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EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION PROCESS IN GEORGIA

Handbook for History and
Civic Education Teachers



**GURANDA TCHELIDZE
EKATERINE KARDAVA
ZURAB BRAGVADZE**

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Tbilisi 2020

Prepared with the support of Caucasus University Erasmus + programs in the framework of the Jean Monnet Project Triangle Effect of European Studies at Schools (TEESS) – 611026 EPP-1-2019-1-GEEPPJ-MO PROJECT



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The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Editors: Ekaterine Kardava
Guranda Tchelidze

Translated by: Khatuna Basilashvili

Designer: Giorgi Bagrationi

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ISBN: 978-9941-9702-5-2

AUTHORS:

Guranda Tchelidze – Doctor of History, Associate Professor at Caucasus University, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, head of the Bachelor’s Degree Programme in European Studies; co-author, expert and coordinator of Jean Monnet Project Triangle Effect of European Studies at Schools (TEESS); participant of a number of projects; author of almost 40 scientific papers, including European History and the European Union; trainer on European Integration.

Ekaterine Kardava – Doctor of Law, Associate Professor at Caucasus University, the School of Law (affiliated); Professor of Gori State Teaching University; Author and coordinator of Jean Monnet module EU Explored in Association Agreement (EUEAA), Jean Monnet Professor; author and co-coordinator of the Jean Monnet project Legal Face of the European Union (LFEU); co-author and expert on Jean Monnet’s Project Triangle Effect of European Studies at Schools (TEESS); co-author and content-creator of the TV show Europe Time (with the support of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation); author and supervisor of the project CJEU Case Law and Georgian Labour Law (with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation); chairperson of the Association “European Time”.

Zurab Bragvadze – Professor at Caucasus University, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences; expert in Jean Monnet’s Project Triangle Effect of European Studies at Schools (TEESS); author of over one hundred scientific papers and 5 monographs on the issues of ancient history and archeology of Georgia; participant and leader of various projects of the European Union and the Council of Europe; member of the Archaeological Council at the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia.

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A WORD FROM THE AUTHORS

**Dear Readers, Teachers,
Students and Parents:**

By making choices, you not only create your own future, but also influence the lives of others. It is the power given to an individual to shape and develop a society. Your choice - who and what you choose - determines the result; determines your fate and the fate of others. Therefore, you are responsible for making the right choice. It is yours and it is free. We will share the knowledge and tell you the truth to allow you to base your choice on objective reality, truthful information, transparent objective circumstances, facts, clear evidence and accurate numbers.

One of the foundations of progress, development and the right choice in modern Georgia is to understand what the EU is all about, what the Association Agreement and Georgia-EU relations are. To this end, Caucasus University has received funding from the Erasmus + Jean Monnet project from the European Union and, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia, has launched a dialogue process with schoolchildren.

European integration is a part of Georgia's national and vital interests: it is the subject of Georgia's domestic policy, and it is a process of investing in the future of a dignified and protected life and personal inviolability of every citizen of Georgia.

The European way of development is a historical and valuable choice made by the people of Georgia and the state of Georgia.

Guranda Tchelidze

Ekaterine Kardava

Zurab Bragvadze

Caucasus University (CU)

Tbilisi, 2020

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE “EUROPEAN”

People are naturally inclined to have identity. On the one hand, they identify themselves differently, but on the other, they rarely identify themselves at a higher and broader level than on the level of one region or one country.

In this sense the term European, today often used in the context of EU citizenship, can be considered unique. Europe is no longer mere geography; it is an idea. The EU is neither a continent nor a traditional nation state, and more importantly no longer a mere economic alliance. It is a union of states founded on European values, which simultaneously have a political and legal nature.

