



Courses to Make Traditional Crafts at the Adults' Educational Center in Akhalkalaki

The main aim of the Adults' Educational Center in Akhalkalaki is to promote professional and personal development by vocational education and support the formation of civil society in the community. The center has been operating since 2006 and does its best to make its services more diverse and interesting.

According to Shorena Tetvadze, Director of the Center, there were some people who were interested in making traditional crafts but setting up a new course requires financial support. At the same time, ENPARD announced the grant competition in Akhalkalaki and so the Center addressed the LAG and prepared a project entitled Cultural Heritage Preservation. The project responded to the main goals of the Akhalkalaki Development Strategy: improving the process of the social integration, deepening knowledge and gaining new skills as well as women's empowerment and their engagement in the community's social life while attracting the young generation to non-material cultural traditions and promoting tourism in the Akhalkalaki Municipality.



Employees: 4 locals
Total budget of the project: GEL 17,200.00
EUshare: GEL 14,210.00
Co-financing: GEL 2,999.00



The financial support allocated by the European Union was used to procure weaving looms and multifunctional sewing machines. Information regarding the new courses was disseminated by the local media which attracted the attention of local ladies who were interested in making crafts and who applied for the courses. Currently, 20 people have completed the courses and 15 others are studying how to embroider, sew or weave carpets and tapestry as well as make souvenirs.





“Georgian and Armenian ladies of different ages are learning some new skills together. The region is multi-ethnic and this has its mark on our culture and traditions. We do a kind of a mixture of Georgian and Armenian cultures. We use colors, ornaments and shapes found in both cultures and we consider that in this way, more interesting crafts are created,” said Shorena Tetvadze.

Tourists are the ones who are mainly interested in the handmade crafts which they buy for themselves or as presents for their friends at home. This increases the popularity of the municipality. The Center has already participated in craft fairs and intends to promote this field more actively in the future.

Five teachers of different crafts are giving the lessons and are always looking for something new to add to the courses. At the initial stage, they studied the forgotten ornaments that were popular in the region in the past, they brought them back and introduced them to the students. The staff hopes that the number of students will increase significantly in the future, something which will create more workplaces for teachers in the Center. Those who have completed the courses have new knowledge which they use to create crafts and then receive additional income.

“I completed the courses a few months ago. I decided to make handmade souvenirs and started working at home. Then, I addressed the stores and distributed my products there. They sold quite well at first but then due to the pandemic, the stores were closed down and, therefore, sales dropped. Currently, the demand has gradually increased and I am sure that once the borders reopen, the number of customers will rise. I have a child who needs constant care and so this type of work gives me the opportunity to be at home and still earn some income,” said Melina Khachatryan, aged 23.

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