

LIFE IN ARMENIA

FOR DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES

MAY 1ST, 2024 | NO. 15 | LIFE IN ARMENIA

MOVE TO ARMENIA TO HOST YOUR NEXT INTERNATIONAL EVENT
YEREVAN WINE DAYS SHINE A LIGHT ON ARMENIA'S POTENTIAL TO HOST GLOBALLY POPULAR EVENTS

CONFESSIONS OF AN ARMENIAN IT SALES PRO
THE SPAM, THE SCRAMBLE, AND THE SWEET SUCCESS

EXPLORING THE RISE OF FINTECH IN ARMENIA
ASSESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARMENIAN FINTECH SECTOR

BUILDING BRIDGES
THE ADVANTAGES OF HIRING IN ARMENIA

FROM ARMENIA TO THE WORLD
HOW THE YOUTH IN ARMENIA ARE MAKING THEIR MARK ON THE WORLD STAGE

THE EVOLUTION OF ARMENIAN CUISINE
TRADITIONS, EXCHANGES, AND UNIQUE FLAVORS

BECOMING ARMENIAN
HOW CAN DIGITAL NOMADS APPLY FOR ARMENIAN CITIZENSHIP IN 2024?

SETTLING IN ARMENIA
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN EX-DIGITAL NOMAD IN ARMENIA



MATHEW ZEIN

EDITOR'S LETTER

Landing in Armenia, I never envisioned trading my digital nomad life for settling down. Even the wildest dreams wouldn't have predicted this. But here I am, an Armenian by choice, inviting international digital nomads and remote workers to discover this country with their families.

Armenian cuisine celebrates the very essence of seasonality. Fresh, local ingredients are the heart and soul of every dish, ensuring you experience the peak of flavor with each bite.

Therefore, today, I'm thrilled to announce my new magazine: "Food in Armenia," a seasonal guide to the country's incredible flavors. Each chapter delves into the unique ingredients, dishes, and traditions that come alive with the changing weather.

The first issue of "Food in Armenia" will be released in mid-September as the country enters Autumn, also known as the golden Spring, my favorite season in Armenia.

CONTENTS

MAY 1st, 2024 | No. 15 | LIFE IN ARMENIA

**MOVE TO ARMENIA TO HOST YOUR NEXT INTERNATIONAL EVENT
YEREVAN WINE DAYS SHINE A LIGHT ON ARMENIA'S POTENTIAL TO HOST GLOBALLY POPULAR EVENTS**

Discover Armenia's untapped potential to host globally renowned gatherings, driven by its strategic location, skilled workforce, and vibrant culture. Dive into the success story of Yerevan Wine Days and explore its economic impact, media recognition, and expansion into the Yerevan Gastronomic Shows.

P 05



**CONFESSIONS OF AN ARMENIAN IT SALES PRO
THE SPAM, THE SCRAMBLE, AND THE SWEET SUCCESS**

Join this exploration of the past, present, and future of Armenian tech sales. Learn about the evolution of sales strategies, the importance of team collaboration, and the impact of quality on reputation. Discover the nuances of IT service sales and the balance between short-term gains and long-term partnerships.

P 16



**EXPLORING THE RISE OF FINTECH IN ARMENIA
ASSESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARMENIAN FINTECH SECTOR**

Dive into the rise of the fintech industry in Armenia! Explore its evolution and how it stacks up against regional and global fintech hubs. Gain valuable insights from various perspectives from leading Armenian and international industry experts.

P 26

**BUILDING BRIDGES
THE ADVANTAGES OF HIRING IN ARMENIA**

Explore the advantages of hiring in Armenia, from a skilled workforce to cost efficiency and cultural compatibility. Dive into Armenia's emerging tech hub and multilingual workforce. Discover customized recruitment solutions and industry insights with staff.am.

P 44

**FROM ARMENIA TO THE WORLD
HOW THE YOUTH IN ARMENIA ARE MAKING THEIR MARK ON THE WORLD STAGE**

Considering relocating to Armenia with your children but worried about their future opportunities? Learn what the transformative power of innovative education and the strategic mastery of chess can do as you explore the inspiring journeys of three young Armenian young women who defied limitations and achieved their ambitions on the global stage.

P 51



CONTENTS

THE EVOLUTION OF ARMENIAN CUISINE TRADITIONS, EXCHANGES, AND UNIQUE FLAVORS

Explore the evolution of Armenian cuisine, from traditional dishes to global influences. Discover the vibrant market culture, rich wine heritage, and hidden culinary gems awaiting you. Dive into a world of flavors and stories that will make your visit or stay in Armenia unforgettable.

P 68



BECOMING ARMENIAN HOW CAN DIGITAL NOMADS APPLY FOR ARMENIAN CITIZENSHIP IN 2024?

Seeking a second passport for your nomadic lifestyle? Discover how Armenia offers digital nomads a straightforward path to citizenship. Explore the benefits, process, and potential rewards in our concise guide.

P 78



SETTLING IN ARMENIA A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN EX-DIGITAL NOMAD IN ARMENIA

Discover the unexpected allure of settling down in Armenia through the eyes of an ex-digital nomad who visited Armenia for seven days and stayed in the country for almost a decade. From work-life balance to family-friendly weekends in the mountains, explore how Armenia transforms the nomadic journey into a lifelong love affair.

P 83

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING? IDENTIFYING PROFESSIONALISM IN ARMENIA'S COWORKING SCENE

Explore the rise of coworking spaces in Armenia, separating the contenders from the pretenders and uncovering the innovative strategies driving success. From luxurious amenities to unexpected perks like golf course access, learn how Armenia is redefining the coworking experience for a new generation of global professionals.

P 91



MOVE TO ARMENIA TO HOST YOUR NEXT
INTERNATIONAL EVENT

YEREVAN WINE DAYS SHINE A LIGHT ON ARMENIA'S POTENTIAL TO HOST GLOBALLY POPULAR EVENTS



**MATHEW
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EDITOR IN CHIEF

INTERVIEWING



**MARY
BADALYAN**

CO-FOUNDER OF EVENTTOURA



**NUNE
MANUKYAN**

CO-FOUNDER OF EVENTTOURA



MOVE TO ARMENIA TO HOST YOUR NEXT INTERNATIONAL EVENT

YEREVAN WINE DAYS SHINE A LIGHT ON ARMENIA'S POTENTIAL TO HOST GLOBALLY POPULAR EVENTS

When you think of international events, certain countries take center stage. These destinations have become magnets for not just local events but also for international gatherings organized by a new breed of travelers: digital nomads. Leveraging a country's infrastructure, strategic location, vibrant population, or unique cultural aspects, these nomads plan and execute everything from tech conferences and panel discussions to art galleries and music concerts around the world.

Unfortunately, many overlook Armenia when it comes to planning professional events, primarily due to a lack of international publicity in this regard. Despite its relatively small size, Armenia possesses **significant potential to become a global hub for events**. This is due to several factors: a strategic location offering easy access to many European, Asian, and Middle Eastern cities with direct flights, and a highly skilled professional community. A prime example is the [Yerevan Wine Days](#) festival, which successfully **attracts thousands of international wine enthusiasts** to savor Armenian wines.

My wife and I have been captivated by Yerevan Wine Days for years. It's more than just the delicious wines—it's the vibrant atmosphere, the friendly people, and the infectious joy that fills the air. This event truly stands out and exemplifies Armenia's potential for hosting exceptional events of all kinds.



While this article delves deeper into the Yerevan Wine Days experience, it serves as **a glimpse into Armenia's potential** for hosting a wide variety of international events. If you're considering organizing an event with a global audience for a special cause, Armenia presents a compelling option. Your event could become the next Yerevan Wine Days, attracting international attention and fostering a thriving community around your cause.

Event Tourism through Yerevan Wine Days

I spoke with Mary Badalyan and Nune Manukyan, Co-founders of [EventToura](#): Event Tourism Developing Agency, the company that organizes Yerevan Wine Days and has since expanded the concept into Yerevan Gastronomy Month.

I was surprised by the numbers Mary shared, particularly the 120,000 visitors in 2023, with **30,000 being tourists**. Over the years, the festival has grown significantly, becoming Armenia's largest. Participating wineries have **increased from 20 in 2017 to 70 in 2023**, showcasing 600 varieties of wine. In total, over 240 wineries have participated, providing a platform for established and emerging producers.





Mary Badalyan

Co-founder and CEO of
EventToura

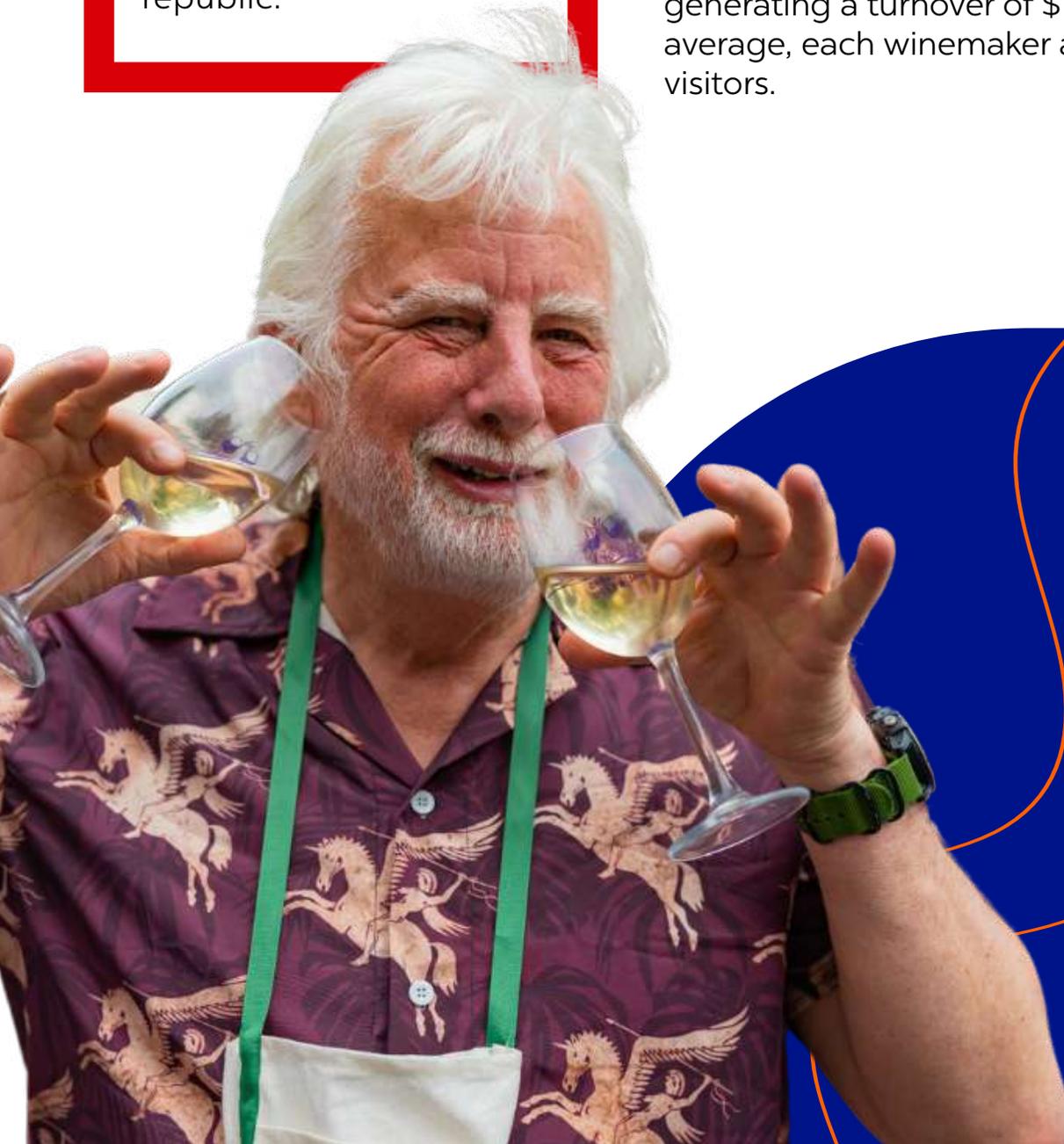
The “Yerevan Wine Days” festival stands as a cornerstone of event tourism in the region, offering wine-centric entertainment to locals and visitors alike and catalyzing growth across several sectors of the republic.

The economic impact of Yerevan Wine Days festival

Tourism: This popular festival attracts an estimated 20,000 tourists to Armenia, each spending an average of \$1,200. This influx generates a significant economic impact, averaging \$25 million in profit.

Wine Sales: Winemakers see impressive sales during the three-day event, selling over 33,000 bottles in total.

Festival Turnover: The festival itself boasts participation from 120 companies, generating a turnover of \$1 million. On average, each winemaker attracts 1,700 visitors.



The festival's scale is undeniable. With its vast offerings, it **attracts tens of thousands of visitors**, including international guests, who flock to enjoy a delightful wine experience in a charming setting.

The media coverage of Yerevan Wine Days is extensive and continues to grow each year. Renowned publications such as Forbes, Elle, and GQ have featured the festival. Additionally, influential bloggers visit Armenia annually during the festival.



Nune Manukyan

Co-founder and CEO of EventToura

By activating Armenia's winemaking potential, the festival has not only bolstered event tourism but also contributed significantly to the republic's economy.



Mary Badalyan

Co-founder and CEO of EventToura

Our most significant recognition came when we won the "Event of the Year" category at the Wine Travel Awards in 2022. The results for 2023 will be announced on May 1st. This year, the festival is nominated in the "Magnet of the Region" category, and we are hopeful for another successful outcome.

In addition to winemakers, food companies play a significant role in the festival's offerings. In 2023, approximately 30 restaurants amazed festival-goers with delectable snacks perfectly paired with wine. Building on the success of the established Yerevan Wine Days festival, the "Yerevan Gastronomic Shows" emerged as a dynamic addition to Armenia's event tourism scene.



A Taste of Armenia

Originally conceived as a segment of the renowned wine festival in 2023, the gastronomic shows garnered such rave reviews that they're now **ready to shine as an independent event.**

This year marks the exciting debut of the “Yerevan Gastronomic Shows,” promising to tantalize taste buds and captivate audiences right in the heart of the city. From June 7th to 9th, the crossroads of Moskovyan and Baghramyan streets will transform into a culinary stage, uniting a global roster of culinary experts.



Mary Badalyan

Co-founder and CEO of
EventToura

Yerevan Wine Days has fulfilled its role by attracting wine lovers to Armenia and establishing the country as one of the most popular wine tourism destinations. By expanding our activities, we aim to boost the gastronomic sector and position Armenia as an international center for gastronomy enthusiasts.



The Yerevan Gastronomic Shows offer **more than just culinary delights**. This exciting event tackles the critical issue of food waste, a problem with wide-ranging social, economic, and environmental consequences.



Mary Badalyan

Co-founder and CEO of EventToura

Our mission is to foster a cultural dialogue between Middle Eastern and European culinary traditions while raising sustainability questions, elevating Yerevan as a dynamic gastronomic epicenter. We aim to redefine gastronomic boundaries, enriching our culinary landscape with diverse flavors, creativity, and shared experiences, all while promoting sustainable practices for a healthier planet.

Leading the charge is Leila Fathallah, a respected authority on food waste management in the Middle East. A renowned advocate for the UN Environment program and the “Recipe for Change” campaign, Chef Leila is an inspiration, particularly for young women in the region.

On the first day, she’ll showcase innovative techniques to minimize food waste while creating delicious dishes. Additionally, insightful panel discussions will bring together industry experts, legal authorities, and Armenian entrepreneurs to explore frameworks and solutions for tackling food waste.

Moreover, French-Armenian chef Alain Alexanian is adding another star to the roster. This two-Michelin-starred culinary master champions healthy, organic cuisine and actively promotes Armenian culinary heritage. At the Gastronomic Shows, Chef Alexanian will showcase his dedication to both by exclusively featuring Armenian products in his creations.

The “Yerevan Gastronomic Shows” **promise to be a game-changer**, not just for the city’s event tourism sector but also for its international profile.



Pioneering Event Experiences Await

While established event hubs like Georgia, Armenia's larger neighbor, and Dubai, a world-renowned destination, hold undeniable appeal, **Armenia offers a unique and cost-effective alternative.**

While Dubai focuses on large conference events, Armenia primarily emphasizes **community, event, and agro-tourism.** Dubai, being a major metropolis, provides unique solutions tailored to luxury holiday enthusiasts. Conversely, Armenia boasts mountainous terrain and rich natural landscapes, facilitating a wide range of outdoor and indoor activities.





Nune Manukyan

Co-founder and CEO of EventToura

Armenia and Georgia, being neighboring countries with similar cultures, should collaborate to make Transcaucasia a highly desirable tourist destination. For instance, we make efforts to schedule our events on different days to avoid disruption to our neighbors.

Consider this: Popular event hubs can become saturated, potentially hindering the success of your event. Armenia, on the other hand, is a **rising star in the event world**, offering a fresh and exciting backdrop for your gathering. Additionally, compared to these established players, Armenia offers significantly lower costs for organizing large events, allowing you to stretch your budget further.

But Armenia's appeal extends beyond affordability. It presents

an opportunity to be a pioneer. Armenia's event scene is brimming with potential, offering the chance to be part of something truly groundbreaking. This translates to a **unique and authentic experience for your attendees**, fostering lasting memories that set your event apart.

Wondering about Armenia's capabilities for hosting international events? Look no further than the [World Congress on Information Technology](#)

(WCIT). This prestigious innovation and technology conference was held in Armenia in 2019, and the event's success was so resounding that Armenia was **chosen to host it again in October 2024**. This impressive repeat selection speaks volumes about Armenia's ability to deliver exceptional event experiences. Armenia is rapidly gaining recognition as a hub for tech events. However, there's an exciting opportunity to **expand beyond the tech sector**.

Armenia's breathtaking regions have lots of potential – majestic mountains, vibrant youth, stunning landscapes, diverse climates, and picturesque rivers. These natural treasures offer a **unique canvas for hosting impactful events** beyond technology.

Imagine the possibilities: a music festival nestled amidst breathtaking mountains, an adventure race traversing dramatic landscapes, or an ecological summit held beside a pristine river. These are just a few examples of the events that could thrive in Armenia.



Mary Badalyan

Co-founder and CEO of EventToura

We have established the EventToura: Event Tourism Developing Fund, which aims to support various events organized in the republic. Recognizing the immense potential of Armenia, we have come to realize that various festivals can be held within communities. By launching the foundation, our goal is to support individuals or companies organizing festivals by providing financial literacy and project management knowledge, enabling communities to host sustainable festivals and promote regional development.”

And the best part? Armenia’s enthusiastic youth is eager to volunteer, ensuring your event runs smoothly and becomes a resounding success. A visit to Armenia would be a revelation, showcasing the true potential for hosting diverse and impactful events.



Advertising Collaboration

Life in Armenia

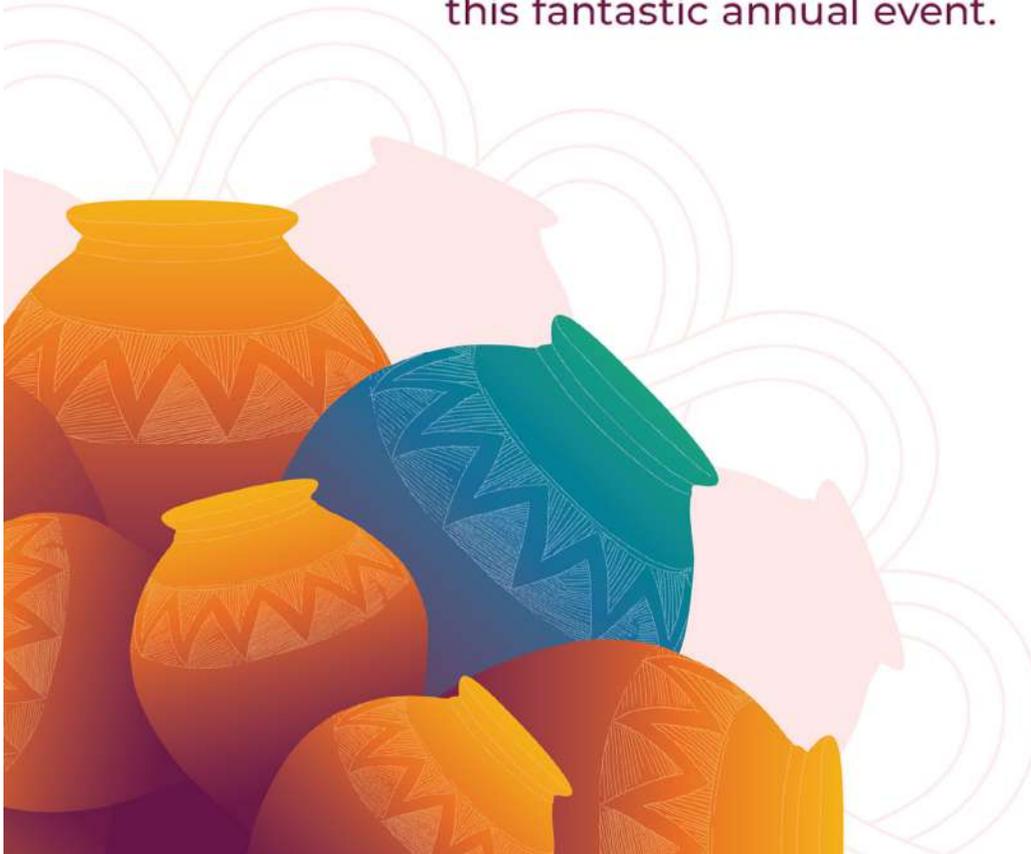


YEREVAN WINE DAYS

7, 8, 9 *June* 2024

Explore the rich heritage of Armenian winemaking at the **YEREVAN WINE DAYS**.