THE EUROPEAN WAY OF LIFE

Many people, including Europeans with their diverse cultures, languages and history, criticise attempts of generalisation and fitting different nationalities living on the continent of Europe into a single definition. While they do not seem to be wrong in their arguments, their assumption is still not fully justified, because the motto of the European Union “United in diversity” (“In varietate Concordia”) provides us the opportunity to coexist and cooperate with experience founded on the values recognised as the guarantee of the European way of life. Here everyone can raise their voice, take part in the management of a diverse society and not be scared of any possible outcomes provided their actions do not restrict the rights and freedoms of others.

THE EU GOALS

- Promote the developing of European values and the well-being of its citizens;
- Ensure peace, security and justice;
- Strengthen the sustainable development based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive market economy with full employment and social progress, and environmental protection;
- Combat social exclusion and discrimination
- Promote scientific and technical progress
- Enhance economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among the EU countries, establish an internal market with a view to eliminating the customs borders and avoiding creating obstacles for one another;
- Respect rich cultural and linguistic diversity
- Establish an economic and monetary union and strengthen one another (the countries) with an internal currency.

THE EU VALUES

The EU values are common to the EU countries in a society in which inclusion, tolerance, justice, and solidarity prevail. They say no to discrimination. These values unite all the member states as they are an integral part of European society.

Human dignity

Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected, protected as it constitutes the real basis of fundamental rights.

Freedom

Individual freedoms such as respect for private life, freedom of

thought, religion, assembly, expression and information are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Freedom of movement gives citizens the right to move and live freely within the EU.

Democracy

The functioning of the Union shall be founded on representative democracy.

Being a European citizen also means enjoying political rights. Every adult EU citizen has the right to stand as a candidate and to vote in elections in the country of his/her residence or of origin. The government is elected by the people, which is achieved through fair elections in which the government is accountable and responsible to the people. Democracy guarantees its citizens stability, sustainable development and security.

Equality

Equality is about equal rights for all citizens before the law. The principle of equality between women and men underpins all European policies and is the basis for European integration. It applies in all areas. The principle of equal pay for equal work became part of the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

Rule of law

The EU is based on the rule of law. Everything the EU does is founded on treaties, voluntarily and democratically agreed by its EU countries. Law and justice are upheld by an independent judiciary. The EU countries gave final jurisdiction to the European Court of Justice the judgments of which have to be respected by all. European integration implies the order based on the rule of law, and the rule of law means the unwavering observance of the laws adopted by the government elected by the people and the examination / monitoring of the effectiveness of the implementation of these laws by the civil society.

Human Rights

The European Union is based on a strong commitment to promoting and protecting human rights. The European idea is the supremacy of human freedom and equality for all. Human beings have natural rights. He/she is born free. He/she enjoys freedom of speech, expression, personal freedom. The state shall not abuse power and shall find the right balance between human rights and the state security.

Human rights are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, according to which any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.

In 2012, the European Union was awarded the Nobel Prize for its contribution to peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe.

The development of the values of the European Union, the fulfillment of its tasks, the protection of the interests of its citizens and member states, the effectiveness and continuity of policy are ensured by the political institutions of the European Union. Each institution operates in accordance with the principle of separation of powers within its authority. The political institutions of the European Union are the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Union (Council of Ministers), the European Court of Justice, the European Central Bank, the Court of Auditors.

CREATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Presenting the history of European states only in bright colors would be inaccurate, to put it mildly. Through centuries there have been numerous wars and controversies among European states. However, after the end of World War II and realising the lessons that

history taught us, one big European family was formed. European states took into account that they had lived together for a long time on the European continent, that European languages are related to each other, European traditions and customs originate from the same root and a person living in one European country may come from another. So, the fundamental basis of European integration, of course, has always been the socio-cultural proximity of the peoples of Europe. From medieval Europe onwards, this space was a cultural unity amalgamated by the Christian religion and the Latin script. For different peoples, Europe was one unified center from which European values reached and spread throughout the world. Europeans equally believe in justice, freedom of thought, mutual respect and tolerance. They have equal respect for everything uniting their countries and peoples.

