

The EU: Georgia Integration Prospects

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The EU is the Union of 25 countries* unified on the basis of liberal democracy as the dominant system of values: supremacy of law, human rights, welfare state, free market economy, and the respect sovereignty of the nations. The alternatives are violence, racism, separatism, occupation, corruption, organized crime, and misrule demonstrated by Russia. The only way of civilized survival for Georgia is the way toward the European Integration, which will bring clear benefits for both parties.

The diplomatic mission representing the European Commission, the executive body of the European Union, for Georgia, in collaboration with Georgian counterparts, the office of the State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, have achieved a lot. Due to their intensive collaboration a number of fundamental documents have been prepared and build up extraordinary ties of mutual understanding between the EU and Georgian governments.

Exclusive importance has Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the EU and Georgia enforced in July 1999; as well as “Deconcentration” policy undertaken by the European Commission in 2000 in order to provide the European Union's external assistance more rapidly and more efficiently. In 2004 Georgia, together with Armenia and Azerbaijan, was included in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which became a powerful impulse for moving the countries from cooperation to integration.⁶³ The EU-Georgia Action Plan 2006, endorsed by Georgian government, will furthermore help to devise and implement policies and measures to promote security, stability, justice, freedom, economic growth, and social cohesion; to reduce poverty, and to protect the environment in Georgia.⁶⁴ The EU intellectual, moral and financial support of institutional, social, and economic reforms have contributed to the long-term objective of sustainable development of postrevolutionary Georgia .

Conflict

For Georgia these are, without a doubt, difficult and challenging times. The past few months have been especially trying. Due to Russia's isolation politics toward Georgia human rights of people with Georgian origins were violated. The deaths and humiliation of innocent people became common in conflict zones. Due to the two unresolved territorial disputes in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, nearly 18% of Georgian territory remains beyond the control of the Georgian authorities. The two conflicts have created more than 260,000 internally displaced

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* In 2007 members of the EU will be 27 countries (Bulgaria and Romania will joint it).

⁶³Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Georgia Towards European Union <http://www.eu-integration.gov.ge/eng/partnership.php>;
Commission Staff Working Paper. European Neighbourhood Policy Country Report Georgia (2005) <http://www.eu->

⁶⁴ Elements for inclusion in an EU/Georgia ENP ACTION PLAN (DRAFT) <http://www.eu-integration.gov.ge/pdfs/ENPActionPlanENG.pdf>

persons (IDPs).⁶⁵ The images of violence, the stories of suffering are challenging. There is deep concern about the humanitarian conditions of people in the seceded territories. Georgian government has redoubled its efforts to improve the situation. It is absolutely essential for it, to be able to show that democratic values and principles offer a better alternative than extremism, violence, terrorism, and separatism.

Georgian side reiterates deep conviction that people deserve a life that is rooted in liberty and democracy; uncompromised by violence, unburdened by corruption and misrule; and forever free of the daily humiliation of occupation.⁶⁶ There could be no greater legacy for Georgia than to help people who have suffered too long, who have been humiliated long, who have not reached their potential, and who have so much to give to the international community. To empower men and women across the region, to help them build lives of peace and dignity, is needed deep integration into European Community, and the EU.

Security

Regional and Trans-National security is closely connected with dialogue and further co-operation in addressing common security threats: terrorism, organized crime, trafficking, illegal arms trading, including nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction and illegal arms exports, illicit traffic of narcotic, psychotropic substances, and money laundering. Georgia is oriented on increased possibilities for closer co-operation in the area of foreign and security policy, including European Security and Defense Policy, in particular, on the issues of regional stability and crisis management based on respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders. The continuing problems of security are also a great challenge for the EU and International Community. Georgia has proposed enhanced anti-terrorist, economic and cultural cooperation. This partnership of Georgia and EU can, and should, become a model for efforts to support Peace and Prosperity in the region. Mobilization of the full energy of Georgian community, focusing its efforts to strengthen, support its citizens throughout the region, who simply long for peace, development, and dignity, is a priority task of Georgian government.

Cooperation

Georgia stepped forward to build a peaceful, responsible state, oriented on regional economic cooperation between the Baltic, Black and Caspian Sea regions, in parallel with the South Caucasus Partnership. Georgia stands for enhanced bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the EU countries in parallel with the World Trade Organization.

For achieving this goal Georgia is on its way to harmonizing its legislation with the EU; strengthening rule of law especially through reform of the judicial system, including the penitentiary system, and through rebuilding state institutions. Georgia is refining mechanisms for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms; as well as is converging its economy and administrative practices.

