunteers how to keep their personal visions and strengths to implement personal aims and ideas.

Dependence. Commonly, volunteers feel dependent in Georgia because communication with authorities, target groups, the members of other organisations, or even within their hosting organisations is difficult or impossible

due to the low level of knowledge of English. Consequently, for example, when a volunteer wishes to organise a local workshop in a school, the first contact if not the entire collaboration with the principal has to be facilitated by a Georgian colleague. In the same way, fundraising for projects often requires someone speaking Georgian. All this often gives volunteers the impression that without the help of a colleague nothing can be done or arranged.

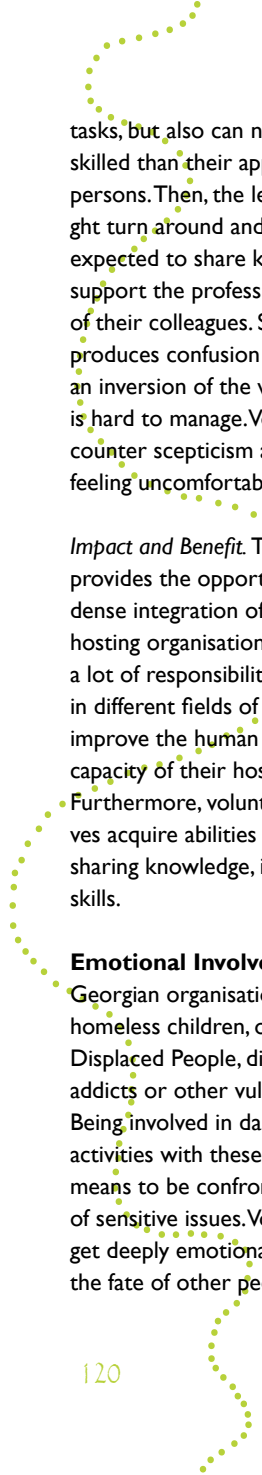
Impact and Benefit. This challenge offers the chance for close collaboration with the hosting organisation by strengthening the relation between an organisation's worker and a volunteer. It also produces creativity to set up, jointly with the hosting organisation, activities which require less language skills - e.g. artistic activities or sports. Moreover because of the feeling of dependence, volunteers are pushed into learning at least basic Georgian to communicate directly with locals.

Underdeveloped Structures. In some Georgian hosting organisations, the internal organisational structure is underdeveloped. Some organisations are often only based on the initiative of one or two persons, who are overworked and have little time for continued cooperation with newly arrived volunteers. This can have two consequences:

on one hand, as soon as the beginning of their projects volunteers are forced to develop personal initiatives or on the other hand they receive no human support for the implementation of specific activities. Bearing in mind that they are not supposed to have any professional skills linked to the field of their organisations' work, the task might become very demanding. Volunteers can be consequently overloaded and left alone to face the responsibilities of difficult missions for which they had not been prepared.

Impact and Benefit. This challenge enables volunteers to gain a lot of skills and abilities by applying personal newly acquired knowledge straight away in the projects. By being responsible for entire projects and their success volunteers will improve their skills in project management very fast. At a more personal level self-confidence and the feeling of being able to deal with complex tasks will be enhanced.

Inverted Learning Process. Some volunteers may think that in their hosting organisations a couple of colleagues have functions for which they obviously do not have the required qualifications or the necessary knowledge. Volunteers will very fast find themselves in a situation in which they not only do not get the help they need for the implementation of their

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tasks, but also can note they are more skilled than their appointed support persons. Then, the learning process might turn around and volunteer will be expected to share knowledge and to support the professional development of their colleagues. Such a situation produces confusion on both sides and an inversion of the working hierarchy is hard to manage. Volunteers might encounter scepticism and rejection while feeling uncomfortable in the situation.

Impact and Benefit. This challenge provides the opportunity for a very dense integration of volunteers in their hosting organisations. It will give them a lot of responsibility and involvement in different fields of work in order to improve the human and organisational capacity of their hosting organisations. Furthermore, volunteers will themselves acquire abilities and experience by sharing knowledge, if not by teaching skills.

Emotional Involvement. A lot of Georgian organisations work with homeless children, orphans, Internally Displaced People, disabled people, drug addicts or other vulnerable groups. Being involved in daily or temporary activities with these target groups means to be confronted with a lot of sensitive issues. Volunteers might get deeply emotionally involved into the fate of other people and this can

create a feeling of helplessness in face of the often dramatic life situations they witness.

Impact and Benefit. This challenge bears the potential for volunteers to consider their own life situations and to value small things and happenings. What's more, it might show volunteers how with small means and little changes big impacts and great improvements can be achieved in the target groups, because for orphans or homeless children being valued by being able to participate in a theatre play is essential.

Practical Suggestions

Volunteers sometimes lack concrete ideas to get active. Deeply involved in daily events and cultural challenges, volunteers might lose focus and forget what they wanted to achieve. Therefore the list below provides concrete ideas and methods to implement small projects, which might be chosen by the volunteer.

However, volunteers should always try first to take part in the running activities of their hosting organisations, because this allows a faster and better integration into the organisation and a deeper trust for further personal initiatives.

Culture and Arts. With the help of the present European volunteers' community, or on their own, volunteers can organise intercultural activities. It raises cultural awareness and enhances tolerance between locals and foreigners.

To organise an intercultural evening by preparing cookies, drinks and dishes from different countries and presenting traditional customs, popular folklore

or national music is a great event all guests will surely enjoy. Volunteers can even teach traditional dances or organise initiation in some national games. Volunteers can also organise a gathering of people to discuss specific issues like cultural diversity, Europe, active citizenship, etc.

If volunteers possess specific artistic skills, they can also set up classes, workshops or clubs on music, photography, painting, etc. Art activities are a good tool to create intercultural dialogue and help groups to express emotions and thoughts, especially when dealing with children and disabled people.

Moreover, with or without experience, to participate or organise theatre plays are of great interest for both local communities and volunteers. Besides the improvement in language skills, theatre plays support the development of self-confidence and create social interactions. If volunteers work in a youth club, setting up a theatre group can be an option for a long-term initia-

tive concluding the voluntary project with a public representation of the play.

Hard skills. Volunteers can set up activities according to their own hard skills. It can be organised in a formal or informal way and can concern very different themes such as computer skills, HIV/AIDS prevention, writing a Curriculum Vitae, Human Rights, leadership, etc.

These activities can also be organised in a given language hence raising the language skills of participants. Moreover, learning the local language will help volunteers when they decide to set up language classes within their organisations. Teaching one's own language, or another language one is fluent in is valuable for both local communities and volunteers.

Sports. Sports activities bring people from different backgrounds together. Linguistic competence is of less importance than human values like respect, tolerance and supportiveness that can be taught by practicing sports. Sports activities include dancing lessons, board game clubs, or even hiking excursions. When setting up sports activities, volunteers should consider the knowledge and the experience of their hosting organisations and of themselves, as well as the potentials of the environment. It is for example unadvisable to

consider organising a rafting afternoon if there is no financial support and no experienced people for coordination available.

