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“European Union Enlargement: Practices and Challenges”

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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“European Union Enlargement: Practices and Challenges”

Book of Abstracts



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კავკასიის უნივერსიტეტი
CAUCASUS UNIVERSITY



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This Abstract Book brings together contributions presented at the international scientific conference organized at Caucasus University within the framework of the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Chair EU-PPS.

The organization of the conference and the publication of its proceedings aim to foster and further strengthen interdisciplinary academic dialogue on the historical experience, contemporary dynamics, and future perspectives of the European Union’s enlargement policy. The conference and the present publication provide a platform for examining the EU enlargement process from diverse disciplinary perspectives, facilitating the exchange of scholarly views and contributing to a deeper understanding of the opportunities, challenges, and evolving dimensions of European integration.

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PLENARY SESSION

Keynote Speakers

2027 Elections across Europe – Enlargement and Rule of Law at the Crossroads

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Abstract

This paper examines the accelerating fragmentation of Europe's political landscape and the rising strength of radical parties, focusing on the 2027 national elections in France, Italy, Poland and Spain as a critical juncture for EU governance. Its aim is to assess how eroding centrist coalitions, and the growing presence of radical-right and radical-left parties questioning "national sovereignty," are likely to shape European integration through the 2029 European Parliament elections.

The analysis draws on a qualitative, comparative reading of recent electoral outcomes, party-system data (including the 220 parties now represented in the European Parliament) and Eurobarometer findings, set against the EU's post-Lisbon record of responding to successive crises - financial, migration, pandemic and the war in Ukraine - without formal Treaty change.

The discussion traces how support for radical parties has risen from roughly 10% to 23% of the vote over the past decade, how coalition-building has grown correspondingly harder, from Belgium's record impasse to Bulgaria's repeated snap elections, and how even mainstream parties, such as the Danish and Swedish social democrats, have shifted toward positions once associated with the radical right. It further shows that the EPP's growing ambivalence toward the European Green Deal illustrates how external pressures - competitiveness concerns raised by the Draghi Report, and geopolitical shifts such as the Trump presidency - can reshape the EU's governing consensus from within, even as prior radical-right governments in Hungary and Poland show that holding power itself has a moderating effect, with Viktor Orban the clear exception.

The paper concludes that while fragmentation and coalition instability will persist through the 2027 election cycle, the EU's pattern of crisis-driven, informal deepening of integration - reinforced by consistently high public support for membership - provides grounds for cautious optimism, even as risks to migration policy, the rule of law and support for Ukraine remain real should radical parties gain further ground.

Keywords: Political fragmentation; Radical parties; European integration; 2027 elections; EU governance; National sovereignty.

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Mediation and Legal Innovation in the EU Enlargement Process: Strengthening Consumer Rights and Access to Justice

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Abstract

In the context of the Republic of Moldova's European integration process, legal mediation and alternative dispute resolution acquire a strategic role in modernising access to justice and strengthening consumer protection.

This paper examines mediation not merely as a procedural alternative, but as an instrument of legal innovation capable of aligning national mechanisms with the standards and values of the European Union. The research starts from the tension between the autonomy of the parties' will, consumer protection as a vulnerable party and the state's obligation to guarantee effective access to justice. The methodology used is a legal-doctrinal one, based on the analysis of the legislation of the Republic of Moldova, Directive 2013/11/EU, European instruments on consumer protection and relevant institutional documents.

The results highlight the fact that the formal existence of alternative resolution mechanisms is not enough: they must be accessible, independent, transparent, fast, predictable and adapted to the digital environment. The discussion proposes the development of a Moldovan model of alternative dispute resolution, focused on effective consumer information, digitalization of procedures, strengthening the independence of competent entities, suspending limitation periods during the procedure and extending collective mechanisms.

The conclusion argues that mediation should be conceived not as a marginal alternative to the court, but as a complementary component of the right to an effective remedy and of the European legal culture.

Keywords: Mediation; Consumer; Access to justice; Legal innovation; European integration.

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Geopolitical Transformation of the EU Enlargement Policy after 2022: The Peace and Security Dimension and the Case of Georgia

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Abstract

The new geopolitical environment that has emerged in Europe since 2022 has significantly changed the priorities and instruments of EU enlargement policy. In the past, the enlargement process focused mainly on assessing whether candidate states had met the Copenhagen criteria and carried out the related reforms. Today, the dimensions of peace, security, democratic resilience and geopolitical stability are becoming increasingly prominent. This paper analyses this transformation of enlargement policy and assesses how far security and geopolitical issues have grown in importance in the European Commission's 2023-2025 enlargement packages. The study is based on a qualitative analysis of the European Commission's 2023-2025 enlargement packages. The analysis covers six thematic areas: countering hybrid threats, the resilience of democratic institutions, alignment with the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), cybersecurity, strategic communication, and energy security. Georgia serves as an empirical case study.

Georgia was granted candidate status in 2023, and the events of 2024 followed. Together, they make it possible to analyse how the EU's stronger security, democratic-resilience and geopolitical interests shape the assessment of a candidate state, the recommendations it receives and the political conditions it must meet. The Georgian case reveals both the opportunities and the limits of enlargement policy. The limits are especially visible when the EU's external incentives and conditionality do not match the candidate state's domestic political dynamics. The paper examines whether these changes point to a transformation of enlargement policy. Such a shift would take it from a mechanism for technical assessment and reform incentives to a broader geopolitical instrument that serves to strengthen peace, security, stability and democratic resilience. Since 2022, enlargement policy has not been replaced by security policy. Rather, its geopolitical and security dimension has grown stronger and has been built more deeply into the existing conditionality mechanism. Enlargement policy keeps its classic function of encouraging candidate countries to reform, meet institutional requirements and align with EU rules. However, it now also carries a clearer dimension of security, resilience and geostrategic orientation.

Keywords: *EU enlargement; Geopolitics; Conditionality; Democratic resilience; Security; Georgia*

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SECTION I

Geopolitics, Security and the Enlargement Agenda

A Strong EU for a Balanced World

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Abstract

This paper explores the pivotal role the European Union (EU) plays in maintaining global power equilibrium among major world powers, particularly the United States and China. In an era of shifting geopolitical landscapes, the EU's strength and unity are crucial for upholding international stability and advocating for multilateralism.

A strong EU acts as a counterbalance to the economic and political influence exerted by the United States and China, offering an alternative vision of global governance rooted in cooperation and democratic values. The EU enlargement process is a key factor in enhancing this strength. By integrating new member states, the EU can bolster its economic prowess, increase its geopolitical reach, and reinforce its collective security capabilities. This expansion not only fosters regional stability and prosperity within Europe but also enhances the EU's ability to assert itself on the world stage.

This paper argues that a strategically expanded EU can better navigate the complexities of global power dynamics, contributing to a more balanced and just world order. By examining recent and potential future enlargements, this study highlights the necessity of a cohesive and powerful EU to enable effective and equitable international relations.

