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CAUCAS.EU.S – THE PROJECT

From 06/06/2024 to 17/07/2024

GEORGIA - RUSTAVI, GUMBATI & KVEDA PONA

Volunteering Teams in High Priority Areas - European Solidarity Corps

OPEN TO: ITALY, FRANCE, UKRAINE, GEORGIA, ARMENIA



ABOUT THE PROJECT



In Georgia, in cooperation with the local organization **Georgian Youth for Europe**, the project will support ecological migrant communities in the villages of Gumbati and Kveda Pona. Over the years, these villages have undergone profound social changes related to the arrival of ecological migrants from the regions of Adjara and Svaneti, where from the 80s to the 2000s, numerous natural disasters forced the communities to seek new territories where to live and to be able to sustain themselves. The particular vulnerability of some regions of Georgia is due to the mountainous conformation of the territory, which in periods of heavy rains have suffered numerous disasters related to flooding and landslides.

The communities of these regions, whose livelihoods consist mainly in agricultural activities and livestock, have therefore had to face a resettlement, in some cases spontaneous and in others organized by the Georgian government, in other areas of the country. The resettlement has caused an enormous change in the social fabric of the arrival villages, which have also had to endure a great effort of economic adaptation to support the numerous families who have found refuge there. In the villages there is a lack of educational initiatives aimed at young people, who in many cases have had to leave the villages seasonally or permanently to go and look for opportunities and work in the cities.

Therefore the project's activities will foster **support to the communities of ecological migrants** forced to leave their areas of origin due to environmental vulnerability and the disasters that have hit the regions of Adjara and Svaneti. The activities will provide support to local livelihoods, especially the agricultural activities carried out by the members of the bio-farming social enterprise managed by GYE on which a big part of the economy of the village relies, and the support of local young people by organizing different cultural and educational activities in the Educational Center Gumbati, for them to acquire new skills, improve personal development, engage with a multicultural environment and learn about the volunteering opportunities with the ESC.

The overall project is coordinated by the Italian organization Amaita Intercultura and includes also the partners Intercultura (France), KIEC European Club (Ukraine) and Youth Initiative Center NGO (Armenia).





ABOUT GEORGIA



Georgia or “Sakartvelo” (საქართველო) in Georgian, is a small country situated in the South of the Great Caucasus, between the Black and Caspian seas, populated by 3.7 million people, with over a third residing in the capital city Tbilisi. Bounded by the Black Sea to the west, Russia to the north and northeast, Turkey to the southwest, Armenia to the south, and Azerbaijan to the southeast, Georgia hosts a multitude of ethnic minorities, languages and religions, all wrapped up in this small territory, making it a real melting pot of cultures.

Georgia has been inhabited since prehistoric times, hosting the world's earliest known sites of winemaking. The “classical era” saw the emergence of several kingdoms, such as Colchis and Iberia, that formed the nucleus of the modern Georgian state. In the early 4th century, Georgians officially adopted Christianity, which contributed to their gradual unification and ethnogenesis. In the High Middle Ages, the Kingdom of Georgia reached its “Golden Age” during the reign of King David IV and Queen Tamar. The kingdom subsequently declined and disintegrated under the hegemony of various regional powers, including the Mongols, the Ottoman Empire, and Persia, before being gradually annexed into the Russian Empire starting in 1801. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, Georgia briefly emerged as an independent republic under German protectorate, but was invaded and annexed by the Soviet Union in 1922, becoming one of its constituent republics. In the 1980s, an independence movement grew quickly, leading to Georgia's secession from the Soviet Union in April 1991. For much of the subsequent decade, the country endured economic crises, political instability, and secessionist wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Following the peaceful Rose Revolution in 2003, Georgia strongly pursued a pro-Western foreign policy, introducing a series of democratic and economic reforms aimed at integration into the European Union and NATO. The country's Western orientation soon led to worsening relations with Russia, which culminated in the Russo-Georgian War of 2008 and continued Russian occupation of parts of Georgia.