Different methods can be suggested to set up activities concerning the above described topics.

Activities should make use of non-formal educational methods such as role plays, discussions, group building activities, etc., which focus on the integration and activation of all participants. Moreover, they are an alternative to formal learning methods used in schools and universities which young people know and deal with every day.

Regular Activities. Setting up regular activities helps to create a stable group of people which gather regularly. Because of the frequent meetings, deeper results can be reached. After the departure of volunteers, these activities might even go on if the participants' motivation is strong enough and if they are given the opportunity. In agreement with local needs and the choices of volunteers, activities may be set up on weekly, biweekly or monthly schedules. For regular activities, both formal and non-formal educational methods can be used, in agreement with the chosen topics and the target groups.

Exceptional Events. To present their own culture or to celebrate a particular day - e.g. the Day of Europe, holidays in their home countries, etc. - volunteers can set up exceptional events. These should provide a specific programme with entertaining activities for participants. These exceptional events can be of many different types: exhibitions, debates, traditional dancing contests, etc.

Camps. Volunteers, in cooperation with their hosting organisations or with other European volunteers, might suggest to organise work camps addressing different issues or topics. The camps can target children with fewer opportunities and can be local, regional or national.

Campaigns. Volunteers can implement campaigns dedicated to specific topics, e.g. ecological awareness, safe sex, gender equality, minority rights, healthy life styles, addictions, etc. Identifying goals and objectives, choosing methods, creating programmes, promoting the initiatives or looking for funds are necessary tasks in order to realise such an event.

Promotion and Networking.

Volunteers can take part in fundraising activities. They can help their organisations by being responsible for contacts with existing partners or by looking

for new collaborators or donors. This requires skills in communication and diplomacy, as well as the availability for meetings in order to explain the aims, objectives, activities and structures of the organisations - meaning volunteers first need to know their hosting organisations very well.

Volunteers can also support their organisations by creating promotional material: flyers, booklets, short movies, etc. This material can be used to promote organisations and to raise funds for future projects.



Concluding Remarks

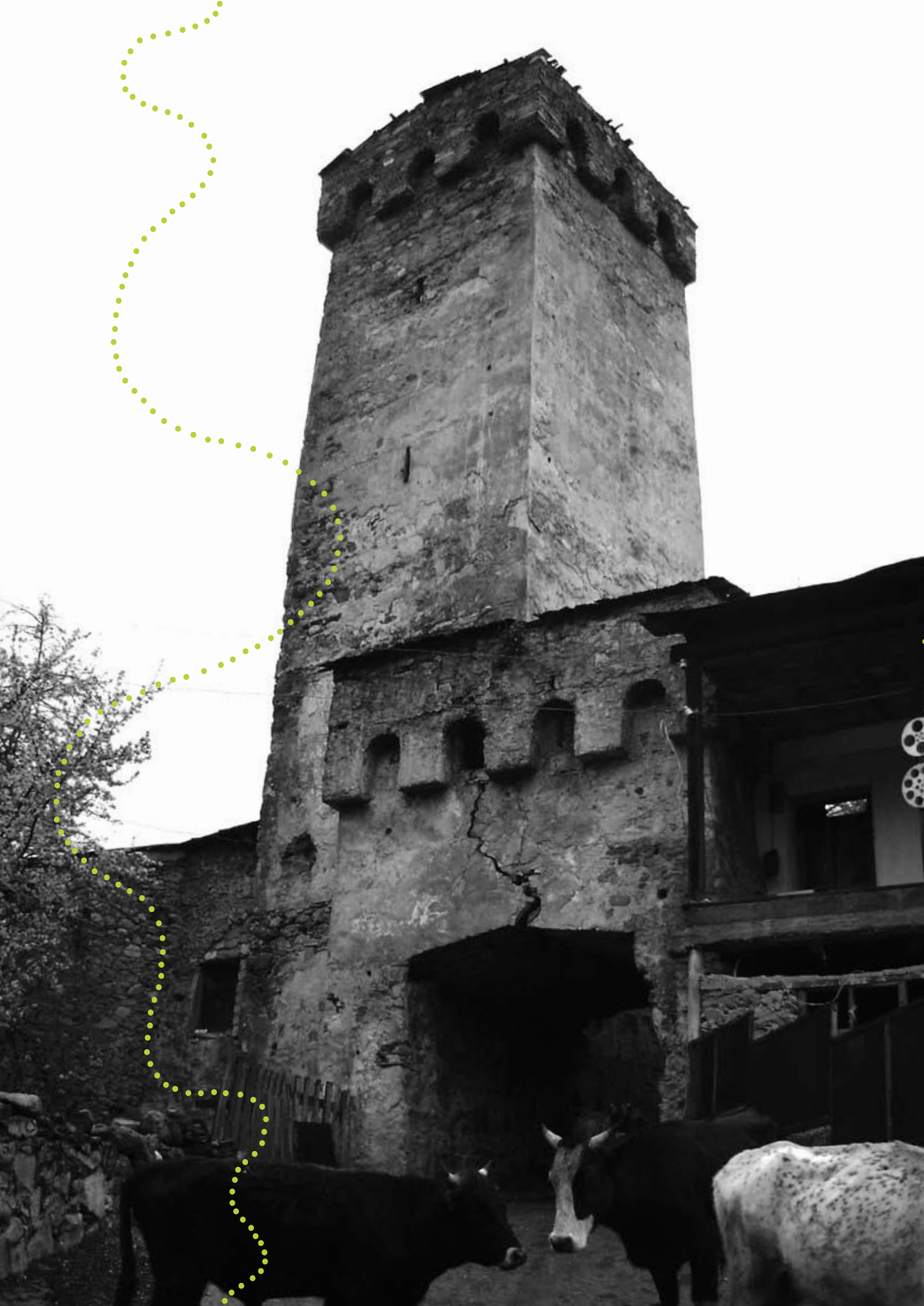
The intention of this handbook is to promote both volunteering and volunteering in Georgia. By outlining the value of volunteering, describing the challenges of living and working in Georgia, but also indicating the benefits volunteers can gain and the tangible impacts they can have during their EVS projects, we hope that readers will experience the desire to discover Georgia as European Volunteers.

Being a volunteer in Georgia is a life time adventure for sure, and moreover an adventure which provides a lot of opportunities for personal development.

The diverse possibilities for personal initiative and the high level of responsibility volunteers can envisage in Georgian organisations imply great learning in professional contexts. The adaptation to Georgian culture, including experiencing different approaches to time, relations and priorities, gives a practical example of what Intercultural Learning and respect really mean and what their values are. Finally, the day-to-day struggle of Georgian daily life may make volunteers feel nothing will be impossible after managing such difficulties.

Before you pack and land there, you should listen to a last warning: be aware that going on a European Voluntary Service project in Georgia will change you and your life forever...

... and be also sure it will be one of the most amazing time you will ever have spent or may ever spend in your entire life time...