Cheers to unforgettable moments and memorable sips during this fantastic annual event.



CONFESSIONS OF AN ARMENIAN IT SALES PRO

THE SPAM, THE SCRAMBLE, AND THE SWEET SUCCESS



**HAYKUHI
TANGYAN**

FOUNDER OF PROPOSELL

CONFESSIONS OF AN ARMENIAN IT SALES PRO THE SPAM, THE SCRAMBLE, AND THE SWEET SUCCESS

Before transitioning to business development and sales, my background was primarily in digital marketing, public relations, and volunteering. I began by volunteering at World Vision Armenia, followed by handling PR and marketing responsibilities for the European Students Forum, then Yerevan Municipality and content marketing for Volo before joining the Business Development efforts and focusing on IT.

When I reflect on my journey, it's funny to think how I used to cringe whenever someone labeled me a "salesperson" or implied I was pushing something onto them.

My AHA Moment: How I Redefined Sales for Myself

Then there was the time my colleague from Switzerland and I went to take part in the OOP Expo/Conference in Munich, Germany in 2017. We were meeting European prospects and had to identify new business opportunities for our company. It wasn't my

first time at an expo, but it was definitely a memorable one.

I found myself hovering near our booth, feeling a bit shy about approaching people and definitely not keen on coming off as pushy or overly salesy. To add to my hesitations,

I guess I've always seen sales as a mixed bag, with different flavors of salespeople: the helpful ones you seek out when you need something, the ones who magically appear when you're in need, and then the ones who seem to sell and push things at you that you never asked for. Maybe the last ones are the main influencers of all bad stereotypes about sales reps. Of course, we have good and bad specialists in all industries.

Back then, I avoided terms like "sales" and "business development," opting instead to talk about digital marketing strategies that indirectly generate leads and drive sales. It was my way of sidestepping the sales stigma.

right beside us was this massive Oracle booth, with sharp-suited old men confidently engaging passersby, asking questions. And there I was, not only shy about sales but also an Armenian lady who tends to avoid initiating conversations with strangers.

For the first part of the day, I mostly interacted with people who ventured over to our booth, whether they were curious about Armenia or interested in our services.

Little did I know, the head of Oracle's sales team had been keeping an eye on me the whole time. After lunch, he came and told me that he's very proud of his team's productivity and very curious about my activities.

Oracle Man

What do you think, what is my team doing now?

Me

They are selling

Oracle Man

And why are you here?

Me

Also to sell I said it while feeling ashamed

Oracle Man

My team's objective isn't to focus on selling. I instruct them to identify individuals seeking our services and who have come to the expo seeking help or tech assistance. This is also what you need to think about when coming to such events.

Digitec Expo 2017

This man played a vital role in redefining sales for me and changing my mindset and starting to enjoy that process of identifying businesses who may need our services.

As a result, I began to embrace the concept of crafting mutually beneficial discussions. When it's not a win-win situation or I understand during the discussion that people don't need this or that service, I don't even discuss or try to convince them. I know that all services and all clients have their matching ideal partners, it just takes time and motivation to find and connect them.



Once you believe that you are selling something to a person, you also harbor the feeling that they may not actually need it, and this emotional aspect can impact your conversation. However, once you believe that you are assisting the person in finding the right tech

partner or solution that will benefit their business, your approach, choice of words, and energy undergo a positive transformation. This is what all founders and tech leaders need to think about when presenting their service or solution to possible clients.

IT Service Sales is a Team Game and Team Responsibility

Firstly, I'd like to clarify that while I don't have extensive experience in various industries, my focus over the past decade has primarily been on digital marketing and the business development of IT services, and more recently, products. I've worked for companies ranging from 300-person enterprises to smaller teams of 30 or 40, as well as with 10-person product teams.

Additionally, I've co-founded and founded two companies. This diverse background has provided me with a foundation to draw parallels, make comparisons, and arrive at some conclusions regarding the state of IT sales and marketing in the Armenian market, which, unfortunately, I must admit is currently underdeveloped compared to Eastern European top destinations.



One of the key motivations behind starting the [sell it](#) podcast was to create a platform for sharing experiences, connecting with individuals involved in these fields, and addressing questions that many companies and teams may have but are hesitant to voice.



When it comes to building a minimum viable product (MVP), we understand that it involves a series of steps—from ideation and planning to setup, implementation, testing, and delivery. However, in the realm of marketing and sales, there's often an expectation for immediate results, accompanied by skepticism and minimal effort from the tech team who get introduced to the

possible clients or the founders who lead the communication after the sales introduction. While I acknowledge that sales processes and cycles vary significantly across industries such as food, real estate, and clothing, the dynamics are notably distinct when it comes to IT service outsourcing sales. In this context, it's always a team effort: the founder, sales representative, project manager, and technical personnel responsible for development each play equally crucial roles in the sales conversion cycle and future upselling opportunities. This is a message that

should be shared among tech teams whenever they embark on any new initiative. They should understand that each one of them is in the business of sales, regardless of their title or job description. Good sales stem from a team's willingness to go the extra mile for the client, the client's willingness to refer you to others, and the sales representative's ambition to constantly seek new sources for networking and lead generation. This creates a healthy cycle or a business growth engine.

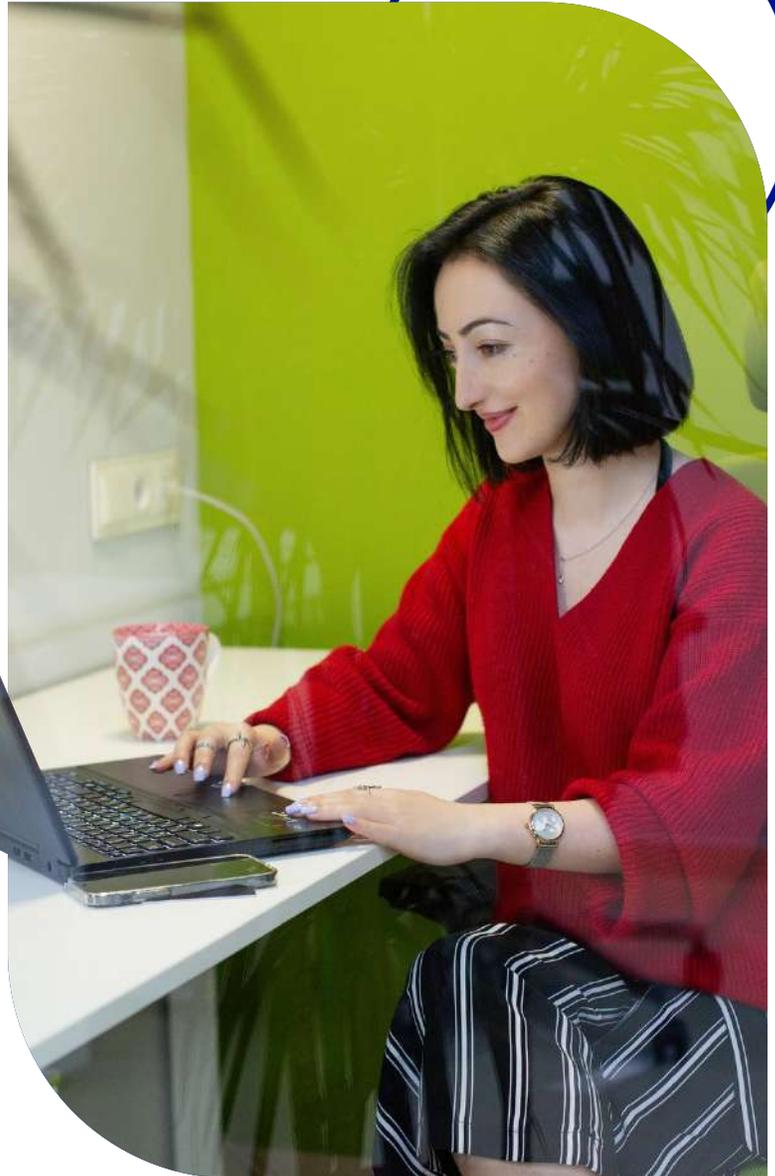
Spamming our Diaspora vs Identifying Win-Win Partnerships

We need to differentiate long-term business development from short-term sales. Long-term business development is about investing in networking over the long haul, building relationships that can lead to trusted partnerships. Short-term sales, on the other hand, focus on quick, small deals and tasks that may or may not grow into something meaningful for your business.

Most businesses initially desire long-term partnerships but often prioritize short-term sales or act like that. They opt for easy and quick bulk outreach efforts, expecting immediate results. This bulk outreach approach may have a very sad impact especially on our diaspora people.

Of course, we all know that it's easier to communicate with Armenians all over the world and many many Armenian tech players also play a vital role in bridging companies and businesses across continents.

Working at Proposell



BUT unfortunately, I've learned from many colleagues and old friends now living in the diaspora that they receive minimum 3-5 messages a day about tech partnerships from diverse businesses who don't even have any matching areas of interest or business connection.

Instead of spending significant time on bulk outreach, why not invest more time in research to identify added value or genuine matches for win/win discussions? Rather than sending hundreds, if not thousands, of emails to Armenians worldwide, why not focus on targeted messages and meetings?

I can imagine how many people end up on these lead generation lists and receive countless emails and messages every day from various companies with very similar offerings. Even if as a potential client you're interested in supporting or genuinely need a partnership, it's challenging to make informed decisions when bombarded with similar messages from dozens of companies.

Why not actually spend time on your targeted offering and the value it can bring to the business of this person and then send one targeted message.

Admittedly, this is challenging and time-consuming. In addition to time, it requires industry-specific knowledge and a deep understanding of business dynamics.

This task is not suitable for university students with just 1-2 years of experience, regardless of their English proficiency, who are tasked with creating email marketing campaigns for tech companies and products. It demands equal involvement of business owners and lead developers in the sales outreach and shaping targeted messages.

While it may seem overly demanding or perfectionist to expect this level of precision from tech companies, in the long run, if we aim to establish ourselves as reputable tech players, creators, innovators, and experts, we must concurrently build teams capable of meeting these standards.

We possess exceptional tech expertise and significant potential within the Armenian IT sector. Our developers are smart, competent, hard-working and can be an asset for any business in the world ready to digitize their business processes.

To fully capitalize on this, we need an even larger pool of highly skilled marketing and business development professionals who can effectively showcase our IT prowess to the global stage and foster significant partnerships.



The Promise of Quality and Its Cost

I have been fortunate enough to be involved in the Armenian tech scene for the past decade, maintaining a close connection by attending various local tech events and actively participating in initiatives such as Why Armenia, Digitec Expos, WCIT,

Barcamps, local tech meetups and co-founding a business matching agency. This involvement has allowed me to meet numerous tech players, founders and gain a comprehensive understanding of the market dynamics from 2014-2024.



From 2012 to 2015

We all know that there was a significant market demand for tech specialists, with many teams actively attracting international businesses and engaging in service outsourcing. This was a positive and growing phase for Armenian companies and startups. During this period, we witnessed a pool of humble and enthusiastic tech talent willing to go the extra mile to deliver quality to each and every client. Our quality standards and rates were great, positioning us competitively against outsourcing hubs in Eastern Europe like Ukraine and Poland.

From 2017 to 2020

The landscape shifted as the demand for tech talent led to an increase in rates and salaries. There was also a trend of accelerated training for new tech professionals, resulting in juniors rapidly advancing to senior positions due to market demand. Unfortunately,

this rapid growth in the workforce led to a decline in quality, maturity, and experience, particularly in handling complex solutions. We have tech specialists with 3-6 months of experience and expectations

of seniors. This phenomenon was not unique to Armenia but was common across the tech market globally. It impacted both the work ethic and made a pressure on employers to fight for good employees and raise both salaries and rates.

2020

The onset of COVID-19 and the shift to remote work further exacerbated these issues. The demand for digital solutions surged, leading to more projects and an increased need for tech talent. Many experts found themselves juggling multiple jobs simultaneously, earning more but impacting the quality of solutions provided to clients.

Of course, this was great for individuals and freelancers. Happy for them, but who loses? The employer, who has a big outsourcing team and pays salaries and taxes, but their employees are not putting enough effort and energy into their services and client communications and in parallel juggle other tasks as remote freelancers.

From 2020 to 2023

In addition to this also currency challenges, parallel geopolitical realities and external factors also played a significant role, further shaping the tech landscape and the demand of tech from specific geographic regions.





— 2024: We Have What We Have

Layoffs, Talent pool seeking new jobs and less clients willing to outsource to big teams. In 2024, we find ourselves in a situation where many tech teams are seeking new projects amidst reduced demand and clients being more cautious with their investments. With the emergence of trends like AI and a focus on team and cost optimization, there is a growing skepticism towards outsourcing larger scopes for bigger budgets. This is the time when companies start investing more in new processes, internal team optimization and quality control to stay competitive and demanding and to also have AI-focused competitive offerings.

This shift underscores the increased demand for skilled sales and marketing professionals who can effectively communicate the need for digital solutions or tech partnerships. Consequently, there is a need for talent that is not only proficient in sales techniques but also possesses a deeper understanding of tech processes, business strategies, IT markets, and the diverse mindsets of customers across different markets.

EXPLORING THE RISE OF FINTECH IN ARMENIA

ASSESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARMENIAN FINTECH SECTOR



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HIGHWAY, ARMENIA



**STEFAN
LUCAS**
FOUNDER AND CEO OF
FINTECH ARMENIA:
UK/US/ASIA-ARMENIA



**MUSHEGH
TOVMASYAN**
FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN
OF ZENUS BANK, USA



**JUSTIN
CALDERON**
FOUNDER AND CEO OF
MINT POSITION, USA

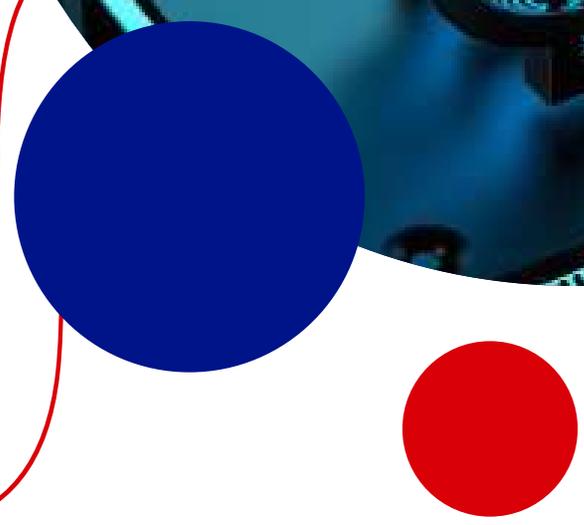




EXPLORING THE RISE OF FINTECH IN ARMENIA ASSESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARMENIAN FINTECH SECTOR

FinTech's dynamic convergence of finance and technology has transcended its initial role as a disruptor. We are now witnessing a mature industry driving financial innovation across the world, and **Armenia is no exception!**

A developed FinTech ecosystem offers digital nomads and remote workers in Armenia better access to online banking, payment systems, and the financial tools they need to manage their global lives. Plus, Armenia's growing FinTech industry could present **exciting opportunities for collaboration** with local startups and established service providers.



From fostering financial inclusion to reshaping established institutions, FinTech's impact on Armenia necessitates understanding its regional variations, regulatory framework, and the evolving nature of competition. While I could summarize a few figures and details from search engines, such information wouldn't be particularly insightful for readers seeking a deeper understanding of the Armenian FinTech industry. Therefore, to complement my research **beyond publicly available data**, I conducted interviews with five local and international FinTech experts for their firsthand market experience.

Quick Overview of the Armenian Financial System

A **strong presence of commercial banks** characterizes the Armenian financial system. These 18 institutions hold the majority of financial assets in the country, fostering a bank-centric model. According to the [Central Bank of Armenia](#), the banking system is the largest participant in the financial market.

Interestingly, the market is competitive, with **no single bank dominating the scene**. The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI), used to measure market concentration, shows low values across different bank size measures, indicating many competing banks in the system. This competition can benefit consumers with potentially better rates and services.

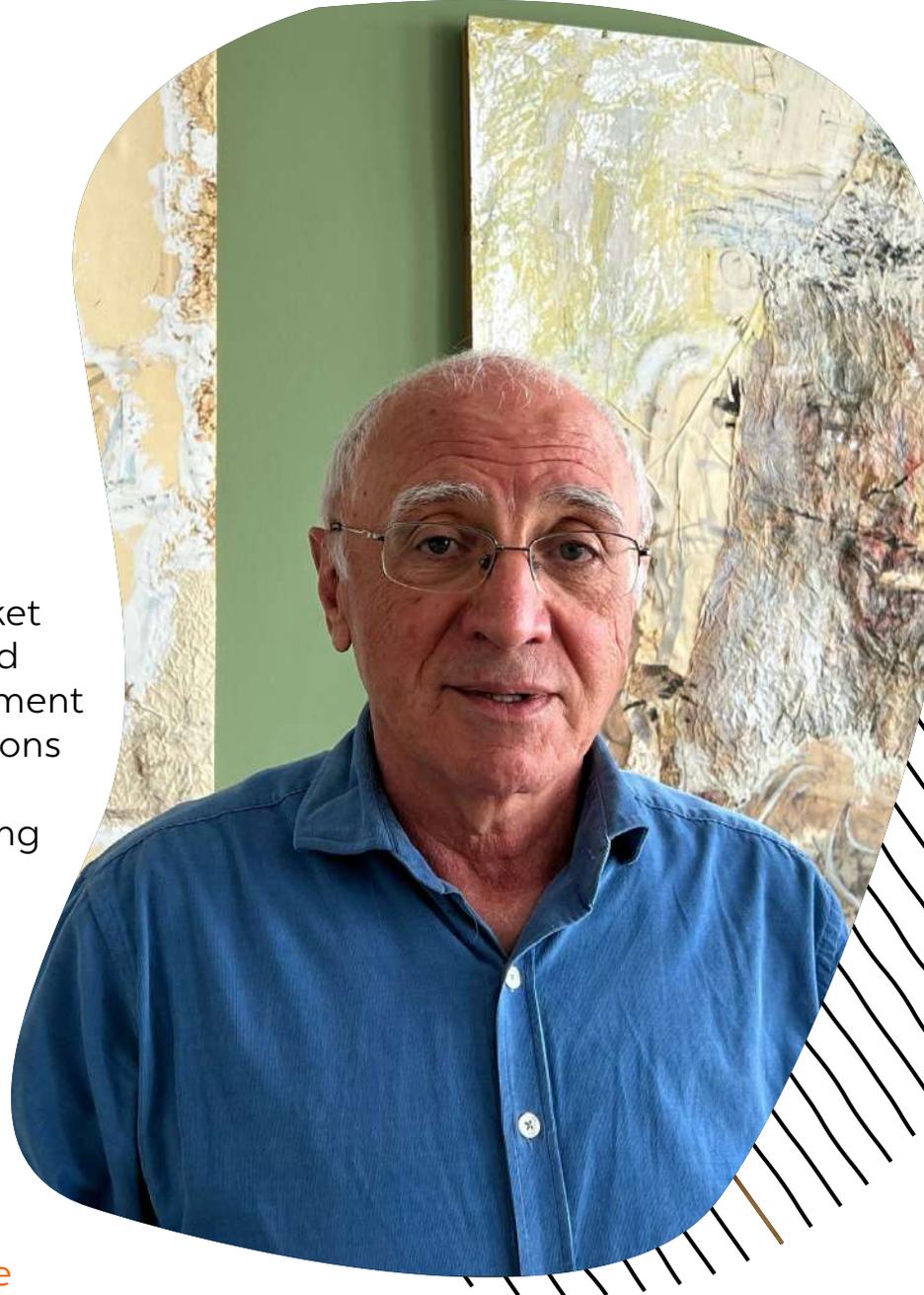
Beyond banks, other institutions contribute to the financial scene. Credit organizations, though smaller in scale, offer some financial services. Insurance companies provide risk protection, while a network of investment firms and the [Armenian Securities Exchange](#) handle securities trading. The Central Bank of Armenia acts as the guardian of this financial ecosystem. It supervises all institutions, grants licenses, and plays a key role in shaping monetary policy.

