Project Update: January 2017

A summarising seminar on protection of the *Apis mellifera caucasica* population has been organised at the Agricultural University of Georgia. There were 30 participants attending, who mostly were queen breeder beekeepers, university entomologists and NGO members.

As was previously planned we have collected 65 honeybee samples covering the majority of regions of Georgia and for further analysis they contributed to the SMARTBEES project (EC FP7-KBBE Project 613960), reckoning that obtained data would be presented to the international scientific society via relevant publications.

While investigating the origin of honeybees, a main part of old beekeepers were keeping claiming that they have got genetic material from the queen breeding station situated in Samegrelo region for decades. In addition, migratory beekeeping is a common practice in Georgia. Thus, it was a challenge to acquire honeybee samples from the very local population, but still it was accomplished in some way. Centralised queen breeding practice has ceased with the fall of the Soviet Union; however, this negative trend is likely to revive.

Considerable work has been undertaken by Mr Irakli Janashia and George Japoshvili for reviewing the existing scientific studies of Caucasian honeybees. A large part of sources are in Georgian and Russian, correspondingly they are less known in the western world. At this point we have successfully dealt with the low engagement of European taxonomists to the improvement of manuscript studies which in the end of the project will be submitted to the decent Journal.

At this moment we organise a meeting at the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia where the importance of native honeybee population protection and urgency of establishment additional protective mechanisms will be discussed.

Honeybees in Lebarde Gorge

Grey Caucasian

Grey Caucasian honeybees chosen for sampling