Keywords: *Strategic Autonomy; Geopolitical Enlargement; Multipolarity; Stabilizing Counterweight.*

From Neighbourhood to Enlargement: Armenia's European Perspective in Historical and Legal Context

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Abstract

Russia's aggression against Ukraine returned enlargement to the centre of the European Union's political agenda and reopened debate on States outside the existing accession framework. Armenia presents a particular case. Its historical links with Europe coexist with security and economic dependence on Russia and participation in Russian-led regional organisations.

This study examines how EU-Armenia relations moved from neighbourhood policy to the present rapprochement, and whether this development places Armenia within the EU enlargement debate. It combines historical analysis with examination of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, EU primary law, Armenian legislation and institutional documents adopted up to August 2026.

The analysis shows that the relationship has changed substantially, especially since the 2020 war and the subsequent crisis of Armenia's traditional security architecture. CEPA implementation, European missions, security cooperation, the visa liberalisation dialogue, the 2025 Armenian law on launching the accession process and the first Armenia-EU Summit in 2026 have given the European dimension of Armenian foreign policy greater political and legal relevance.

Nevertheless, these developments have not produced an application under Article 49 TEU, candidate status or formal recognition of a European perspective within enlargement policy. The study argues that Armenia is no longer situated in an ordinary neighbourhood relationship but remains outside the enlargement process. Any transition from rapprochement to accession would depend on a separate political decision and on demanding legal and geopolitical conditions, including Armenia's qualification as a European State, compliance with the Copenhagen criteria, foreign-policy alignment, relations with Russian-led organisations and the capacity and willingness of the EU to enlarge further.

Keywords: *Armenia; European Union; enlargement; Eastern Partnership; EU-Armenia relations.*

Challenges and Difficulties of an EU-Enlargement

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European Union enlargement remains a contested and evolving policy domain shaped by renewed geopolitical imperatives and persistent institutional constraints. This paper examines contemporary practices and challenges in the EU accession process, with particular emphasis on the 2020 revised methodology and post-2022 geopolitical shifts.

The study finds that the "fundamentals first" principle and phasing-in mechanisms now anchor enlargement practice, prioritizing rule of law, anti-corruption reforms, and democratic governance through concrete benchmarks and active monitoring before candidate countries advance in negotiations. However, significant challenges persist. Democratic backsliding and domestic capture in candidate states, particularly across the Western Balkans as well as Georgia, undermine reform credibility and EU leverage. Bilateral disputes among aspirants and existing members create additional veto points. Russia's war in Ukraine has re-politicized enlargement, generating strategic urgency while exposing the EU's limited absorption capacity and institutional preparedness for rapid integration. The literature highlights a tension between accelerated accession pathways and the need for substantive, not merely formal, compliance with EU norms.

We conclude that successful enlargement requires balanced conditionality, credible membership incentives, and internal EU reforms to address decision-making problems and budgetary pressures. Without parallel institutional adaptation, the European Union risks both legitimacy erosion and the uncertainty of potential member candidates, weakening its normative power and geopolitical influence.

Keywords: *EU Enlargement; Geopolitical Influence; Strategic Autonomy; Institutional Reform; Multipolar International Order.*

Contemporary Abkhazia: Public Security, European Values, and Prospects for Sustainable Peace (Based on a Public Opinion Poll)

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Abstract

The present study aims to examine the socio-political, economic, and cultural challenges facing contemporary Abkhazia, their public perception, and the threats they pose to regional peace and security. Attention is paid to the interrelationship between human security, human rights, cultural and civic identity, social well-being, and sustainable peace. The empirical basis of the study is a public opinion poll conducted by the authors, the findings of which make it possible to analyze the current situation in the region directly through the attitudes and assessments of the population of Abkhazia. The relevance of the study is determined by the fact that the unresolved Abkhaz conflict remains one of the major security challenges in the South Caucasus. At the present stage, conflict can no longer be viewed solely through the prism of territorial status; rather, it encompasses a broad range of issues, including socio-economic conditions, the functioning of political institutions, human rights, cultural identity, interethnic relations, demographic change, migration, education, and external political influence.

The analysis of the public opinion poll pays particular attention to problems that directly affect the everyday lives of the population of Abkhazia. The study identified a range of problems indicative of the protracted crisis in Abkhazia, including the deprivation of voting rights and property rights; restrictions on education in the native language; restrictions on the right to speak one's native (Georgian) language; restrictions on the right to worship in one's native language; violations of the right to healthcare; the minimization of entrepreneurial activity; difficulties in crossing the Enguri River into the rest of Georgia; and the alteration and reconstruction of cultural heritage monuments, particularly Christian places of worship, among others. Developments in recent years demonstrate that economic dependence and the issue of Russian influence remain among the major subjects of Abkhazia's internal political debates, particularly among the Georgian population.

The findings demonstrate that sustainable peace in Abkhazia cannot be achieved solely through the resolution of the issue of political status. The disenfranchised position of the population of Gali, as well as parts of Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli municipalities, cannot provide a foundation for the sustainable development of peace in Abkhazia or in the region. Accordingly, the study integrates perspectives of public opinion, human security, conflict transformation, and regional security into the analysis of the Abkhaz conflict. The scholarly significance of the study lies in its assessment of the contemporary situation in Abkhazia based on empirical public opinion data and its interpretation within a comparative framework encompassing the South Caucasus and the broader international context. This approach makes it possible to identify more clearly the factors contributing to the persistence of the conflict, while also determining different areas whose strengthening may contribute to establishing the foundations for long-term peace and stability in the region.

Keywords: *Abkhazia; Public Opinion Poll; European values; European Union; European Security; Regional Security.*

Geopolitics and Democratic Conditionality in Georgia: Complementary or Competing Logics of EU Enlargement?

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Abstract

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 prompted the current wave of European Union (EU) enlargement, which its institutions have framed as a geostrategic investment. How far that impetus reaches into the accession process, and whether it remains merit-based, is therefore an open question.

This article asks: are geopolitics and democratic conditionality complementary or competing logics of enlargement? It answers through Georgia, one of the three eastern applicants offered a membership perspective in 2022 and the one in which the two collided: a state of strategic value to the EU, governed by a party in retreat from reform. Process tracing follows the EU's decisions and their public justifications from 2022 to September 2026 across three stages, from the membership perspective through conditional candidacy to the de facto halt, and tests them against two rival accounts, geopolitical override and democratic primary.

The analysis establishes the reach and the limits of geopolitics in the EU's handling of Georgia, the arrangement that allowed recognition to precede compliance without relaxing the conditions, and the origins of the present deadlock. Three contributions follow. Empirically, the article provides a systematic account of how accession requirements were retained, revised and supplemented across successive EU decisions. Theoretically, it introduces the recipient of a reward into the external incentives model and distinguishes the credibility of conditionality from its effectiveness. For policy, it shows what recognition granted before compliance can and cannot achieve where a government's commitment to accession is weak.

