

# FINAL REPORT GRETA MID-TERM-EVALUATION BY AGROSERVICE

Version 211014



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## **FINAL REPORT**

Mid-Term Evaluation of GRETA

Green Economy: Sustainable Mountain Tourism and Organic Agriculture

Project Number: 6542 – 00 / 2018

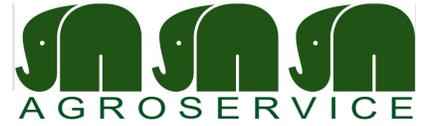
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This is an independent evaluation report. Views and conclusions expressed do not necessarily represent those of the contractors.

## **Acronyms**

ABCO	Association of Business Consulting Organizations of Georgia
ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ARDA	Agricultural and Rural Development Agency
BRC	British Retail Consortium
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere – international NGO
CAUCASCERT	Organic certification company

CB	Certification Body
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DMO	Destination Management Organization
ELKANA	Biological Farming Association Elkana
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation (in Georgia)
EUROCERT	Organic certification company
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GAG	Gastronomic Association of Georgia
GBTA	Georgian Business Tourism Association
GEA	Georgian Ecotourism Association
GEL	Georgian Lari (currency)
GEOSTAT	National Statistics Office of Georgia
GFA	Georgian Farmers' Association
GHRCF	Georgian Hotels, Restaurants and Cafe Federation
GITOA	Georgian Incoming Tour Operators Association
GNTA	Georgian National Tourism Administration
GRETA	Green Economy - Sustainable Mountain Tourism and Organic Agriculture
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
GTA	Georgian Tourism Association
GTBA	Gastro Tourism Business Association
GTIA	Georgian Tourism Industry Alliance
GTN	Georgian Tourism Network
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
HORECA	Hotel, Restaurant, Catering - Term used in the English, Dutch, German, Italian, Romanian, French languages for the food service and hotel industry
ICC	Information and Consultation Centre (of RDA under MEPA)
ICS	Internal Control System
LAG	Local Action Groups
LDI	Local Development Initiative
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEPA	Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture
MoCSY	Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia
MoESD	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia
MRDI	Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia
MTE	Mid Term Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTFP	Non Timber Forest Product
OA	Organic Agriculture
PIN	People in Need – international NGO
RDA	Rural Development Agency (of MEPA)
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SMT	Sustainable Mountain Tourism
TDI	Tourism Development Initiative
ToC	Theory of Change
UNWTO	World Tourism Organisation
VC	Value Chain



**Currency exchange (June 2021)<sup>1</sup>**

1 EUR = 4.042 GEL

100 GEL = 24.74 EUR

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<sup>1</sup> EU Currency Converter; [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/how-eu-funding-works/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/exchange-rate-infoeuro\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/how-eu-funding-works/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/exchange-rate-infoeuro_en)



## 1. Executive Summary

### Introduction

GRETA is based on the fascinating project idea to create new income opportunities in sustainable mountain tourism (SMT) and organic farming (OA) in order to reduce poverty and exclusion in the eight mountainous municipalities in the regions of Upper Imereti (municipalities of Sachkhere, Tkibuli, Chiatura), in Racha-Lechkhumi-Lower Svaneti (municipalities of Ambrolauri, Oni, Tsageri, Lentekhi) and in Upper Svaneti (municipality of Mestia) of Georgia.

GRETA beneficiaries, according to the Second Annual Report, should be 400 small-scale business enterprises and producers in mountain tourism, 300 accommodation service providers, 300 other tourism service suppliers, 230 farmers in organic agriculture, 2 certification bodies as well as 76 local villagers and inspectors.

The term beneficiary seemed to be sometimes vaguely defined and therefore the MTE team uses it as follows: *Beneficiaries are all persons who received grants in form of physical tools and also other persons and institutions who have not received grants in form of physical tools, but who benefited from trainings or participation in study trips, etc. Indirect beneficiaries include providers of services and supplies to the direct beneficiaries as well as individuals copying the good experience of direct beneficiaries or even spreading these experiences to wider audiences or crowds.*

According to logframe, these around 1,200 beneficiaries will through GRETA increase their revenues and create employments.

Besides the mentioned group of beneficiaries, there are also other important stakeholders as the private sector and business associations, government as well as public sector institutions (local, regional and national authorities), Civil Society Organisations and local communities. These stakeholders do not receive grants in form of physical tools, but might benefit from trainings, studies and others and furthermore from an improved business environment.