Insights From Ashot Khachatryan

Founder and CEO of Armenian Software, Armenia

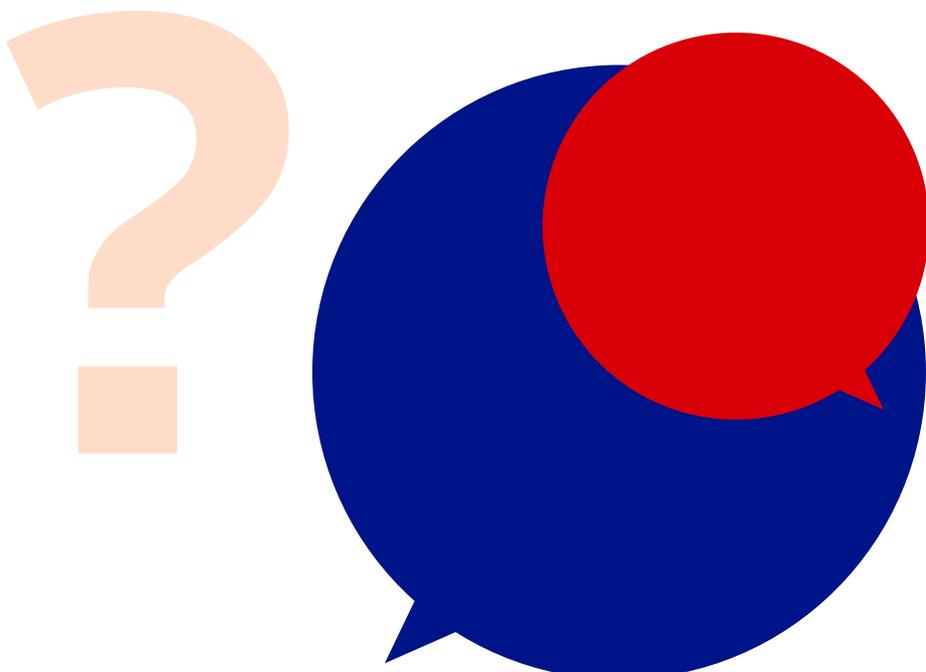
Armenian Software, also known as [ArmSoft](#), has over 35 years of experience in the Armenian market and specializes in developing and implementing business management systems. They also provide solutions for enterprises with complex accounting structures and banking systems to banks and credit organizations. I reached out to Ashot Khachatryan, ArmSoft's Founder and CEO, whose outlook on Armenian FinTech was cautiously optimistic.

Mr. Khachatryan believes there will be exciting growth in Armenian FinTech! **Businesses are rapidly adopting these solutions**, driven by a clear need for more financial services and a growing confidence in data security. Of course, there's always room for improvement. He thinks that Armenian FinTech companies would benefit from a more hands-off approach from the government in the IT sector. Additionally, investing in a stronger IT education system would **create a larger pool of skilled professionals** to support continued FinTech growth.



Have you observed a shift in how Armenian businesses, particularly traditional ones, are adopting FinTech solutions for their operations?

There has been a notable shift in the adoption of FinTech solutions by businesses. Skepticism and apprehensions regarding data security and financial integrity have diminished, leading to a quicker uptake of FinTech solutions.



What are the most pressing needs of FinTech companies in Armenia with regard to technology and infrastructure?

The growth of the FinTech sector is constrained by the limited availability of qualified professionals rather than technological or infrastructural impediments.

Based on ArmSoft's experience working with various businesses, what are your observations on the growth of the FinTech industry in Armenia?

The FinTech sector grows in proportion with domestic demand growth, which proves insufficient.

From your long years of experience, what are the biggest challenges FinTech companies face in Armenia?

FinTech companies in Armenia face two significant challenges:

a. One major issue revolves around the consistent and considerable intervention of the government in the economy, particularly within the IT sector. This intervention creates highly uneven competitive conditions, particularly for IT enterprises, including those in the FinTech sphere.

b. Another challenge pertains to the scarcity of skilled IT professionals. The higher education system has been in decline for an extended period, failing to produce adequately trained specialists.

Insights From Davit Baloyan

Founder and CEO of Highway, Armenia



[Highway](#) is an Armenian FinTech company founded in 2021 that offers a core banking engine, a comprehensive toolkit, and front-end solutions. Highway's experience in the Armenian FinTech industry dates back to their collaboration with InecoBank, Armenia's largest digital lender. Highway digitalized and developed all the banking solutions for Ineco. I asked [Davit Baloyan](#), Highway's founder and CEO, about his take on the Armenian FinTech industry.

Mr. Baloyan believes Armenian consumers are receptive to adopting FinTech products and digital products in general. FinTech companies face regulatory limitations, but the Central Bank is expected to make changes to allow for wider use. He thinks both sides must collaborate openly with common goals for successful Bank-FinTech partnerships. However, [Armenian banks tend to be the leaders in such partnerships](#), which stifles innovation.

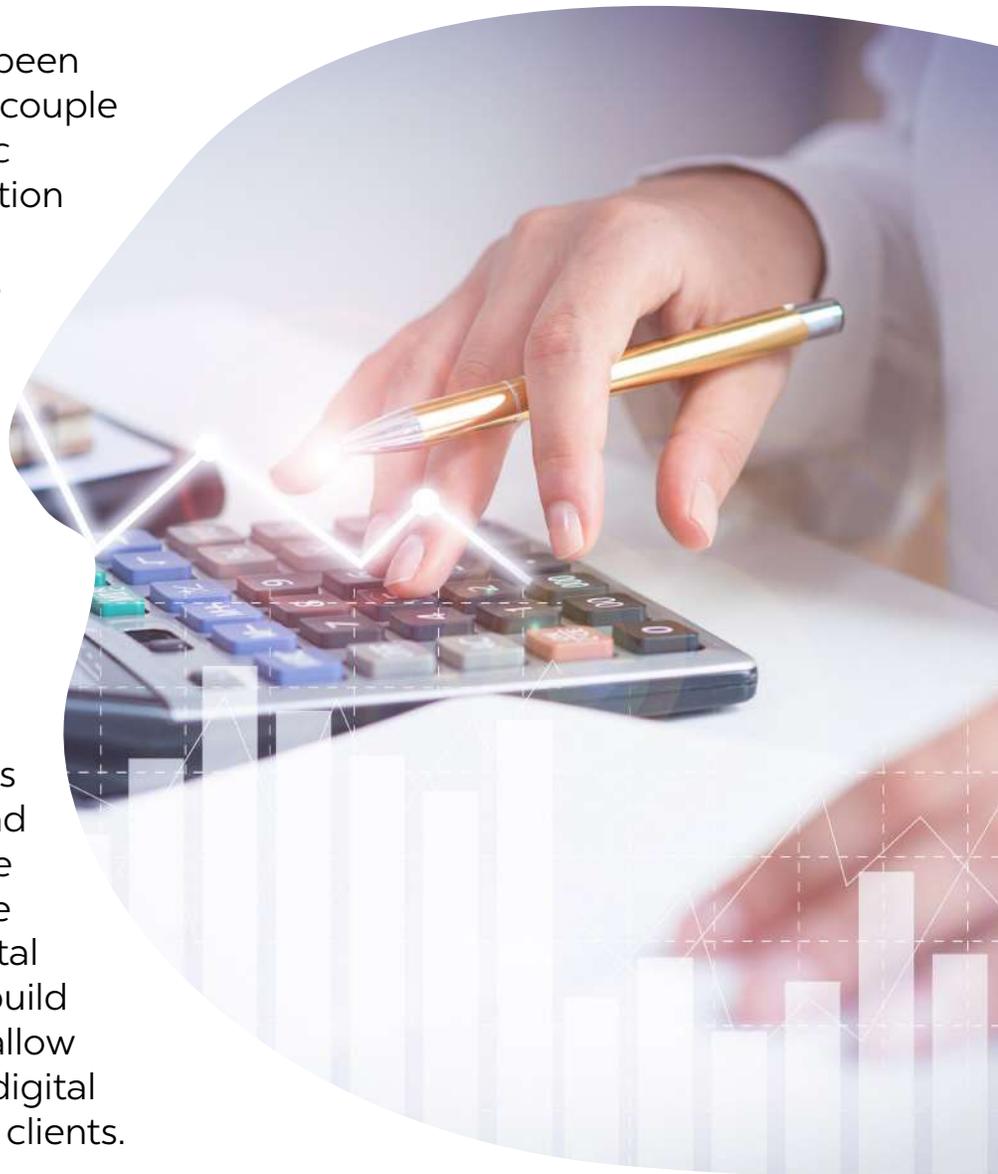
Based on Highway's experience, how receptive have Armenian consumers been to adopting FinTech products and services?

The short answer is that Armenian consumers are very receptive, and not only to FinTech products but overall to digital products. You can hardly find anyone in Armenia who doesn't use mobile banking apps, food delivery apps or taxi apps.

The challenge of FinTech is more on the regulator's side when there are certain limitations of what FinTechs can do. For example, you can use public clouds for data storage, which is quite common in the rest of the world nowadays. However, I see an overall positive approach from the Central Bank of Armenia. I am sure that many changes will be made to the regulatory framework, allowing digital banking and FinTech products to grow further and achieve wider use among the Armenian users.

Armenia is a developing FinTech market. How does Highway see itself contributing to the overall growth and innovation of the Armenian FinTech sector?

The Armenian economy has been growing rapidly over the last couple of years. Obviously, economic growth brings more competition in every sector of the market, and more competition forces businesses to be more innovative and find new ways of doing business. This is especially true for the Armenian banking sector, where 18 banks are fiercely competing for each customer in the market and need to be more innovative and forward-looking in their offerings and products. This is where FinTech capabilities and FinTech solution providers like Highway come into the space – we help banks on their digital transformation journey and build products and solutions that allow them to offer more superior digital customer experience to their clients.



Currently, we cooperate with one of the leading and most advanced digital banks in Armenia—Incobank. We are helping them digitalize their lending in the retail banking segment by building Sprintonline.am, a digital platform where clients can see their credit limits for 6 different credit products and proceed to actually receive the loans on their current account or credit card. This is a completely new approach in the market, and I believe it is way ahead of what the competition is offering.

How are banks in Armenia collaborating with FinTech companies to offer new products and services?

What I can add here is that in order for such a partnership to be successful both sides need to approach it as equal partners and encourage their teams to work together openly as a united team with common goals and targets. Frankly speaking, this is not something I see often

between bank-FinTech partnerships, both in Armenia and abroad.

In the Armenian market, banks are the main partners and leaders in this kind of corporation and drive the decision-making process based on their specific needs. This approach doesn't allow the FinTech team to come up with new

ideas and innovations and eventually fails to produce good results.

Luckily, our experience with our partner banks has been very positive, and we have been able to bring several new and breakthrough products and solutions to the market, and we hope to continue on this path.

What specific strategies does Highway adopt to address the challenge of the limited domestic market in Armenia?

It is true that the Armenian market is not very large, and sometimes, it is very challenging to achieve the right scale here. However, I must also say that there are several interesting niche markets in Armenia where you can achieve really good results.

Besides Armenia, we also look to other markets and try to find local players there with whom to cooperate. Our model is to bring technology and loan digitizing know-how to the table. Currently, we are working on one project in Bulgaria, and we are also speaking with several partners in Georgia and Uzbekistan. These are all very interesting markets, and there are some very interesting prospects. And I am sure that we can build something extraordinary with our partners.



Insights From Stefan Lucas

Founder and CEO of FinTech Armenia: UK/US/Asia-Armenia

[Stefan Lucas](#), a pioneering British Armenian with over 16+ years experience in the financial technology industry, is the Founding CEO of [FinTech Armenia](#), the leading Financial Technology Hub & Ecosystem of the Caucasus. Given the nature of this article, I couldn't help but reach out to him for his insights on the Armenian FinTech industry - both locally and internationally. Specifically, I wanted to hear his perspective as the founder of the FinTech Armenia Industry Association & Hub - regarding the outcomes he's achieved since establishing this exciting, rapidly growing hub.

Mr. Lucas believes that Armenia's tech sector is rapidly developing, and FinTech is increasingly becoming a key high growth / high potential component. The country aims to be a regional and international leader with a strong focus on advancing innovation and collaboration. **International firms are eager to partner**, and Armenia is actively fostering these connections to drive innovation across the entire FinTech Ecosystem. This collaborative approach is expected to fuel growth in areas like **mobile payments, e-markets, AI, better UI / UX and potentially even blockchain technology**.



What are your thoughts on the current state of FinTech development in Armenia?

Armenia's Science and Technology Ecosystem is developing rapidly. The FinTech Armenia Association & Hub we are building - together with all key market participants - are additive constituents to Armenia's accelerating Scientific and Technological leadership position.

What was the reason behind your decision to found FinTech Armenia at this specific time?

Timing, core competency, and market readiness.

How do advanced regional/international FinTech firms perceive Armenian FinTech solutions/vendors?

Demand, feedback and perception from the regional / international FinTech community to join forces with our exponentially growing FinTech Armenia Association and Hub is very high and positive. The market is especially exciting about our upcoming FinTech Armenia Summits.

What specific trends have you observed in the Armenian FinTech market in recent years?

The FinTech Armenia Ecosystem has a strong Banking & Payments component - we are building on it to broaden / scale innovation, reach and impact - regionally and internationally

In your view, what are the most exciting opportunities for growth in the Armenian FinTech sector?

FinTech Armenia's market participants see many impactful growth opportunities. We are working together collaboratively to deliver on our goals - based on our dynamic, bold strategy and innovative industry roadmap. This definitely includes accelerated digitization, e-markets, smarter AI, better mobile UI / UX, embedded finance, and stronger cybersecurity, to name a few - and it is potentially expanding via robust blockchain technology.



Insights From Mushegh Tovmasyan

Founder and Chairman of Zenus Bank, USA

[Zenus Bank](#) is a digital bank headquartered in San Juan, Puerto Rico. They offer personal and business banking services entirely online and through mobile apps. This digital bank allows you to open a US account remotely, regardless of your citizenship status, making it accessible to customers in over 150 countries. I interviewed [Mushegh Tovmasyan](#), Founder and Chairman of Zenus Bank, to learn what he thinks of the Armenian FinTech market and how it compares to the US FinTech market.

Mr. Tovmasyan is often impressed by FinTech innovations coming out of Armenia but feels the [country is not yet well-recognized globally](#). He sees an opportunity for Armenia to become a major FinTech player like some Baltic countries, Cyprus or Singapore. He also suggests the UAE and the GCC region as potential target markets for Armenian FinTech solutions. Prior to Zenus Bank, Mr. Tovmasyan was the founder of international FinTech group - Divisa Capital / Equiti Capital which had two subsidiaries in Armenia. One of them, Equiti AM CJSC, still operates under Central Bank license 0011 and was [one of the first brokerages in the country](#) allowed to offer trading in foreign exchange and CFD's.



Given your personal user experience and business perspective, how would you evaluate mobile banking in Armenia?

Mobile banking is actually great in Armenia. I was pleasantly surprised how advanced and feature-rich most of the mobile banking wallets are. Although cash usage remains popular in both cities and rural areas - bill pay, digital checkouts and pay kiosks are much more advanced than in most countries around the world. Also interesting is to point out that foreign exchange rates are prominently available via most user interfaces.

What is your perspective on the current state of the FinTech industry in Armenia?

Armenia has consistently stood out to me for its FinTech innovation. The country boasts a well-educated population with a wealth of technical and creative talent, but despite this, Armenia is often seen as being under Russia's sphere of influence, particularly in the context of FinTech. This perception

has limited its ability to fully engage with Western markets and realize its broader potential. I now see a great opportunity for Armenia to become a FinTech powerhouse similar to comparable countries in the Baltics or Cyprus. UAE and the greater GCC region can also be a good target audience for financial technology developed and maintained in Armenia.

What should be the main areas of focus for Armenian FinTech solutions to grow globally?

Prioritize UX/UI and related content in English vs Armenian/Russian, continue developing FinTech conferences inviting relevant audiences from US, Europe, GCC, India and Africa. Follow the existing formula of tapping into Western VC funds targeting US IPO.



he US has a vibrant venture capital ecosystem for FinTech startups. How can Armenian FinTech attract investment compared to the US market?

There have been many Armenian success stories recently so that creative and marketing engines should not take a break. Armenian FinTech companies should participate more in Western conferences, award ceremonies, etc. I think the government should double down on recent efforts and allocate even more marketing budget promoting the country internationally as an entrepreneurial and digital nomad hub.

As an American-Armenian entrepreneur, what do you see as the biggest challenge and the most exciting opportunity for FinTech startups in Armenia?

Armenia as a country has not done enough to be perceived as an enticing startup ecosystem like UAE, Estonia, Latvia, Cyprus, Singapore, Colombia, Mexico or Hong Kong. Company formation, taxation, Visa requirements, banking, HR ecosystem, cost of living and cost of operating should all be aligned to entice new and repeat entrepreneurs to consider Armenia. English as an option should be encouraged more in UX/UI to make the various procedural journeys friendlier to foreigners. I participated in a couple of impressive events this year and look forward to many more. The most recent one [Doing Digital Forum](#) included FinTech as a topic, and the next major one most likely [FinTech Armenia](#).

Insights From Justin Calderon

Founder and CEO of Mint Position, USA

After this deep dive into FinTech information, I wanted a fresh perspective on FinTech from another angle. That's where I shifted to a marketing viewpoint. Therefore, I reached out to [Justin Calderon](#), Founder and CEO of [Mint Position](#), a US-based SEO-focused content marketing agency that specializes in producing all kinds of web page content for FinTechs, including many in the GCC. I wanted to learn more about the potential of Armenian FinTech solutions in this region.

Mr. Calderon believes that FinTech companies entering the GCC market face a challenge in **educating the population about financial technology products** and services due to a low level of financial literacy in the region. However, content marketing that informs the target audience is **essential to overcome this knowledge gap**. He thinks that success for GCC FinTech startups is measured by a combination of factors. Organic traffic and online visibility, indicated by ranking for relevant keywords, show brand and website growth. Lead generation, measured by form submissions and customer signups, is also crucial.



What are the biggest marketing challenges Armenian FinTech companies might face when entering the GCC market?

The GCC is often seen by the outside world as a highly developed and wealthy region, but there are still many aspects where they lag, and financial literacy is one of them. Many people here lack financial education and are not financially “well”, which is both a challenge and an opportunity. The GCC market is characterized as being highly unaware of how many financial tech services work. This means there is a large knowledge gap for FinTech brands to overcome to first educate their audience before they can begin to think about converting the majority of them. Many FinTech products require advanced learning before using, which is why content marketing is a particularly apt tactic for FinTechs in the GCC.

How do FinTech companies in the GCC measure the success of their marketing campaigns? What metrics are most important?

For startups that are just launched, the answer is twofold. When it comes to building your brand and website, you want to ensure that your organic traffic is steadily increasing, as well as your online visibility, which is measured by the amount of organic keywords

you rank for. On the other hand, FinTechs need to also invest in lead generation, which comes down to how each uniquely measures leads, usually by form submissions and customers signed. Both metrics are key to measuring marketing success.

Do you see any potential for collaboration between Armenian FinTech companies and established players in the GCC?

