

JOHANNES HAHN

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, *11.4.2018*
Ares (2018) s. 1414391

Dear Ms Ghvinianidze,

Thank you for your letter of 13 February 2018, which refers to important concerns of Georgian civil society regarding the law on "Labour Safety" which has recently been adopted by Parliament. I am replying also on behalf of Commissioners Malmström and Thyssen.

The European Union is fully aware of the situation as regards Occupational Safety and Health and as regards working conditions and social protection overall in Georgia. We have repeatedly called for action and are concerned by the lack of progress in establishing an effective system for the supervision of working conditions, the employment relationship and the enforcement of labour rights and standards.

The lack of an effective system for enforcement of labour rights and standards could result in a breach of commitments taken by Georgia under its Association Agreement (including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area) with the European Union to effectively implement the core labour standards embodied in the ILO fundamental conventions in Georgian law and practice. Current practice in Georgia as well as the law on "Labour Safety" are not fully in line with Georgia's commitment to approximate its legislation to EU health and safety at work and labour protection, which generally provides for sanctions to be effective, proportionate and dissuasive and to have a real and deterrent effect on employers. Clear, predictable and enforced rules are also important for businesses, investors and trade. Georgia has recognised the beneficial role that core labour standards and decent work can have on economic efficiency, innovation and productivity.

Against this background, we take good note of your concerns regarding the provisions of the law on "Labour Safety". The EU will closely follow developments, also in collaboration with the ILO, and continue to insist that the scope of the legislation provides for effective protection for all workers with supervision and sanctioning powers, in line with international standards, along with the establishment of a proper labour inspection system.

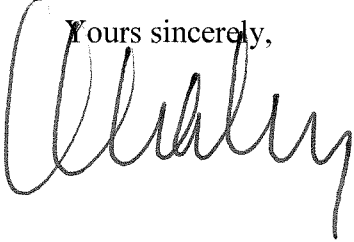
The civil society structures (i.e. the Domestic Advisory Groups (DAGs) both on the EU and the Georgian side) established by the provisions of the Chapter on Trade and Sustainable Development of the Association Agreement are an important channel through which civil society can raise with the EU and Georgian authorities any concerns related to labour rights

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but also environmental matters relevant in a trade context. We encourage you to benefit from these structures and the possibilities provided within their framework.

The EU will further support the establishment of a proper Occupational Health and Safety protection system, and better working conditions in Georgia. I am confident that Georgia, as a key partner of the EU, will continue to move towards high standards of labour protection as set out in the Association Agreement.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Alakly', written in a cursive style.