GRETA project has in mind to find potential synergies between tourism and agriculture.<sup>2</sup> For example, a mountainous farmer is producing potatoes, maize, legumes and stone-fruits and is selling his products to a nearby guesthouse owner who then serves local, authentic and eventually even organic food to his international guests.

GRETA is implemented by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and as the EU Member States, Sweden and especially Austria is well experienced in mountain tourism and organic farming. The available budget is EUR totals EUR 6.8 Million and consists of contributions of the EU (EUR 3 mill.), Sweden (EUR 2.8 mill.) and the Austrian Development Cooperation (EUR 1.0 mill.). By 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, EUR 1,209,893 have been spent, equivalent 17.79%. The main expenditures so far are Human Resources with EUR 536,056 and Direct Intervention with EUR 410,710, equivalent to 9.21% of the total budget foreseen for these Direct Interventions.

### Background and context analysis

GRETA's overall objective is to improve the business environment and to create new income opportunities in sustainable mountain tourism and organic farming in order to reduce poverty and exclusion in the selected mountain areas of Georgia.

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<sup>2</sup> Annex to the EU Indirect Management Delegation Agreement 2018 / 401-348 and to the arrangement on Delegated Cooperation with SIDA. Description of Action. GRETA. October 2018



The expected results are the following:

- (1) The legal and policy framework for sustainable mountain tourism and organic agriculture is enabling sustainable and inclusive development;
- (2) Employment and income in both sectors are increased due to new and better products and services and through better market linkages, locally, nationally and internationally;
- (3) Access to capacity development measures for people and institutions active in the fields of sustainable mountain tourism and organic agriculture is improved and a system of knowledge management is in place enabling joint learning among public, private and civil society actors.

The project set-up seems well, as employment and income can only be created by capacity development of the beneficiaries and stakeholders. Also improving the legal and policy framework in order to create a better business environment is important as a kind of supporting measure.

### **Methodology**

In terms of evaluation design, the literature distinguished between a) experimental design, b) quasi-experimental design and c) non-experimental design. The non-experimental design was chosen for this project,

as not sufficient data have been available for the Experimental design or the quasi-experimental design with its comparison of intervention group's performance with the control group's performance. Concerning the methodological approach, a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative with qualitative approaches and methods.

### **Findings**

The findings have been grouped in line with the Evaluation Questions (EQs) which have been largely fixed in the Terms of Reference (ToR); just few additional questions have been integrated. The detailed findings are presented in the main text (see chapter 5 and 6) and here the highlights regarding Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability are elaborated.

#### EQ1 Relevance

Relevance, defined as the appropriateness of project objectives to the real problems, needs and priorities of the intended target groups and beneficiaries that the project is supposed to address, and to the physical and policy environment within which it operates.

The overall relevance of GRETA in the areas of SMT and OA is very high. The intervention to increase revenues of tourism service providers, i.e. guesthouse owners and guides, and farmers in mountain areas reflects the needs and priorities of the selected target groups. Furthermore, it could stop or at least slow down urban migration and also the degradation of the pastures and other natural resources. Of course, the rural population in the target area would also need additionally infrastructure like roads, hospitals and schools, but that is not part of GRETA. Creating jobs in SMT is a good option for mountain farmers who cannot generate enough income with conventional farming alone.

The SMT component deals with many more beneficiaries than the OA; that is partially because many farmers rather see a way forward to move into agritourism and SMT, instead into organic farming. At the same time, their guesthouse activities need experienced service providers to give tourists variety of activities to choose from. Already existing associations of private sector operators (i.e. Georgian Ecotourism Association, Society for Nature Conservation SABUKO, Georgian Paragliding Federation, Georgian Mountain Guide Association GMGA, etc.) need to be more encouraged to become active



stakeholders and even beneficiaries of GRETA. Also local travel agencies specialised in mountain tourism should be taken into consideration. However, to become more relevant, GRETA needs to collaborate closer with ministries and GNTA, especially in introducing more sustainable mountain tourism elements into existing Georgian tourism development strategies, tourism standards and certification systems. There is little willingness in the government to introduce new strategies and certification systems not linked with already existing systems. Aside the ministries and their respective departments and entities under them which GRETA is already in touch with, more attention should be given at least to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) and its Regional Development Agency (RDA) and Environmental Informational and Education Center (EIEC) as well as the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth (MoCSY) of Georgia as regards protection of cultural heritage.