The GCC is a demographically diverse marketplace. Many of its countries, including the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar, have populations that are vastly represented by foreign residents. In the KSA, that foreign population is 40%, which is still sizeable. This presents a unique situation that has made

places like Dubai and Doha a melting pot of business. In my 4 years of working directly with Dubai-based FinTechs, the thing that has struck me the most is the global mindset that these companies carry with them. A FinTech CEO in this region can be from anywhere, and their employees are just as diverse. FinTech CEOs

can be Lebanese, British, Moroccan, Indian, Syrian, South African or any other citizens, and they employ that diversity of people as well. This makes the business environment culturally open and easy for people of all backgrounds to come in, collaborate and build new FinTech products and services.

Based on your experience with GCC FinTech, what advice would you give to Armenian FinTech companies looking to expand into the region?

As noted above, the GCC is a diverse region. If you are aiming at offering products here, you have to consider the complexities of the local demographics. For example, in Dubai, the primary target market that FinTechs work with

is people of South Asian origin, as well as other Arab-speaking nations, such as people from Egypt and Lebanon. This diversity also means that Islamic finance products are less important than you may think.

More Insights From Davit Baloyan

Founder and CEO of Highway

Following our insightful discussion on FinTech solutions from a marketing standpoint, I revisited Davit Baloyan to learn more about how they position their Armenian-based FinTech for local and international collaboration. Luckily, I got more information than I expected!



How do you see Highway maintaining its competitive edge as the regional FinTech scene continues to evolve?

Well, it's a difficult question to answer, and let me start by saying that I am a firm believer in the concept that "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." We welcome competition as it is the main driver behind innovation and change in all sectors and life in general.

We have our approach to competition. Number one is building the right team with the right leadership approach. We are a

tech company, we are a product company, and we have to understand that technology and especially financial technology, first of all, is about people who make things happen. To be successful, you have to allow people to act freely and not be afraid of making mistakes. As a founder and CEO of Highway, I see my role as providing meaningful leadership to our team, encouraging them to think outside of the box and experimenting

with ideas. The team should know that you have got their back, and if something goes wrong you are there to support them and find a solution together. However, having said this I also want to emphasize that without discipline and hard work, you can never achieve success. So, I also put my efforts into ensuring that the team's performance is at the highest level, and if anything needs to be changed, I act accordingly.

Number two is focus. You have to focus on a few things and do these things 10x better than others. I often hear when other founders say that as a startup, you need to be agile and be able to change fast. Don't follow trends, but follow your vision and goals. Focus on delivering and if something is not working only then can you make changes and improve your product. At Highway, we focus on building banking infrastructure, such as core banking systems and digitizing loans. We have very deep domain knowledge in both areas, are very confident in our capabilities, and are not afraid of competition in these fields.

Number three is relationship management. Setting the right relationship with your clients, having a large network of experts and industry professionals is important in all sectors and businesses. It is even more so in FinTech and banking. In the FinTech world many companies claim to be disrupters who are here to revolutionize existing business models, banks, etc. I don't mind disrupting or changing an existing model and luckily for me I have had the chance to be part of several ground-breaking and successful FinTech projects. However, our approach at Highway is to not scare our clients with technology but rather show them what tech can do for them, how we can work together and build better products for their clients and eventually achieve success.

How does Highway position itself to attract international investment and users?

It is a very interesting topic to discuss. I will start by saying that with regards to investments and funding, Highway is self-sufficient and is generating enough cash to support its growth and development. In case of a need for new funds we have access to debt instruments, which can help us cover our financing needs in the short to mid-term. In this aspect our goal is to maximize the company's valuation as much as possible before we decide to attract new equity investments.

Being financially self-sufficient doesn't mean that we are not open to business. On the contrary our approach is to always look for and engage in discussions with potential investors both domestic and international investors. It is important to choose the right partners and we are happy to be in a position where we can practically choose who we want to work with.

Highway is an Armenia-based company. We have ambitions to expand beyond Armenia and I believe that by achieving success we shall also contribute to our country's overall success, by showing international investors that they can find and make successful investments in Armenia. This is one of our goals to try and put Armenia on the global FinTech map and to bring foreign capital to our country. We are on a mission to make Armenia one of the regional FinTech hubs (i.e. via the FinTech Armenia Ecosystem).

Financial technology is constantly evolving. What emerging trends is Highway most interested in exploring?

Not only financial but overall technology is constantly evolving, and new solutions and opportunities arise almost daily. In my opinion it is very important to understand what technology can bring to your business and how you can benefit by deploying it. I believe that technology is a key enabler for success in banking and financial services businesses. However, digitalization of products and services should not happen for the sake of digitalization only, but rather they should be driven by specific business goals.

At Highway we have 3 main focus areas when building a new product or solution: Customer experience, scalability, and cost-effective operations.

Coming back to your question of trends in FinTech I would say development and the use of AI and machine learning create the biggest opportunities for banks and FinTechs by far. We are now exploring a couple of interesting cases with AI and I hope we can be one of the first companies in Armenia to offer FinTech solutions based on AI in the near future.

Challenges and Opportunities

Based on the valuable insights gleaned from my interviews with five FinTech industry leaders, a clear picture emerges: the **Armenian FinTech market is promising** for both local startups and international players. However, this promising market also presents significant risks that need to be addressed.

Overdependence on the limited domestic market is a key risk. True growth for Armenian FinTechs hinges on their ability to enter regional or international markets. **The collaborative FinTech Armenia Hub & Ecosystem is actively addressing and progressing in this area.** Furthermore, difficulty keeping pace with regulatory changes could

lead to compliance issues that hinder operations and growth. Balancing innovation with adherence to regulations will be crucial for Armenian FinTech companies. Finally, the limited pool of Armenian IT professionals, despite their high skill level, could restrict startups' ability to scale rapidly and handle increasingly complex FinTech projects.

BUILDING BRIDGES

THE ADVANTAGES OF HIRING IN ARMENIA



**LUIZA
AVETISYAN**

CO-FOUNDER AND CEO OF STAFF.AM



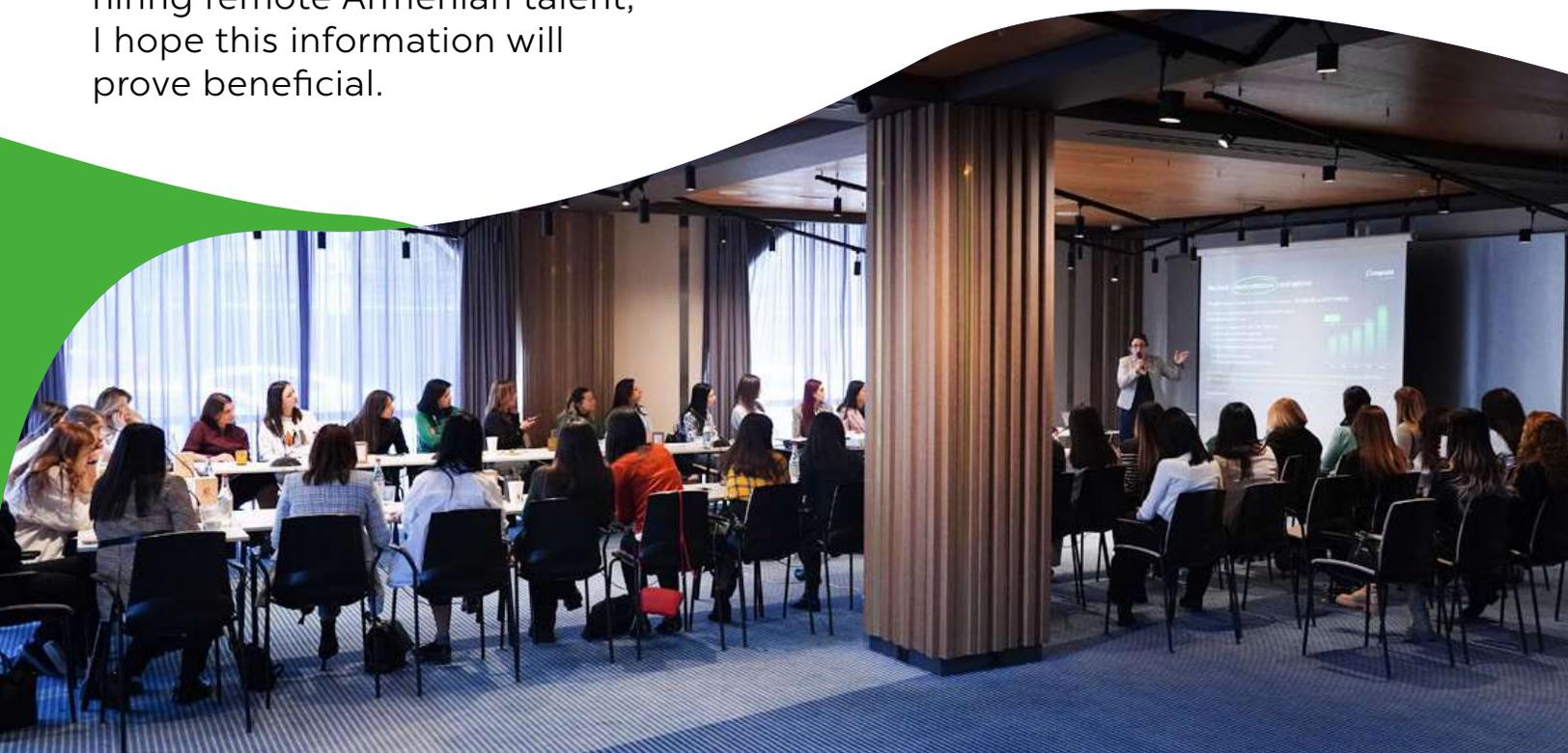
In the ever-evolving landscape of global business, companies constantly seek new avenues to thrive. One promising destination for sourcing talent is Armenia, a country with a rapidly growing workforce and a dynamic tech scene.

As the co-founder and CEO of [staff.am](#), Armenia's leading career marketplace, I've gained years of experience and witnessed the country's job market transformations. In this article, I'll leverage this knowledge to discuss the advantages of hiring Armenian talent, [explore readily available skillsets](#), and address any niche areas that might pose temporary challenges.

For the entrepreneur reader, whether you're considering a visit to Armenia, establishing a back office here, or simply hiring remote Armenian talent, I hope this information will prove beneficial.

What Are The Advantages of Hiring in Armenia?

Armenia, with its rich history of innovation and skilled workforce, presents a compelling case for businesses looking to expand or establish a presence in the region. Several prominent companies from the [US and Europe have opened their offices, representations, and R&D centers in Armenia](#). Among those are NVIDIA, Microchip, AMD, Miro, ServiceTitan, SADA (an Insight Company), and many more. Let's take a closer look into factors contributing to its attractiveness as a destination for talent acquisition and team expansion.



Skilled Workforce

Armenia boasts a highly educated population, with a significant emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. The country has a good educational infrastructure, including international universities like the American University of Armenia, Université française en Arménie (French University of Armenia), Matena Leadership School for executive education, University of York, and Sheffield University branches in Armenia for executive education, among others.

Armenian families highly regard good education, often prefer private schools for their children instead of public ones, and invest in their children's education. There are many opportunities for young Armenians to study abroad through short and long-term educational programs.

Cost Efficiency

Compared to many Western countries, labor costs in Armenia are relatively lower, **without compromising on the quality of talent**. The main reason behind lower labor costs is a relatively lower cost of living.

This makes Armenia an attractive option for companies seeking to optimize their operational expenses without compromising on talent acquisition.

Due to its favorable climate, with 300 days of sun, quality food, and water, Armenia has also become a country of choice for digital nomads who move there with their families. During the past two years, a significant influx of professionals has taken place, especially into industries like Information Technologies and Hospitality.



Cultural Compatibility

Armenia's workforce is known for its strong work ethic, adaptability, and cultural affinity with Western business practices. This cultural compatibility empowers **seamless integration for international companies** establishing operations in the country. The tech

industry in Armenia is the flagman in terms of exposure to building bridges with overseas teams; however, this culture of diversity and multiculturalism is spreading to other, more traditional industries as well.

Emerging Tech Hub

Armenia has emerged as a vibrant tech hub, particularly in the fields of software development, IT services, and **emerging technologies such as AI, blockchain, and crypto**. The presence of innovative startups and established tech firms creates a conducive ecosystem for collaboration and growth.

The country boasts a local unicorn, Picsart, which now employs more than 1,000 people across a number of countries. Another unicorn, with founders of Armenian origin, ServiceTitan, founded in the US, also has a local software engineering team. Companies like Synopsys, Adobe, TeamViewer, and Oracle have their R&D centers in Armenia.

Multilingual Workforce

The workforce in metropolitan areas of the country is largely multilingual. Besides the native Armenian language, young professionals speak English and Russian. Given the presence of the French University in Armenia, it is **not hard to find people speaking French** as well. Yerevan State University's renowned Eastern Studies department educates many young professionals who speak Arabic and Persian. The multilingual capability of our workforce opens new doors for remote and local hiring by international companies based outside of Armenia.



Staff.am Ecosystem

[staff.am](#) was launched 7 years ago. Initially, it was a career marketplace with advanced tools, including AI-powered candidate search. staff.am's career marketplace is the leading source in Armenia for hiring quality talent locally. In 2023, [staff.am launched 3 new products](#) and now positions itself as an ecosystem comprising 4 main directions.

The first and core product is staff.am, a marketplace platform on the web and mobile that helps thousands of people find jobs or hire talent monthly. The second product is [staffmedia.am](#), staff.am's media platform that covers topics around the labor market, business and employers, professional development, and business events.

[Career Factory](#) was launched in 2023 and is staff.am's educational division. Career Factory offers online and offline, free and paid courses to ambitious professionals who want to grow professionally.

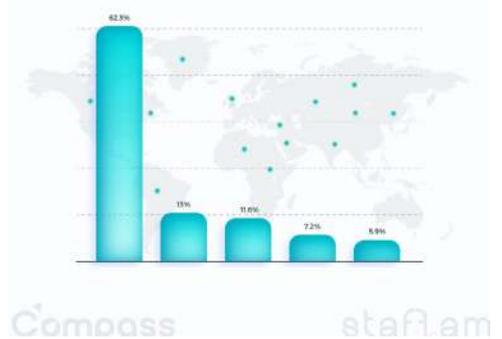
The most recently launched division of staff.am is called [Compass by staff.am](#), which uses big data and helps businesses and individuals make informed decisions about labor market trends, salaries, benefits, and more.

staff.am's marketplace provides access to a diverse pool of qualified candidates across various industries and skill sets. Its user-friendly interface and advanced search functionalities streamline the recruitment process, allowing employers to identify and engage with suitable candidates efficiently.

The number of [jobs posted in 2023](#) comprises close to [20,000](#), out of which the top three are Software Engineering, Sales and Service, and Banking industry jobs. Staff.am has over 5,000 employers in its database, and close to [3,000](#) are actively hiring.

Since COVID-19 and the rise of remote work, the number of remote positions [posted by non-native companies](#) has surged by 60%. The biggest share among remote international jobs posted on staff.am belongs to [US companies](#), followed by [Germany, Poland, France, and Georgia](#).

COUNTRIES WITH THE MOST REMOTE POSITIONS ON STAFF.AM



Below we have highlighted some advantages that drive staff.am's popularity among overseas companies who want to hire in Armenia.

Customized Recruitment Solutions

Whether hiring for temporary positions, freelance projects, or permanent roles, staff.am covers it all. Employers can leverage features such as job posting, candidate screening, and applicant tracking to streamline their hiring process and find the perfect fit for their organization. staff.am also offers features to **promote the employer brand and increase awareness of the company** and their hiring needs. There are both paid and free of charge services.

Community Engagement

staff.am has built a strong community of Human Resources industry specialists and leaders, ambitious individuals, educators, and trainers, mentors, and coaches.

Beyond serving as the leading jobs and career platform in Armenia, staff.am builds a vibrant community of job seekers, employers, industry professionals, and international organizations.

Industry Insights and Analytics

staff.am provides valuable insights into market trends, salary benchmarks, and industry dynamics, empowering employers to make informed decisions throughout the recruitment process. Each year staff.am publishes a **comprehensive guide to labor market trends**, which shows the highest demand for professions, industries, cities, regions, etc. The report is free of charge and helps many organizations, businesses, and individuals to make informed decisions.

Through various networking events, online and offline short and long-term educational programs, knowledge-sharing initiatives, and insightful articles, staff.am facilitates meaningful connections and collaboration within the Armenian business ecosystem, acting as a bridge not only between local talent and businesses but also **companies who are planning on opening offices or hiring remote teams in Armenia**.



Talent Availability in Armenia

While Armenia offers a rich talent pool across various domains, certain skills are more readily available than others. Some of the easiest types of talent to find in Armenia include:

Project Management

A strong domain where local talent can excel, even when it comes to **working fully remotely and managing multiple tasks over several time zones**, is Project Management. The country has a well-developed project manager community, quality training centers, and trainers educating the next generation of successful project managers.

Software Development

Armenia has earned a reputation as a hub for software development talent, with expertise in programming languages such as Java, Python, and JavaScript. The country's strong focus on STEM education and a thriving tech ecosystem contribute to the abundance of software developers available for hire. The position is relatively available, and at times, **software engineering professionals are in high demand**.

Product Design and Digital Design

For the past couple of years, local talent in product and digital design has been upskilled, competing with countries with longer tenure of having such professionals. It is relatively easier to find a highly skilled designer in Armenia without breaking the bank.

However, certain niche skills may pose challenges to find in Armenia, including:

AI and Machine Learning

While Armenia has made significant strides in AI and machine learning research and development, specialized talent in these fields may be relatively scarce. Companies seeking expertise in cutting-edge technologies **may need to invest in talent development** or explore partnerships with research institutions.

Digital Marketing

While digital marketing talent is available in Armenia, finding professionals with extensive experience and expertise in advanced digital marketing strategies on a global scale, such as SEO (search engine optimization), SEM (search engine marketing like Google ads), and specific niche-based professionals, like Pinterest marketing, etc., may require more targeted recruitment efforts. Companies may need to offer competitive compensation packages to attract top talent in this domain.

FROM ARMENIA TO THE WORLD

HOW THE YOUTH IN ARMENIA ARE MAKING THEIR MARK ON THE WORLD STAGE



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FROM ARMENIA TO THE WORLD HOW THE YOUTH IN ARMENIA ARE MAKING THEIR MARK ON THE WORLD STAGE

Since I became a journalistic writer, I started searching for interesting narratives hidden within the everyday. With a keen eye for detail, I find joy in [uncovering these stories based on my observations](#). It's most satisfying when my conclusions are later proven correct. Therefore, I actively participate in events inside Armenia and abroad. This allows me to meet international speakers, network with professionals, and seek out fresh perspectives.

Human behavior patterns are a source of endless attention for me. When I observe a recurring pattern, I'm driven to understand its root cause – what shapes these tendencies in our nature or behavior? This fascination is a cornerstone of my writing work. After all, when a group of people consistently exhibit similar traits, it suggests a deeper underlying reason. [These patterns aren't random](#); they emerge from complex social, cultural, or even biological influences.



I've laid this introduction to share my experience at [FemInno](#), the largest female innovation conference in Armenia and the region, which I attended last year in Yerevan. While the impressive speaker lineup featuring international figures initially drew me in, something else entirely captured my attention during the event. This unexpected element forms the core of this article.



During FemInno, I couldn't help but notice a few young Armenian women I met, or more precisely, was fortunate to meet. I discovered they were all international students who began their journeys in Armenia **before excelling at prestigious universities** in Europe and the United States. Additionally, they were all professional chess players, and many of them attended [TUMO Centers for Creative Technologies](#) in Armenia at a very young age. Suddenly, **a pattern seemed to emerge before my eyes!**



Ani Petrosyan

At the “Brewing Entrepreneurship” workshop led by Karén Gyulbudaghyan, I spotted a familiar face next to me: [Ani Petrosyan](#), a LinkedIn connection who’d caught my eye months ago.

Ani’s name surfaced while I was writing an article about successful Armenian women for an international media outlet. Back then, several people had recommended I connect with her simply because she was a data scientist, **not even 20 years old at the time**.

After the conference, Ani and I grabbed a coffee in downtown Yerevan and talked for an hour and a half; more precisely, Ani did the talking while I was impressed by her story.