Keywords: *EU enlargement; Democratic conditionality; Security–democracy dilemma; Georgia; External incentives model*

Horizon Europe as a Strategic Instrument for Georgia's Internal Security: Leveraging Clusters 3 and 4 through the NOTIONES Experience

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Abstract

The European Union's research and innovation programme Horizon Europe (2021-2027) is increasingly recognized as a strategic instrument for security development, extending well beyond its traditional role in scientific cooperation.

This paper examines the relevance of two thematically connected clusters, Cluster 3 ("Civil Security for Society") and Cluster 4 ("Digital, Industry and Space"), for Georgia's internal security architecture. Since January 2021, Georgia has been a fully associated member of Horizon Europe, entitled to participate on equal terms with European Union Member States. However, the strategic potential of these two clusters for the country's domestic security institutions remains largely underexplored in academic and policy literature.

Methodologically, the paper applies a policy analysis approach that combines document analysis of Horizon Europe's programmatic architecture, a case study of the NOTIONES project (funded under Horizon 2020) and its wider network of sister projects, and a comparative assessment of Georgia's current security-research architecture against European standards. NOTIONES, in which Georgia's Ministry of Internal Affairs participated alongside thirty European partner organizations, serves as the paper's primary empirical illustration.

The analysis shows that the synergy between Clusters 3 and 4 offers a concrete mechanism for aligning Georgia's internal security system with European Union standards, that Georgia's participation in NOTIONES yielded tangible operational benefits, and that the European Commission's own interim evaluation evidence corroborates the cluster's demonstrated societal effects. Building on this experience, the paper identifies a replicable institutional model: the creation of a national-level security-research network functioning as a Georgian equivalent of NOTIONES.

The paper concludes that participation in Horizon Europe, particularly through the combined leverage of Clusters 3 and 4, constitutes a substantive dimension of Georgia's European integration process, advancing not only institutional alignment with European Union norms but also the concrete development of operational security capabilities.

Keywords: *Horizon Europe; Internal security, European integration, NOTIONES, Cluster 3, Cluster 4.*

Challenges and Mutual Benefits of Georgia's Accession to the European Union

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Abstract

EU enlargement is currently a highly relevant issue for several countries, particularly for Georgia. The question of enlargement is linked to challenges facing both Georgia and the European Union. This paper examines the legal and institutional challenges, as well as the potential mutual benefits, associated with Georgia's accession to the EU.

The central research question is: what legal and institutional conditions must Georgia and the EU consider ensuring that Georgia's future integration is effective, legally predictable, and institutionally sustainable? The discussion addresses the EU's so-called "absorption capacity" its ability to institutionally, procedurally, and substantively integrate new member states without disrupting or weakening the integration process. Furthermore, the paper considers the realism of the prospect of Georgia's future EU accession considering its geopolitical position as the representative of one of the oldest civilizations and as a link between Europe and Asia.

The paper pays special attention to the issue of language - an aspect that has received limited prior analysis. It examines Articles 49 and 55 of the TEU, Regulation No 1/1958, and the Rules of Procedure of the Court of Justice of the European Union, specifically addressing the determination of the language of the case, translation processes, and the role of lawyer-linguists. Additionally, the study reviews the experience of EU enlargement, integration capacity, the Copenhagen criteria, and the subsequent developments regarding Georgia's candidate status.

The research employs comparative-legal, dogmatic-legal, and analytical methods. The concluding section presents recommendations concerning Georgian legal terminology, the translation of EU law, the training of lawyer-linguists, institutional readiness for judicial cooperation, public communication, and the consistent implementation of reforms.

Keywords: *Georgia; EU enlargement; Multilingualism; Court of Justice of the European Union; Lawyer-linguists; Legal translation.*

SECTION II

Rule of Law, Legal Approximation and Governance

Rule of Law Conditionality in EU Enlargement: Benchmark Criteria and Democratic Backsliding

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Abstract

Rule-of-law conditionality has become a defining feature of European Union enlargement as accession increasingly connects Article 49 TEU with the values of Article 2 TEU and more developed standards of judicial independence, effective judicial protection, and institutional accountability. Yet the accession framework remains better equipped to measure progress than deterioration from standards already attained.

The article combines doctrinal legal analysis of Articles 2, 19, and 49 TEU, relevant Court of Justice jurisprudence, and EU enlargement methodology with a structured comparison of Moldova, Ukraine, Albania, Montenegro, and Serbia. It examines Commission reports, Council and European Council documents, accession benchmarks, and related institutional materials through the analytical dimensions of compliance, track record, and non-regression.

The analysis shows that accession conditionality has evolved from predominantly formal compliance towards implementation and demonstrable track records, while CJEU jurisprudence increasingly provides a substantive constitutional vocabulary for assessing rule-of-law reforms. Comparative evidence nevertheless reveals an asymmetry: benchmarks and monitoring have become increasingly sophisticated in identifying progress but remain less systematic in determining when deterioration constitutes regression from an attained level of protection.

The article argues that non-regression should operate as an explicit substantive dimension of benchmark assessment, distinct from track record, while reversibility should function as a proportionate procedural response to serious deterioration. Compliance, track record, and non-regression should therefore be understood as cumulative analytical dimensions contributing to constitutional resilience. This approach can strengthen merit-based enlargement without treating candidate constitutional arrangements as immutable or implying that Member-State obligations apply identically before accession.

Keywords: *EU enlargement; Rule of law conditionality; Accession benchmarks; Democratic backsliding; non-regression.*

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The Role of Evidence-Based Public Policy in the European Integration Process: Georgia's Experience and Challenges

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Abstract

The process of European integration requires candidate countries not only to align their national legislation with European Union law but also to develop public administration systems that systematically incorporate evidence, research findings, and data into decision-making. In this context, evidence-based policymaking constitutes an important foundation for effective, transparent, and accountable governance. This study aims to assess the development of evidence-based policymaking in Georgia in the context of European integration and to identify the key institutional challenges that remain.

The study employs a qualitative research design and uses document analysis as its primary method. It examines official documents of the European Commission, OECD/SIGMA, and the Government of Georgia, strategic documents on public administration reform, and relevant academic literature. The analysis focuses on several key dimensions: policy planning, monitoring and evaluation, data use, institutional capacity, inter-agency coordination, and stakeholder participation.

The findings indicate that Georgia has established a legal and institutional framework for the development of evidence-based policymaking that is broadly aligned with EU and OECD/SIGMA standards. However, several challenges persist in practice, including data fragmentation, limited effectiveness of inter-agency coordination, uneven analytical capacity across the public sector, insufficient use of monitoring and evaluation findings in decision-making, and the often formalistic nature of stakeholder participation.

The study concludes that, in the context of European integration, evidence-based policymaking is not merely an instrument for improving administrative effectiveness but also an important foundation for good governance and institutional resilience. For Georgia, key priorities include strengthening the practical implementation of existing institutional mechanisms, developing analytical capacity, improving integrated data management, and ensuring the systematic use of evaluation findings throughout all stages of the public policy cycle.