Resources

Resources directs to further resources about Georgia, Intercultural Learning and the European Voluntary Service for those who want to know more about the three topics of this book. This chapter provides books and movies about Georgia, refers to further readings about Intercultural Learning or to institutions working on these issues and provides links for more information about the European Voluntary Service.



Georgia

The following readings and movies are advised to anyone who is planning to travel or to stay in Georgia. They illustrate specific components of Georgian culture and history and reflect on the relations Georgia has with its neighbours.

.. Readings ..

The Knight in the Panther's Skin, Shota Rustaveli. This epic poem written by Rustaveli during the reign of King Tamara, "Queen of the Queens and King of the Kings", addresses humanist values. Deeply connected to Georgian culture and the Georgian way of thinking, this book is – since it requires deep and full concentration - of great interest.

The Caucasus, Alexandre Dumas, 1859. This diary held by the French writer Alexandre Dumas describes his adventures during his journey from Astrakhan, in Russia, to Tbilisi, across Dagestan and Baku. At that time, the Caucasus region definitely lacked peace and he had to travel escorted by

Cossacks forces. His insights and views on the culture at the end of the XIXth century are a good start to understand the people and their traditions.

Ali and Nino: A Love Story, Kurban Said, 1937. This book written by the Jewish Azerbaijani writer Lev Nussimbaum under his pseudonym Kurban Said was published in 1937 in Vienna. In the shape of a love story between an Azerbaijani young man called Ali and a Georgian woman called Nino, the novel describes the life at the crossroads between European and Asian cultures in Baku, Azerbaijan, during WWI. This book is a must to get to know more about the cultural characteristics of the Caucasus and the interrelations between Georgians, Azerbaijanis and Armenians. Reading it before coming to Georgia will give a general idea about the cultures in Southern Caucasus, but reading it while living there reveals different layers in the story.

The Georgian Feast - The vibrant Culture and Savoury Food of the Republic of Georgia, Darra Golds-

tein, 1993. This book provides a brief overview of Georgian history until the beginning of the 1990s and gives an overview of Georgian cooking style and traditional table habits. In the first chapters Darra Goldstein explains different components of Georgian celebrations and their symbolism. That is followed by the recipes of traditional dishes with a description of their probable origins, the ways or occasions to consume them and their diverse variations. This book can help you to learn how to cook Georgian dishes, sauces and pastries.

The Making of the Georgian Nation,

Ronald Grigor Suny, 1994. Covering the history of Georgia from its early beginnings, through all invasions, during the Soviet Union era and until today, this book is recommended to anyone who wants to know more about the development of Georgia as a nation. This book written at the beginning of the independence unfortunately does not include the latest political developments like the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Rose Revolution and the subsequent tension with the Russian Federation.

The Literature of Georgia: A History,

Donald Rayfield, 1994 and revised edition in 2000. Written by a professor of Russian and Georgian languages at the University of London, this book

provides an overview of Georgian literature. It covers the whole history of its literature, analysing the influences of Greek, Persian and Russian literatures, focusing on the art of oration and poetry and describing the tragedy of Georgian intellectuals during the Great Purges of Stalin in 1937.

Georgia - In the Mountains of Poetry, Peter Nasmyth, 2001. By

portraying Georgian landscapes and traditions, Nasmyth gives the desire to discover this country that has been all along history surrounded by strong powers like the Persian, Ottoman or Russian Empires. Nevertheless, the author demonstrates how Georgians managed to keep their culture alive. The book features a description of the epic tradition of writing and telling stories, table traditions, and it contains some chapters on religion. This book is good to know more about the current state of Georgian culture; it also features interesting illustrations and pictures.

Bread and Ashes - A Walk Through the Mountains of Georgia, Tony

Anderson, 2003. Tony Anderson walked along the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range in Georgia from East to West in 1999. This book gives an account of his experience in the remote mountainous territories. His journey aimed at meeting people living there and at get-

ting to know their particular culture. With the description of the fascinating landscapes of Georgia, the observations concerning history, the relations with neighbours and the culture of the different people the author met, this book is of great interest for future volunteers to understand cultural differences in Georgia. In the same way, the author often refers to the writings of former travellers, comparing their cultural observations with what he observes himself.

Georgia Diary – A Chronicle of War and Political Chaos in Post-Soviet Caucasus, Thomas Goltz, (2006).

Thomas Goltz, an American writer and journalist, gives - based on his numerous visits to Georgia - a deep insight into the political and social situation in Georgia between 1992 and 1998.

The book focuses mainly on the civil war and on the war in Abkhazia and his reports are enriched with first hand experience from different war zones.

It is generally easy to read and due to the good documentation of the author recommended for those who are interested in the political chaos Georgia went through in the 1990s.

.. Movies ..

The Father of a Soldier, directed by Rezo Chkheidze, 1964. During WW2, an old Georgian winegrower decides

to leave his land to look for his injured son, a soldier. His journey turns out to be a real adventure in Europe. The movie that got an award at the 4th Moscow International Film Festival, is the most famous Georgian movie produced during Soviet times. It describes very well how Georgians are: kind, charismatic, talkative and resilient.

Mimino, directed by Giorgi Danelia, 1977. The Georgian helicopter pilot Mimino from Telavi dreams of flying for international airlines and therefore goes to Moscow to make his dream come true. There he meets an Armenian truck driver and together they try to manage their life in the capital of the USSR, but at the end Mimino returns to his beloved Georgia because of his homesickness. The movie is very famous in all former Soviet Union republics and most people can recall jokes from it. However, this is not the only reason to watch it. It also gives an insight into the Georgian communistic heritage and it shows some Georgian cultural characteristics.

Since Otar Left, directed by Julie Bertucelli, 2003. Three generations of Georgian women live together in Tbilisi: the grandmother Eka, her daughter Marina and her granddaughter Ada. Eka, a passionate of French culture, hopes to see her son again who left a few years ago for France in order to find

a “better life”, while Marina and Ada find it too cruel to tell her he is dead. This movie describes the interrelations between different generations in Georgian families with great subtlety. The portraits of these three women illustrate very well how different generations perceive the current reality of the country.

Trip to Karabakh, directed by Levan Tutberidze, 2006. Two Georgians decide to head to Armenia to buy some drugs - on their chaotic way they got involved into the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. This movie is recommended for people who have never been to the Caucasus. It contains a deep insight into Caucasian inter-social relations and particularly into Georgia’s ambivalent perception of its neighbours. Caucasian issues like brotherhood, the importance of the family, social restrictions or hospitality are to be discovered along the movie. Besides, *Trip to Karabakh* gives a quick vision of the chaotic political situation in Southern Caucasus in the early 90s. It is a good starting point for a deeper understanding of the current situation.

Legacy, directed by Temur and Gela Babluani, 2006. Three French people, accompanied by their translator, travel through remote Georgian areas in order to claim a ruined castle that one of them has inherited. In the bus which

brings them there, they encounter an old man with his grandchild carrying an empty coffin: these two Georgians are going to the village of an enemy clan of their family in order to sacrifice the grandpa to end the bloody strife between the two families. This movie shows still existing archaic traditions in some parts of Georgia and illustrates deep cultural differences between Westerners and Georgians.