OA; There are good opportunities for farmers based in the project areas to produce a wide variety of environmental-friendly and healthy products for the guesthouses in the region such as the traditional products (potato, maize, legumes, etc.). Apart from production in an eco-friendly way, it needs organisation of supply chains, marketing and others to finally sell the produces and get money therefore. If GRETA can establish market linkages, additional income would be generated for the target group and employment created too. Apart from a focus on the local market, few farmers or operators may also be able to export, e.g., organic tea and honey.

## EQ2 Effectiveness

Effectiveness is measured as extent to which the objectives and results of an intervention have been achieved or can be expected to be achieved. Effectiveness shows how much the project in the first 28 months contributed to the envisaged outcomes.

Outcome 1 SMT: The legal and policy framework for mountain tourism and organic agriculture is enabling sustainable and inclusive development. – Regarding SMT the Sustainable Mountain Tourism Strategy has been on hold during most of the reporting period with no major developments (also) due to COVID-19.

Outcome 1 OA: The target “harmonization of national organic legislation with EU regulations has been facilitated” has not been reached yet; so far a Georgian- language version of the new EU regulation was made and published and MEPA has developed the 1<sup>st</sup> draft of the harmonized version of the new National Organic Legislation, which was shared with involved local stakeholders (CAUCASCERT & ELKANA) for further updating and discussion. However, this output is not enabling organic agriculture and not sustainable and inclusive development, because the EU regulation on organic farming has changed and the new regulation will be enforced on January 2022. All products will have to be certified 100% in compliance with the new regulation by certifiers, who are approved and registered by the European Commission. The national harmonised regulation has no impact on the export of organic products to the EU, but makes certification costs for domestic market development very expensive and thus rather as an impediment than a facilitation of the organic agriculture sector.

Concerning the Internal Control System (ICS), GRETA has identified that this is hardly relevant for Georgia. One reason for this is, that Georgian farmers do not like to join into cooperatives (due to the soviet legacy) and in addition, the groups are too small for economic group certification. ICS is getting relevant for group certification with minimum 50 farmers and GRETA faces difficulties here. Based on the new EU regulation, the group must have a legal entity, which could be a cooperative.

Outcome 2 for SMT and OA: It is very unlikely that employment and income in both sectors is increased due to new and better products and services and through better market linkages, locally, nationally and internationally - implemented by GRETA. Due to very limited monitoring from GRETA side, also no evidence was provided that would allow a more positive interpretation. Additionally since April 2020 COVID-19 is slowing many activities down and COVID-19 itself hit the Georgian economy hard. - The World Bank’s press release from March 31, 2021 titled: Georgia’s Economy Unlikely to Recover to Pre-COVID Levels Until Late 2022. ... The COVID-19 pandemic has hit Georgia hard. Mobility restrictions,



a sudden halt to international tourist arrivals, and weak external demand drove an estimated economic contraction of 6.2% in 2020. The poverty rate increased by an estimated 5.4% points. Job and income losses were severe. ... Georgia's economy is projected to expand to 4% in 2021 and then to firm to 5% in 2022. Despite this improvement, output is unlikely to recover to pre-COVID levels until late 2022, in part owing to a subdued outlook for international tourism over the forecast horizon.<sup>3</sup>

Outcome 3: Access to capacity development measures for people and institutions active in the fields of sustainable mountain tourism and organic agriculture is improved and a system of knowledge management is in place enabling joint learning among public, private and civil society actors.

Because of not doing the trainings first, but starting instead with calls for applications, this capacity building project gave training a lower priority. This set up, not providing training in the first 14 COVID-free months of the project duration, resulted in substantial delays.

As SMT is concerned, national and international exchange and organizational learning has started with a study trip to the INTERALPIN Messe in Innsbruck in 2019. However, COVID-19 has stopped all international activities and the planned participation in the ITB in Berlin was postponed and Kiev exhibition took place only after MTE period.

Capacity development measures for mountain guides and guest house owners have been facilitated by GRETA by contracting ELKANA to provide introductory training in tourism development for 30 people in person and 56 on-line. Capacity building of mountain guides has started by contractor Adventure Tourism School (ATS), who conducted the first part of the training course but the course was not completed. No guides have been certified during MTE period.

Regarding OA as shown in the Annual Report, capacity development measures for 7 members of two certification body representatives have been facilitated and furthermore some few capacity development measures for extension service providers have been facilitated for 8 staff members (from 8 target municipalities / 5 females and 3 males) of MEPA/ICC, who have been trained in organic certification practices and in business plan writing. In addition, 3 leader farmers have been identified and trained as field agents. The 14 identified beneficiaries of the organic agriculture sector received just 4 hours training in the requirements of organic certification and business plan writing. Those who have received green houses as grants were also trained in management of the green houses. Summarizing these activities, it has to be stated, that farmers have not received sufficient training in organic methods to convert their farms successfully to organic so far.

