

**Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation (SRNSF)  
Basic Research Grant**

**Project Summary**

(Up to 250 words)

**Project Title:** Neanderthals in The South Caucasus

**Host Institution:** Georgian National Museum

Georgian National Museum(GNM) has brought up several generations of scientists in cooperation with foreign educational-scientific institutions. This presented project is an initiative of these aspiring scientists and aims an interdisciplinary research of Neanderthal settlement patterns in the South Caucasus.

Despite existing studies a chronological frame and specific characteristics of the middle/upper Paleolithic transition in Georgia remains undefined. According to these findings, middle/upper Paleolithic transition in the South Caucasus happened around 43-37 kya. The interesting point is that despite examples of Neanderthal and *Homo sapiens* interaction in western Eurasia, in South Caucasus Neanderthals already should have been extinct by 39 kya, while *Homo sapiens* arrived in the Caucasus around 32 kya, this fact excludes intersection of these two species.

**The Tsutskhvati cavernous complex** in the Western Georgia gives the unique opportunity to revise aforementioned information and reconstruct behavioral and paleoenvironmental patterns of Neanderthals in western Georgia, considering already proved trace of Neanderthals revealed during short-term archaeological excavations in 1970's.

**Project goals:** Expansion of theoretical knowledge on Neandertals' settlement in the South Caucasus; Engage in the process of integration of GNM's educational, scientific and collecting functions; Derive international scientific communities attention and increase monument's touristic potential and popularise prehistoric sciences.

**Project objectives:** Carrying out archeological excavations; laboratory works and Interdisciplinary research of existing and excavated materials; Selecting students for engagement in the process; Publish research findings in international peer-reviewed scientific journals; Promote international scientific cooperation; Implementation of procedures to obtain the status of cultural heritage of the site.