It all started when Ani’s parents, **despite not being tech-savvy themselves**, took the decision to enroll her at TUMO Center in Yerevan by the time she was twelve, setting her on a journey of self-discovery. TUMO honed her skills, **exposed her to diverse fields**, and ultimately sparked a love for data science and quantum computing. Every day, she’d return home, excitedly explaining her learnings to her supportive parents, though they couldn’t fully grasp the concepts.



“ I absolutely love TUMO! I’ve been involved there for about six years, and it has been a transformative journey. I am deeply grateful to TUMO for shaping me into who I am today.”

-Ani Petrosyan

While still in high school, Ani landed a backend developer internship at the All-In Group in Yerevan, working alongside adults who enjoyed her company. She told me how everyone there was kind to her, perhaps because she was just a kid. But even then, she felt a sense of fulfillment, living the dream of working in a professional setting.



“ In my final year of high school, I was selected for DataPoint Armenia’s competitive data science fellowship. This program was even more enriching than a typical internship. We not only worked on an actual project with a client but also engaged in active learning sessions that enhanced our practical skills.”

-Ani Petrosyan

It was clear that **TUMO nurtured the dreamer within this young girl**, fueling her ambition. Since then, she’s been actively involved in many international and local programs, and she even started a nonprofit in Armenia called “Girlopolis,” where they organize hackathons to inspire and engage females in technology.

When it was the right time for Ani to start applying to universities, her passion for computer science was dominant, and she was particularly attracted to the Ivy League. Fortunately, the University of Pennsylvania recognized not just her passion for computer science but also her dedication to making a difference both locally and globally. Today, Ani is a University of Pennsylvania **teaching assistant and undergraduate researcher** at the General Robotics, Automation, Sensing, and Perception (GRASP) Lab, delving into NeRFs.

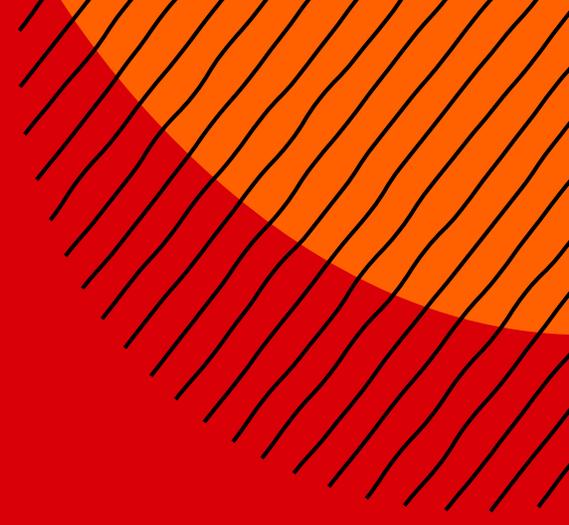
I wanted to know what Ani, a young professional woman who has **achieved so much in a short time**, thinks of Armenia as a destination for remote workers with children, especially since Armenia is not the typical “land of opportunities” many envision.

“During my first year, I also received a few small grants to help cover non-tuition expenses, so shout-out to “The Sona Mnatsakanyan Female Talent Scholarship” and Mary Kay’s “Young Women in STEM” grant.”

-Ani Petrosyan



She told me that **Armenia is a fantastic choice for families**, especially for those with school-aged children, as it offers a warm community and a safe environment at school that is ideal for raising kids. Armenian schools provide a strong educational foundation, and many cultural and historical opportunities enrich learning outside the classroom.



“I went to a public school in Yerevan, and I am at UPenn right now.”

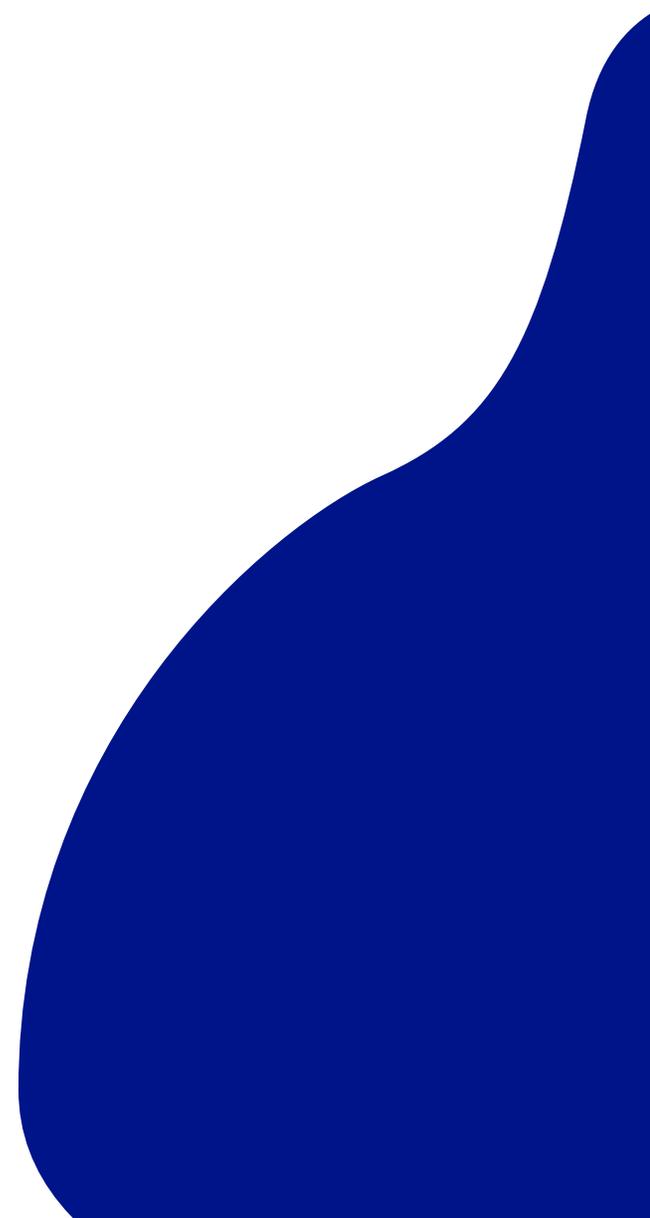
-Ani Petrosyan

One thing I learned from her, though she dismissed it as a minor detail, resonated with me more deeply. She mentioned **mastering chess at a young age**, which doesn't seem surprising at all. Her strategic life plan was evident, with each step meticulously calculated and contributing to a bigger vision. **Chess likely complemented TUMO's influence.**

“I began learning chess in second grade when it was offered as a subject at my school. Over the years, I've observed that playing chess has significantly enhanced my logical thinking and decision-making skills, especially when compared to my peers.”

-Ani Petrosyan

But was Ani unique, or **is this a formula for success?** The next chapter explores this question.



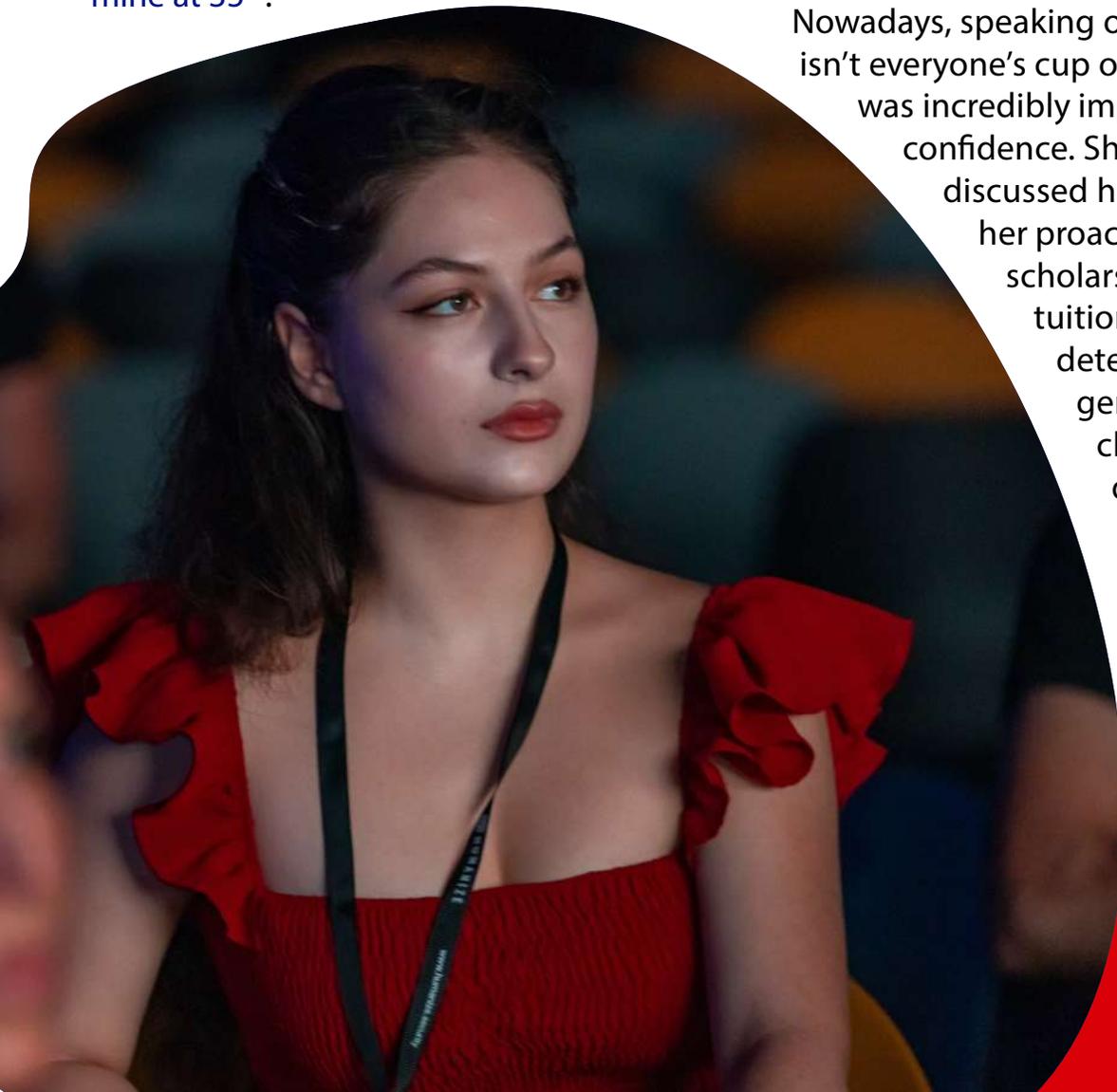
Hratsin Torosyan

“Hi, I’m Hratsin, an Advisory Council at the Youth Development Center of Armenia.” With these words, [Hratsin Torosyan](#) introduced herself to me and others attending the FemInno conference.

Many of us, myself included, build self-confidence over time. In my late twenties, I finally felt comfortable asserting myself in group settings. I thought that was the case for everyone until I met Hratsin at FemInno last year, whose confidence was surprising. She was 19 years old, yet she spoke with a [self-assuredness that rivaled mine at 35](#) .

Our conversation revealed Hratsin’s drive. She was at FemInno seeking funding to complete her second year of higher education in Italy. She actively networked, looking for scholarships to fuel her ambitions. Over the next two days, I watched in admiration as she interacted with the conference participants. She effortlessly sparked conversations, [introducing herself with charm and grace](#) . It would be honest to admit a flicker of envy – I couldn’t help but wonder where that kind of confidence had been when I was her age.

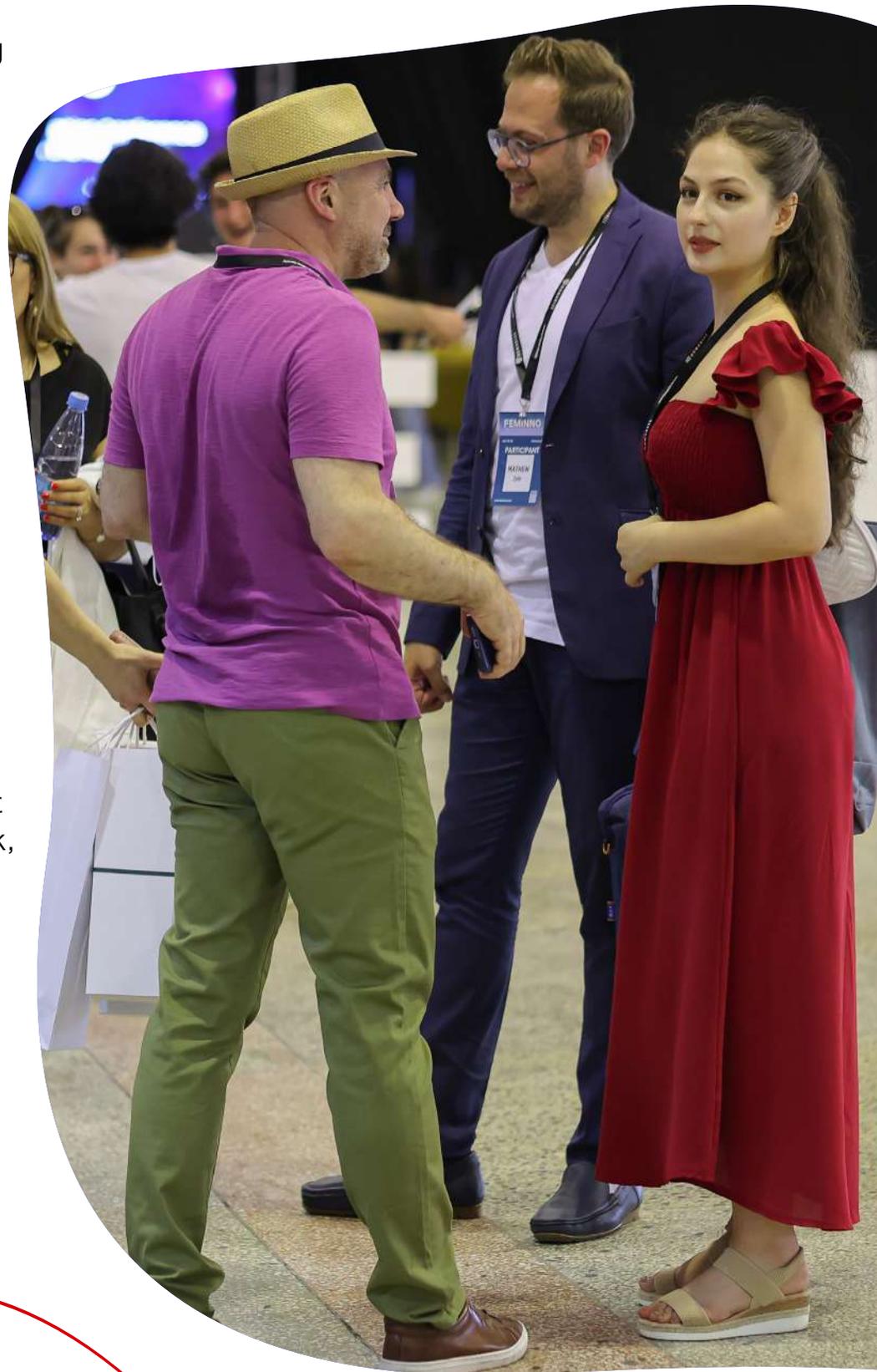
Nowadays, speaking of finances isn’t everyone’s cup of tea, but I was incredibly impressed by her confidence. She openly discussed her goals and her proactive search for scholarships to cover her tuition. That kind of determination is a rare gem these days; it’s the classic way of pursuing dreams: [Clearly and straightforwardly](#) .



Hratsin's dream of studying abroad started after her participation in an Erasmus+ project in the Czech Republic at the age of 16. This experience, which focused on public speaking and cultural exchange, fueled her desire to broaden her horizons and make a positive impact on the world.

“ I explored every corner of Prague and talked with every person I could meet. I was so happy to be given that opportunity that I gave it my all. After coming back, I decided to actively engage in community work and participated in various projects, including more than ten Erasmus+ projects. Afterwards, I applied to universities in Europe.”

-Hratsin Torosyan



Upon returning to Armenia, encouraged by her love for chemistry, she set her sights on a neuroscience degree in Germany, diligently studying German and excelling in her academic coursework. However, the COVID-19 pandemic took the world by storm and put an end to her plans. It seemed like Faith had different plans for her, and she had the opportunity to reconsider her choice and make a life-changing decision to pursue her passion for art, a field she'd always felt deeply connected to. Today, Hratsin is [studying art at the University of Padua in Italy](#).

My top question was how did she manage to switch from neuroscience to architecture, [then to art studies](#), and explore other fields in between? A deeper conversation revealed a nearly 10-year journey with TUMO Centers. Well, I got my answer already!

Hratsin described her time at TUMO as one of the brightest chapters in her life. This unique free program provided her with the [opportunity to explore different interests](#), from robotics and programming to animation, filmmaking, and web development. The chance to learn from qualified teachers and experts from around the world further enriched the experience.

“ I still remember my impatience, waiting for that anticipated day when I would turn 12 years old so I could attend TUMO. It is one of the most remarkable educational institutions in the world, a place where kids from 12 to 18 can learn skills based on their own personal interests.”

-Hratsin Torosyan

Hratsin's journey highlights **the value of exploration during one's teenage years**. These years are a time to embrace new interests, encounter different people, and learn from both successes and failures.

“ I strongly believe that teens are meant to experiment, changing fields and trying new things, meeting new people, failing, learning, and failing again. It's during this period of exploration that we truly discover ourselves.”

-Hratsin Torosyan



Something seemed to be missing in Hratsin's story; this [confidence and sharp eye for details](#) she must have developed by something beyond TUMO. And there it was, chess professionalism over and over again. I learned that Hratsin began [practicing chess by the time she was six years old](#) and continued developing her skills, coached, supported, and mentored by her grandfather. While still at school, she joined the [Chess Federation of Armenia](#) along with her brother and took her chess skills to the next level.

“ It wasn't merely a game; it was a reflection of life itself, a microcosm of the human experience played out on a checkered battlefield”

-Hratsin Torosyan

Hratsin participated in many local and international chess tournaments and championships. Moreover, I was surprised to learn that in Armenia, she learned Blind Chess, a form of chess where players compete without seeing the board or pieces. Players rely on memory and visualization to keep track of the game's progress. She mentioned how she and her brother used to play blind chess games on the way back home every day.

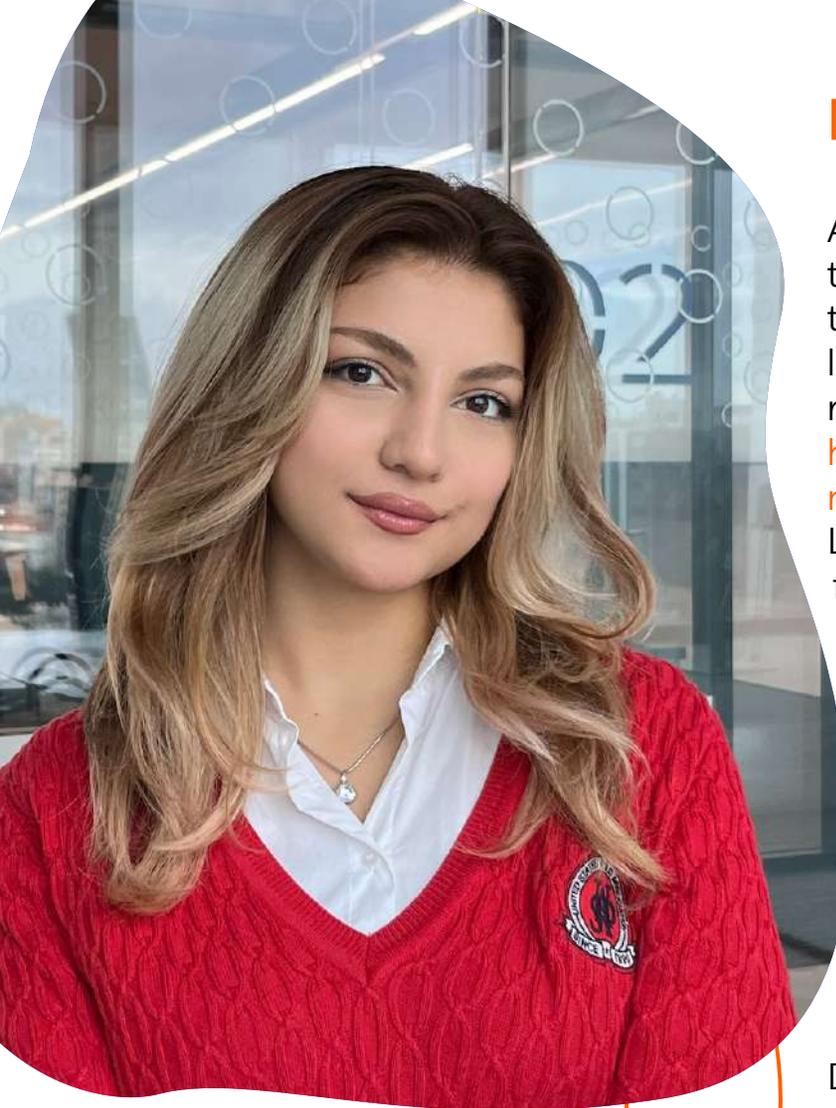
Learning these details erased any lingering doubts about Hratsin's self-confidence. It became clear to me that when she was networking during FemInno, [the entire conference zone was her chessboard](#), and she strategically moved across it. It was clear that her TUMO education, chess background, and Armenian roots were key to her success.