Intercultural Learning

Several sources of information are listed below which are of relevant interest to understand better the mechanisms influencing Intercultural Learning and non-formal education. Some of these publications additionally provide basic knowledge about how to implement exercises and workshops in an intercultural context. They all give background information and support for the experience a European Volunteer will get.

SALTO-YOUTH. The Support and Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities structure within the Youth in Action programme of the European Community aims at supporting youth projects with particular attention to issues like cultural diversity, social inclusion or to participation of young people and neighbouring regions such as EuroMed, South East Europe or Eastern Europe and Caucasus. This network of eight Resource Centres provides resources, information and training for youth and youth workers. For future volunteers, the Resource Centres dedicated to social inclusion

and to cultural diversity are of special interest. They inform about specific tools and methods about activities to include young people with fewer opportunities and from different cultural minorities. Available online on www.SALTO-YOUTH.net

Training Kit n°4 Intercultural Learning, a publication of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, 2000. This manual presents what Intercultural Learning is and means. The training-kit describes different methods used in non-formal education and how to implement them. For every method - energisers, individual exercises, discussions, role plays, problem solving, etc. - examples of activities are presented. Some keys are also given for the organisation of intercultural workshops and exchanges. This booklet is interesting for future participants in the European Voluntary Service programme because it indicates what non-formal education focusing on Intercultural Learning is and what challenges volunteers will meet when dealing with that topic. Available online


on www.youth-partnership.net

Training Kit n°5 International Voluntary Service, a publication of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, 2000. This publication is of particular importance to young people who consider going on a European Voluntary Service. This manual features a detailed approach of the different phases of a voluntary project and gives precise advice for each step – the planning and preparation of a volunteering project, collaboration with partner organisations, the development and final return of the volunteer - to achieve a high quality and successful project. Furthermore, this manual gives some tips on how to foresee or manage specific troubles which commonly happen during voluntary projects. Available online www.youth-partnership.net

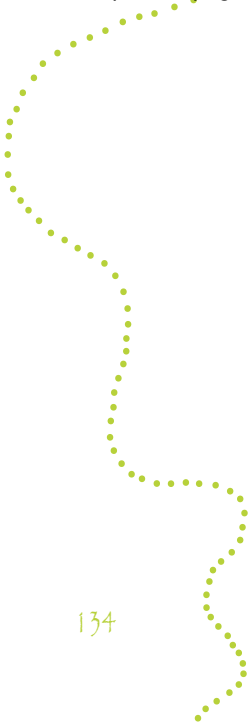
Education Pack - Ideas, Resources, Methods and Activities for Informal Intercultural Education with Young People and Adults, a publication of the Council of Europe and the Human Rights Education Associates, 2004. This manual is of relevant interest for everyone who is involved in youth work and non-formal education. The first part explains what Intercultural Learning is all about and why it is relevant for the present and future challenges of our societies. Key-elements for understanding identity,

culture, or discrimination are given, along with questions inciting readers into reflection. The second part is dedicated to activities, methods and resources for non-formal education. Even if not a trainer, or not directly involved in training activities, future European Volunteers might find here great inspiration for implementing workshops on different topics within their volunteering period. Available online on <http://eycb.coe.int/edupack>

ID Booklet Ideas for Inclusion and Diversity, a Practical Booklet about Making your Youth Work and your International Projects more Inclusive and Reaching more Diverse Target Groups, a publication of SALTO-Youth Inclusion and Cultural Diversity Centres, 2006. This booklet is a great tool for future activities concerning matters of Intercultural Learning. It explains in great detail methods and exercises to work with different groups of people on the issue of inclusion and diversity. The first two parts are dedicated to the meaning of identity – one's own and the others' – and give basic knowledge necessary to use the following parts on inclusion and diversity. Both theoretical and practical, this booklet is useful to discover oneself before an intercultural experience as well as to get ideas to implement workshops. Available online on <http://www.salto-youth.net/IDBooklet/>



Culture Matters - The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook, a publication of the Peace Corps Centre's Information Collection and Exchange (ICE). This manual was published for American Peace Corps Volunteers, but is useful for anyone about to face volunteering challenges in foreign countries. The book features a theoretical background and group and individual exercises, deals with integration and adaptation in a foreign community and studies the difficulties volunteers might encounter in a new cultural environment. By its practical exercises and advice, it gives materials to reflect upon and become aware of our own culture and values. Available online on www.peacecorps.gov



European Voluntary Service



While the European Voluntary Service is very well advertised when taking place in member countries (the European Union countries plus Norway, Turkey, Iceland and Lichtenstein), this is not the case for neighbouring partner countries. The following links offer further information about European Voluntary Service projects within Eastern Europe and the Caucasus in general, and Georgia in particular.

Youth in Action Programme. The Youth in Action programme is the programme implemented by the European Commission dedicated to young people and youth workers. It follows the YOUTH programme and will be in use from 2007 to 2013. The European Voluntary Service is Action 2 of the Youth in Action programme. Components of the programme are described in details on the website of the European Commission in the section

“Youth”. <http://ec.europa.eu/youth>

SOS Volunteer Helpdesk. This Helpdesk provides needed and helpful information for future, current or former volunteers. The most important section is a database of all organisations which possess the Expression of Interest (EI) allowing them officially to organise EVS projects like sending, hosting and coordinating organisations under Action 2 of the Youth in Action programme. Any organisation from a Programme country that wishes to participate in the EVS programme has to be officially registered and is then listed on the website. Unfortunately, this database does not list placements in neighbouring country like Eastern Europe and Caucasus (EECA) because organisations that are located there are not obliged yet to possess an EI. To know about available EVS placements in the EECA region, it is needed

to contact the relevant structures: SALTO-EECA Resource Centre and its multipliers in the countries themselves.
<http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/>

SALTO-Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre (SALTO-EECA).

The SALTO-EECA Resource Centre, set up in 2003, aims at developing and improving youth projects within the frame of the Youth in Action programme involving EECA countries following the policy for the neighbouring countries of the European Union. On its website it proposes information for on-going projects and future cooperation with the EECA region as well as contact detail of youth workers involved in the programme. Information about SALTO-EECA on www.salto-youth.net/eeca/ and Support Service for EECA on www.salto-eeca.eu

Multipliers of SALTO-EECA in Georgia.

