



Flash Report 11th of November, 2018 “The Georgian Tourism Industry: How can we all contribute? The importance of the transportation system in tourism development.”

The European Business Association Georgia initiated a second round table for members on 11th November at Best Western Tbilisi Art Hotel. Participants of the Round table discussed challenges related to transportation in context of tourism and the ways of improvement.

The event was moderated by David Lee, CEO of the European Business Association and over 60 people attended including industry, government and the diplomatic community.

Speakers:

John Hugo Freddy Braeckeveldt – Chairman of the European Business Association

Carlo Natale – The Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Georgia

George Chogovadze – Head of Georgian National Tourism Administration

Vaso Urushadze – Executive Director of HUB Georgia

Nina Kekelidze - Director of Discover Georgia

Aurelio La Torre – Director of BS Europe



Main Points from speakers and round table discussion:

In January – April, 2018 the number of international arrivals in Georgia amounted to 2,060,264, showing an increase of 15.9% compared to the same period of previous year. The majority of foreign travelers were Azerbaijanian (-0.5%), Armenian (+8.7%),

Turkish (+23.9%), Russian (+31.2%) and Iranian (+69.3%).

Other top ten Nations sending tourists Georgia were: Ukraine, Israel, India, Kazakhstan and Germany.

The discussion confirmed that a core problem is the aviation facilities and the number of European Flights. All 3 main Georgian airports (Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi) are developing quickly, particularly Kutaisi, but more must be done to attract more direct and regular flights from European Cities and reduce costs. Wizz Air is a huge benefit to the Georgian Tourism Sector is excellent value and has European Service Levels.



7 specific issues with aviation were identified:

- A. Limited choice for direct flights flights operating between Tbilisi and the EU major cities.
- B. Necessity to stop over in (non-EU) connecting Airports. Travelers must normally travel through non EU airports, such as Istanbul or Kiev, to name two main "hubs" on which Georgia is relying for the international flight connections.
- C. Long duration of journeys (flight+connection).
- D. Frequent risk of travel problems (connections missed, delays and loss of luggage in particular).
- E. Slots are set in uncomfortable hours (both in outbound and inbound flights).
- F. There is limited size and comfort in the aircraft and their configuration.
- G. Lack of a strong National airline supported by the State.



The building of the new line from Tbilisi to Kutaisi Airport <http://agenda.ge/news/77108/eng> was supposed to be operative in April 2018. It is now in "stand by". This is surprising, since the building of the new railway to Kutaisi is part of the Government's four-point reform agenda which aims at modernising infrastructural development in the country. All the participants urged the Government to prioritise this development.

EBA would like to thank Mr. Aurelio La Torre - Team Leader of a EU funded Project on Competition policy for his involvement in the workshop and for putting at disposal the data used for writing this report.