Keywords: *Evidence-based policymaking; European integration; Public administration reform; OECD/SIGMA; Public policy evaluation.*

Transformation of the Copenhagen Criteria and Contemporary Interpretations in the Context of Waste Management: Challenges and Practical Recommendations for Georgia's EU Integration

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Abstract

The paper explores the dynamics of the development of the Copenhagen criteria, modern interpretations, and applies them to assess the harmonization and compliance of Georgia's EU integration process - specifically waste management policy and systems.

The analysis is based on a review/assessment of legislative requirements and policy documents in the waste management sector, an analysis of regional experience, and a model for evaluating quantitatively measurable progress.

The article discusses institutional, legal, and technical requirements in the waste management sector, analysing and evaluating existing barriers. In conclusion, recommendations based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are presented to ensure compliance with the EU *acquis*.

The main conclusion highlights the need to strengthen institutional capacity, the critical importance of law enforcement mechanisms, and public engagement as key factors determining Georgia's readiness for EU accession through waste management system reforms.

Keywords: *Copenhagen criteria, EU integration, Waste management, Georgia, Environmental policy.*

The Influence of European Good Governance Standards on the Development of Georgian Administrative Law under the EU Candidate Status

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Abstract

The process of European integration represents one of the main directions of Georgia's legal and institutional development. After Georgia received European Union candidate status, the alignment of national legal and administrative practice with European standards acquired particular importance. European good governance principles provide a framework for lawful, transparent, accountable, and citizen-oriented administration.

This article examines the relationship between those principles and Georgian administrative law within the broader process of Europeanisation. It focuses on legality and legal certainty, proportionality, impartiality, transparency, accountability, the right to good administration, and effective judicial control. The analysis distinguishes between EU law, the broader European administrative space, and the standards developed by SIGMA/OECD and the Council of Europe. It then evaluates the correspondence between these standards and the principles embodied in Georgia's General Administrative Code, public service legislation, administrative justice and public administration reform. Georgia adopted its General Administrative Code in 1999, long before obtaining EU candidate status, and therefore entered the current stage of European integration with an established administrative-law framework containing principles broadly consistent with the European tradition of good administration. Subsequent European integration has reinforced these principles, expanded their institutional significance and made their effective implementation an important benchmark in the accession process. The decisive challenge is therefore not simply formal legal approximation, but the consistent application of existing guarantees as enforceable and routine standards of administrative conduct. The subsequent *de facto* halt in Georgia's accession process demonstrates that formal commitments and an established legal framework do not ensure compliance unless administrative institutions apply those standards consistently. Sustainable Europeanisation therefore requires reasoned decision-making, meaningful participation, a merit-based public service, effective remedies and institutional accountability in everyday administrative practice.

Keywords: *Europeanisation; Administrative law; Good governance; European administrative space; EU integration; Georgia.*

Georgia's Intellectual Property Law in an Evolving European Legal Framework: Legislative Reform and the Challenge of Sustained Alignment

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Abstract

This article examines the approximation of Georgian intellectual property law under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and assesses selected legislative reforms adopted between 2014 and 2025. Its central question is whether the legal and institutional framework is capable not only of securing initial legislative alignment but also of preserving that alignment as EU intellectual property law evolves. The assessment therefore focuses on the existence of a coherent process for identifying relevant European developments, evaluating divergences, preparing necessary legislative responses, and reviewing implementation.

The study employs normative-dogmatic and systemic methods. It analyses the intellectual property provisions of the Association Agreement, relevant Georgian legislation, subsequent developments in EU law, and doctrinal sources on legal approximation. The assessment covers civil procedural remedies, patents, designs, trade marks, copyright and related rights, border measures, and geographical indications. Administrative and criminal provisions are treated as complementary enforcement mechanisms.

Georgian intellectual property law underwent substantial legislative development during the period examined. Nevertheless, the adoption of legal rules does not itself demonstrate effective implementation and enforcement. The sources analysed also do not disclose a permanent procedure specific to intellectual property that would ensure a systematic Georgian response to subsequent developments in EU law.

Preserving the alignment achieved requires a coherent institutional cycle encompassing periodic monitoring of new EU legal acts and relevant CJEU interpretations, assessment of their legal significance for Georgia, identification of divergences from domestic law, coordination among responsible authorities, timely preparation of necessary amendments, and subsequent review of implementation. The number of legislative acts adopted is therefore not, by itself, an adequate measure of sustained approximation. Without a structured updating process, alignment achieved at one stage may gradually erode as EU intellectual property law develops.

Keywords: *Intellectual property; Association Agreement; Legal approximation; Legislative reform; Approximation monitoring.*

Privacy-by-Design in AI-Powered Online Tutoring: A Framework for GDPR-Compliant Learning Analytics for Children

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Abstract

The rapid growth of online tutoring has created demand for artificial intelligence (AI) tools that monitor learner engagement and support tutors' instructional decisions. Many engagement-analytics systems, however, rely on video surveillance, facial and emotion recognition and continuous behavioral tracking, which raises serious concerns for children's privacy and rights.

The study combines doctrinal analysis of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, international standards on children's rights in the digital environment and Georgia's 2023 Law on Personal Data Protection with the Privacy-by-Design approach. From this analysis it derives a conceptual framework for privacy-preserving engagement analytics and applies it to a qualitative single case study of a voice-only AI tutoring assistant that operates without video capture, facial recognition or emotion inference.

The framework comprises seven design principles: modality minimization, pedagogical purpose binding, human oversight with non-evaluative outputs, ephemerality, visible presence with child-legible transparency, control by default and an accountable supply chain. The case study shows that most principles can be embedded in system architecture, while residual risks remain in raw audio retention, third-party processing and age-appropriate transparency.

Educational AI can provide meaningful pedagogical support without intrusive surveillance when privacy constraints are treated as design requirements rather than as compliance afterthoughts. The framework offers practical guidance for educational technology developers, tutoring providers, regulators and policymakers, including those in EU candidate countries aligning national law with the EU data protection acquis.

Keywords: *Privacy-by-Design; GDPR; children's data protection; learning analytics; online tutoring.*

SECTION III

Economy, Connectivity and Social Policy

The Prospects for the Implementation of European Union Regulations on Crypto Assets in the Republic of Moldova

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Abstract

Crypto-assets are digital representations of value or rights that rely on cryptography and distributed ledger technology, such as blockchain, to operate without the involvement of a central bank or government. The purpose of this article is to examine the legal and operational aspects of crypto-assets in the Republic of Moldova within the context of European integration.