“ Being Armenian is a blessing and never a disadvantage”

-Hratsin Torosyan

Does mastering chess pave the way for success? Is it a shortcut to achievement, or is there more to the story? The next chapter reveals all!



Emily Khachatryan

At the conference, a young woman tirelessly working with the organizing team caught my eye. Wherever I looked, she was ensuring everything ran smoothly. With a warm smile, she **handled speakers and participant needs** and oversaw every detail. Luckily, on the first day of FemInno, a friend of mine introduced me to [Emily Khachatryan](#).

There are youth, there are successful youth, and there's Emily – a whole other level of success on a global scale. Beyond her role at the conference, being a FemInno ambassador for two years already, Emily is a member of the management board at the Youth Development Center of Armenia and a member of the Council of Europe's Advisory Council on Youth. Add to that pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Data and Business Analytics at IE School of Science and Technology in Spain. These were only to name a few because she has much more.

“ Since childhood, studying abroad has been a lifelong dream of mine. I was thrilled to receive acceptance to a school in the UK to pursue an IB degree for high school. Unfortunately, due to financial constraints, I was unable to attend”

- Emily Khachatryan

Two years ago, Emily received the High Potential Award from IE, covering 75% of her tuition fees. However, despite this generous support, the remaining expenses were substantial. It was with great gratitude that she received the Sona Mnatsakanyan Women in STEM scholarship, which provided the means to fully cover the rest of her tuition costs. Additionally, she started a fundraising campaign for her first year

of studies, and thanks to the generous support of donors, she was able to gather the necessary funds to cover her living expenses.

Once again, it's all about having strong self-belief and a clear vision for the future. Starting a fundraising campaign to cover living expenses demonstrates a responsible and proactive mindset.

“Despite the obstacles driven by an unwavering desire to fulfill my educational aspirations, I got accepted to nine universities all over the world and in the end chose the best university for my profession.”

Emily's decision to study Data Science comes from her deep interest in Statistics and Mathematics. She told me that since childhood, she's always enjoyed solving logical problems rather than memorizing information. In August 2023, Emily was elected **president of the Google Developers Student Club** at her university. This role allows her to organize workshops and sessions for students from technical and non-technical backgrounds and teach them about Google Developer Technologies

- Emily Khachatryan



“ I’ve spent time exploring fields that combine my interests in Marketing, Technology, and Social Aspects and found that Data Science is the perfect fit.”

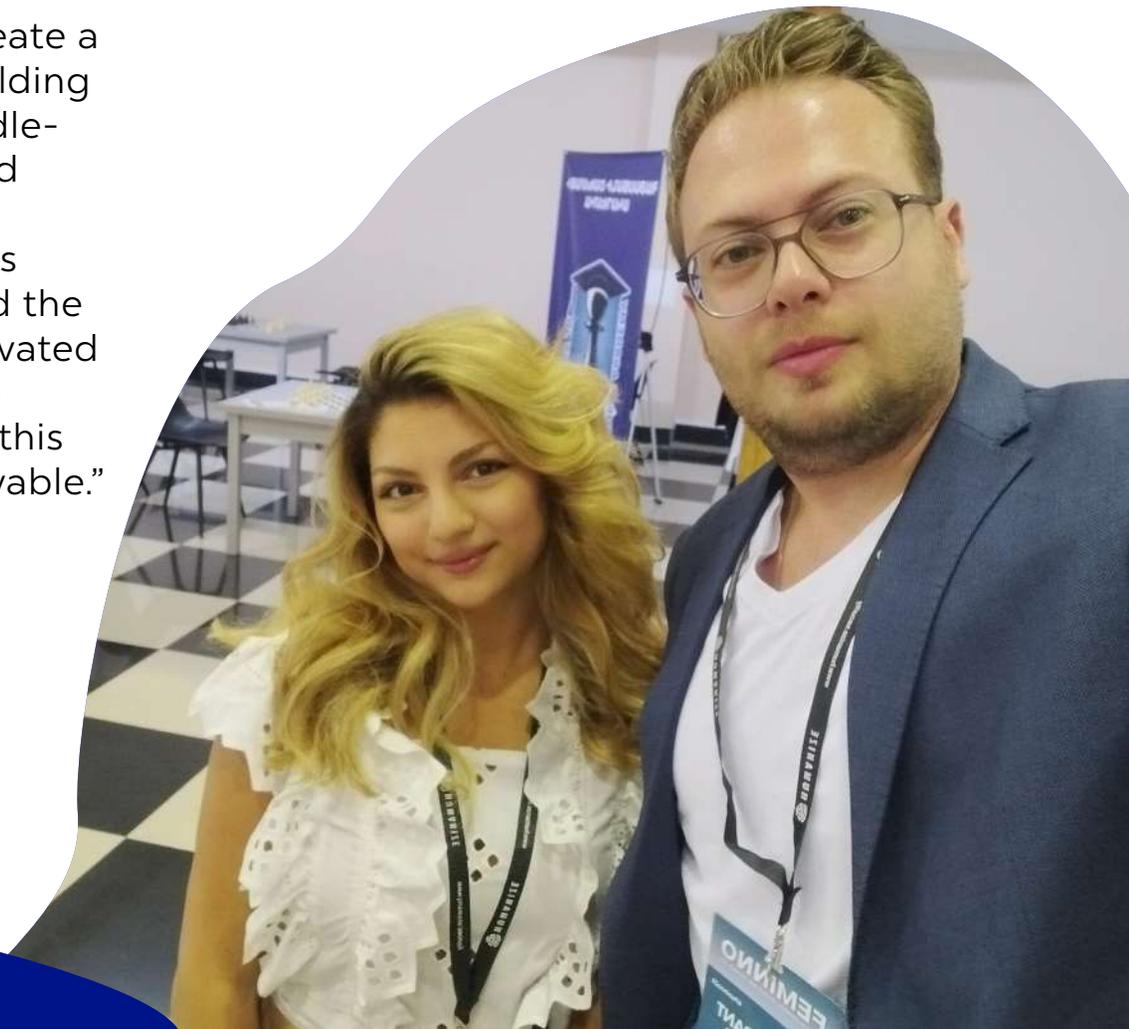
- Emily Khachatryan

As my conversation with Emily delved deeper into her academic background and volunteer activities, I arrived **at the realization I’d likely anticipated from our initial greeting**. Emily was a chess player who began practicing chess while still in middle school as **part of the Armenian curriculum**.

“ I aspire to create a free capacity-building program for middle-aged unemployed individuals. With volunteer mentors and teachers, and the network I’ve cultivated through studying abroad, I believe this initiative is achievable.”

-Emily Khachatryan

Even when I asked Emily about her future goals beyond her current education, I was impressed by her answer, which went **far beyond what a typical person her age would dream of**. She aspires to create a program to empower middle-aged individuals by providing them with opportunities to acquire new technical skills and explore emerging professions in the rapidly evolving fields of Artificial Intelligence and Technology. Leveraging her expertise in STEM, the initiative seeks to support Armenians who have been **displaced from their jobs due to the dynamic nature of the tech market**.



“ I often reflect on how each decision we make in life shapes who we are. Everything that happens to us, happens for a reason. I firmly believe that being born and raised in Armenia has played a significant role in shaping the person I am today. If I had been born anywhere else in the world, I wouldn't be the same person with the same character, ambitions, and vision. Armenia provided me with the foundation and the core beginning of my future success”

- **Emily Khachatryan**

Emily's focus on middle-aged unemployed individuals revealed a thoughtful and clear mind with a focus on social responsibility.

Living proof that Armenia fosters ambition, these young women shattered the “land of opportunity” myth. For families considering relocation, Armenia could be the unexpected launchpad for your children's dreams.



TECH EVENTS



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TECH BLOGGER

MAY 2	From Stress to Success by HR Drone	
MAY 2	Mergers and Acquisitions: Driving Forces and Deal Structuring by AUA,	
MAY 2	“Solana Ecosystem Call Meetup”	
MAY 2-3	International Conference on Nano science and Nanotechnology	
MAY 3	Data Analysis and Plotting in Python with Pandas by AITC / Armenian-Indian Center for Excellence in ICT by EIF	
MAY 3	Scientific computing with Python by AITC	
MAY 3	«IP addressing and subnetting» free course by AITC	
MAY 3	Job fair by e-work.am	
MAY 3	Entrepreneurship Hack Night by EPIC - Entrepreneurship and Product Innovation Center	
MAY 3	“Road towards programming” in Ijevan by Innoijevna	
MAY 4	Fastex Meetup by Blockchain Embassy of Armenia	
MAY 4	TEDxYerevan	
MAY 4-5	Gyumri Game Conference 2024	

MAY 5	Business mentoring	
MAY 6	Unlocking the Power of Armenian Supercomputing free course by AICT	
MAY 7	HR breakfast	
MAY 8	Unveiling the Granatus Ventures and Alchemist Partnership by Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology (FAST)	
MAY 10	The role of technologies in the board of the directors” by Armenian Institute of Directors	
MAY 12	ARDY Academy open day	
MAY 13-17	NanoPQIQO forum	
MAY 14	ProExport by Armenian Businessmen Association	
MAY 15	Enhancing Project Management through Interpersonal & Intrapersonal Intelligence by PMI Armenia chapter	
MAY 14-16	EBRD annual meeting and business forum	
MAY 16	Crafting Impactful dashboards for your clients by PMI Science	
MAY 18-19	Security BSides Yerevan	
MAY 19	Presentation of Ton Ecosystem and community meetup	
MAY 20	International HR dayMay 22-24:	
MAY 22-24	CyberGen 2024 by Central Bank of Armenia	

THE EVOLUTION OF ARMENIAN CUISINE

TRADITIONS, EXCHANGES, AND UNIQUE FLAVORS



**VAHRAM
ELAGOZ**

ADJUNCT LECTURER



THE EVOLUTION OF ARMENIAN CUISINE TRADITIONS, EXCHANGES, AND UNIQUE FLAVORS

The annual vacation time is fast approaching, and our decision is made: **we will visit Armenia.** The flights are booked, and the accommodation is secured. Now we are ready to plan our stay: day trips to organize, museums to visit, and, perhaps more importantly, **places to eat.** After all, experiencing the culinary wealth and traditions of any host country is one of the strongest aspects of its cultural heritage and undoubtedly the most exciting part of our visit.

Beyond the Top Ten Dishes

One of the first things prior to our departure we intuitively do is to browse the internet, or -if you belong to the above-a-certain-age generation as I do and still appreciate printed resources- turn the pages of a guide book to find out where to eat and, more importantly, what to eat. If one is pressed with time, I admit, it is enticing to go down the rabbit hole in our quest to find eateries with the so-called top ten national dishes on their menu that, more often than not, **might end up being a big disappointment** along with a deep hole in our wallet.



While in some cases, the traveler may have tasted a selection of dishes from popular travel destinations, such as Chinese, Greek, Italian, Indian, Thai, Mexican, or French, it is often not easy to come across restaurants serving the food of smaller, perhaps, less known, countries unless you happen to live in large metropolises across the globe with sizeable communities from those countries such as Armenia.

From Soil to Table

The best advice to give, then, is to dedicate some time to studying and learning the **history and evolution of the food culture of Armenia**. This is also true for most of us Armenians like myself who were born and grew up outside of the Republic of Armenia. Of course, advice is cheap and can be readily given; following it is up to the individual. In my case, I was neither given nor sought it as I was coming to Armenia for a longer stay and wanted to experience the culinary traditions at my own pace.

A course I taught for many years offered a glimpse into how plants shaped the lives, culture, and traditions of human societies once they made the shift from being hunters and

gatherers into agrarian societies. The geography and the climate of a region determine which plants will successfully grow and thrive. And they, in turn, will offer their bounties to the humans that happen to live in a given area.



Food culture and traditions, like so many other things linked to human societies, are not static: they evolve as the wheels of time turn, and through exchanges made by trade and travel, certain components of the traditions of neighboring cultures by way of additions of new flavors, utensils, and cooking techniques are adopted and incorporated into the existing traditions.

Such exchanges can easily be perceived as something negative, but they don't necessarily have to be so. In fact, as long as the unique characteristics of a nation's culture and, by extension, its culinary characteristics are retained, **such exchanges enrich the culinary traditions of a particular country** or region and do not impoverish it, as history shows.

Global Diaspora Influence

Armenia's topography certainly allowed it to retain its own culinary traditions over many centuries, whereas its geography and historical expanse allowed and facilitated exchanges of culinary traditions and contributed to its diversity, even **adding exotic layers of flavors to its cuisine.**

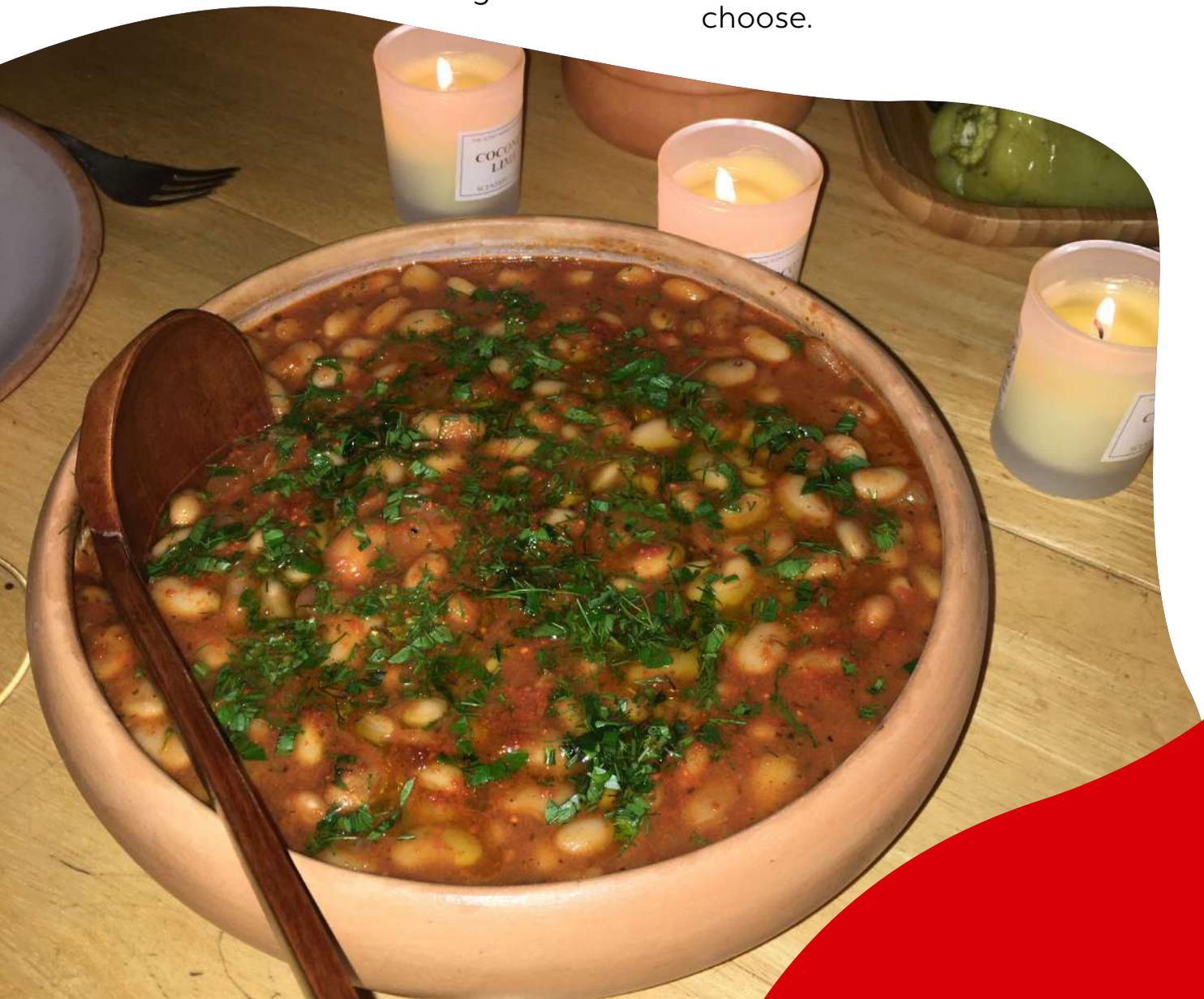
Our nation's historical realities set in motion a global diaspora, taking their culinary traditions with them to the four corners of the world with new combinations of flavors and tastes emerging. Is it too fanciful to imagine that Armenians -being forced to leave behind their homelands, for example, in Persia and settling down in India, Malaya, or even Indonesia- have added new spices and ingredients they found in their new homes to their foods imbued with ancient traditions? Who knows? However, what we know with certainty is the more recent influx of many diasporan Armenians from countries such as Syria, Lebanon, and many other parts of the world to Armenia, who brought with them the **food traditions of their home countries to Armenia.**



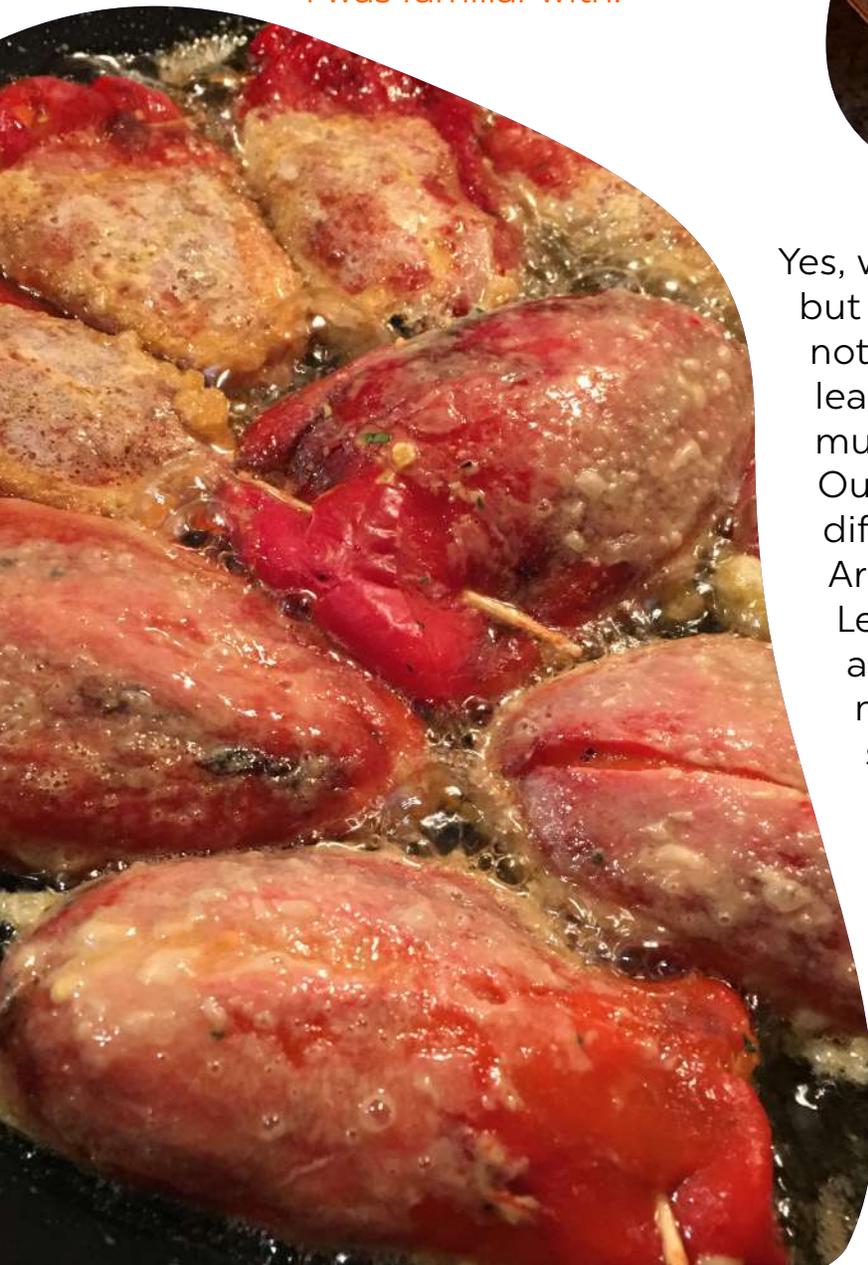
Today, the culinary wealth of Armenia's rich past and the presence of Armenians from all over the world who have found a new home in Armenia can be readily sampled in many eateries throughout Armenia, **enriched with regional traditions and flavors**, a reminder of the various Armenian kingdoms in the region. It is now possible to taste the finest examples of Middle Eastern and European specialties in Armenia, particularly in Yerevan and Gyumri: the buzz of new restaurants is unstoppable to the delight of so many local and visiting 'foodies.'