Before the idea of European unification turned into a real political goal, this idea, as the future destiny of European states, was put forward by European philosophers and authors. As far back as the 19th century, the famous French writer Victor Hugo spoke about the “United States of Europe” based on the ideas of humanism. In the 1920s, Richard Kalerg, the Austrian politician and one of the first ideologues of European integration, argued that European unity was feasible only through close political cooperation between Germany and France. However, the practical implementation of these ideas proved impossible due to the two world wars waged in the first half of the twentieth century.

In 1945, the dire consequences of World War II faced by Europe - millions of homeless people, refugees and the unemployed, the peak of Europe’s economic backwardness, along with its political fragmentation – convinced the world that Europe’s dilapidated infrastructure could only be restored through cooperation of the states, which would effectively preclude the danger of confrontation and outbreak of new wars between the countries. The people fighting against totalitarianism for years were ready to put an end to the boundless hatred and create the conditions for a lasting peace. A whole plethora of

prominent figures of this period - Robert Schumann, Konrad Adenauer, Winston Churchill and others - called on the peoples of Europe to turn a new page in their lives. New structures based on common interests and agreements were to be created in Western Europe, which would guarantee the rule of law and equality of all European states. It is worth mentioning that the creation of a united Europe was supported by the Georgian lawyer Michel Muskheli (Mikheil Muskhelishvili) living in Strasbourg, who strongly believed that the unification would only strengthen European countries and would by no means undermine or weaken the sovereignty of the member states.

Calls for the unification of European states was followed by the idea of a united Europe voiced by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Winston Churchill, about which he spoke in his speech made on September 19, 1946, at the University of Zurich, Switzerland: "We must re-create the European family with a regional structure which may be called the United States of Europe."

The idea of Great Britain was supported by the United States. In 1947, the United States approved the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe's dilapidated economy, which also called on European nations to cooperate. France's position and its readiness to cooperate with its former rival – Germany - was of paramount importance. Thus, France's stance played a crucial role in European integration, the starting point of which is considered May 9, 1950, when a proposal made by French politician Jean Monnet was officially voiced by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman involving the unification of the coal and steel industries of Western Europe. According to Jean Monnet's initiative, the historical rivals - France and Germany – were to unite with other European countries in order to no longer be able to process coal and steel independently. Jean Monnet's proposal was based on the idea that any country needed steel to wage war, which was used to produce ammunition and coal to supply factories and railways. The subordination of the production and sale of these essential resources to a common supranational body (the "supreme government") would serve the ultimate goal of ensuring the peaceful coexistence of Ger-

many and France and deepening the economic and political interdependence of the two countries. Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands also believed in it, and in 1951 the “European Coal and Steel Union” was established. An independent supranational governing body and its balancing bodies - the Council of Ministers of the Member States, the Parliamentary Assembly of Members of Parliament, the Court of Justice – were established. Over time, cooperation and progress in various areas of relations have proven that the creation of a “European Coal and Steel Community” was the right step. In 1957, cooperation started in the field of nuclear energy and the European Atomic Energy Union was established. In addition, these countries signed an agreement in 1957 to bring the entire economic system closer together. The aim of the “European Economic Union” was to create a common European market to facilitate trade cooperation among the member states. This involved eliminating the barriers of moving goods from one country to another - stopping cargo at the borders or paying the so-called customs duty. By creating a common market, border controls and customs duties were abolished. All restrictions on the free movement of goods, labour, services and capital were removed. A body of representatives of national governments - the Council of Ministers - was established. The previously established Parliamentary Assembly and the Court of Justice expanded.