The research methodology involved, in the initial stage, an analysis of EU and the Republic of Moldova's legislation on crypto-assets, as well as relevant open-access publications available online. The collected information was subsequently structured and synthesized to provide a comprehensive overview of the issues under examination. The transformation of crypto-assets from a speculative niche into a well-established global financial sector has been largely driven by regulation. In the European Union, the main legislative act in this field is the Markets in Crypto-Assets (MiCA) Regulation. It establishes a uniform legal framework for crypto-asset issuers and service providers across the EU. In contrast, in the Republic of Moldova, providing services on the crypto-assets market is currently prohibited.

However, the Republic of Moldova is currently in the process of developing a comprehensive legal framework regarding crypto-assets, with a draft law being developed to transpose relevant European regulations. It will ensure the legalization of crypto-asset activities and promote the development of alternative payment methods, new sources of financing, and crypto-asset markets. Current trends in financial technology make the integration of crypto-assets into the Moldovan financial market increasingly necessary, particularly in the context of the country's European integration process. At the same time, this topic remains insufficiently explored in academic literature.

Keywords: *Regulation; Crypto-assets; Risk; Issuer; Service provider; User.*

European Values in Human Resource Management

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Abstract

The European Union is founded on a set of fundamental values—human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights—which provide a normative foundation for European societies and institutions. Despite their relevance to employment relations and people management, knowledge of how these values have been incorporated into Human Resource Management (HRM) research remains fragmented. This study therefore asks: How has the HRM literature addressed EU fundamental values, and what intellectual and thematic structures characterize this research field?

To answer this question, we conduct a Bibliometric Literature Review based on Scopus. Documents were retrieved by searching titles, abstracts, and keywords using the string: (“European Union Value*” OR “EU value*” OR “Human dignity” OR “Freedom” OR “Democracy” OR “Equality” OR “Rule of law” OR “Human right*”) AND (“Human resource* management” OR “HRM” OR “people management”). After restricting the search to English-language articles and reviews, the final dataset comprised 466 documents. Bibliometrix was employed to examine publication trends, leading journals, and geographical distribution, while VOSviewer keyword co-occurrence analysis was used to identify the field’s thematic structure.

The findings reveal a strong acceleration of scholarly production, particularly since 2010, with output reaching its highest level in 2026. Research is geographically widespread, although the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, China, India, and Australia emerge as prominent contributors. The International Journal of Human Resource Management is the leading outlet (26 documents), followed by Journal of Business Ethics (13), Human Resource Management Journal (12), and Human Resource Management and Sustainability (11 each). The thematic analysis positions human resource management as the central connecting concept and reveals several interconnected research streams centered on equality, diversity and inclusion; employee participation and workplace democracy; human rights, dignity and business ethics; sustainable/green HRM; and employment and industrial relations.

Overall, the results indicate that EU values are present across HRM scholarship but remain conceptually dispersed, suggesting the need for a more integrated values-based HRM framework connecting institutional principles with organizational practices and employee experiences.

Keywords: *European Union values; Human Resource Management; Bibliometric analysis.*

Georgia's Path from Association to Candidate Status: Practice and Challenges in Social Policy and Employment

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Abstract

This paper examines the transformation of Georgia's social policy and employment sector from the signing of the EU–Georgia Association Agreement (AA) to the granting of candidate status. Social policy and employment are among the key areas of European integration, as they directly affect citizens' well-being and quality of life. The Association Agreement is the most important legal framework for Georgia's domestic reforms, and it has moved bilateral relations to a qualitatively new stage. The commitments arising from the Agreement are set out in the National Action Plans. Together, they provide an important strategic tool for assessing Georgia's compliance with EU legislation and standards. The study aims to assess the progress achieved in this area and to identify the factors that hinder full alignment with European standards.

The research is based on content analysis of official documents. These include the National Action Plans for the implementation of the EU-Georgia Association Agenda, strategic documents of the Government of Georgia and relevant state agencies, and the academic literature.

The findings show that Georgia has made notable progress, both in developing its legislative framework and in establishing the relevant institutional mechanisms. The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia and the LEPL State Employment Support Agency are actively working to advance this progress. This is reflected in the organisation of job fairs, the growing number of registered jobseekers, and support for the employment of vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, full compliance with the EU *acquis communautaire* remains one of the main challenges. Significant shortcomings persist in three areas: the mismatch between labour market demand and workforce skills, the quality of employment, and weak social dialogue. Considerable legislative progress has already been made, so the main problem now is implementing the adopted norms effectively in practice.

The study concludes that greater effectiveness in social policy and employment requires further approximation to EU legislation and stronger institutional mechanisms, which are a prerequisite for better practical enforcement of the norms. The findings may be useful both to policymakers and to researchers in the further planning and evaluation of social policy in the context of European integration.

Keywords: *Association Agreement; European integration; Social policy; Employment; *acquis Communautaire*; social dialogue.*

Marabda-Kartsakhi Railway's Geo-Economical Commitments and Their Implications for Georgia's European Integration

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Abstract

The present article examines the geo-economical and geopolitical dimensions of the Marabda-Kartsakhi railway project within the context of Georgia's European integration. The central focus of the study is Georgia's state-level commitment toward Azerbaijan. The key research question asks whether the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway joint venture, established in 2024, together with its institutional governance and control elements, can function as a structural lever that constrains Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration trajectory.

The study draws on three mutually complementary theoretical frameworks: critical geopolitical economy, updated dependency theory, and the external governance approach to Europeanisation. Its methodological foundation comprises case study analysis, content analysis, and comparative strategic analysis, incorporating the contrasting cases of Moldova's successful dismantling of dependency structures and Armenia's geographic landlockedness.

The study's principal finding is that the deepening governance dimension of the project reinforces structural dependency precisely now when, according to the European Commission's 2025 report, Georgia's European integration process has effectively stalled. The article develops two novel analytical categories: Infrastructure Geopolitical Lock-in and Elective Dependency, which identify the specific points of incompatibility with the Copenhagen criteria.

Keywords: *Marabda-Kartsakhi, European integration, structural dependency, Critical Geopolitical Economy, Copenhagen criteria.*

SECTION IV

Education, Research and European Values

Integration Before Membership: The Under-Recognised Role of EU Research and Education Programmes in Gradual Integration

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Abstract

The EU's enlargement policy has long relied on political conditionality, offering membership prospects in exchange for domestic reforms. As accession negotiations stall and conditionality shows diminishing effectiveness, the EU faces pressure to reconsider its toolkit. The emerging concept of gradual integration remains overwhelmingly economic, focused on single market access and regulatory alignment.

This paper examines how EU research and education programmes - notably Horizon Europe and Erasmus+, including Jean Monnet Actions - are framed within the Commission's strategic account of gradual integration. Drawing on a systematic qualitative analysis of EU Enlargement Policy Communications (2022-2025) and supplementary documentation, it analyses the structural positioning of research and education references relative to the dominant conditionality and market-access logic.

The analysis reveals a persistent gap between the de facto integrative function of these programmes - embedding candidate-country institutions in European research networks and governance structures - and their treatment in enlargement documents, where gradual integration is consistently equated with single market access. The Commission's own 2020 methodology envisaged phasing candidates into EU programmes, not only the market; post-2022 Communications narrow that founding formulation rather than merely omitting research and education.