Multipliers are the persons who have been selected by the SALTO-EECA Resource Centre in order to spread information and promote the Youth in Action programme in each EECA country. By contacting the multipliers, the future volunteer will get information about on-going projects and available placements for European Voluntary Service in different organisations across the given country. More information on www.salto-youth.net/eecamultipliers/

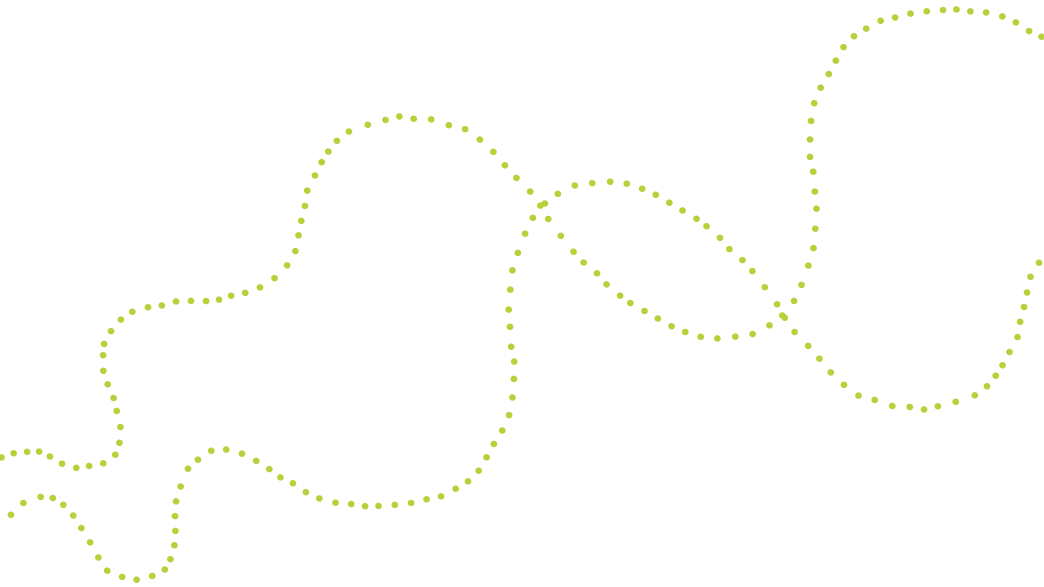
At the time of writing, the multipliers of SALTO-EECA for Georgia are:

. Giorgi Kakulia, Academy for Peace and Development, Tbilisi, giorgi.kakulia@gmail.com

. Rusudan Kalichava, Association ATINATI, Zugdidi, rusudan@atinati.org

. Giorgi Kikalishvili, Youth Association DRONI, Tbilisi, giokika@yahoo.com

. Pavle Tvaliashvili, SIQA Georgian Association of Educational Initiatives, Rustavi, pavle@ctc.org.ge





The Georgian Language

A short language overview is given below aiming at helping volunteers in their daily contacts with locals. Divided into different sections, it covers the different situations foreigners will meet when living in Georgia - e.g. shopping, using public transportation, giving basic information about one's own activities, etc.

The Latin transcription is presented next to the Georgian version to help newcomers to familiarise themselves with the written alphabet. When the polite version differs from the familiar one, both versions are stated.

Alphabet. Georgian language possesses its own written alphabet featuring 33 letters. There is no distinction between uppercase and lowercase.

ა - A	ა - J like in "pleasure"	ჩ - CH' (ejective)
ბ - B	რ - R (rhotic)	ხ - X like in German "Achtung"
გ - G like in "go"	ს - S	ჯ - DJ like in "jungle"
დ - D	თ - T' (ejective)	ჰ - H like in "house"
ე - E	უ - U	
ვ - V	ფ - P	
ზ - Z	კ - K	
თ - T	ღ - GH like a French "r"	
ი - I	ყ - Q' (ejective)	
კ - K' (ejective)	შ - SH like in "shop"	
ლ - L	ჩ - CH like in "chewing gum"	
მ - M	ც - TS like in "tsunami"	
ნ - N	ძ - DZ	
ო - O	წ - TS' (ejective)	
პ - P' (ejective)		

Basics

Yes. დიას (*diax*)

Yes. (neutral) კი (*k'i*)

No. არა (*ara*)

Hello. გამარჯობა (*gamardjoba*)

Hello (back) გაუმარჯოს (*gaumardjos*)

Good morning. დილა მშვიდობისა (*dila mshvidobisa*)

Good afternoon. დღე მშვიდობისა (*dghe mshvidobisa*)

Good evening. საღამო მშვიდობისა (*saghamo mshvidobisa*)

Good night. ღამე მშვიდობისა (*ghame mshvidobisa*)

How are you? როგორ ხარ? (*rogor xar?*)

Fine, and you? კარგად და შენ? (*k'argad da shen?*)

How are you? (Polite) როგორ ბრძანდებით? (*rogor brdzandebit?*)

Fine, and you? (Polite) კარგად და თქვენ? (*k'argad da tkven?*)

Thank you. გმადლობთ (*gmadlobt*)

Thanks. მადლობა (*madloba*)

Good bye. ნახვამდის (*naxvamdis*)

Good bye (Other form) მშვიდობით (*mshvidobit*)

Please. თუ შეიძლება (*tu sheidzleba*)

Please (Other form) გთხოვთ (*gtxovt*)

Excuse me. უკაცრავად (*uk'atsravad*)

Sorry. ბოდიში (*bodishi*)

Sorry (Other form) მაპატიეთ (*map'at'iet*)

Do you speak any English/ Russian? ლაპარაკობთ ინგლისურად/რუსულად?
(*lap'arak'obt inglisurad/ rusulad?*)

Sorry, I don't understand. უკაცრავად ვერ გავიგე (*uk'atsravad, ver gavige*)

I don't speak Georgian. არ ვიცი ქართული (*ar vitsi kartuli*)

Can you repeat please? შეგიძლიათ, გაიმეოროთ? (*shegidzliat gaimeorot?*)

Can you speak slower? შეიძლება, ცოტა ნელა ილაპარაკოთ? (*sheidzleba tsot'a nela ilap'arak'ot?*)

What is your name? რა გქვიათ? (*ra gkviat?*)

My name is Giorgi. მე მქვია გიორგი (*me mkvia giorgi*)

Where are you from? სადაური ხარ? (*sadauri xar?*)

I'm from Poland. მე პოლონეთიდან ვარ (*me p'olonetidani var*)

Where do you live? სად ცხოვრობ? (*sad tsxovrob?*)

I'm living in Tbilisi. მე თბილისში ვცხოვრობ (tbilishi vtsxovrob)
I am a volunteer. მე მოხალისე ვარ (me moxalise var)

What is this? რა არის ეს? (ra aris es?)
How is this called? ამას რა ქვია? (amas ra kvia?)
How much does it cost? რა ღირს? (ra ghirs?)
I would like this. აი, ეს, თუ შეიძლება (ai, es, tu sheidzleba)
It is expensive. ძვირია (dzviria)

Help! მიშველეთ! დამეხმარეთ! (mishvelet! damexmaret!)
Go away! დამანებე თავი! (damanebe tavi)

Orientation

Where is this station? სად არის ეს სადგური? (sad aris es sadguri?)
What is the name of this street? ეს რა ქუჩაა? (es ra kuchaa?)
Where is Asatiani Street? სად არის ასათიანის ქუჩა? (sad aris asatianis kuchaa?)
Which bus number is going to Abashidze Street? რა ნომერი ავტობუსი მიდის აბაშიძის ქუჩაზე? (ra nomeri avt'obusi midis abashidzis kuchaze?)
Is this bus going to Mtskheta? ეს ავტობუსი მცხეთაში მიდის? (es avt'obusi mtsxetashi midis?)
How much to go to Freedom Square? თავისუფლების მოედნამდე რა ღირს? (tavisuplebis moednamde ra ghirs?)
Is it far? Is it close? შორსაა? ახლოსაა? (shorsaa? axlosaa?)
To the right/ to the left. მარჯვნივ / მარცხნივ (mardjvniv/ martsxniv)
Here / There. აქ / იქ (ak/ ik)
Stop here! აქ გააჩერეთ! (ak gaacheret!)
Stop at the corner! კუთხეში გააჩერეთ! (k'utxeshi gaacheret!)
Stop at the metro station! მეტროსთან გააჩერეთ! (met'rostan gaacheret!)