⁶⁵ Commission Staff Working Paper. European Neighbourhood Policy Country Report Georgia (2005), p.2. http://www.eu-integration.gov.ge/pdfs/georgia_cr_0503.pdf

⁶⁶ Elements for inclusion in an EU/Georgia ENP ACTION PLAN (DRAFT) <http://www.eu-integration.gov.ge/pdfs/ENPActionPlanENG.pdf>

Georgia should become attractive politically, economically, and culturally not only for the succeeded regions, but for the world community. Great impetus to futher economic and business development should be:

- Deepening trade and economic relations with the EU;
- Providing the opportunity for opening of economies to each other;
- The continued reduction of non-tariff barriers to trade;
- Liberalization movement of goods, services, capital and human resources.

These measures will stimulate investment's growth, as well as cross-border and trans-national cooperation between the EU and Georgia. Dynamic development Georgia's market economy, its sound functioning and strengthening, should be achieved through economic structural reforms.

But for achieving rapid and sizeable results futher concentration human and financial resources are needed in attracting domestic and foreign investments, fostering small and medium sizes enterprises, providing industrialization of the agrarian sector, including development of rural tourism, promotion and protection of quality production, exchange of experience on best practices and use of international and the EU standards.

Education

Successful development of ongoing processes will depend on the education sector reforms providing in the context of the Bologna Process. Fostering the human resources became central issue of reforms. Georgia needs futher development of academic freedom, and mobility; extention of the international partnership programs for scholars, students and education managers to promote education, information and communication technologies in the region. TACIS* committee admopted financial assistance University reforms under TEMPUS program. This program will significantly contribute in fostering professionals.⁶⁷

Further progress in electronic communications policy and regulations will accelerate development and use of Information Society applications. Adoption of a national policy on the development of the telecommunications and IT sectors became urgent task for Georgia. This sector needs development comprehensive regulatory framework including users rights, privacy protection and data security. Widely should be used Georgia's capacity in technological R&I** to support the economy and society. For achieving outstanding results in any field of human activity Georgia should reinforce human, material and institutional resources in order to improve the capacities in technological R&I.. Georgia is on its way to restructuring science management system through introduction of peer review-based competitive environment. The academic community witnesses integration of scientific institutions with higher education institutions. The EU Georgia integration will facilitate significant progress in the systems of education and science of Georgia.

* TACIS - Technical Assistance Program for Commonwealth Independent States.

⁶⁷ TACIS National Programs. Georgia Towards European Union, October 18, 2006. <http://www.eu-integration.gov.ge/eng/tacisnatprogs.php#>

** R&I – Research and Innovation.

Social Security

Effectiveness of social protection measures are closely connected with the sustainable development of the nation. Undertaken a reform of the social assistance and health care sectors include establishing an effective legal base and effective management systems. Georgia is developing the capacity for promotion relevant child and maternity care, as well as other urgent programs needed in this sector.

Citizens of Georgia share deep concern in dealing with drug problem, its rapid dissemination in the country. Georgia undertakes serious steps toward reduction and irredication of this sin. Georgia reinforces national legislation and develops a national anti-drug strategy, covering drug supply and demand, including prevention programmes and programmes for treatment of drug addicts.

A special concern deals with the level of poverty in the country. The Georgian government takes significant steps to reduce level of poverty. Significant programs oriented to reduction of the number of people with income below the poverty line was introduced by the EU. These poverty reduction measures are aimed at qualitative reduction of poverty and improvement social cohesion. Protection and assistance to IDPs - promoting integration of IDPs in their current places of residence, shelter rehabilitation, skill transfer, creation of employment opportunities is the issue of the daily concern of Georgian officials and non-governmental organizations. TACIS current budget for "Support in Addressing the Social Consequences of Transition" amounts 5 million Euros.⁶⁸ Total assistance provided by the EU to Georgia equals 647.57 million Euros.⁶⁹ The EU outstanding historic assistance the Georgian Nation became additional impetus for the integration.

Conclusions

Unified, Sovereign, and Economically Flourishing Georgia fully integrated into the EU can seem like a very distant dream. But there are so many things that once seemed unattainable, but after they happened, simply seemed inevitable. Georgians restates strong commitment to a process by which is moving forward to the day when there will be fully sovereign, prosperous and secure state within the EU. Georgian government, and people have a lot of work to do in between, but there is the strong commitment to that causes that once it will happen.

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⁶⁸ TACIS National Program, C:\My Documents\EU\Programms.htm

⁶⁹ Out of 647.57 million Euros 423.57 million represent European grants, and 224 millions - long term credits. Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Georgia Towards European Union <http://www.eu-integration.gov.ge/eng/partnership.php>

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