The European Union gave its member states the opportunity for maintaining peaceful relations. However, it does not necessarily mean there is no difference of opinion, but within the framework of a common idea and prosperity, each state resorts to ways of dialogue and negotiation. Shortly after the creation of the common market, the population of the “European Economic Union” felt significant improvement in their living conditions. The countries of the European Economic Union together took care of solving various problems in Europe, helping relatively low-income developing countries to join. All the conditions were created for the free movement of people across Europe for travel and residential purposes, which, in its turn, led to the accession of other countries to the Union. Over time, from 1973

to 2013, the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland (1973), Greece (1981), Portugal and Spain (1986), Austria, Finland and Sweden (1995) became the EU member states. Of particular interest was the fate of the Eastern and Central European states after the end of the Cold War, i.e. after the collapse of Berlin Wall and the lowering the Iron Curtain. These states managed to overcome their communist-totalitarian past by joining the EU. These states were able to demonstrate to all of Europe their potential for representative democracy and the development of a free, competitive market economy, and respect for human rights, all of which taken together was an essential basis for their accession to the European Union. The Union was joined in 2004 by Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary and the Czech Republic, in 2007 by Romania and Bulgaria, and in 2013 by Croatia. The process of bringing other countries closer to European values also began. The way problems were solved within the EU served as a typical example for them:

1. Assistance to difficult regions with insufficient jobs / where environmental conditions hamper agricultural development processes / in some places trade relations are hindered due to underdeveloped communication infrastructure;
2. Assistance to poor countries - work in this direction will give assistance to the countries with low living standards caused by conflicts, natural disasters and epidemics in various fields, such as education and medicine. In addition, the EU countries will purchase products made in poor countries without having to pay customs duties;
3. Creating new jobs - The European Union constantly creates new jobs and better working conditions and helps people to start new businesses. Consequently, it spends money on retraining staff with the relevant qualifications;
4. No individual country is able to solve environmental problems on its own. The European Union seeks to address climate change and environmental problems through agreements be-

tween Member States and the active involvement of other countries;

5. Solving common problems in Europe is facilitated by creating the common currency introduced for the member states - the Euro. The use of a single currency has made it easier to travel around the EU, do business and increase trade turnover;
6. Finally, a person residing in the European Union has the right to live, study or work in a member state of his or her choice. Moving from one EU country to another is made as easy as possible, the education for students is greatly facilitated within the EU member states.

By joining the European Union, the new member states were able to deepen the unity of the market. All the obstacles to the free movement of goods, services, labour and capital are consistently and gradually being eliminated. Currently, movement between states is as free as within countries themselves, which is why the EU market is currently no longer referred to as a common market but rather as internal. The name of the organization has also been changed. Since 1993, the “European Economic Union” has been replaced by the “European Union” because it is no longer a mere economic union but a political one as well. The countries cooperate in matters of law enforcement, security and foreign relations. The structure of the Union, the rules and procedures of decision-making have gradually been improved. The role and powers of the European Parliament have increased. It has been transformed from an advisory body into a legislative, approving the EU budget and overseeing the work of the European Commission. The rules for the EU Parliament composition have changed. If initially it brought together representatives of the national parliaments, nowadays its members are directly elected by the citizens of the European states. However, along with obvious advantages, there are some of the drawbacks as well. Developments in the world in 2015, in the form of the war in Syria, increased the flow of refugees to Europe, which led the UK to opt for leaving the EU. De-

spite the first precedent of leaving the EU by a member state, there is no alternative to close cooperation between European states, as co-existence and cooperation are the only means contributing to peace, security, economic development and the well-being of its citizens.

THE EU MEMBERSHIP CONDITIONS

Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union stipulates that applications for membership of the European Union may be made by European states which respect and uphold democracy, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and the rights of minorities.

In addition, the country must have a functioning market economy and be competitive in the European internal market.

In 1993, the European Council at the Copenhagen Summit recognised the right of Eastern and Central European countries to join the European Union provided they meet the following three criteria:

Political – countries have stable institutions. They are responsible for democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and respect the minority rights. In order for a country aspiring to join the European Union to start a dialogue on membership, it shall, by all means, meet the first criterion.

Economic – countries are developing market economies and can cope with the competitive environment and other challenges inherent in a market economy.

Legal – Laws and legal practices in the EU are acceptable to the countries.

