



They say...

## This is the real Field Office



*The Zugdidi Field Office in Meunargia Street has been the home of EUMM in Western Georgia since Christmas Eve 2008.*

around in their free time together. Some even take their breakfast together. This is why many monitors also keep referring to this Field Office as “the Family Field Office”.

### The early days

In August 2008, a team from the European Union Special Representative for Southern Caucasus was tasked to set up a Field Office in Zugdidi, initially located in Samegrelo Hotel, ironically referred to as the Hilton of Zugdidi; and a Field Office in the coastal town of Poti. Both offices were handed over to the newly established Mission, when the monitors arrived on 1 October 2008. The Poti office was almost instantly transferred to Khashuri and remained in operation until 14 September 2009.

Then, on Christmas Eve 2008 the Zugdidi Field Offices moved to its current location on Meunargia Street. The building, which once served as a family residence, today hosts 49 international and 19 national staff. It consists of 11 rooms, supplemented by an outbuilding and 14 containers.

Since 2008, Field Office Zugdidi has conducted over 16,000 patrols in Western Georgia.

**The EUMM has three fully staffed Field Offices in Georgia. These are the bases from where operations are conducted and where cooperation with partners and interlocutors is coordinated.**

In Eastern Georgia Mtskheta and Gori Field Office cover the activities inland and along the Administrative Boundary Line with South Ossetia.

In the western corner of the country, Field Office Zugdidi covers the ins and outs of the entire Western Georgia. “This is the real field office” some say, not least because of its remote location to the capital; a road trip to the capital Tbilisi easily takes 5 hours.

### A gigantic tropical sauna

Zugdidi is the town where people do their shopping in the market, not in the supermarket. Local farmers sell their fruits and vegetables in the bazaar, where the cheapest and best fresh produce from the surrounding farmland can be found all year round.

For the villagers, a trip to Zugdidi is considered a real journey to a buzzing town with the opportunity to

do all necessary shopping for the week. For internationals, who are used to having produce from around the globe at their disposal at any time of the year, this “simple life” may take some time to get used to. Interruption of water supplies and electricity cuts are no exception here.

Zugdidi is well known for its very humid climate. In summertime, mercury often climbs to 40 degrees, temporarily turning the town into a gigantic tropical sauna. This adds up to the feeling that Zugdidi is indeed off the beaten path.

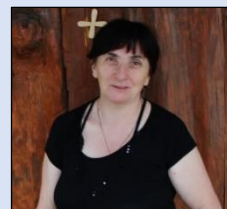
### Like a great big family

The combination of these elements make working in Western Georgia slightly more challenging, but on the other hand it brings the Field Office staff more closely together.

Every so often, the atmosphere in the office is close to family-like. In all weather conditions, colleagues go on patrol together from early morning until late night and occasionally they camp together during overnight patrols. They play volleyball together, watch football together, travel

### The Field Office Mama

“Panama” is a diner located right next to the Field Office. It is a well-known establishment run by Nunu, the friendliest Georgian woman in town. She prepares breakfast, lunch and dinner for the monitors, hosts TV football tournaments, birthday parties and farewell parties. She is one of those, who over the years, has seen the most monitors come and go. Flags from all the EU Member States decorate the inside walls as a reminder of the 335 monitors who served in Zugdidi since 2008.



This is...

# Western Georgia



Western Georgia is located at the crossroads of Western Asia and Eastern Europe, bounded to the west by the Black Sea, to the north by the Russian Federation, to the south by Turkey. The EUMM Field Office in Zugdidi has the entire Western Georgia as its Area of Responsibility.

## Regions

The five Administrative Regions constituting Western Georgian accounts for some 40% of Georgia's land territory of totally 69,700 km<sup>2</sup>, which equals the size of Ireland, and has just over 40% of its population.

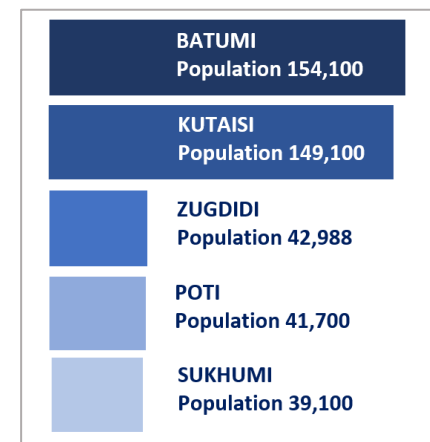
Black Sea can reach up to 43°C during summer with extreme humidity. The foothills and mountainous areas experience cool, wet summers and snowy winters.