Numbers

One ერთი (erti)	Six ექვსი (ekvsi)
Two ორი (ori)	Seven შვიდი (shvidi)
Three სამი (sami)	Eight რვა (rva)
Four ოთხი (otxi)	Nine ცხრა (tsxra)
Five ხუთი (xuti)	Ten ათი (ati)

Eleven თერთმეტი (*tertmet'i*)
Twelve თორმეტი (*tormet'i*)
Thirteen ცამეტი (*tsamet'i*)
Fourteen თოთხმეტი (*totxmet'i*)
Fifteen თხუთმეტი (*txutmet'i*)
Sixteen თექვსმეტი (*tek'vsmet'i*)
Seventeen ჩვიდმეტი (*chvidmet'i*)
Eighteen თვრამეტი (*tvramet'i*)
Nineteen ცხრამეტი (*tsxramet'i*)
Twenty ოცი (*otsi*)

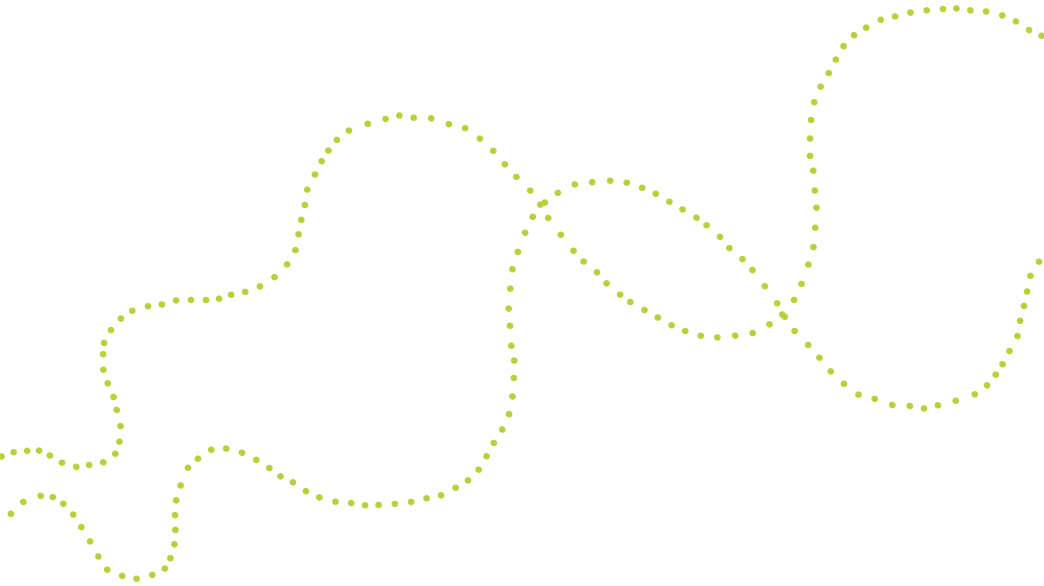
Twenty one ოცდაერთი (*otsdaerti*)
Twenty two ოცდაორი (*otsdaori*)
Thirty ოცდაათი (*otsdaati*)
Forty ორმოცი (*ormotsi*)
Fifty ორმოცდაათი (*ormotsdaati*)
Sixty სამოცი (*samotsi*)
Seventy სამოცდაათი (*samotsdaati*)
Eighty ოთხმოცი (*otxmotsi*)
Ninety ოთხმოცდაათი (*otxmotsdaati*)
Hundred ასი (*asi*)

Countries

Georgia საქართველო (*sakartvelo*)
Armenia სომხეთი (*sómxeti*)
Azerbaijan აზერბაიჯანი (*azerbaidjaini*)
Turkey თურქეთი (*turketi*)
Russia რუსეთი (*ruseti*)

Cities

Bakuriani ბაკურიანი
Batumi ბათუმი
Borjomi ბორჯომი
Gori გორი
Kazbegi ყაზბეგი
Kutaisi ქუთაისი
Mestia მესტია
Mtskheta მცხეთა
Poti პოტი
Rustavi რუსთავი
Tbilisi თბილისი
Telavi თელავი
Zugdidi ზუგდიდი





Acknowledgements

This handbook is an initiative of the Academy for Peace and Development (APD), an international youth organisation located in Tbilisi, Georgia, which is dedicated to promoting peace and cultural diversity in Southern Caucasus. More information about the organisation and its activities on www.apd.ge

The handbook owes a debt of gratitude to those who wrote testimonies, shared experiences, opinions and were of great inspiration during the writing process. Those people, who will for sure smile when recognising that this note is written for them, were of considerable and valuable help by listening at any time to questions and requests, by giving advice and inspiration and by being patient at both professional and personal levels, especially when the only interest of the authors was this handbook.

A special thanks goes to three volunteers Helve Rammul, Maartje Schrama and Inge Snip for their contributions to the handbook.

The first versions of the handbook were influenced by a mix of different languages daily used in Georgia by the authors. That is why they especially want to express their deep gratitude to Dr. Jacques Coulardeau, University of Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne, for his proofreading of the final written version before publication. (Contact: 8 rue de la Chaussée, BP 9, 63880 Olliergues, France / +33(0)473.955.917)

The authors express their regards to those who carefully and critically read some sections or the whole handbook and contributed their comments and suggestions to the final version.

Last but not least, the authors are sincerely thankful that the publication of the present handbook was made possible by the financial support of the Academy for Peace and Development (APD) and of the SALTO Multipliers in Georgia - Giorgi Kakulia, Rusidan Kalichava, Giorgi Kikalishvili and Pavle Tvaliashvili.