Here's some fun facts about Georgia:

- Georgia is one of the oldest wine-producing countries in the world: archaeology indicates that fertile valleys and slopes in and around Georgia have been home to grapevine cultivation and neolithic wine production for millennia, using traditional clay pots for fermentation, that became UNESCO cultural heritage in 2013.
- One of the most unusual traditions of Georgia is the “supra”, or “Georgian table”, a way of socializing with friends and family: the head of “supra” is known as “tamada”, he/she conducts highly philosophical toasts and makes sure that everyone is enjoying themselves.
- Wrestling is one of the most practiced and popular sports in Georgia.
- The Georgian language is the most widely spoken Kartvelian language (group of languages indigenous of the South Caucasus), it's the native or primary language of 87.6% of the country's population and is written in its own unique alphabet.

ABOUT THE HOSTING ORGANIZATION

The mission of Georgian Youth for Europe (GYE) is to empower youth of the Kvemo Kartli Region of Georgia to achieve their full physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual potential both as individuals and as responsible citizens. Mostly they are fewer opportunity young people aged 13-30 who are facing migrant backgrounds, geographical, economical, educational, cultural and health obstacles but also with adults.

GYE uses non-formal education methodologies to achieve this mission and as such exposes its members and the city of Rustavi to information covering a wide variety of topics.

As an organization with a 400-person strong membership base, GYE promotes learning by concentrating the following topics:

1. Increasing members' civic participation.
2. Offering space for members to develop their own interests and talents.
3. Promoting European Union Citizenship through the participation of Erasmus Plus and ESC Projects.



PROJECT LOCATIONS

The city of **Rustavi**, is situated just 20km away from the capital city Tbilisi and it's the fourth most populous city in Georgia. Here the hosting organization Georgian Youth for Europe (GYE) hosts its headquarters, along side the Scout Center that will host the volunteers during the on-arrival training. In Rustavi all kinds of services can be found, including supermarkets, banks, hospitals and more. The volunteers will be hosted in the city for the on-arrival training (7 days) and for educational activities organized for the children with fewer opportunities that are participating in the activities organized by GYE.



The village of **Kveda Pona** is located on the southern slope of the main ridge of the Great Caucasus, 14 km from the administrative center of Lagodekhi. The village is mainly inhabited by ethnic Ossetians and about 15 years ago, eco-migrants from the Adjara region started to settle in the village (the process continues to this day and the share of the Adjara population in the village increases every year). The largest part of the rural population is engaged in cattle breeding, viticulture, and fruit cultivation. Agriculture is the main income of the village: here GYE started a bio-farming social enterprise to support the local community by providing employment and better equipment.



The village of **Gumbati** is located around 150 km west from Rustavi, in a rural area that counts 400 inhabitants, a quarter of them being young people aged 16-29. Historically, Gumbati has been a multicultural village, where migrants coming from Greece and Turkey found refuge and later also Georgian eco-migrants resettling from landslide areas in Adjara and Svaneti mountain regions (which are now the majority of the population). Almost all the inhabitants survive thanks to agricultural activities but there's an enormous unemployment issue, especially related to young people. The level of education provided is very low and cultural/language barriers are still an issue and in many cases deny young people the possibility to continue their studies. In November 2016, with the financial support of CSRDG (Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia), local activists launched the social enterprise "Educational Center Gumbati", which aims to help overcome the language barrier and increase access to general education. The center offers different courses and prepares students for the National Exams. Particular attention is given also to students with learning difficulties to ensure everyone has access to proper education opportunities. Moreover, the center has become a hub for non-formal education where training sessions and other activities offered to the local community have taken place to promote democratic participation and civic engagement.

To learn more about Gumbati, check out this video: <https://youtu.be/ZTC4F8I7vI8>



THE ACTIVITIES

Participants will have the opportunity to join various activities that will be organized in the different locations of the project:

- During the first week of stay (orientation week), the participants will be hosted in the Rustavi Scout Center where together with the Georgian Youth for Europe team they will participate in the **on-arrival training** dedicated to getting to know each other, building good group dynamics, discovering the country, its history, its culture, its language and review the work program for the following weeks.
- The participants will then leave for the village of **Gumbati**, where they will stay for about 15 days and will support the local community through the **organization of recreational-educational activities at the small Educational Center of Gumbati** (language courses, sports activities, themed cultural evenings etc.) and through the **renovation of the small sports field** of the Gumbati school, the only space dedicated to the children and young people of the village where football, basketball and other sporting activities tournaments can be organised. The volunteers will be hosted by local families.



- The participants will then return to **Rustavi** for 7 days where they will be hosted again in the Scout Center and will organize **recreational-educational activities for children with fewer opportunities** who attend the scout center and GYE initiatives during the summer.