Drawing on external governance theory and the literature on socialisation and differentiated integration, the paper argues these programmes form a knowledge-based track of pre-accession integration whose incentive and socialization effects overlap with conditionality rather than oppose it. Since the EU already invests substantially in these programmes, recognising them within the gradual integration framework would raise the strategic return on existing investments, offering a complement to conditionality operating through channels potentially less directly exposed to political elite capture.

Keywords: *EU enlargement, gradual integration, Horizon Europe, European Research Area.*

Globalization and Education: Some Analyses of Challenges and Opportunities for National Educational Systems

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Abstract

This article examines the positive and negative effects of globalization on the national education systems of developing countries. The study draws on data analysis and on the experience of countries that have already faced these processes.

On the one hand, globalization gives people from developing countries the opportunity to realize their talents and abilities. Students can build international careers, and researchers can present their work to a global audience. Globalization also gives scholars access to the latest scientific achievements worldwide.

On the other hand, globalization poses risks to the local and national interests of developing countries, including the loss of cultural identity and of long-established, effective educational traditions. Developed countries' education systems are affected as well. The commercialization of education and the growing influence of university rankings often lead decision-makers to lose sight of the true purpose of education and to prioritize market demand instead.

The article concludes that balanced strategies are needed: education systems should embrace the benefits of globalization, such as wider access to knowledge, international cooperation and digitalization, while protecting their national characteristics and cultural diversity.

Keywords: *Globalization; Education systems; Developing countries; Commercialization of education; University rankings*

The Role of Education in the Context of EU Enlargement

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Abstract

The study aims to examine the role of education and the internationalization of higher education as instruments of European integration within the EU enlargement process. It focuses on how education contributes to human capital development, the alignment of educational and professional standards, democratic values, intercultural understanding, and the development of a shared European identity. Attention is given to the relevance of the experiences of earlier EU enlargement processes for newer candidate countries, especially Georgia.

The study employs a qualitative comparative case-study approach. It examines the role of education in the European integration experiences of earlier candidate countries and considers their relevance to Georgia as a newer EU candidate country. The analysis focuses on European Studies, the internationalization of higher education, academic mobility, and EU-supported educational programs, with particular attention to Erasmus+ as a mechanism of academic exchange, capacity-building, and Europeanisation.

The findings indicate that education has served as a significant instrument of Europeanisation by strengthening human capital, supporting the alignment of educational and professional standards, developing institutional and academic networks, and promoting democratic values and a shared European identity. Academic mobility and internationalization provide students and academic staff with opportunities to develop professional, intercultural, and personal competencies, while also fostering transnational cooperation and mutual understanding. The experience of earlier enlargement processes demonstrates that these educational mechanisms can contribute to institutional capacity-building and prepare societies for closer European integration. These findings are particularly relevant to Georgia, where educational cooperation and mobility can support both institutional development and the broader social foundations of Europeanisation.

Education should be understood not merely as a supporting element of EU enlargement, but as a long-term instrument for developing the human, institutional, and societal foundations of European integration. Strengthening internationalization, academic mobility, European Studies, and participation in EU educational programs can contribute to professional development, employability, democratic citizenship, intercultural dialogue, and social cohesion.

Keywords: *EU enlargement; education; Europeanisation; internationalization of higher education; Erasmus+.*

Advancing Academic Integrity and Research Ethics in Higher Education: A Case Study of Institutional Capacity Building at Caucasus University

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Abstract

Academic integrity and research ethics have become central pillars in the European Higher Education Area, particularly in the context of increasing internationalization and digital transformation. This paper presents the experience of Caucasus University in strengthening institutional capacity through two Erasmus+ initiatives: the “Integrity” project (2018-2020) and the “ETHICS” project (2023-2026). Building on the outcomes of the first project, which focused on embedding academic integrity principles into institutional policies, it introduced improved academic writing syllabi, additional training on plagiarism prevention, the use of plagiarism detection software, and the development of a foundational framework for preventing academic misconduct. The second project, ETHICS, expanded this framework by advancing responsible conduct of research, developing institutional guidelines, and integrating research ethics training across academic programs, as well as establishing a research ethics committee. Through these initiatives, Caucasus University has implemented comprehensive training modules, updated internal regulations, and established support mechanisms for both students and academic staff. As a result, a culture of integrity and ethical awareness has been progressively institutionalized within the university and disseminated among interested parties.

The paper critically reflects on the synergy between the two projects, highlighting their cumulative impact on institutional development and capacity building. Finally, the study offers transferable examples for higher education institutions in emerging EU-associated countries seeking to strengthen academic integrity and research ethics frameworks through international cooperation and project-based reform.

Keywords: *academic integrity; research ethics; research integrity; institutional capacity building; Erasmus+*

Institutionalizing European Research Area (ERA) Standards in Georgian Universities through Research Ethics Governance

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Abstract

Research ethics is an important component of responsible research governance within the European Research Area (ERA). This study examines how, and to what extent, ERA-related expectations concerning ethical research are formally translated into research ethics governance in Georgian universities.

The study uses comparative qualitative document analysis of seven institutional instruments that regulate research ethics, including research ethics council or committee regulations, biomedical ethics regulations, research ethics standards, and related institutional ethics provisions. A Research Ethics Governance Assessment Framework is applied across five dimensions: normative ethical alignment; institutional responsibility and authority; governance positioning and independence; ethical review and procedural capacity; and accountability, transparency, and oversight.

The documents show broad convergence around participant dignity and autonomy, informed consent, confidentiality, risk assessment, researcher responsibility, impartial review, and protection of vulnerable participants. Greater variation concerns the organizational authority and independence of ethics bodies, continuing review and monitoring, committee training, quality assurance, reporting, and appeals.

The selected Georgian universities demonstrate substantive but uneven institutionalization of research ethics governance. The findings concern only the research ethics arrangements evidenced in the analyzed documents and do not assess each university's wider research-integrity system, which may be governed through separate instruments.

Keywords: *ERA, ethics; RECs; Ethics governance; Georgia.*

Peace Education Discourse in Georgian Higher Education Programs: Trends and Challenges

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Abstract

Peace education represents an important area of contemporary education policy, concerned not only with acquiring knowledge about conflict and peace, but also with developing a culture of peace, respect for human rights, democratic values, social responsibility, recognition of diversity, dialogue, and competencies for the non-violent management of conflicts. Considering Georgia's post-conflict experience and its ongoing integration into the European educational space, this study examines how the discourse of peace education is developing within Georgian higher education and how it is reflected in educational programmes and university practices.

The study employs qualitative documentary analysis and examines educational programmes, courses, syllabi, learning resources, institutional activities of universities, and materials from international projects. The central case is the collaboration between Sokhumi State University and Ilia State University within the framework of the PeaceEdu project, while the experiences of other universities are considered to provide a comparative perspective.