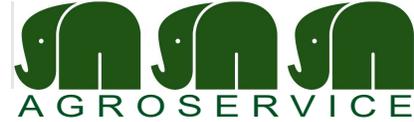
As its overall objective, the GRETA project contributes to improving the business environment and creating new income opportunities in sustainable mountain tourism and organic farming in order to reduce poverty and exclusion in the selected mountain areas of Georgia. Therefore the effectiveness deals with the degree of increasing income (and jobs) and of improving the business environment.

SMT activities have not been very effective. Almost no beneficiaries out of the target group of 400 small-scale business enterprises and producers in mountain tourism, 300 accommodation service providers and 300 other tourism service suppliers have been identified so far and therefore no other activities than introductory trainings of guesthouse owners and first part of training package of mountain guides have taken place.

Main reason therefore is that instead of selecting the beneficiaries by GRETA, a call for proposals was made and unfortunately in a quite complicated and time consuming manner. Beneficiaries will be successful applicants and the decisions are not taken yet, more than 30 months after project's start. Too many application absorbed to much workforce. In addition to that, the COVID-19 situation slowed down the

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/03/31/georgia-s-economy-unlikely-to-recover-to-pre-covid-levels-until-late-2022>



entire procedure. Due to such minimal amount of outputs/activities, it is difficult to analyse the contribution made by the project's results to the achievement of the project purpose.

OA activities have not been very effective either. Only 14 beneficiaries of which 3 had already been under organic control have been identified. No intensive training on organic principles and production methods have been carried out and the understanding among most beneficiaries of what OA means is still very low. ELKANA conducted a training of 4 h only and this even included the history of OA world-wide. GRETA has identified that organic certification for the national market is too expensive and is thinking of an alternative standard. However, no decision is made so far. It is still not clarified to which standard products for the national market should be certified. So far, the project contributed only very little to the achievements of the project's objectives. Most likely no increase of incomes of the 230 farmers was achieved yet and the same can be assumed concerning employment. Also due to misleading indicators in Output 1, much time and energy was spent on the harmonization of national organic legislation with EU regulations without any positive effects on improved business environment.

### EQ3 Efficiency

The relation between inputs and outputs are poor, especially concerning the content. Results like increased income, jobs created and business environment improved have largely not been achieved yet; no details about that have been published so far in the Annual Report. Positive to mention is that by 31st March 2021, only EUR 1,209,893 have been spent out of the available budget of EUR 6,800,000.

SMT has not been effective and its efficiency has been similarly weak. Staff time and other resources have been spent with grant applications leaving facilitation of introduction of new SMT products, activations of potential service providers, collaboration with municipal tourism development units etc. without any attention. At the same time, even grant applicants complain the extremely long time the evaluation of applications is requiring without GRETA staff providing any information about the status of applications.

OA; the efficiency is very weak. Too much time is spent for the tender procedure. Beneficiaries are largely selected via tenders for grants – instead of being actively selected by GRETA staff. Support to farmers in conversion to organic and establishment of market linkages is given too less importance. The development of supply chains is neglected.

The applied approach is largely focusing on call for applications to determine beneficiaries and to equip them with support; so far, the support was mainly oriented towards grants or distribution of physical assets. The training component did not start so far, only basic information about organic certification was shared and business plan writing was trained.

### EQ4 Sustainability SMT & OA

In development projects, sustainability is reached if there is a harmony between the economic, social and environmental perspective (Triple Bottom Line).<sup>4</sup> Economic sustainability is just granted, if the project contributes to increased incomes of the target group. Therefore it needs a baseline study and monitoring activities. So far, farmers and guesthouse owners are not monitored regarding their commercial performance. Therefore also no data are available about economic progress, if there is. (Also if there would be an economic impact through the project, it might not result into improved economic performances – meeting the indicators - due to the pandemic situation.) Economic progress is easier to measure than social and environmental aspects, which are also of great importance. It needs monitoring, also of the economic performance of the beneficiaries.

There is no sign that SMT component has achieved any sustainability. Some potential beneficiaries are even holding their development inputs back due to the uncertainty of their applications for GRETA support.