## Languages

Western Georgia, like much of the Caucasus, is characterized by diversity of ethnic groups and languages.

Aside from Indo-European and Turkic languages, other language families such as Northwest and Northeast Caucasian, and Kartvelian (South Caucasian), are indigenous to the region. Georgian is the most widely spoken of the small

## LARGEST CITIES IN WESTERN GEORGIA



Monitors from the EUMM Field Office in Zugdidi patrol the northernmost remote and mountainous part of the Area of Responsibility.

## Europe's second highest peak

With its 5,201 meters, Mount Shkhara, located in Western Georgia, is the highest mountain in Georgia and the second highest in Europe after Mount Elbrus in Russia (5,642 meters) and followed by Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in Western Europe (4,810 meters).

## The 2009 attack on EUMM

On 21 June 2009, two explosive devices were detonated and hit a convoy of three mission vehicles on patrol in Western Georgia. The driver of the middle vehicle, an unarmoured ambulance that accompanied the monitors, was taken to hospital, but died of injuries shortly afterwards. One of the Mission's armoured vehicles was slightly damaged.

## THE REGIONS OF WESTERN GEORGIA

REGION	Capital	Population	Area
IMERETI	Kutaisi	533,906	6,475 km <sup>2</sup>
SAMEGRELO-ZEMO SVANETI	Zugdidi	362,760	7,440 km <sup>2</sup>
GURIA	Ozurgeti	113,221	2,033 km <sup>2</sup>
ADJARA *)	Batumi	336,077	2,880 km <sup>2</sup>
ABKHAZIA **)	Sukhumi	242,862	8,660 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,588,826</b>	<b>27,488 km<sup>2</sup></b>

## Climate

The climate of Western Georgia is relatively warm throughout the year. The temperature along the

South Caucasian family, whereas Abkhaz is a Northwest Caucasian language.

\*) Designated as the Autonomous Republic of Adjara in the Georgian constitution.

\*\*\*) Designated as the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia in the Georgian constitution. Self-declared republic since 23 July 1992.

# 148 kilometres dividing Western Georgia

The 148 km long Administrative Boundary Line in Western Georgia separates the breakaway region of Abkhazia from the rest of Georgia (the Tbilisi Administered Territory).

The Line extends from the Black Sea in the south to the Russian Federation border in the north.

33 kilometres of the Line follows the Enguri River.

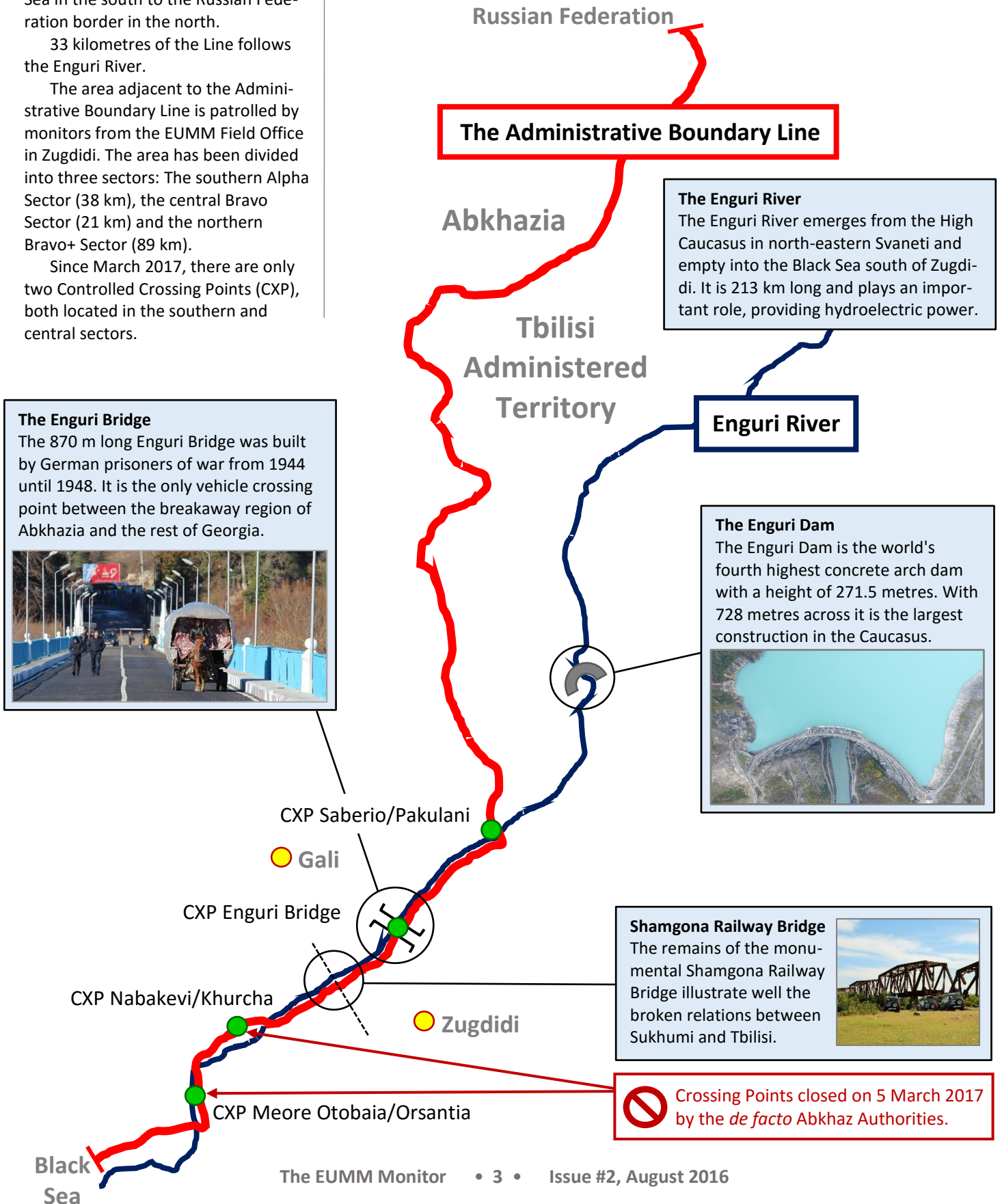
The area adjacent to the Administrative Boundary Line is patrolled by monitors from the EUMM Field Office in Zugdidi. The area has been divided into three sectors: The southern Alpha Sector (38 km), the central Bravo Sector (21 km) and the northern Bravo+ Sector (89 km).

