



### Sunday School for Learning Greek in Akhalkalaki

Greek families settled in Akhalkalaki from Erzurum in the nineteenth century and became an integral part of the municipality which is distinguished by its ethnic diversity. Nowadays, there are 163 Greek and mixed families of Greek-Armenians and Greek-Georgians in the region.

“A lot of Greek families living in Georgia relocated to Greece. Unlike other Greeks, those living in Javakheti do not intend to leave their homeland. That is why we came up with the idea to create a Sunday school for learning the Greek language and the Embassy of Greece in Georgia supported the implementation of this idea. The center is crucial in order to retain our roots and identity and to make sure that young people have the opportunity to learn the language of the Iliad and the Odyssey.



Employees: 2 locals  
Total budget of the project: GEL 6,640.00  
EU share: GEL 5,640.00  
Co-financing: GEL 1,000.00

“The European Union supported us to equip our center with fresh audio programs and the necessary technology. We received a grant amount which was used to rehabilitate the building, we procured laptops, headsets and a Greek language program,” said Mikheil Kolikidi, the Chairman of the Patrída – Greek Union in Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Two groups with ten people each were created at the Sunday school. The Greek language is taught by a professional teacher who knows the Georgian, Armenian and Russian languages in addition to Greek. This facilitates communication with the students.

“The group of students is quite diverse, some of them are better in Georgian, others in the Armenian and Russian languages and so certainly, the language barriers challenged us a little bit at the beginning. We did our best to overcome this issue and now we’ve got a smoothly running educational process,” said the Greek language teacher.





Covid-19 turned into a challenge as well. The students had to continue studying remotely online. According to Mikheil Kolikidi, GIPA supported them a lot during this period of time. The university shared its experience and, therefore, the studying process went on remotely without any obstacles.

“It wasn’t easy to adapt to the new reality. Although, with the support of GIPA and the LAG we managed to overcome this obstacle. The role of the students should be mentioned as well because they helped us a lot. They wanted to continue studying. They are able to communicate with each other in Greek and, most importantly, they are connected by the love of their mother language,” said Mikheil Kolikidi.

Two people are employed at school. Opening up the center has been a catalyst for the Greek community to be actively involved in the community’s social life.

*The initiative has been financed by the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD) through the project of promoting new approaches in Rural Development in Akhalkhalaki.*

*Project is being implemented by the Department of Rural Development and Vocational Education (DRDVE) of the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA). Project Partners are Mercy Corps, Elva - Community Engagement and West Cork Development Partnership.*

*The European Union supports agriculture and rural development of Georgia through the programme of ENPARD, which has been implemented in Georgia since 2013. The total budget is 179.5 mio EUR. The main goal of the ENPARD is to reduce the rural poverty. The main priority of the first phase of the program was to support agricultural development, whereas the main aim of the second and third phases is to promote economic opportunities and capacity building of people living in the rural areas. For the additional information, please follow the link: [www.enpard.ge](http://www.enpard.ge)*