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<sup>4</sup> Silvius, A.J. et al: Evaluating projects from a sustainability perspective; researchgate; 2017



Improved linkage to the serious resources provided by the Government of Georgia for general tourism development has to be considered as the basis of GRETA activities to ensure sustainability.

From today's point of view, the economic sustainability is not achieved. Because of a slow project start, it is at mid-term too early to assess the sustainability. However, it seems very unlikely that farmers will continue besides those who were already organic before the intervention of the project.

## **Conclusions**

A good project starts with a good design, based on sound baseline studies reflecting in a pragmatic way the envisaged indicators. As the existing GRETA logframe is not well structured in form of providing a hierarchy of targets, it might create misunderstandings.

During the first weeks, a good project needs a lot of internal and external discussions, to create a team spirit and to achieve a common understanding; that includes also definitions of used terminology. It took the MTE team a while, until the definition of a beneficiary was well understood. The MTE team uses the following definition: Beneficiaries are all persons who received grants in form of physical tools and also other persons and institutions who have not received grants in form of physical tools, but who benefited from trainings or participation in study trips, etc. – In this context it is important to highlight that all beneficiaries should increase their income by 20% or even 30%.

Furthermore today, all development projects put some efforts on communication and visibility. However, that requires a clear understanding what the project is trying to achieve. Till today, GRETA team has no clear plan how it will achieve its general objective and therefore it has not been able to share that vision with stakeholders, partners and staff. Multiple findings show a lack of interconnection between activities and outputs derived from the outcomes and objectives. If there is a common understanding what the project wants to achieve and how it will do that, then it is also much easier to communicate that to stakeholders and potential beneficiaries.

The collaboration and even coordination between the two GRETA project components SMT and OA are almost non-existent and therefore no – or not enough - synergies can be created.

GRETA project is significantly understaffed and also therefore not sufficiently represented in the target areas. Additionally, due to this unfortunate call-for-application approach to select the majority of beneficiaries, the sector managers are overloaded with procurement work, that could have been done by other staff or even could have been outsourced.

Until today, no National SMT Tourism Strategy, Destination Management Plans or National Quality Standard or Control System for tourism suppliers have been developed. Also the coordination of activities with e.g. GNTA but also some ministries is not well developed.

Concerning SMT development, the general vision of who are the key drivers and how they should be approached is not clearly described in any project plans and even less understood among the project staff, partners, beneficiaries and stakeholders. SMT should remain authentically and will remain a niche market, as SMT cannot handle large tourist volumes.

Missing are among others the agricultural potential products for the potential domestic markets. The organic certification for the national market seems to be not realistic for most beneficiaries. A new and easier “eco-friendly” standard with low cost certification for national market development is currently prepared and needs much attention, to enable national “certified” products with higher market prices due to stricter production procedures, without becoming as strict as required by organic certified products.



There are great synergy potentials between SMT and OA; e.g. tourist service providers with small authentic accommodation facilities, which might need reconstruction and refurbishment, should be linked with local food producers.

Baseline studies and M&E activities are not as good as they should be. For SMT and OA no baseline studies were carried out, at least not in the sense, that such studies provide clear information about the indicators. These studies should have provided the average socio-economic situation of potential beneficiaries at project start to allow later on an evaluation of the project's progress. GRETA agreed that it would be better to have such studies, but neither before project start, nor during project start and not even now that was started.

Furthermore, the beneficiaries are largely not selected and therefore an intensive training for these beneficiaries cannot be done. Also until today, the project's actual status regarding the performance of the beneficiaries, i.e., 400 small-scale business enterprises and producers in mountain tourism; 300 accommodation service providers; 300 other tourism service suppliers; and 230 farmers in organic agriculture, is unclear. Also the development if the beneficiaries are doing better today than at project start is uncertain.

M&E is under the responsibility of the M&E focal point, however the person in charge is not doing data collection and monitoring, at least not among beneficiaries in the target areas. First attempts are being prepared to collect more baseline data through additional freelancers.

The project was originally planned with a large focus on capacity building. However, GRETA changed priorities to a grant driven project - bringing along the main disadvantage that successful applicants are almost not known to GRETA staff when being confirmed! So far GRETA has carried out only very few activities besides the tender procedure for the grants.

## **Recommendations**

The evaluation team developed 10 recommendations. The first one is to put all activities on hold and to define clearly the wanted target group that should include at least 300 accommodation service providers (bed & breakfast private households), up to 300 other tourism service providers like tour operators (climbing-, hiking, bicycle-, walking-, horseback-, historical- and culinary tours), tourism information centres associations and DMOs (Destination Management Organizations), up to 230 "organic certified" farmers, and some others. This quite heterogenous target group should benefit through GRETA through increase in income and creation of additional employment opportunities.

