

From: [Redacted]
To: [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: RE: Working level meetings for the second church delegation from Georgia
Date: 12 May 2017 14:40:34

Hi,

Yes, it makes sense for us to be in touch on this directly. Here below are some materials for Georgia.

[Redacted]

Background:

The level of support among the Georgian population towards Georgia’s European and Euro-Atlantic integration is very high. Results of various polls conducted this spring show an increase from 60–65% in 2015 to 77-82% in 2016. However, awareness of Georgia's cooperation with the EU and NATO and understanding of the reform process is still low among the clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

At the same time, the Patriarchate of the Georgian Orthodox Church is one of the most respected institutions in the country. Based on polls from spring 2016, 89% of the Georgian population trusts the church, making it the most trusted institution in the country. Based on official data available after the 2014 census, 83.4% of the total population in Georgia are Orthodox Christian.

[Redacted]

[Redacted], the Information Center on NATO and EU and the State Ministers office of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration are organising an official study visit to Brussels for the Clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church from 7-11 November. The group was composed with special blessings of Patriarch Ilia – II, and is organised by the Center for Development and Democracy with the financial support of the British Embassy in Tbilisi.

The group will visit NATO HQ, European Parliament, EESC and other EU institutions. They will be accompanied by journalists from the Patriarchy television “Ertsulovneba”, where new TV series about Georgian European and Euro–Atlantic integration will be broadcast from November 2017.

Xxx

Budget:

Explanation from the head of the NGO:

Concerning your question, our project apart from visit was including other components but approximately can say: so 20 person visit for 4 days including air ticket, airport transfer, accommodation (in Single and double rooms), meals, local transport (mini buses – not the best quality), health insurance (Georgian) costed = 25 000 Euro. Donor of the visit was UK Embassy Tbilisi via Good Governance Fund.

Xxx

Reports from first meeting in Brussels:

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, November 11, 2016 11:34 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Visit of Georgian Orthodox Church representatives

For info. I had similar, encouraging messages from the Georgian clergy in my meeting with them on Wednesday: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: MATHERNOVA Katarina (NEAR)
[mailto:xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xx.xxxxxx.xx]
Sent: Friday, November 11, 2016 11:25 AM
To: DANIELSSON Christian (NEAR); [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]; MATHERNOVA Katarina

Subject: Visit of Georgian Orthodox Church representatives

DG NEAR DDG Katarina Mathernova and [REDACTED] met Georgian Orthodox Church on 10 November 2016. In a constructive and very positive atmosphere, clear message from the Church that they do not interfere with political processes and that they support the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Georgia. Call for EU support to economic development, support to rural areas, and traditional food and craft production. Call for EU direct support to Church-supported economic activities (honey, wine, berries). Very constructive exchange on EU values and on what EU stands for, the importance of non discrimination, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Details

A large representation of the Georgian Orthodox Church led by the Archbishop visited Brussels for a study tour of the NATO and EU institutions. Main topics proposed for discussion were the impact of European Integration on Georgian traditional values. The Georgian Orthodox Church is the most trusted institution in Georgia and this discussion followed up on previous talks between the HOD to Georgia and the Patriarch and other high

level discussion of the Georgian clergy with EUMS, NATO and the EEAS.

Main questions raised by the GE side:

- Georgia decided irreversibly to follow the Euro-integration path, confirmed by the recent democratic elections.

- The GE clergy representatives confirmed that the Church is fully independent from the Government, the two institutions not interfering one with another. But the Church always had an active role in the social sphere: it supported development of traditional crafts, agricultural development projects, collaborated with USAID projects and supported introduction of new technologies but at the same time preserving traditional agriculture and keeping the trust of the Georgian population (as an example the honey produced by the church is highly appreciated by the population). It appears that the AA/DCFTA requires EU standards to which farmers would have difficulties to adapt (*'moving from household farming to farms is a painful process'*).

Answers from NEAR side clarified that the EU stands for the territorial integrity of Georgia, and universality of values,

Therefore direct contact between the Church and Institutions is welcome, also to clarify misconceptions and misunderstandings. Georgia was praised for the good reforms and democratic elections, this also led to enhanced cooperation and more support from the EU side. On DCFTA impact, it was clarified that EU does not promote one type of agriculture. Standards are also important for marketing products, particularly in the EU. Food safety is also an important dimension. At the same time the EU has been supporting rural

development/agricultural adjustments as well as traditional arts and crafts in Georgia. A sizeable DCFTA facility is being made available.

The Georgian part raised the question of eligibility to receive support programmes as a religious organization to which the answer was that there is no 'political' limitation that religious organization cannot be supported. Discussions at the technical level are to follow during the incoming Programming Mission.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, May 12, 2017 2:32 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Working level meetings for the second church delegation from Georgia
Hi [REDACTED] thanks for this explanation! And yes, I would welcome the budget breakdown. Would it make sense if I put you in contact with our C2 colleagues to discuss a possible Armenia visit?

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, May 12, 2017 2:31 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Working level meetings for the second church delegation from Georgia
Dear [REDACTED]

For Georgia it was very much a joint exercise between EU, NATO and Member States. The driving force was the EU NATO Information Centre in Georgia in cooperation with a local NGO who works closely with the church. The funding came from the UK and Netherlands embassies. We were the key partners in Brussels on the EU's side to make sure that the group gets the right amount of attention and meetings here. I think it is a great idea to do it for Armenia, I am copying in my colleague [REDACTED] who leads on Armenia in our team. We also have good colleagues at the delegation in Armenia, who could help with this. No Taiex funding for Georgia, as the MS covered all the costs. If you are interested in the budget breakdown, I actually just sent it to Azerbaijan, so can forward it to you as well.

Best regards,
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, May 12, 2017 11:58 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Working level meetings for the second church delegation from Georgia
Dear [REDACTED]

Our colleagues from our sister unit would like to organize a similar visit for Armenian Church.

I received the first information about this potential visit from your side. Would you happen to know who was in charge of organizing and funding the visit? Was there any TAIEX funding involved or any other form of support from our side?

Thanks for your help on this.

Best

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 10, 2017 1:48 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Working level meetings for the second church delegation from Georgia

Dear [REDACTED]

I think the best would be to check with our colleagues in DG Near (in copy the desks and [REDACTED] who might have a better vision of possible meetings for the GE clergy following the area of interest below.

Bests
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 10, 2017 11:03 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Working level meetings for the second church delegation from Georgia

Dear both,

I met with [REDACTED] from EU/NATO info centre yesterday and we went through the list of participants of the second Brussels study visit for the Georgian clergy.

This time the group is more working level and keen on proceeding with the EU cooperation on their different projects. We discussed particular interest areas and these could be grouped into the list I have added below. Do you think we could recommend them any further useful working level meetings on these topics in Brussels? Maybe in DG NEAR? DG AGRI? DG EAC?

- **Regional development and promotion of agritourism**
- **ENPARD, cooperatives**
- **Support to SMEs, trade**
- **Education, lifelong learning**
- **Learning English (very important to them as currently the church language is Russian, but they want to learn more conversational English)**

Any ideas welcome, thank you,
[REDACTED]