

EFRJ Board Elections June 2020

Candidate: Maia Chochua

Proposer: Ivo Aertsen

Secunder: Brunilda Pali



I am a Georgian lawyer, with a master in public administration. I have over twenty years of experience working with international organisations in support of legal reforms in the Southern part of the Caucasus. This included policy, legislation and institutional capacity building reforms for the judiciary, bar association, prosecution, police, probation, penitentiary, social services. While promoting international human rights standards both for juveniles and adults, our aim has been to build up a 'joined up' approach between criminal justice and social work.

Although active in legal reform movements during the last 20 years, it was only ten years ago that I discovered restorative justice, which deeply affected my own professional priorities showing me the right path to carry on with my work. I am convinced that it is only through restorative justice practices that we can achieve a safe and just society. It also empowered me to spread this conviction among others, mainly professionals involved in criminal justice. European Union support allowed me and my team in Georgia to invest in the transformation of mindset towards restorative justice. These efforts have affected the lives of many juveniles and young offenders – more than 4000 of those have been diverted from criminal justice procedures during the last years, most of them participated in victim offender mediation - with only 9% of reoffending rate.

I had the privilege to advice other countries of our region in introducing restorative justice elements for juveniles. Together with my project team in Tbilisi and in close cooperation with the European Forum for Restorative Justice we have organised an international conference in Georgia -“Restorative Justice – Towards Safe Society” in 2019. We were able to gather delegations of 8 countries – Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of North Macedonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan- that were hosted by a wide range of Georgian practitioners and members of the EFRJ Board to speak about the benefits of restorative justice from multiple perspectives. This kind of cooperation where we share experiences between Western European countries and countries similar to Georgia- making their first steps into restorative justice – I believe is very useful and I am very confident that this is the path we should continue walking. I hope we can further expand and strengthen this kind of cooperation among countries in the Eastern part of Europe.

I am committed to the values of restorative justice and excited to continue advocating for the promotion and expansion of restorative practices in my country, as well as elsewhere. What can I offer to EFRJ - I am confident that I possess the skills, experience of delivering policy advice reflected in successful institutional reforms and good perspective of cooperation with Eastern European countries. If elected, I'm motivated to contribute substantively and substantially to the mission of the

EFRJ as a member of its Board. I am certainly eager to dedicate my time to promoting restorative justice through various supporting EFRJ activities.

Statement by the proposer:

As I know Maia Chochua for several years, I would like to support her candidature without any reservation. Maia has been involved in penal reform, and in particular in restorative justice developments and implementation in her home country, Georgia, for about 10 years now. I have been able (and lucky) to work with her and her team since 2015. Maia has been involved in legislative work in the field of restorative justice, in designing and organising training for mediators, legal practitioners and other professionals, in policy work with governmental bodies, and in sensitizing and informing a broad public about restorative justice. On top of that, she has set up cooperation in the field of restorative justice with representatives from various countries in the Eastern (Caucasus) part of Europe and Central Asia, and she has also done international work in a more general sense. Maia has been involved in EFRJ activities more and more in the previous years, and she is the ideal person for the EFRJ to act as a go-between and strong developer towards the countries in her region.

As a diplomatic and quiet person with strong management skills, she is able to motivate people and to take the lead in the implementation of innovative practices. She has abroad network in the social field and amongst key actors in national and regional policy making, including the European institutions.

Statement by the seconder:

As Member of the Executive Board of the European Forum for Restorative Justice I am extremely happy to act as a seconder to Maia Chochua. Maia has also been officially proposed by other esteemed members of the EFRJ, such as Dr. Anamaria Szabo and Dr. Christa Pelikan (two years ago) and by Prof. Em. Ivo Aertsen (this year).

Maia is the absolute driving force behind Georgia's criminal justice reforms in general, and especially the development of youth justice restorative programmes. Maia is moreover an active promoter of restorative justice approaches in the whole region, including Ukraine and Armenia. Maia has an excellent relationship with the EFRJ members and has organised excellent international events and established partnerships with those members.

Maia's passion and commitment for restorative justice, her policy experience in criminal justice matters, and her unique regional background are excellent reasons for her to join the EFRJ board which lacks members both from the region and from the background that Maia has. Her drive and her experience guarantee establishing further connections of the EFRJ with the region and with policymakers. I strongly advise the members of the EFRJ to support Maia's membership to the Board, as this would be an extremely valuable contribution and asset for all of us. Maia makes things happen. Just give her the chance.