- The participants will then move to the **Bio-Farm of Kveda Pona** in the region of Kaheti (around 2.30/3h drive east from Rustavi), an agricultural social cooperative created by GYE to support the local community of the village of Kveda Pona through agricultural activities and certified organic food production. Here volunteers will stay for about 7 days and will participate in various activities divided into subgroups, including sowing, harvesting fruits, planting plants, maintenance of fields and greenhouses, production of certified organic dried fruit and artisanal bread and more. The volunteers will be hosted in an independent house that the whole group will share.
- A complementary activity of the group will be the **realisation of a short documentary**, coordinated by a professional video maker from Amaita Intercultura. All volunteers interested in supporting the shooting of the documentary can collaborate with the video maker. Whoever is interested in taking part in the documentary making must bring their own cameras/microphones if owned. The documentary will be shoot in all locations and will include interviews to the volunteers, local community members, staff etc.

The volunteers will work from **Monday to Friday** (sometimes it might be needed working on Saturdays) from **10am to 4pm**. Working hours can be flexible depending on the activities and the locations. Volunteers will have **2 extra free days** at the end of the activities.

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PARTICIPANT PROFILE

We are looking for **4 volunteers** from each country to participate in the activities organized by GYE in Georgia. The project will last **42 days** (40 days of activities + 2 travel days*) and the activities will be hosted in Rustavi, Gumbati and Kveda Pona.

Here is some information that will help you understand if this project is right for you:

- Participants must be **between 18 and 30 years old**.
- Participation is open to young people from: **Italy, France, Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia**.
- Participants must be interested in **rural development** and **education**.
- Participants must be flexible and with a **great spirit of adaptation** to new contexts with deep cultural differences.
- Participants must be able to **work in a team**.
- Participants must be **willing to live in very rural contexts** where there is no possibility of accessing all the services normally available in the city and adopting a simple lifestyle.
- Participants must be **highly respectful of the local culture and religion** (including dress code, especially for women, and conduct).
- We are looking for a participant with **experience in media and video-making** who can support the documentary maker who will follow the work of the volunteers during the implementation of the project.

All participants must own a valid **passport** that respects the conditions for traveling to Georgia.

*For volunteers coming from Ukraine, the travel days available are 4 (but they must be in Rustavi on the 06/06/2024).



THE ACCOMMODATION

Participants will be hosted in **3 different accommodations** during the entire project:

- during the orientation week the participants will be hosted in the Scout Center in Rustavi.
- during the implementation of activities in the village of Kveda Pona, participants will be hosted in an independent house near the Bio-Farm social cooperative.
- during the implementation of the activities in Gumbati village, participants will be hosted in the homes of local families.

Here is more information about each accommodation:

The **Scout Center of Rustavi** is located around 20 minutes by walk from the city center. It's a fully equipped building where the participants will be hosted in shared rooms (3-4 people per room divided by gender) with shared bathrooms (divided by gender). The Scout Center provides bedsheets but the participants must bring their own towels. In the Scout Center there's a laundry room available and various meeting rooms. Wi-Fi is available in the whole building.



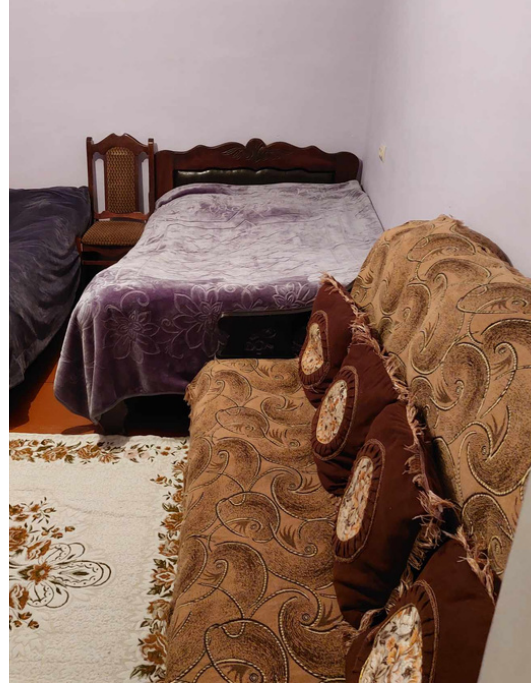
The accommodation in the village of Kveda Pona consists in an independent house near the Bio-Farm social cooperative where the participants will work. The house is fully equipped with kitchen where the volunteers can cook their own food, washing machine for laundry and Wi-Fi. The participants will be hosted in shared rooms (divided by gender) with shared bathrooms (divided by gender).