Authors

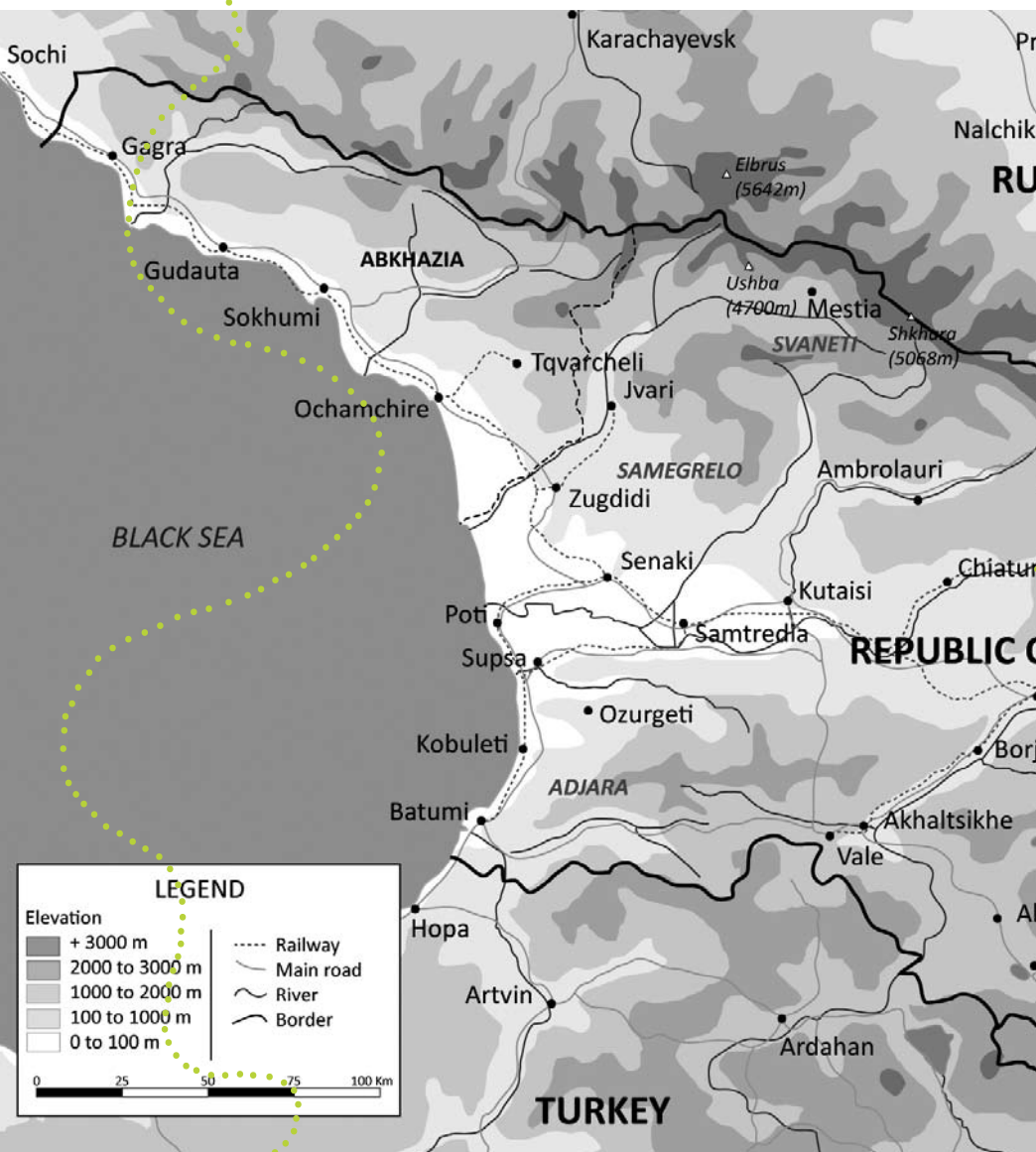
This Handbook was written and designed by Sebastian Schweitzer and Tiphaine Coulardeau.

Tiphaine Coulardeau, a European Volunteer in the Academy for Peace and Development in 2007-2008, studied Architecture and Urbanism focusing on international cooperation in developing contexts at the School of Architecture of Toulouse, the Technische Universiteit of Eindhoven and the Universitat Internacional de Catalunya, Barcelona. She wrote her dissertation on urban perceptions in the city of Groningen. She is particularly interested in the diverse understandings of identity and culture and how those are expressed and reflected through arts and spaces.

Sebastian Schweitzer went to Georgia for European Voluntary Service in 2006-2007 after he graduated in Political Sciences focusing on political transformation processes in Post-Soviet countries at the University of Potsdam. He worked in Germany on political education and has been for more than five years involved in European projects, particularly in international youth work. Currently working as a programme manager for the Academy for Peace and Development in Tbilisi, he is as well a free-lance trainer on different topics like conflict resolution, project management and Intercultural Learning.

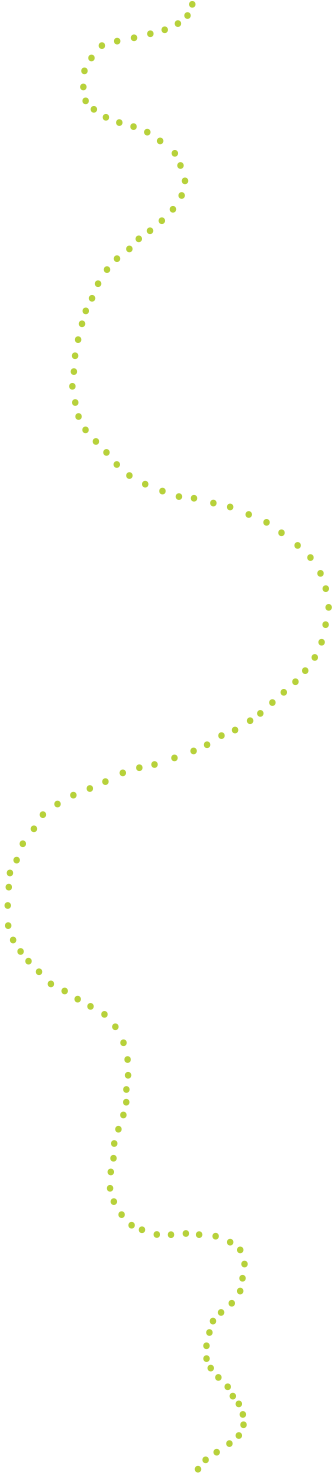
When writing this handbook both authors gained a deeper understanding of Intercultural Learning processes. Indeed, they enjoyed sharing their views and perceptions of Georgian culture.

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Georgia



Anecdote of a European Volunteer in Georgia

The Trip to the Post Office. "At the beginning of my stay in Georgia, a colleague of mine proposed to accompany me to the Post Office to pick up a parcel. It was the beginning of the afternoon, during office hours, and I definitely thought that this excursion will take one hour maximum. But, I did not consider Georgian timing. The trip to the Post Office ended up to be a trip to many places all around the city: going to the bank to get important papers; buying a donut on the way, going back to the bank to get some forgotten document, making a phone call, stopping at the donut shop for the Donut we did not get the first time, visiting the new attraction park, just to see and take a picture, etc... The trip took finally a few hours and I definitely got impressed how time is extendable! From then on, when a Georgian proposed me to go somewhere, I made sure that I did not have any obligation for the next coming hours!"