Evolving Definition of Armenian Cuisine

With that, the definition of Armenian cuisine also seems to be changing along with it the concept of what constitutes authentic or traditional Armenian food. Still, there exist uniquely Armenian dishes that act as 'storehouses of cultural identity,' and we should be proud of those. If that is the visitor's choice, Yerevan and other parts of Armenia offer us a large selection from which to choose.



I was born and raised in Istanbul. My maternal ancestors hail from Kütahya (Կուտահյա in Armenian, Κοτύαιον in Greek), who in turn left Persia during the reign of Shah Abbas I (1521-1629) of Persia. The food that I grew up with was a mélange of the prevailing food traditions of western Anatolia that managed to incorporate and retain some of the culinary traits of remote Persia. What I would like to underline with this digression is the fact that although I am an Armenian, through and through, a lot of the flavor combinations or the dishes I encountered during my two-year stay in Armenia **were different than what I was familiar with.**



Yes, we eat dolma* or sarma at home, but we also have meatless versions of not only grape leaves but cabbage leaves, green bell peppers, and even mussels, eaten at room temperature. Our mantı is prepared somewhat differently than those prepared in Armenian households from Syria or Lebanon. But there are also unique and elaborate dishes such as stuffed mackerel (uskumru dolması), stuffed spleen (dalak dolması), topik and anoushabur (sweet soup) and zerde, a rice pudding that contains saffron, rose water and pomegranates, a holdover from the long-gone times of Persia both of which we associate with New Year, Christmas and Easter, which are not widely known in Armenia.

A wide array of vegetable dishes that are cooked in olive oil and served at room temperature in the homes of Armenians in Istanbul, for example, are the result of marriages of diverse culinary traditions and ingredients of our region, which enriched and diversified Armenian culinary traditions. The list of examples is long, and the reader will, no doubt, have his/ her own stories to tell.

When we look back, the historical Armenian diet was, in the words of [Dr. David Pipoyan](#) from the National Academy of Sciences in Yerevan, **very healthy and close to a more plant-based Mediterranean diet**. This is still true thanks to dishes that combine meat with fruits and vegetables (e.g.,

stews); soups that contain fermented dairy products (e.g., yogurt) with grains such as cracked wheat (or bulgur); various legumes and grains; fresh herbs and greens that accompany dishes and, of course, freshwater fishes that constitute an important part of culinary experience in Armenia.

Undeniable is also the Soviet Era's influence and contribution to Armenian cuisine: heavy on cabbage, potatoes, root vegetables, and buckwheat but also a rich French-influenced dessert culture is an undeniable and important component of that era, still masterfully prepared and served along with more traditional sweets in **several cafés and pâtisseries in Yerevan and Gyumri**.

Armenia's Vibrant Market Culture

The visitor who comes to Armenia should not miss the opportunity to taste fresh fruits and vegetables that are available and, when in season, in huge quantities and in such a variety that would leave one positively speechless, as I was.

Of course, as a plant biologist and someone with a deep interest in plant diversity, I was so excited whenever I visited a greengrocer or walked by a street hawker to see the freshest fruits and vegetables on offer or the villagers proudly selling the freshly gathered wild herbs and roots, the harbingers of spring, brought into the cities from their villages.



Their stories, if one cares to listen as much as I did, are fascinating and worth listening to. I remember one encounter I had with one of them: an elderly woman who was a native of Akhalakalaki in Georgia who sold the freshest herbs and, later in the season, the best tomatoes on Hanrapetutyan Street. It was not very easy for me to understand every word she said, but I am sure she also had similar problems with my ways of speaking Armenian, the Bolsahay's Armenian. Still, there always was laughter at the end of each conversation. I also remember Baron Garo from Armavir, who put up a small stall on Pushkin Street on weekends. He had the best fruits and sometimes even

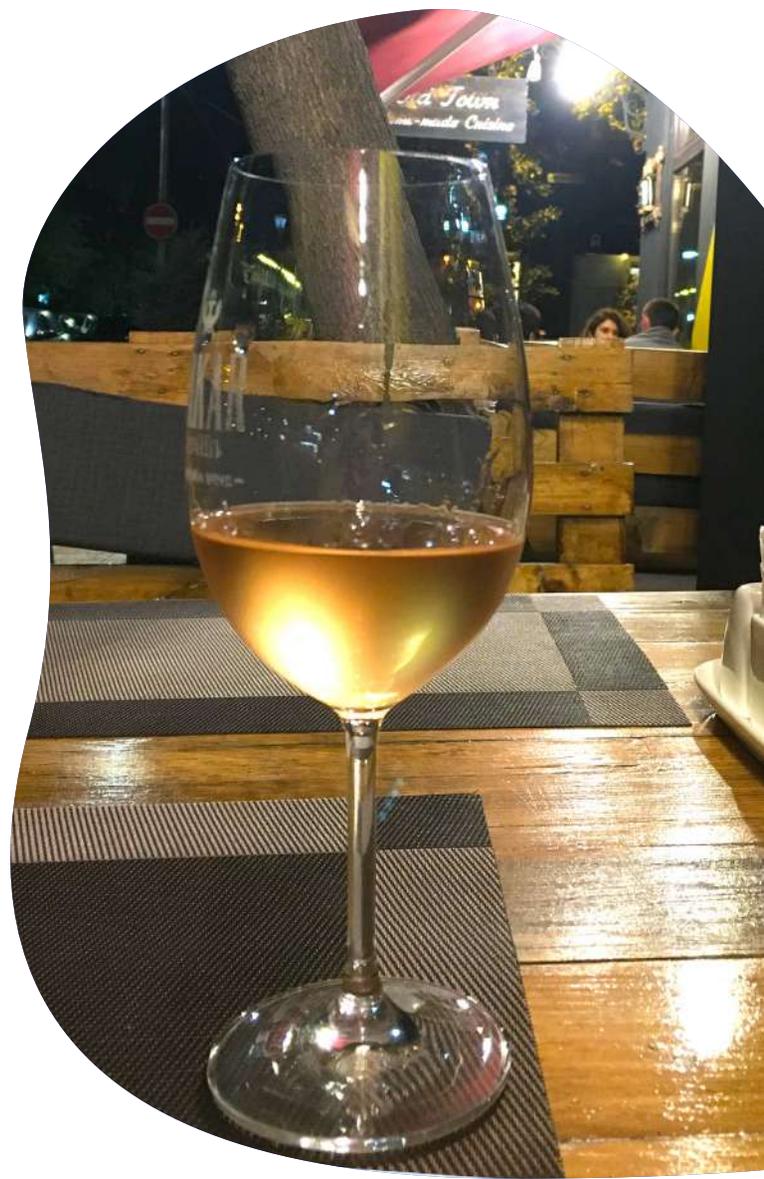
exotic varieties of cucumbers on display. Our conversations were lively and even on days I felt slightly depressed, I would return home 'vokevorvadz' and happy. I shouldn't forget to mention Digin Anahid on Nalbandyan Street, my primary source of fresh purslane, mallow, and okra in season. She suffered from severe back pain, the result of constant bending while tending her garden, but very rarely complained.

These are some of the happiest memories that I carry with me. People like Baron Garo or Digin Anahid were my good sources of information on what traditional and regional foods to try or prepare at home.

Exploring the Richness of Armenian Wine Culture

When talking about food and culinary traditions, a thriving and **constantly growing wine culture in Armenia** is definitely worth mentioning. Prior to the popularization of the vodka tradition during the Soviet Era, the production and consumption of wine was part of the Armenian culture, the result of the centuries-old Armenian tradition of viticulture.

This tradition can be seen in films dating back to the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, depicting family reunions and special occasions, especially in rural settings, which are readily accessible on the [National Cinema Center of Armenia's](#) YouTube portal.



A renewed interest in Armenia's long history of wine-making has given a much-needed boost to the establishment of new vineyards and [the production of world-class wines in Armenia](#). This growing interest is, in part, thanks to institutions such as the [EVN Wine Academy](#) of the International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE), which offers an Enology and Wine Business Program that offers hands-on experience.

Today, there are many wine shops that offer a wide selection of Armenian wines, vineyards, and wine bars that offer wine tastings along with an amazing variety of top-of-the-line cheeses produced in Armenia that [incorporate French and Italian cheese-making technologies](#).

Within this context, it is worth mentioning that the [Yerevan Wine Days](#) are going to take place between June 7 and 9, 2024, the aim of which is to introduce and promote Armenian wines to residents and tourists alike.

In order to inspire potential wine lovers, I should not hesitate to mention a [growing number of Armenian artisanal cheese makers](#) –nothing to compare with those sold in major supermarket chains. Their products are readily available in small businesses across Yerevan (Zakyan and Avag Petrosyan Streets come to my mind) and, of course, online.

In conclusion, the curious traveler to Armenia or someone who decides to settle down in Armenia regardless of his/her heritage should venture out of the beaten track and try out as much as possible, especially dishes that are [not featured in the so-called top-ten lists](#). An amazing range of fruits, both fresh and dried, vegetables, a wide range of herbs always present at dinner tables, cheeses that incorporate spices and herbs or utilize different cheese-making techniques, wines, and other locally-produced spirits, and not to forget mouth-watering desserts and pastries are what will [make a visit or stay in Armenia an unforgettable experience](#).



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HOW CAN DIGITAL NOMADS APPLY FOR ARMENIAN CITIZENSHIP IN 2024?



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How to Obtain Armenian Citizenship?

While the Armenian Citizenship Law doesn't explicitly define "permanent resident," you can qualify for citizenship by holding a valid Armenian residence permit (temporary, permanent, or special) **for the past three years.**

In addition to the residency requirement, you'll need to pass a multiple-choice test on the Armenian Constitution. You only need to get 17 out of 33 questions correct to pass. However, the test is administered in Armenian, and you'll also need to fill out a biographical form in Armenian. This means that spending some time **learning basic Armenian might be necessary.**

Here's the information regarding fees for Armenian Citizenship applications and documents:

Applying for citizenship	1,000 AMD (\$2.50)
Regular passport	1,000 AMD (\$2.50)
Biometric passport	25,000 AMD (\$56.00)
ID card	3,000 AMD (\$7.50)
Address registration	1,000 AMD (\$2.50)

For faster passport or ID card issuance, there are additional fees:

Next business day	20,000 AMD (\$50.00)
Three business days	10,000 AMD (\$25.00)
Five business days	5,000 AMD (\$12.50)

While meeting the specified requirements improves your chances, it **does not guarantee approval of your application**. If rejected, you are permitted to reapply after a year. Additionally, you have the legal right to appeal the decision in court; however, be advised that administrative court proceedings may extend for a year or more. Typically, rejections are communicated via text message without explanation. Under Armenian law, the **government can refuse citizenship applications without providing reasons**. Should your application be rejected, you have two months to appeal in court, but you must first obtain a copy of the rejection notice from the Passport Office.

Obtaining Armenian citizenship **doesn't automatically make you a tax resident**. Tax residency follows tax laws, not immigration laws, and usually requires spending over 183 days per year in Armenia. So, you can be an Armenian citizen without being a tax resident, and vice versa.

All Armenian citizens need a registered address for official notices. If you used a foreign address in your application, **that will be your official address**. However, to register a local address (e.g., showing "Armenia" on your passport/ID), proof of residence is required. This can be a property ownership/lease certificate or owner's consent. If unavailable, local police verification (taking up to two weeks) is an option.

Expanding your horizons through dual citizenship can be incredibly rewarding. While Armenian citizenship might not be the perfect fit for everyone, it offers unique advantages for some. Keep these two. Why is it worth considering? Simple: Acquiring Armenian citizenship is a relatively easy and affordable endeavor compared to other countries. Moreover, the application fees are manageable, and brushing up on basic Armenian can be an enjoyable cultural experience, not just a requirement. However, it's important to remember that **eligibility doesn't guarantee approval**.

In essence, Armenian citizenship can be a **low-cost investment with high potential rewards** for the adventurous remote worker. Should you have any detailed questions about relocating to Armenia or getting Armenian citizenship, our website, [Armenian Lawyers](#), is updated with the most recent information in English.

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SETTLING IN ARMENIA

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN EX-DIGITAL NOMAD IN ARMENIA



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We've traveled the world as nomads, moving from city to city while working remotely. This lifestyle exposed us to new cultures and countries. We became digital nomads somewhat unexpectedly; it felt like [this way of life chose us rather than the other way around](#).

I'm an English writer, and my wife is a professional photographer. While I envisioned having a child during our nomadic journey, my wife wasn't enthusiastic about the idea. She preferred to [settle down somewhere and build a family life](#).

Settling Down in Armenia

Fast forward a few years, and we found ourselves visiting Armenia for a week to see a friend. We had no idea back then that Armenia would become [our home away from home](#), and most importantly, we never thought it would spell the end of our digital nomad lifestyle. Despite being a small country with a relatively small population, [Armenia unexpectedly captured our hearts](#). We fell in love with every aspect of life here. What began as a one-week trip turned into a one-year stay, then two, then three, then four, and now [we've been here for almost seven years – and counting](#).

Surprisingly, we embraced a settled life, finding a specific corner of a city that stole our hearts: [Abovyan Street in the heart of Yerevan](#). It was in Armenia that my wife expressed her desire to have a child and raise a family after ten years of marriage. Now, with occasional business trips to the Emirates, [Armenia truly feels like home base](#). Ironically, earlier this year, I was offered a dream job (one I would have jumped at a decade ago) that involves frequent travel and a great salary. But my first thought? I don't have a desire to travel constantly these days.



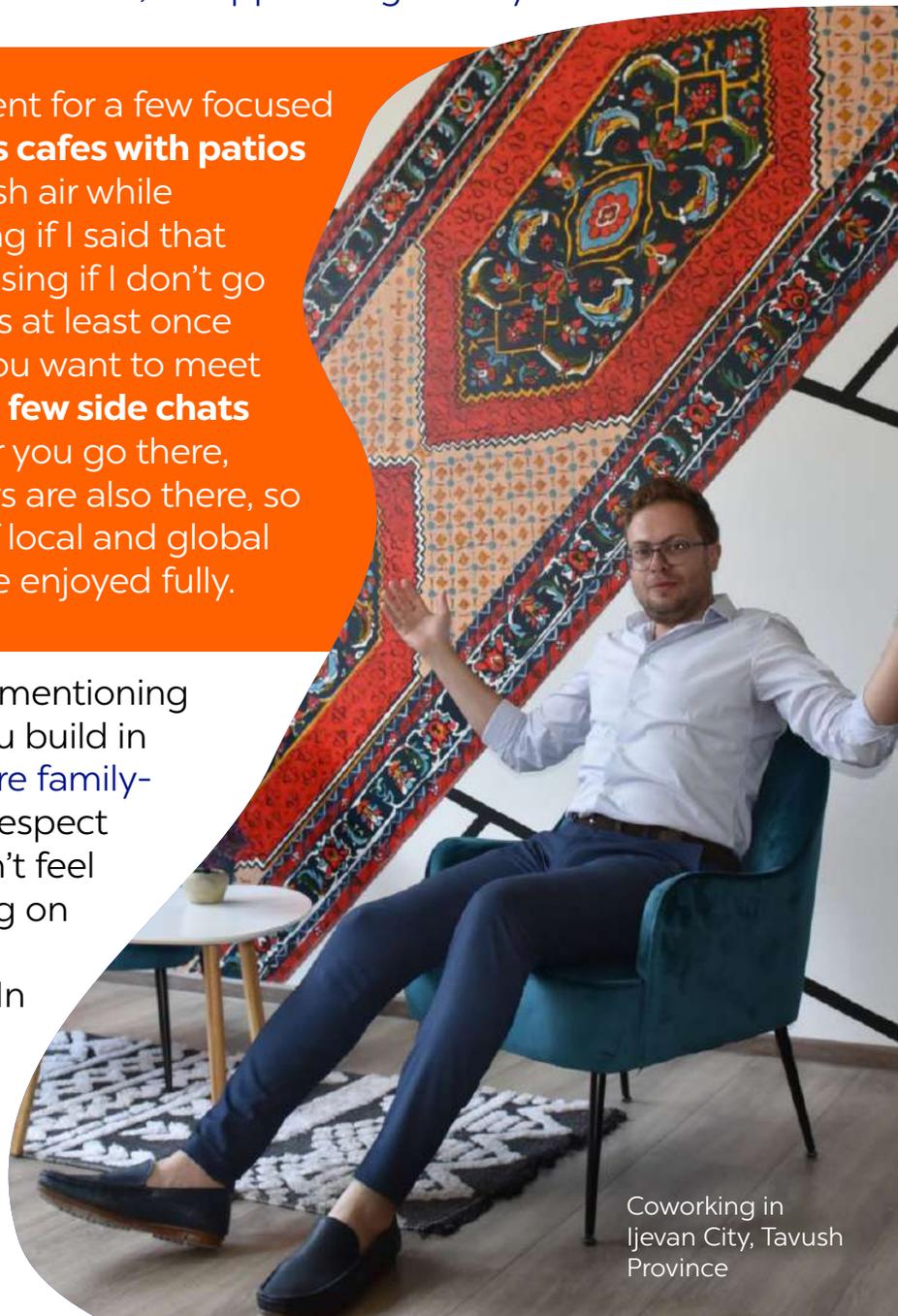
Embracing Community in Yerevan

Now that you've heard how I [became an ex-digital nomad](#), let's explore what daily life looks like for me in Armenia. It's important to note that while I'm no longer nomadic, I continue to work remotely as an English writer with over 10 years of experience collaborating with clients worldwide. So, the only aspect of my professional life that hasn't changed is [the remote element](#).

Yerevan's compact size and relaxed atmosphere are a big plus for remote workers. You don't feel isolated; [the city itself becomes an extension of your workspace](#). There's a strong sense of community – you'll encounter familiar faces at cafes and coworking spaces, and they'll recognize you too. People greet each other on the street, fostering a natural network for those open to making connections. This is a stark contrast to the hustle of larger cities, where building a network takes time and effort. In [Yerevan, it happens organically](#).

Each morning, I leave my apartment for a few focused hours of work. I **gravitate towards cafes with patios or open areas**, soaking up the fresh air while getting creative. I Wouldn't be lying if I said that sometimes I feel something is missing if I don't go grab a coffee at my favorite places at least once a week. You get the feeling that you want to meet the nice people there and **enjoy a few side chats with them**. Additionally, whenever you go there, many international remote workers are also there, so the atmosphere is always a mix of local and global cultures, and it's rich enough to be enjoyed fully.

One thing on the side that is worth mentioning is the quality of the relationships you build in Armenia. [People in Armenia are more family-oriented](#), and they appreciate and respect families and strong bonds. You don't feel like you're being perceived as hitting on others just because you care about them and enjoy a coffee together. In fact, this is the [social conservatism balanced with freedom](#) that I've referred to in previous articles about life in Armenia.



Coworking in
Ijevan City, Tavush
Province

Since Yerevan is **walkable and designed to be enjoyed on foot**, I find walking around a great way to clear my head and spark new writing ideas. In fact, this doesn't just apply to Yerevan but to many other Armenian cities in the region. Unlike some developed metropolises, Yerevan allows you to get from point A to point B walking, **eliminating the need for constant transportation**. The lack of walkable areas in some big cities is a drawback I can't ignore or get along with.