In the village of Gumbati, the participants will have the opportunity to have a real local experience by being **hosted by local families**: every family will host 2-3 participants (divided by gender). In each family, there will be at least one English-speaking member that will be the assigned buddy of the hosted participants: if the assigned buddy is a girl, her family will only host female participants, the same works with male buddies. The participants will be hosted in private rooms in the houses that only they will share (there might be the chance of having to share double beds too). The bathroom and the rest of the spaces will be shared with the hosting families. The opportunity of being hosted by local families also comes with rules: respecting the culture and religion of the hosting family is a MUST. These families are opening their houses to you, welcoming you as another family member so respecting their rules and traditions is mandatory, even if they might be different from what you are used to.

Here's a glimpse of what the houses of the hosting families look like!





FOOD POLICY

Depending on the locations, 3 different food policies apply:

- whenever the volunteers are hosted at the Scout Center, they will be provided food money and will be responsible for cooking their own meals. **ONLY** during the first 2 days (**on-arrival training**) the volunteers will be provided breakfast, lunch and dinner prepared by the staff of the Scout Center.
- when the volunteers are hosted by the families of Gumbati, they will themselves be responsible for purchasing food at the small village market. The volunteers will then be able to cook at the host family's home. Volunteers will receive a budget to purchase food;
- when the volunteers are hosted in the Kveda Pona house, GYE will be responsible for purchasing weekly groceries that the volunteers will receive. The volunteers will then be divided in teams for the tasks to carry out and one team will be in charge of preparing the food for the rest.

Please report dietary needs to the GYE staff.

INSURANCE

Cross-border participants will be registered in the HENNER insurance scheme which will become their primary insurance during the stay. Registration of participant to the insurance is made by the coordinating organization Amaita Intercultura.

Local volunteers will be registered also but will only receive complementary coverage as they already have access to the national healthcare system.

POCKET MONEY

The volunteers will receive 6€ per day for every day they will be staying in the country including weekends and days off following the guidelines of the European Solidarity Corps for Georgia. The pocket money is a reimbursement received by the volunteers during their stay and does not include the food money that you will receive separately to purchase your groceries.

TRAVEL BUDGET

All participants will have a travel budget of **€500** to reach the project location.

The travel budget can include all the means of transport necessary to reach the destination (planes, trains, buses). Airplane tickets must be booked for the roundtrip.

Participants are responsible for booking their own tickets (with the support of sending organizations if necessary) and will be reimbursed only after providing all travel documents to their sending organizations (booking confirmation emails, boarding passes, train or train tickets). bus). Participants must send all digital travel documents via email and retain all original paper documents that must be sent by post. If the participant does not provide all travel documents, he/she/they will be reimbursed only up to the amount confirmed by the travel documents in his/her/their possession.

In case the tickets are booked by the sending organization, the participant will have to sign a declaration in which he/she/they takes/take responsibility for reimbursing the sending organization in the event that the tickets have already been purchased and the participant is no longer available to travel and join the project for unjustifiable reasons.

No visa is needed to enter Georgia if you own a national passport from the countries included in the project.

TRAVELING TO GEORGIA

Arrival at Tbilisi International Airport:

The main arrival airport for international flights is that of the capital Tbilisi, which is about 20-25 minutes by car from the city of Rustavi, where the volunteers will be hosted in the first week of the project. Most international flights arrive in Tbilisi during the night hours or very early in the morning. Each national volunteer group will be advised to travel together in order to organize airport pick-ups for them. GYE will prepare arrival and departure schedules and accordingly will welcome them in the airport. If some volunteers prefer to travel individually, GYE will give details on how to reach the accommodation place by taxi since there is no public transport available between Tbilisi International Airport and Rustavi city.

At the airport Wi-Fi is available and you can exchange money into local currency and buy a local SIM.

Arrival at Kutaisi International Airport:

If you travel to Kutaisi Airport, you must take a bus transfer to Tbilisi (around 4h). It's advised to book bus tickets online at <https://georgianbus.com/> (the bus ticket costs around 25 Georgian Lari = 8,70€). Once you reach Tbilisi, GYE will organise a transfer to Rustavi if you travel with the rest of your national group; if you travel alone, GYE will give you extra info on how to reach the Scout Center of Rustavi by taxi).