Volga Car, Tbilisi



Anecdote of a European Volunteer in Georgia

Urgent Phone Bills. "Using a landline at home and not having paid the bills for a few months, we once got a phone call asking us to come to the main office to pay our phone bill. When we arrived at the office the clerk provided us with the detail of the calls, but the bill contained some calls which were not ours and which had been made more than two years before. We kindly asked if it was possible to pay just for our own calls but unfortunately the clerk answered that no, we had to pay the whole bill. Considering the high level of it and its obvious "emergency", we decided this bill could wait a few more months....Three months later we still had a working landline and a very urgent bill to pay!"

Public Phones, Tbilisi

1916



1916



1916



Anecdote of a European Volunteer in Georgia

Asking the Way... “Wishing to go to the cave town of David Gareji with some

friends, we decided to take a marshrutka to Sagarejo and from there share a taxi. Arriving on the main square of Sagarejo, we were a bit confused because no taxis were around. So, to play it safe, we asked a policeman. The policeman after discussing for ten minutes in a quite animated conversation with his colleagues brought us to the Police Station. Though we did not understand what was going on and were afraid of wasting our time, we were informed that everything was under control and that we will soon meet the Police Superintendent of Sagarejo district and that he will arrange something for us. We ended up in the office of the Superintendent and after one hour of small talk and play with the puppy the Superintendent just bought for his children, two men brought us to an amazing glass tinted car, bought us some sodas and started taking on a crazy ride to the cave town. The day trip finished, as could be expected, in a restaurant for a Georgian dinner with vodka and toast with these two Georgian policemen!”

Hole in Footpath, Tbilisi



Anecdote of a European Volunteer in Georgia

Cocktail Bar: "I remember one evening I went to a very nice Art Lounge cocktail bar with a date: cosy place, nice music, scenic atmosphere and great menu... but the cocktail menu was tricky! We tried to order cocktails but the waiter spoke neither English nor Russian. We finally managed to communicate thanks to a friend of the waiter's: he kindly told us that if we wished some cocktails we should go to the bar to make them ourselves! As making cocktails is one of my hobbies, I did not mind to make a small show. So I went to the bar, asked for a shaker and some ice and took the needed bottles from the bar shelf. I properly crushed the ice, supplemented the process with a dancing show of my own and when all attention was captured by the foreigners making cocktails, I managed to conjure two delicious "Sex on the Beach." We enjoyed these fabulous "self-made" cocktails and I will always remember my perfect date in this Georgian Cocktail Bar!"

Grapes, Kakheti Region

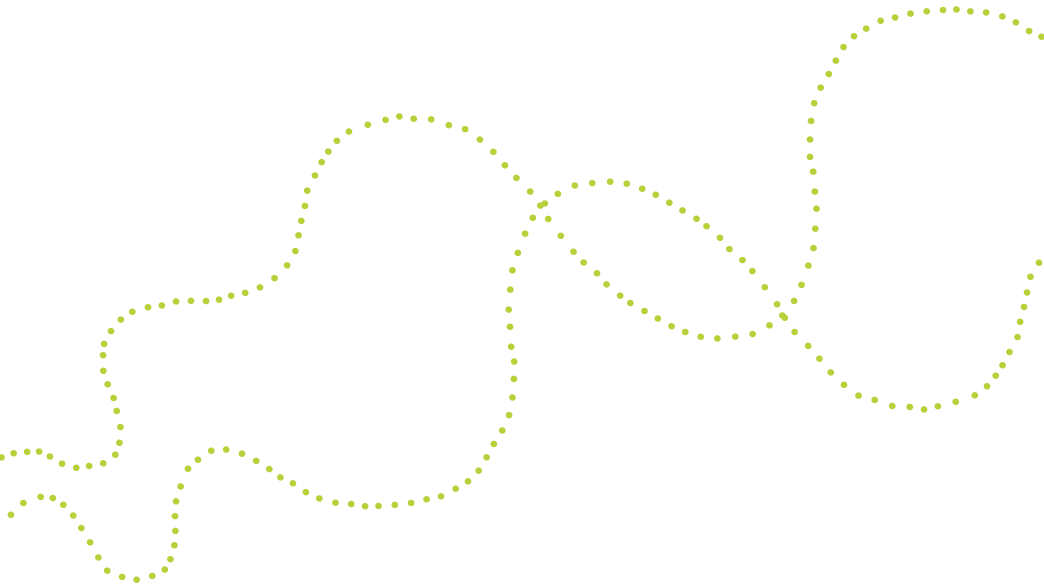


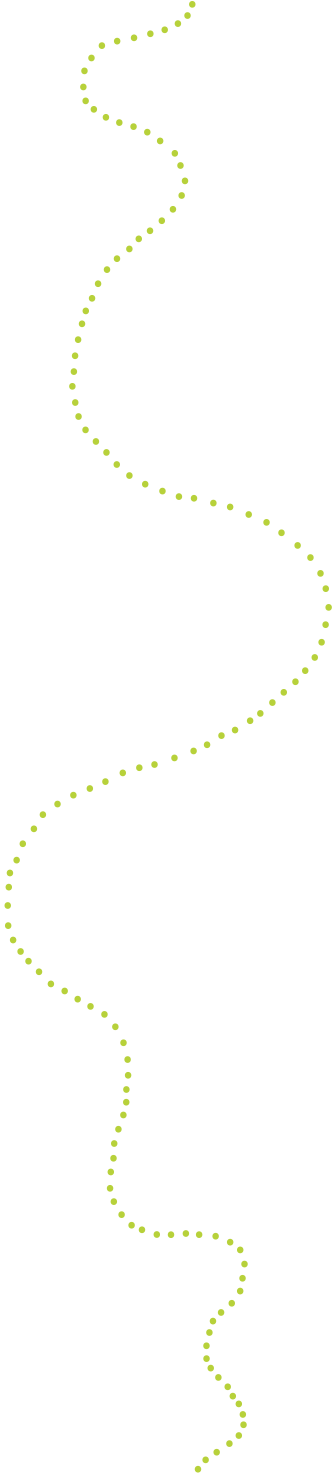
Anecdote of a European Volunteer in Georgia

The Supra I Will Never Forget. "I attended a lot of Georgian feasts but this one I will never forget. After a friend of mine had had one of his relatives' child christened, we all went to have a supra together. A lot of people were there and we were squeezed all around the table. As usual, food and wine never finished and I can really not remember how we went back home and how much wine we drank, but one toast I will ever keep in mind: when the priest that christened the child had to leave, he was invited to make a toast. His toast was for all the women on earth and particularly for those around the table, but uncommonly in Georgia he asked all women to stand up and join the already standing men. He explained that according to Georgian tradition man and woman are equal and that this is unfortunately often forgotten by a lot of people..."

Georgian Women







Volunteering in Georgia A Handbook

Georgia is a mysterious country for most people all around the world. This handbook is dedicated to all brave young people just dreaming or already packing to confront themselves to their Georgian adventure to come as European Volunteers.

Reading this booklet will give these newly-hatched volunteers some sense of orientation in the confusing reality of their new environment with plenty of unknown events, circumstances, encounters, haps and mishaps in a sonic dramatic decor of particularly obscure expressions like ... Marshrutka, Giorgoba, Mtskheta, Khvanchkara...