Since March 2017, there are only two Controlled Crossing Points (CXP), both located in the southern and central sectors.

The Enguri Bridge, refurbished in 2016, is the only Controlled Crossing Point where vehicles can cross.

Additionally, there are numerous, frequently used, Uncontrolled Crossing Points (UXP) along the entire Line.

The only railway line to and from the breakaway region, was via the Shamgona Railway Bridge over the Enguri River. The bridge was demolished in the 1992-93 war and railway traffic was never resumed.



The Enguri Dam provides...

# Power to the people



**The Enguri Dam is a hydroelectric dam located at the town of Jvari on the Enguri River. The facility provides all electricity to the Abkhaz grid and generates sufficient power to provide the rest of Georgia with half of its electrical energy consumption.**

With 728 metres across it is also the most massive structure in the Caucasus.

The Enguri Hydroelectric Power Station straddles both Abkhazian and Tbilisi Controlled Territory. Whereas the arch dam is located on Tbilisi Administered Territory in Upper Svaneti, the power station is located in the Gali District of the breakaway region of Abkhazia.

The dam and the power station are jointly operated by staff residing in both territories.

- **In 2015**, the Enguri Dam was added to the list of Georgia's most distinguished cultural heritage sites when The National Agency for Protection of Cultural Heritage granted the "Engurhesi Arched Dam" the national status of cultural heritage for the purpose of development of the country's industrial capacity.



The reservoir, when full, has a maximum capacity of 1.1 billion cubic meters and is capable of generating 1,320 megawatts per hour.

The construction began in 1961. The dam became temporarily operational in 1978, and was completed in 1987. The beautiful arched concrete dam is the world's fourth highest with a height of 271.5 metres.

- **In 1999**, the Enguri Hydroelectric Power Station was granted massive international subsidies for urgent repairs, including a €9.4 million contribution from the European Commission.
- **In 2011**, the European Investment Bank granted a €20 million loan in order to complete the rehabilitation of the plant and to ensure safe water evacuation towards the Black Sea.



The EUMM Field Office Zugdidi frequently patrols the areas adjacent to the Administrative Boundary Line including the Enguri Dam.

# Cross boundary trade is booming

In spite of the ban on the import and export of food products and industrial goods to and from Abkhazia, demand on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Line encourages a booming trade across the Line. The cross boundary trade is purely profit driven and goods flow to the highest paying markets.