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

- During your stay, sheets and blankets will be provided in all accommodations (Rustavi, Gumbati and Kveda Pona). Please **bring your own towels**.
- **Bring all the medicines and personal hygiene items you need** and promptly **notify your sending organization if you have any particular pathologies** that require particular attention. Rustavi is the only urban location of the project, where pharmacies/clinics/hospitals are more easily accessible. Gumbati and Kveda Pona are rural villages where access to health services may be limited, so come prepared!
- Georgia is home to a **high number of stray dogs**, especially in the cities. Most of the dogs are microchipped and have been vaccinated by municipal authorities but many are not yet vaccinated. The dogs are usually curious and will get close to you. It is therefore **necessary to keep your distance, not pet them and avoid disturbing them** to avoid accidents. We suggest that you consult with your doctor to evaluate the administration of the rabies vaccine before departure. The vaccine is not mandatory to take part in the project but it is recommended. Please discuss it seriously with your doctor or health provider as rabies can be a fatal disease if contracted.
- During the project you will take part in **agricultural activities**, it is therefore recommended to **consult your doctor to check when the last dose of tetanus vaccine was administered** and whether a new dose is necessary to ensure coverage. The vaccine is not mandatory to take part in the project but it is recommended.
- All participants **must be in possession of a valid passport** and this must comply with the rules of access to the country. Please check the website of your Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure your passport is valid for travel to Georgia. Furthermore, **if you have a European passport (including a Ukrainian one), you will not need any visa** to enter the country. If you have a non-EU passport, please inform the sending organization immediately during the interview.
- Almost all supermarkets in Georgia are open 24/7. Small private shops operate from 8- 9 am to 5 pm. Markets and bazaars open at 6 am, but trading may end by 2 pm. The major supermarket retail chains in Georgia include: Carrefour (considered the best hypermarket in the country in terms of price-to-quality ratio), Nikora (a grocery store offering customers a selection of over 500 different products) and Spar (a Dutch retail chain).
- Bring clothes you are not afraid of getting dirty or ripped for the agricultural activities in Kveda Pona, swimwear (there's a nice river near the village of Pona where people go swim in summer), sunscreen (very important!) and a hat.

- It is possible to **change Euros into local currency** at the airport (of both departure and arrival) and in Rustavi. Credit card payments are only possible in cities and are not normally accepted in small shops. Remember to activate the international payments option on your debit card to ensure it works abroad. Banks are usually open on weekdays from 9:00 to 17:30-18:00, and from 09:00-14:00 on Saturdays. Exchange offices are usually open until late evening. When exchanging money in banks be sure to bring an ID card, whereas in the specialized exchange offices the presentation of ID is not necessary. Some exchange office owners are putting high rates on signs, but often it does not correspond to reality. If you want to exchange currency in the exchange office instead of a bank, it would be prudent to ask about the final sum in advance, and only then make the operation. The current exchange rate of GEL on 31/03/2024, however, taking into account that the Georgian currency is heavily dependent on the world currency leaders, the rates can vary significantly even during the day: 1 EUR = 2.8400 GEL.
- Bring an extra phone to get a Georgian SIM (you can also use your current phone and just exchange the SIMs).
- Georgian society is considered relatively conservative, particularly in rural areas. In the village of Gumbati the majority of the population is Muslim and we recommend modest clothing. **Out of respect for local culture and religion, please bring appropriate clothing (especially for girls).**
- Here you can familiarize yourself with help desk phone numbers and phone hotline in Georgia: **Ambulance 113, Patrol Service - Police 122, Fire Department 111.**

NOTE: The Educational Center of Gumbati is always looking for books or board games for the children to play with. They opened the very first library where anyone from the village can come and borrow books to read. If you want to donate some, please bring them with you. Also, an intercultural night will be held during the stay, so you are welcome to bring some traditional food and items from your country to share with the rest of the group and the children.

Useful links:

GYE Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GeorgianYouthForEurope>

GYE Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/georgian_youth_for_europe/?hl=en

Gumbati Education Center: <https://www.facebook.com/gumbatiorganisation>

Bio-Farm Kveda Pona: <https://www.facebook.com/BiofarmPona>

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