The second recommendation is to increase the staff of GRETA team, either by new employees or by contracting individual consultants; e.g. as SMT expert in the field or as M&E freelancers, also in the field.

Training as the third recommendation is crucial and the project was originally foreseen as a capacity development project. It needs more specific training fulfilling the needs of the beneficiaries, e.g. in producing better and more eco-friendly traditional products like potato, maize, legumes, etc. Training in SMT and OA has to take place to a large part in the fields, on the demo-plots, on the hiking routes. Needless to say that training material is needed too; however, it exists partially and should be used in trainings as soon as possible.

The fourth recommendation is to simplify the grant application process. Grants have to be seen as tools, to implement the new knowledge in daily work faster.

SMT and OA – as fifth recommendation - should make better use of their synergy potential. Mountainous farmers could supply the mountainous guesthouses with locally and eco-friendly grown vegetables, potatoes and others. That needs the set-up of (short) supply chains for the benefit of both groups.



Mountainous households are complex multi-task operators who are involved in various activities. The farmer has also some rooms for rent and the son/daughter works part-time as a guide and rents a couple of mountain bicycles. GRETA should allow both OA and SMT beneficiaries to apply for grants even before they have completed the previous one, especially when the application process takes too much time.

The sixth recommendation deals with networking and a closer cooperation to achieve synergies; GRETA project SMT expert(s) need to work closer with GNTA to be aware of Government plans for DMO development. GRETA should also consider GNTA's approach of introducing existing SMT related voluntary standards already used in EU (HORECA, GSTC, etc.) instead of trying to create new own ones. GRETA project should also significantly increase its activities to link DMOs with SMT beneficiaries directly or in collaboration with LAG projects. GRETA should provide for DMOs and other SMT development entities capacity building, which is more participatory/bottom up and based on the needs of SMT operators instead of focusing general central plans and Government funding. Examples can be found from similar organisations in EU alpine countries, with whom GRETA project should pay more attention in facilitating business linkages of Georgian DMOs and SMT operators with respective ones in alpine EU.

The seventh recommendation proposes GRETA to widen its approach from mainly guesthouses to other SMT operators. The project should also consider accepting grant/support applications for infrastructure development and even construction/ reconstruction of old structures – as expressed by several interviewed stakeholders. At the same time, GRETA project should focus more on developing digitalisation of SMT services. Website and social media are mentioned in the outputs, but they need resources for development, maintenance and keeping fresh and updated. A common platform/portal open for project beneficiaries could be the most sustainable way.

Concerning OA, the eight recommendation is to be pragmatic and to support the development of a eco-friendly farming policy to assist the farmers and other stakeholders, but not for the sake to write a strategy or policy paper. As “organic certified” will become too expensive for smallholders, dealing exclusively with the local market, an alternative standard and verification system should be developed. Marketing or creating market linkages should be done in a way that leads to increase sales figures, with or without branding. Having a nice brand designed, that will not lead to increased turnovers, has to be considered as a failure; the reason therefore is that branding is needed only to improve the sales volumes.

The ninth recommendation deals with the budget of EUR 6,800,000. By 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, EUR 1,209,893 have been spent, equivalent 17.79%. Accordingly sufficient budget is available for the remaining project duration. The point must be to implement in the remaining time the key targets – capacity building to improve income and employment level. It is not recommended to run the project as long until the full budget will be spent. Not to spend money is not a goal but also to spend the budget is not a goal in itself.

The tenth and last recommendation reflects “what to continue” and “what to stop”. The evaluators do not want to influence the recommended open internal discussion too much. However, it needs a pragmatic approach, keeping in mind that the around 1,200 beneficiaries have to increase their income substantially. That is a very ambitious goal and will most likely not be achieved. However, it needs something like a 3 days' workshop in Mestia or any other project location, where the team reconsiders the work done so far. Training is the most important “what to continue” and it should be accompanied with physical tools to speed up applying the new know-how in daily work. On the other side, the MTE team is not recommending “to stop” something, but would like to see a clear priority list of actions.

Summarizing, the evaluation team does not recommend to extend the project duration of GRETA, as more working months would not improve the situation. The same could be said about changing the logframe. Best might be to work hard in the remaining around 2 years to provide practical training and assist the beneficiaries – through intensive coaching on the ground - to improve their way of living by having more income and more jobs.