The bulk of the trade is in fruit and vegetables. These commodities are seasonal in nature and the trade therefore peaks in the summer months. Hazelnuts are by far the most exported product from Abkhazia, whereas fruits, berries and vegetables are the most imported commodity to the break-away. As much as 3,000 kg of produce daily has regularly been observed passing into Abkhazia through just one Controlled Crossing Point.

## Beyond Abkhazia

The final destinations for much of the produce are the markets in major Abkhazian cities, but the goods also travel beyond Abkhazia.

Open sources indicate that up to 70% of the agricultural products available in the Gali market are imported from Tbilisi Administered Territory. A 2014 media estimate pointed to a yearly

Abkhaz cross boundary import value of 58 million USD.

## Suitcase trade

Despite obstacles, grassroots contacts between Georgians and Abkhaz are increasing.

Each day, up to several thousand commuters cross the Enguri River, many to conduct suitcase trade in Abkhazia of commodities and agricultural goods, but also pharmaceuticals and medical equipment.

## Arbitrary practice

Commuters to Abkhazia are allowed bring goods with them, but are often requested to pay import duties on larger quantities.

The custom duties and export fees collected by the Abkhaz *de facto* Border Guards vary according to the season and other factors.



Tens of thousands tons of hazelnuts are harvested from summer through fall each year.



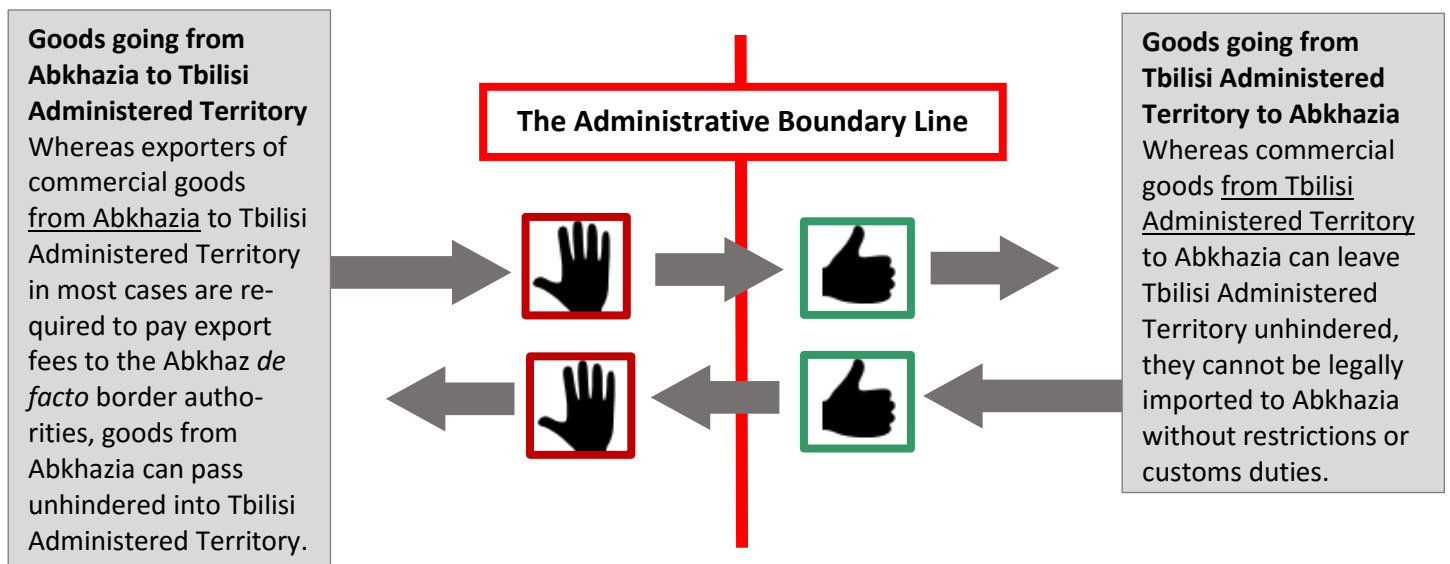
Each year, the newly harvested hazelnuts find their way from the hazelnut farms to the highest paying markets.

## Hazelnuts – a multi-billion Euro industry

Georgia is located in a climate zone with favourable conditions for hazelnut farming along the Black Sea coast.

Hazelnuts are big business in Georgia, with thousands of hazelnut farmers being dependent on world market prices. Demand, however, is expected to increase, and in the long term, Georgia has a good chance to become one of the top 3 hazelnut supplying countries in the world after Turkey and Italy.