In addition to the above criteria, the one deserving special mention is a ***geographical*** criterion, since according to the 1992 Maas-

tricht Treaty, any European country can declare its desire to join the EU provided it respects its democratic values and is ready to promote them. In addition, no specification is given regarding the rapprochement-accession of non-European countries.

FROM THE CHRONOLOGY OF EU-GEORGIA RELATIONS

Georgia is one of the states that has clearly expressed its pro-Western political course of further development since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the 1990s.

It should clearly be stated that the EU supports Georgia's aspirations for closer relations and cooperation with the EU. The European Union and the government of Georgia have agreed to continue cooperation with a view to further deepening Georgia's political association and economic integration with the European Union, which remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting the territorial integrity of Georgia and assisting its economic development and modernisation. Moreover, the EU ensures Georgia's security and democratic and economic development. Joining the EU is an opportunity to ensure security, territorial integrity and raise living standards.

Overview of EU-Georgia Relations Chronology:

- Our country's relations with the European Union date back to 1992 – the starting point of the process of transition to a market economy and of strengthening democracy in the newly independent countries. The process was facilitated by the EU Technical Assistance Programme- TACIS. The EU economic assistance comprised three main areas: financial assistance, humanitarian aid (in the form of food aid) and technical assistance;¹

1 In the process of furthering the EU-Georgia relations, TACIS was replaced in 2007 by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), and the latter was replaced in 2014 by the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)..

- On 22 April 1996, the first international agreement "Partnership and Cooperation Agreement" (PCA), signed between the EU and Georgia in Luxembourg, became the legal basis for EU-Georgia relations. The agreement provided an appropriate framework for the political dialogue between the Parties allowing the development of political relations – to support Georgia's efforts to consolidate its democracy, develop its economy and complete the transition to a market economy; to promote trade and investment and harmonious economic relations between the Parties and so to foster their sustainable economic development; to provide a basis for legislative, economic, social, financial, civil scientific, technological and cultural cooperation;
- Among the many chronological milestones between Georgia and the European Union are the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Eastern Partnership Initiative (EaP), which has given rise to a number of achievements in Georgia-EU relations;
- In 2004, Georgia became a beneficiary of the European Neighbourhood Policy;
- During the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, it was through the help and intervention of the European Union and the United States that the geographical expansion of hostilities and occupation was put an end to;
- In 2009, Georgia (along with Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia and Ukraine) became a participant in the European Union Eastern Partnership Initiative;
- **Since signing the Association Agreement (AA) in 2014, a political association** has been established between Georgia and the European Union and actions for establishing a **Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA)** have been taken;
- **In 2017, the European Union gave Georgian citizens permission to travel to the Schengen Area without a visa and move there freely.**

EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY (ENP)

Strengthening the state and social sustainability of the EU partners has been a key issue and a major priority for the EU since 2003. The European Union has created a zone of development and good-Neighbourliness, the so-called “Belt of Friends” at the heart of which lies the stabilisation of the region, in political, socio-economic and security-related terms. In addition, the possibility of creating a framework for further development of the EU relations with the countries of the southern Mediterranean, Russia and the newly independent states is being considered. This approach recognises the different aspirations of the partner countries in developing their relations with the EU, tailors support to each partner country’s ambitions and pursues its new Neighbourhood policy on the basis of a differentiated approach. The EU Neighbourhood Policy is a foreign policy towards its Neighbouring countries developed in 2004 with a view to avoiding new dividing lines between the expanded EU and its new neighbour as well as to fostering stability, security and prosperity. One of the basic principles of the European Neighbourhood Policy is to help neighbouring countries implement equal reforms for equal cooperation.

The European Neighbourhood Policy differs in its essence from potential EU membership. It is an alternative to enlargement and establishes a privileged relationship for the EU’s neighbouring countries. The policy proposes four priority areas: rule of law, good governance, minority rights, good neighbourly relations, market economy principles and sustainable development. The EU is providing assistance to the Partners in the Neighbourhood, mainly through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), which envisages allocating € 15 billion for the activities planned for 2014-2020.