The study demonstrates that peace education has not yet developed into a unified model in Georgia; however, significant academic and institutional foundations for its development are already in place. The analysis reveals progression from the thematic and disciplinary integration of peace-related content, through the academic and institutional establishment of Peace Studies, towards the curricular integration of competence-based Peace Education. Importance is attached to the experience of PeaceEdu, which directly connects peace education with teacher professional preparation, the teaching and learning process, and the development of practical competencies. A key challenge remains the sustainable institutionalization of the experience gained and its systematic alignment with programme objectives, learning outcomes, courses, teaching methods, assessment, and professional practice.

Keywords: *Peace Education, Peace Studies, Higher education, PeaceEdu, Georgia.*

Promotion of European Values in Sokhumi State University (on Example of Jean Monnet Module EUPEACE)

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Abstract

In the context of Georgia's European integration and ongoing conflict-related challenges, higher education plays a crucial role in promoting peacebuilding, democratic values, and European citizenship. This is particularly significant at Sokhumi State University (SSU), where many students are internally displaced persons and young people from occupied Abkhazia, including representatives of the Abkhaz community. These students require both academic knowledge and practical competencies to understand contemporary security challenges and contribute to peaceful conflict transformation.

The Jean Monnet Module "*Georgian Peace Paradigm and EU Peacebuilding*" enhances the quality of teaching in the fields of European integration and peace studies by integrating the European Union's experience in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and security policy into the university curriculum. The module combines theoretical foundations with comparative analysis, enabling students to examine the EU's peacebuilding approaches alongside Georgia's peace policy and European aspirations.

Through an interdisciplinary learning approach, the module strengthens students' understanding of the EU as a peace project and as a global actor in conflict prevention and security governance. It develops analytical and critical thinking skills, familiarizes students with the conceptual framework and terminology of European integration and peacebuilding, and encourages active civic engagement based on European values and democratic principles.

The experience of the module demonstrates the added value of Jean Monnet activities in strengthening European Studies within higher education institutions located in conflict-affected environments. By fostering academic excellence, policy-oriented learning, and dialogue on peace and security, the project contributes to preparing a new generation of professionals capable of supporting Georgia's European integration and sustainable peacebuilding efforts.

Keywords: *Sokhumi State University, Peacebuilding, European Union, Jean Monnet Module EUPEACE*

Integrating European Experience of Values and Peace Education into the Primary Teacher Education Program at Caucasus University

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Abstract

In the era of globalization and digital information, fostering a value-driven, democratically minded civil society is a primary objective of higher education. This paper analyses the experience of the PROVE project (Peace and Values Education in Teacher Education), developed within the framework of the European Union Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) program, which aims to promote values and peace education in the South Caucasus. Within the broader context of Georgia's European integration, engagement with European Union educational programmes plays a significant role in strengthening academic and institutional links with the European Higher Education Area and in facilitating the alignment and integration of European educational standards and shared values within Georgia's higher education system. To share best practices, the paper presents an analysis of the implementation of the VaKE methodology, a key component of the PROVE project, within the Primary Teacher Education Program at Caucasus University.

To strengthen values education, the project undertook a curriculum update that involved both the development of a standalone course and the integration of VaKE didactic elements into existing pedagogical disciplines. The academic staff was empowered in the values education component, training modules were developed for general education schoolteachers, and student-led community actions were designed.

Although the implementation process is still ongoing, initial observations confirm the high pedagogical potential of the VaKE methodology in higher education. It enables learners to comprehend real-world ethical dilemmas, fosters competencies in argumentation and constructive dialogue, respect for diverse perspectives, and contributes to shaping the value awareness and professional ethics of future educators.

Keywords: *European Union; Erasmus+; VaKE; Values Education; Peace Education; Dilemma.*

SECTION V

Identity, Culture and Historical Perspectives

Visual Metaphors of Peace, Prosperity and Security in European Union Enlargement Discourse

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Abstract

This study examines how the concepts of peace, prosperity and security are represented through visual metaphors in European Union enlargement discourse. The research focuses on selected visual materials published by European Union institutions and official communication platforms related to the EU.

Methodologically, the study employs qualitative visual content analysis and visual metaphor analysis. Six visuals were examined under three thematic categories: peace, prosperity and security. The analysis was conducted according to six criteria: dominant visual element, metaphorical meaning, symbolic code, use of colour, compositional hierarchy and rhetorical function. The findings show that the theme of peace is represented through metaphors of unity, solidarity, harmony and shared belonging. Prosperity is visualized through images of modernization, connectivity, quality of life, sustainability and future generations. Security, on the other hand, is represented through metaphors of geopolitical rapprochement, institutional integration, completion and stability.

The study demonstrates that visuals used in EU enlargement communication are not merely informative or decorative elements; rather, they function as rhetorical tools that structure political meaning and guide the viewer's perception of Europe. In conclusion, European Union enlargement discourse visually constructs a continuity narrative that connects the historical project of peace, the present promise of prosperity and the future-oriented expansion of security. From the perspective of graphic design and visual communication, the study contributes to understanding how abstract political concepts are transformed into visually readable and symbolically powerful messages.

Keywords: *European Union enlargement; Visual metaphor; Visual communication; Political communication; Peace-prosperity-security.*

Cultural Heritage Security in European Union Policy: Contemporary Challenges and Protection Mechanisms

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Abstract

The protection of cultural heritage has emerged as an important dimension of contemporary international policy, particularly in the context of armed conflicts, political crises, occupation, terrorism, illicit archaeological excavations, and the illegal trafficking of cultural property. The destruction or damage of cultural heritage represents more than merely a cultural loss; it is closely associated with a society's historical memory, national and cultural identity, social resilience, and human security. Accordingly, cultural heritage security is increasingly regarded as an interconnected field encompassing cultural policy, security policy, and international cooperation.

The aim of this paper is to examine issues of cultural heritage security within the context of European Union policy and to analyze the principal mechanisms through which the European Union contributes to the protection of cultural heritage and the prevention of related risks. Attention is paid to the integration of cultural heritage protection into the EU's foreign and security policy, international humanitarian cooperation, crisis management, and sustainable development agenda.

The paper also focuses on preventing damage to cultural heritage resulting from armed conflicts and crises, combating the illicit trafficking of cultural property, documenting cultural heritage sites and ensuring their digital preservation, as well as promoting cooperation with international organizations and partner states. Cultural heritage assumes particular significance in peacebuilding and conflict transformation processes, as its protection can contribute to dialogue, mutual understanding, and the preservation of social ties within communities.

The paper examines the significance of EU policy for the European Neighborhood and the countries of the Eastern Partnership. In this context, cultural heritage security is particularly relevant to Georgia, where parts of the country's cultural heritage face threats resulting from conflict and occupation (Abkhazia and the so-called South Ossetia). The experience of the European Union can be regarded as an important resource for the protection, monitoring, and documentation of cultural heritage, the creation of digital archives, the development of international cooperation, and the prevention of illicit activities directed against cultural heritage.