The bulk of Georgia's annual hazelnut production of 37,000 tonnes (2014) goes to confectioners, with Italian Ferrero accounting for the largest share. Ferrero purchases 1/4 of the world's hazelnut supply to produce its famous Nutella and Ferrero Rocher.



## Medical Crossings

# How does it work?

The Republic of Georgia provides all citizens within its internationally recognised borders with health care and medical services. Consequently, people residing in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, are eligible for fully or partially free medical treatment on Tbilisi Administrated Territory. For this reason and to obtain some medical services, not available in Abkhazia, numerous patients cross the Administrative Boundary Line.

An example of a

### Medical Crossing with valid travel documents

1

A 65-year-old Abkhazian male suffers from diabetic complications and needs medical treatment. The patient is in possession of a valid travel document.

2

To coordinate the transfer, the Abkhazian ambulatory contacts the designated medical facility on Tbilisi Administrated Territory, where the patient is to be treated.

3

Paramedics from the town ambulatory collect the patient at his home and transport him to the one of the Controlled Crossing Points.

4

At the Abkhazian check point, the Abkhazian *de facto* Border Guard verifies the patient's documents before he is allowed to cross the Administrative Boundary Line. In this case the patient is mobile, so any of the Crossing Points can be used. If the patient was transported in an ambulance, only the Enguri Bridge Controlled Crossing Point could be used.

5

Once the patient has crossed, he is met by an ambulance crew from Tbilisi Administrated Territory, and continues to the medical facility, in this case the Zugdidi Hospital.



Ambulance from Tbilisi Administrated Territory picking up a patient from Abkhazia after a Medical Crossing at the Nabakevi/Khurcha Controlled Crossing Point.

### Obtaining travel documents for medical crossings

If the patient is not in possession of a valid travel document, he must apply for the so-called Form No. 9, issued by the Abkhazian *de facto* local authorities. This form proves the identity and address of the person and is issued for medical reasons upon submission of Form No. 100. This is a medical certificate, issued by the Abkhaz medical facility, supporting the need for medical treatment or health care on Tbilisi Administrated Territory.

### EUMM assisted medical crossings

In emergency cases, the Abkhazian *de facto* Border Guard can contact the EUMM liaison officer by phone (the Hotline). The EUMM liaison officer then reaches out to the State Security Services of Georgia, who activates the Georgian Hospital Unit to dispatch an ambulance to the Enguri Bridge Controlled Crossing Point. Here the patient is transferred from one ambulance to the other and rushed to the emergency room of the nearest medical facility on Tbilisi Administrated Territory.

In extreme cases the ambulance from Tbilisi Administrated Territory is authorized, under escort, to enter Abkhazia and collect the patient at the Abkhazian medical facility.

The European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia is the EU's only current mission that is specifically dedicated to monitoring. Following the eighth extension of its mandate, the Council of the EU agreed that EUMM would be extended until 14 December 2016. Since January 2015, EUMM's Head of Mission is Kęstutis Jankauskas (Lithuania). He succeeded Toivo Klaat (Estonia), Andrzej Tyszkiewicz (Poland), and Hansjörg Haber (Germany).

This bulletin is published by the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia

- Contact: [press@eumm.eu](mailto:press@eumm.eu)
  - John Durnin, Spokesperson: [john.durnin@eumm.eu](mailto:john.durnin@eumm.eu)
  - Hasse Resenbro, Press & Public Information Officer: [hasse.resenbro@eumm.eu](mailto:hasse.resenbro@eumm.eu)
- Visit us here: [www.eumm.eu](http://www.eumm.eu) & [www.facebook.com/eumm\\_geo](https://www.facebook.com/eumm_geo)



# School kids crossing



For practical reasons, parents often prefer their children to travel the shortest way to school. This also applies to families along the Administrative Boundary Line. As a result, pupils from both sides cross the Line daily to attend school or pre-school on the other side.

A key element in the Missions mandate is to facilitate resumption of a safe and normal life for the communities living on both sides of the Line.

Taking the shortest way to school or going to the school, most suitable to match the pupils needs, can make a big difference for the families and their children.

This is why the European Union Monitoring Mission is in favour of unhindered and easy passage for children and teenagers going to or from school on the opposite side of the Line.

Although there has been a decline in the number of educational crossings since 2009, approximately 60 school children continue to commute from Abkhazia to Tbilisi Administered Territory and vice-versa on a daily basis, using different crossing points. This Mission monitors and follows up on any disturbances to the school commute, liaising with teachers, parents and pupils.