The countries of the South Caucasus, including Georgia, have become beneficiaries of the European Neighbourhood Policy since 2004, following the November 2003 Rose Revolution, since when the Georgian-EU relations have acquired a qualitatively new perspective. The European Union has offered us privileged relations, which has gone beyond simple cooperation and grown into a close economic and political integration.

The European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) has been operative since 2007 as a part of the Neighbourhood Policy - a financial instrument designed to support the Policy with specific financial activities. In 2007, € 24 million was allocated to Georgia under the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument to reform the priority areas of the Action Plan. Following the August 2008 war, the European Commission allocated an additional 500 million to Georgia from the European Neighbourhood Policy Conflict Instrument package, the bulk of which was spent on IDP support. Launched in 2011, the New European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) provided assistance to 16 partner countries east and south of the EU in 2014-2020. This tool was launched in Georgia in 2015.

With a view to encouraging partner countries, the European Neighbourhood Instrument is based on the method of differentiation and the principle of “more for more”: special attention is paid to those countries that actually build a strong and sustainable democracy based on the rule of law. The European Neighbourhood Policy even reflected the country’s level of ambition in terms of partnership with the EU, its progress in building democracy and achieving the agreed goals of the reform.

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP (EaP)

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative, which came into force in 2009, is a joint policy initiative aiming to deepen and strengthen relations between the European Union and its eastern Neighbours (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine).

The Eastern Partnership is not an alternative to the prospect of joining the European Union it is rather a joint commitment to deliver tangible results for citizens across the region and increase the stabilisation and resilience of the EU’s Eastern neighbours. The Cooperation takes place both at bilateral and at regional level, depending on the nature of the action. Through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, it facilitated to deepening the process of integration of the partner countries, including Georgia; in addition, it contributed

to spreading and sharing common values, strengthening security of the region and developing its economy. The chief goal of the initiative is giving support to the ENP implementation, however, the Eastern Partnership programme has gone further to offer particular perspectives to partner countries with a view to bringing them closer to the EU.

The Eastern Partnership offered the countries the maximum opportunities considering their political and economic situations, the pace of the implemented reforms and the outcomes reached.

Cooperation within the Eastern Partnership developed in the formats of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, with the aim of achieving the goals set for the region through the implementation of joint projects. The bilateral cooperation between the EU and each of the partner states implied further enhancement of the cooperation, including: establishing new, more comprehensive contact relations through signing deepened Agreements – Association Agreements, which were broader compared to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and better responded to each partner country's aspiration to move closer to the EU. Such agreements were concluded with the countries (Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova) ready to assume the appropriate level of commitments; to establish free trade zones between the EU and partner countries, based on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DECTs) with each country, as an inseparable part of the Association Agreement; to promote the movement of people in a safe environment. To this end, the EU has signed Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements with partner countries, including Georgia. Consistent steps have been taken to introduce a visa-free travel regime.

The European Commission allocated millions of euros for the implementation of the Eastern Partnership as of a part of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The commitments by the EU and its partner countries cover the four main priority areas:

Specific cooperation issues have been identified on four platforms:

Platform I – Democracy, good governance and stability;

Platform II – Economic integration and ensuring compliance with the EU policy;

Platform III – Energy Security;

Platform IV – Contacts between peoples.

Georgia has successfully achieved the goals set within the Eastern Partnership, which has been widely reflected in the practical implementation of the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, which is evidenced by the 2018 survey carried out to explore the attitude of the Georgian population towards the European Union. According to the survey findings, Georgia's EU membership is supported by vast majority of its people.