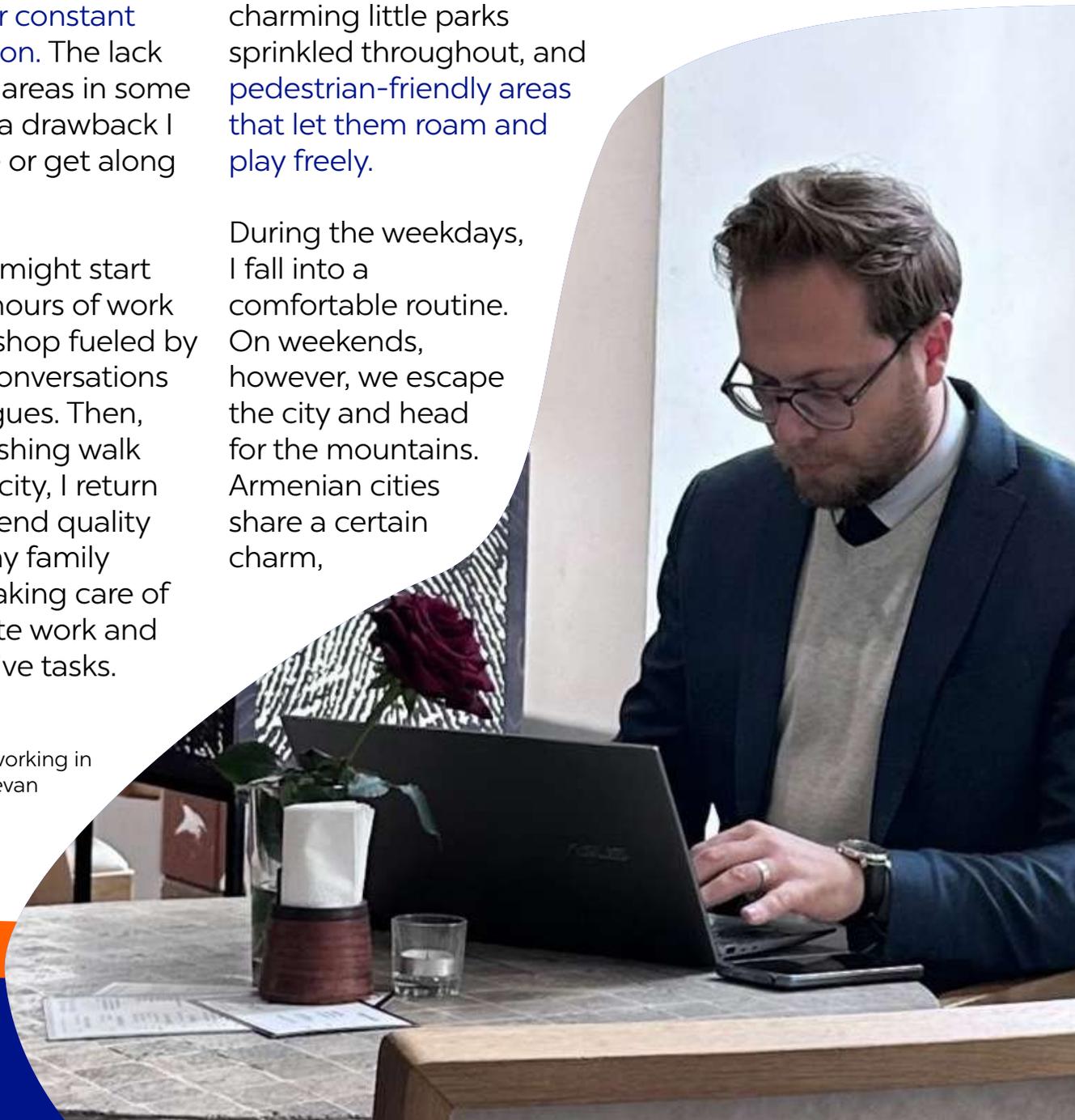
So, the day might start with a few hours of work at a coffee shop fueled by enjoyable conversations with colleagues. Then, after a refreshing walk around the city, I return home to spend quality time with my family while also taking care of some remote work and administrative tasks.

Coworking in
Yerevan
City

Summer nights in Yerevan come alive! There's no need for elaborate plans - just step outside, and you might find yourself surrounded by a street party, a celebration, or people dancing in the squares. Even on a quieter evening, enjoying an ice cream or a cold drink with your family becomes a special experience. The city caters to children as well, with dancing fountains, charming little parks sprinkled throughout, and **pedestrian-friendly areas that let them roam and play freely**.

During the weekdays, I fall into a comfortable routine. On weekends, however, we escape the city and head for the mountains. Armenian cities share a certain charm,

typically featuring a central square, surrounding parks, and walkable tree-lined streets. Beyond the city limits, breathtaking scenery unfolds, offering many outdoor activities perfect for family bonding. Armenia truly is **a haven for families seeking quality time together**.



Collaborating with Armenians

Let's switch gears and discuss collaborating with Armenian professionals. This is a major advantage of Armenia's residence permit program compared to many digital nomad visa programs worldwide. Here, you can **freely work with local businesses**, hire Armenian talent, and be hired yourself, all under a residence permit.

The level of professionalism in Armenia is exceptional, exceeding my experience with clients in some developed countries. Even better, I **haven't faced pressure to lower my rates**. Armenians value quality and are willing to pay fair service fees for skilled professionals.

Armenia has a vibrant professional scene with many events, conferences, forums, and gatherings throughout the year. There are so many events that you're sure to find one that interests you. These events attract international attendees, local professionals, and renowned speakers, fostering discussions on a wide range of compelling topics.



Me in Downtown Ijevan Next to I Love Ijevan Statue

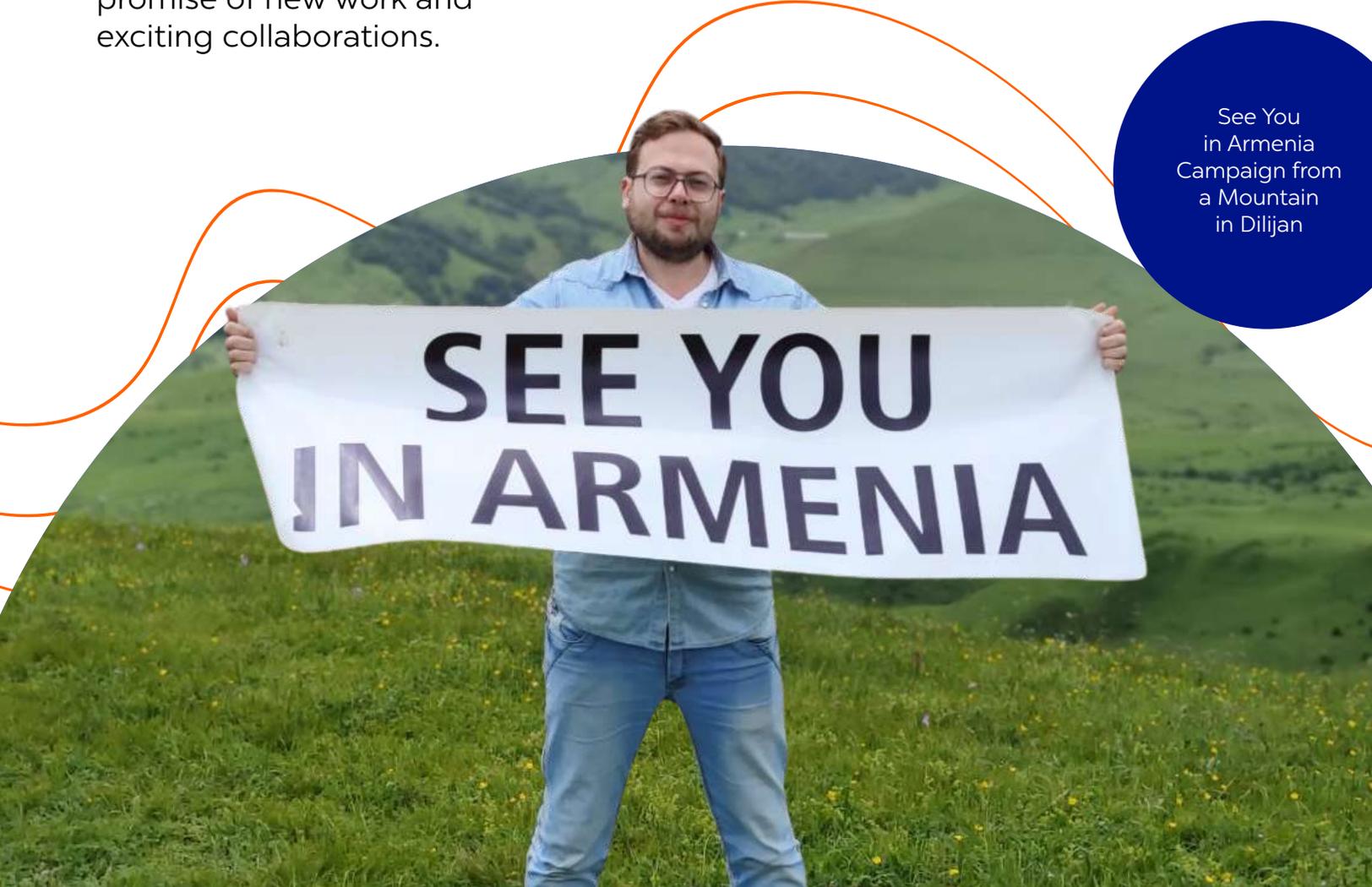
Dispell the misconception that such events are limited to first-world countries. Armenia offers a unique experience, with conferences known for their [strong networking opportunities and rich informational content](#). This holds true year-round, with a slight increase in events during the summer months.

Armenian weekends wind down peacefully, leaving you excited for the new week ahead. [Mondays have lost their heavy burden](#); they're a fresh start, filled with the promise of new work and exciting collaborations.

Give Armenia 7 Days

When I first arrived in Armenia, I met someone who'd relocated years before me. I still remember his words: "I've lived on these few streets around Abovyan for ten years, and I love it." Back then, it struck me as odd. I couldn't understand why someone wouldn't want to 'live more' by moving around. Fast forward seven years, and I find myself [on the verge of saying the same thing to future visitors](#).

Maybe it was the simple routine, the joy of settling down after years of nomadism, or [maybe Armenia itself captured my heart](#). Whatever the reason, I always say this: give Armenia a week, and the country will weave its magic. Take a chance, just like I did, and enjoy life here.



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TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?

IDENTIFYING PROFESSIONALISM IN ARMENIA'S COWORKING SCENE



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TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING? IDENTIFYING PROFESSIONALISM IN ARMENIA'S COWORKING SCENE

Until recently, coworking spaces weren't very common in Armenia, even in the capital, Yerevan. Options were very limited, with only a few meeting the international standards for coworking environments I'd experienced in more developed cities.

While Armenia has boasted excellent cafes for remote workers for a long time, these lack the **dedicated work environment and amenities** that coworking spaces provide. Unlike cafes, coworking spaces are designed

specifically to meet the needs of professionals, offering memberships with flexible options like hourly access or dedicated desks for extended periods.

Fueled by an influx of remote Russian professionals and Armenia's growing appeal as a remote work destination, **coworking spaces have mushroomed across the country** in the last few years. Last year, a wave of new coworking spaces swept across

Yerevan city, popping up on every corner and even expanding to other regions. Briefly speaking, "It has become too much of a good thing."

Suddenly, my Instagram feed became flooded with ads for new openings. However, upon closer inspection, and based on my 10 years of remote work experience in various cities around the world, many **lacked the hallmarks of a professional coworking environment**.



These pop-up spaces often consisted of just a few tables, internet, a play station, and an open bar – falling short of the dedicated environment and amenities remote workers seek. Creating a professional atmosphere isn't just about ping-pong tables and espresso machines; it **requires more than just perks**.

As expected, many of these new spaces **quickly resorted to discounts to attract remote workers**. However, true success in coworking goes beyond discounts; it requires a deep understanding of the coworking culture, the remote work industry, and its specific needs.

As Armenia's coworking scene matures, a **natural selection process is taking place**. Well-equipped spaces with professional standards are thriving and expanding, while those failing to meet industry expectations are struggling. This winnows the market, leaving behind high-quality options for remote workers.

During the flurry of coworking space openings and closures, one particular coworking space called InnWork caught my eye on Facebook. It offered diverse options, including subscriptions for remote working individuals and teams and packages for companies seeking dedicated office space. But what truly set it apart was the unprecedented perk—**access to a golf course!** This unique amenity was a first for me, even compared to coworking spaces beyond Armenia.



The golf course access piqued my interest so much, I couldn't resist learning more. I contacted Sos Muradyan, the founder, and scheduled a meeting. He invited me to visit their new space, which was nearing completion.

The new building was impressive—a multi-story structure bathed in natural light. Upon entering, I was greeted by a professional atmosphere. The facility offered a variety of work environments: dedicated offices for companies, private workrooms for focused tasks, meeting rooms for collaboration, booths for online meetings, and an open area for coworking. Additionally, The space boasted air conditioning, premium bathrooms, and two well-equipped kitchens (one large and one with a smaller bar area).

I was curious about Sos Muradyan's motivations for entering the coworking industry. He revealed that InnWork's journey began with renting office spaces and providing building management services. Recognizing the growing needs of remote workers and freelancers, they strategically expanded their offerings to include **coworking spaces within their existing facilities**, providing a professional environment for individuals to connect and collaborate. Furthermore, he told me about his plans for international expansion and shared blueprints outlining his strategy to open coworking spaces in the UAE.



Sos Muradyan

Founder of InnWork

With the speed at which our square meters are growing, our scale is already extremely impressive for the Armenian market. The consideration of InnWork's presence in Dubai is due to the high demand for quality workspaces in this region."

I also learned that InnWork has three well-situated other business centers. One offers a mix of coworking and private office spaces, ideal for remote workers and established businesses alike. Another is home to a top-ranked Armenian company. The crown jewel is their **expansive 8-story center in the heart of Yerevan**, with stunning views opposite a prestigious hotel. All locations prioritize high-quality working conditions and convenient access, fostering business success and productivity.



Sos Muradyan

Founder of InnWork

We are gradually expanding and increasing square meters every day. Coworking is a new product in our company that allows our clients to save money, expand their network of contacts and participate in a dynamic work environment.”

Beyond the professional environment, I still wondered about golf and why InnWork included access to a golf course for its subscribers. Sos, a golf enthusiast, explained the sport's positive impact on business professionals' well-being. He wanted to **share his love for the game with everyone else** at InnWork. Therefore, he contracted with a leading Yerevan golf course for member practice.

I questioned the accessibility, wondering if travel to the course might be difficult for busy professionals. Sos provided a compelling response. He emphasized the value of committing to a dedicated location for physical activity and sport, especially for remote workers. This commitment, he argued, **enhances enjoyment, benefits, and positive energy**. In fact, Sos is taking his passion a step further, authoring a book that explores his unique perspective on the link between golf and business success.

At InnWork, a thoughtful detail caught my eye – chess tables scattered throughout the building across various floors. This wasn't just about aesthetics; it was a deliberate strategy to foster connections between coworking professionals from different companies. These chess boards provided a casual and engaging platform for interaction, **encouraging meaningful connections** beyond the traditional work setting.



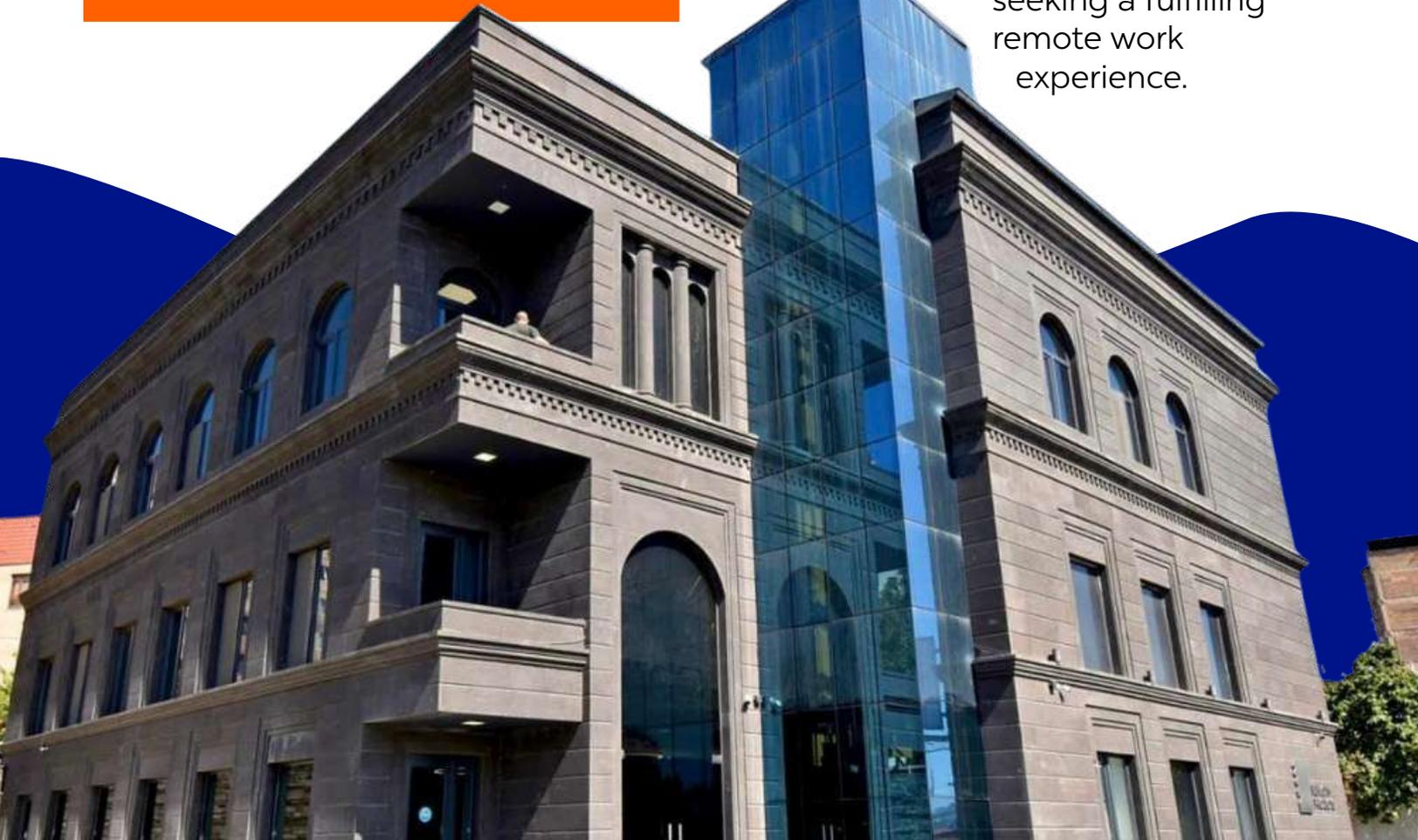
Sos Muradyan

Founder of InnWork

Our clients range from local residents to expatriate professionals, entrepreneurs and companies, creating a diverse and interesting work environment.”

More than just a workplace trend, **coworking has become a global phenomenon**. Forget a simple desk and internet – successful coworking spaces cater to the unique needs of their remote professional members. It's not about fancy decor or a PlayStation; it's about fostering a community where professionals feel understood, supported, and empowered to thrive. Luckily, Armenia's coworking scene is growing and moving in the right direction.

Supportive government regulations, combined with a commitment to building a strong remote work ecosystem, position Armenia to become **a major hub for international remote workers**. With increased awareness and continued development, Armenia is poised to become a top destination for those seeking a fulfilling remote work experience.



Help Mery Pursue her Master's *in the* Netherlands



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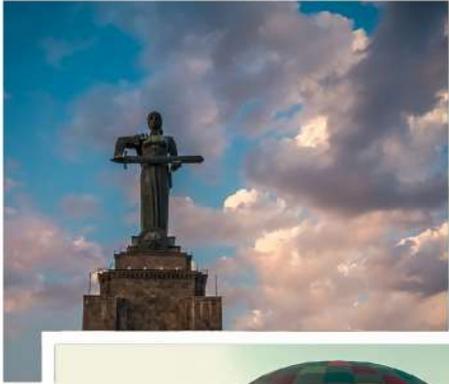
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