# A troublesome relationship

Western Georgia is heavily influenced by an uneasy and challenging relationship between the neighbouring territories divided by the Administrative Boundary Line. The history of Western Georgia documents generations of tension and conflict. Since 2008 the EUMM has worked to build confidence between the neighbours and to reduce tension. These are the beginnings of the conflict.

## The Russian Revolution Aftermath

- In the devastating 1918 Russian civil war, following the Russian 1917 Revolutions, Georgia supports the anti-Bolshevik White Army forces, whereas Abkhazia supports the Bolshevik Red Army.
- In May 1918, in the aftermath of the revolution, an independent Georgia including Abkhazia is created and the drafting of the first Georgian Constitution begins.
- In 1920, the anti-Bolsheviks are defeated, leading to the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).
- In 1921, the first Georgia Constitution, granting Abkhazia autonomy, is adopted.
- The same year, Soviet power arrives and Georgia is established as a Socialist Soviet Republic (SSR). Thanks to its support to the Red Army, Abkhazia obtains status as the Abkhazian SSR, but with the vague status of *treaty republic* associated with the Georgian SSR.
- In 1931, Joseph Stalin (born 18 December 1878 in Gori, Georgia) reduces the status of the Abkhazian SSR to an Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (ASSR) within the Georgian SSR. After Stalin's death, the Abkhazian ASSR remains the only autonomous republic in the USSR, in which the language (Abkhazian) is confirmed in its constitution as one of its official languages.



EUMM Information Sharing Meetings  
with Civil Society Organisations delivers...

# A Win-Win Situation

The EUMM Field Office in Zugdidi has chaired more than 50 Information Sharing Meetings with NGOs in Western Georgia. "These meetings provide tremendous value for the NGOs as well as for us. It is truly a win-win situation", states Team Leader of the EUMM Field Office Zugdidi Human Security Team, Chris Taylor.



From left: Zugdidi Field Office Chief, Gabriel von Horn, Deputy Head of the EUMM, Erik Høeg and Leader of the Human Security Team, Chris Taylor attending a discussion at one of the EUMM Information Sharing meetings.

The purpose of the meetings is to share information between the Mission and the strong and active civil society community in Western Georgia. "We share our findings and observations with the participants and they inform us about their current priorities, results and needs. The meetings also provide a unique networking opportunity for the attending NGOs and an opportunity for any NGO to approach us on a one-to-one basis for a discussion of bilateral issues", explains Chris Taylor.

## Broad NGO representation

Representatives from 35-40 different NGOs from the Zugdidi, Kutaisi, Poti and Batumi areas are invited to the meetings, that take place every six to eight weeks in Zugdidi.

Usually there are around 20 participants attending each meeting, representing 15-18 NGOs. Occasionally also NGOs from Abkhazia attend the meetings.

There are also representatives from The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

## Local authorities are invited

"Our meetings are open, and we have welcomed interested representatives of the youth – young teenagers – as well as Representatives of the Abkhaz Government in Exile. We also invite local authorities to come and speak and in most cases our invitations are accepted. In fact, officials seem to speak more freely in the context of our meetings, and they always get many questions from the audience, as NGOs appreciate transparency.

Finally, dissemination is key in any project, so many of the NGOs also use the meetings as a podium to disseminate the outcome of their work", says Chris Taylor, who has regularly chaired these meetings since 2014.

The Information Sharing Meetings were initiated by United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) in 2002. After the departure of UNOMIG in the summer of 2009 EUMM took over the role of chairing these meetings.

## EUMM Information Sharing Meetings

- The 50<sup>th</sup> meeting took place in 2016
- EUMM began hosting in 2009
- NGOs from Samegrelo, Adjara, Imereti and Abkhazia participate
- Approx. 20 attendees at each meeting, new attendees always welcome
- Takes place every 6-8 weeks at the Civil Engagement Centre Building in Zugdidi
- Starts at 11:00 and lunch is provided for participants
- Two language assistants provide full translation into English and Georgian
- Unique forum for EUMM monitoring updates in Western Georgia
- Often includes a guest presenter from an NGO or local authorities
- Chatham House Rules apply.

### The EUMM Monitor, Issue #2, August 2016

This issue of The EUMM Monitor is dedicated to Western Georgia, the Administrative Boundary Line there and the European Union Monitoring Mission Field Office in Zugdidi. Editor-in-Chief: John Durnin. Editorial Team: Hasse Resenbro, Sanne Biesmans, Giulio Savina and Kaupo Känd.