The study is based on an analysis of relevant European Union policy documents, the international legal framework, and scholarly literature. The paper demonstrates that, within the EU's contemporary approach, cultural heritage security is gradually extending beyond the narrow framework of cultural policy and acquiring broader dimensions related to human security, peacebuilding, social resilience, and international security. Thus, the protection of cultural heritage can be regarded as an important instrument of both the European Union's internal and external policies, the effectiveness of which depends to a significant extent on international cooperation, preventive policies, and the active engagement of local communities.

Keywords: *Cultural heritage; Cultural heritage security; European Union policy; Cultural heritage protection; Human security; Conflict; Peacebuilding; Cultural identity; Georgia.*

Perceptions of Europe and the Formation of Georgia's European Identity in the Georgian Press of the First Republic (1918–1921)

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Abstract

Throughout the existence of the First Republic of Georgia, Europe emerged as one of the principal orientations of Georgian political and public thought. Following the declaration of independence, questions concerning the country's foreign-policy orientation, state development, and national self-identification were actively discussed in the Georgian press. In these discussions, Europe was presented not only as an international political space but also as a model of democratic governance, the rule of law, and cultural progress. The aim of this paper is to examine how Europe was perceived in the Georgian periodical press between 1918 and 1921 and what role these perceptions played in the formation of Georgia's European identity.

The study is based on content analysis, discourse analysis, historical-contextual analysis, and comparative analysis of Georgian periodical press materials published between 1918 and 1921. It examines the principal themes, narratives, and assessments related to Europe that appeared in the Georgian press in discussions of political, cultural, and foreign-policy issues. Attention is paid to the ways in which Europe was associated with ideas of democracy, freedom, the rule of law, cultural development, and integration into the international community.

The findings demonstrate that, in the Georgian press of the First Republic, Europe was perceived not merely as a geographical or political area but also as a value-based and cultural point of reference. Rapprochement with Europe was regarded as an important condition for Georgia's development. These perceptions contributed to the formation of Georgia's European identity and reveal the historical foundations upon which the country's European aspirations were based.

Keywords: *European identity; Perception of Europe; Georgian press; First Republic; European discourse.*

European and Georgian Identity – Past and Present

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In the context of European Union enlargement, the question of national identity has acquired renewed relevance. For Georgia, as a candidate country, European integration raises a fundamental question: how can a nation accede to a community founded on shared values while preserving its historical and cultural distinctiveness? Enlargement is thus not merely a political, economic and legal process, but also a matter of identity and belonging. This paper examines the essence of Georgian national identity and its relationship to European identity, exploring the markers, values and principles that characterize both and distinguish them from each other and from other cultural traditions.

The study employs a comparative historical and cultural analysis of European and Georgian identities from antiquity to the present. National identity is conceptualized as a form of collective consciousness, manifested in the individual's identification with a community's values, historical experience and cultural framework.

The paper argues that the sustainable development of a national community depends not solely on political and economic progress, but fundamentally on the continuity of its national identity. Society is conceived as a community bound by a sense of belonging and shared values, which enable it to pursue collective objectives. In a globalized world, nations preserve their distinctiveness through self-determination, self-affirmation and self-definition. The paper examines the principal historical and cultural factors that have shaped both identities, as well as differences in their value systems and patterns of collective thought.

The study identifies both points of convergence and distinctive features of European and Georgian identities. It demonstrates that shared values constitute a foundation for Georgia's European integration, while its cultural particularities form part of Europe's diversity rather than an obstacle to it. The paper concludes that a clear understanding of national identity is a prerequisite for meaningful participation in an enlarged European Union.

Keywords: *National identity; European identity; Georgian identity; EU enlargement.*

Mikheil Muskhelishvili's Federalist Vision and the British European Dilemma: From the Idea of a Federal Europe to Brexit

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Abstract

This article explores the federalist thought of the Georgian scholar and international law specialist Mikheil Muskhelishvili (Michel Mouskhely; 1903-1964) in the context of European integration and the United Kingdom's evolving relationship with the European project. It focuses on the intellectual foundations of his federalism and considers how his ideas illuminate the enduring tension between European political integration and national sovereignty.

The study employs historical-comparative and intellectual-historical approaches, examining Muskhelishvili's theoretical writings and European federalist works alongside the 1948 draft Constitution for a Federal Europe, prepared with Gaston Stefani, relevant historical documents, and scholarly literature on European integration and British European policy.

The analysis suggests that Muskhelishvili conceived federalism as a system for organizing political authority through a division of competences between common institutions and constituent states. This perspective provides a useful framework for examining the different trajectories of European integration and British policy toward Europe. The British experience demonstrates the persistence of sovereignty and parliamentary authority as central principles shaping the United Kingdom's relationship with European institutions, ultimately contributing to the political dynamics that culminated in Brexit.

The article therefore situates Brexit within a longer historical development rather than treating it as an isolated consequence of contemporary political circumstances. It also draws attention to the contribution of intellectuals from smaller European states to debates over the political and institutional future of post-war Europe.

Keywords: *European federalism; Michel Mouskhely; European integration; British sovereignty; Brexit.*

Georgia's European Choice and the Role of the Orthodox Church in Civilizational Transformation: Analysis of Ilia II's Public Discourse and Prospects

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how Georgia's European choice is conceptualized in the public discourse of Ilia II, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, and to assess the role of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the cultural and symbolic legitimization of European integration.

The study employs a qualitative thematic and discourse analysis. It examines several key public statements and epistles delivered by Ilia II between 2014 and 2023 that directly address Georgia's European choice, integration with the European Union, democracy, national identity, and cultural heritage. The primary sources are analysed in the context of the existing academic literature on Georgia–EU institutional relations and the role of the Orthodox Church.

The analysis identified five major frames in Ilia II's European discourse: (1) Georgia as a historical part of Christian Europe; (2) European integration combined with the preservation of national and religious identity; (3) European democratic institutions as mechanisms for safeguarding peace and freedom; (4) European integration as a reciprocal relationship in which Georgia not only benefits from Europe but also contributes culturally and spiritually to the European community; and (5) support for major stages of rapprochement with the European Union and their interpretation as confirmation of Georgia's historical European choice. At the same time, Ilia II's officially pro-European position should not be equated with a uniform position among all clergy or groups within the Georgian Orthodox Church.

In Ilia II's public discourse, European integration is presented not as the mechanical importation of a Western model, but as the realization of Georgia's historical and civilizational belonging. A distinctive feature of this discourse is the linking of the European choice with Christian heritage and the preservation of national identity. Such a framing may contribute to the cultural legitimization of European integration among social groups for whom Orthodox Christianity constitutes an important component of national identity.

Keywords: *European integration; Georgia; Ilia II; Orthodox Church; European identity; civilizational choice; Christian values; national identity; democracy.*