Source List:

www.europe.eu

www.europe-today.eu

www.op.europa.eu

www.eesc.europa.eu

www.consilium.europa.eu/media/44400/685-annex-5-d-georgia-factsheet

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<http://www.epfound.ge/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/EU-2019-Final-GE.pdf>

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION CHOICE OF GEORGIA – OFFICIALLY DECLARED AND CONFIRMED IN GEORGIA

The European Union recognises the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, which, in turn, considers the European Union to be its strategic partner. The EU remains committed to supporting Georgia through its assistance programmes and disburses 100 million euros annually in financial assistance provided to the country. However, the EU's assistance is not only limited to its financial contribution: its support to Georgia has political, technical and humanitarian implications and much more.

1. Article 78 of the Constitution of Georgia states:

“The constitutional bodies shall take all measures within the scope of their competences to ensure the full integration of Georgia into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.”

2. Georgia's foreign policy strategy for 2019-2022:

“The Government of Georgia has adopted its foreign policy strategy for 2019-2022, which covers a wide range of issues that the country aims to address; it defines the country's foreign policy strategic goals, its objectives and priority directions and the ways and mechanisms of their implementation. This is the first foreign policy strategy of Georgia – a national document approved by the Government of Georgia. “

“Goal 2: The EU Membership”

“National interests of Georgia:

1. Ensuring sovereignty and territorial integrity;

2. Developing state institutions and strengthening democracy;
3. Developing an effective national security system;
4. Strengthening national unity and civil consent;
- 5. European and Euro-Atlantic integration;**
6. Securing stable long-term economic growth;
7. Ensuring energy security;
8. Ensuring regional stability;
9. Strengthening the transit role of Georgia;
10. Ensuring the environmental security of Georgia and the region;
11. Ensuring civil integration and maintaining national and cultural uniqueness;
12. Strengthening cyber security;
13. Ensuring demographic security;
14. Relations with the Diaspora “.

“Key directions of National Security Concept of Georgia:

1. Ending the occupation of Georgia’s territories; relations with the Russian Federation;
 2. Developing the state institutions and strengthening democracy;
 3. Implementing the Engagement Policy;
 4. Developing the defense and security system of Georgia;
 - 5. Integrating into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union”**
- ... (etc.).

3. Decree No 765 of the Government of Georgia on the Approval of the Government Communication Strategy on Georgia’s Membership to the EU and NATO for 2017-2020:

Key messages

The relevant messages on the Georgia’s accession to the EU and

NATO are developed on national and international levels through examination of the public opinion poll findings, investigation of target groups, prevalent misconceptions and the lack of public awareness as well as analysis of the action plan report.

The strategic communication is carried out on the basis of the following key messages:

On the national level:

- Ongoing, implemented and planned complex and large-scale reforms in the process of accession to the EU and NATO strengthen Georgia's statehood and defense capacities;
- The process of Georgia's accession to the European Union and NATO contributes to the creation of a safe and competitive environment vital for the country's rapid development;
- The process of Georgia's accession to the European Union and NATO ensures the development of democratic institutions in Georgia, the protection of the rule of law, human rights, common values and cultural diversity and the free movement of people;
- The process of Georgia's accession to the European Union and NATO helps increase foreign investment, reduce unemployment and improve the living standards of every citizen of Georgia.

Internationally:

- Georgia, as one of the oldest Christian countries and young democracies carrying European culture and values, makes a significant contribution to strengthening European and Euro-Atlantic security;
- Georgia is an example of successful democratic development in the EU-NATO Eastern Neighbourhood;
- The European Union and NATO membership will contribute to the rapid consolidation of democracy in Georgia and increase aspiration to the democratic processes in the region;

- Georgia is a reliable partner, representing an important transit corridor, which, among others, contributes to Europe’s energy security.

4. Ordinance №533 of 2017 of the Government of Georgia on the approval of the “Unified Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia 2017 - 2021” states:

The strategy is focused on approximation with the relevant EU policies and practices in the field of education, which is related to consideration of recommendations worked out within the Bologna process, including the requirements of standards and guidelines of ensuring European quality higher education (ESG), in the implementation of mechanisms of education quality assurance. The Strategy Document also envisages a gradual introduction of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) in the Vocational Education System of Georgia.

Individual chapters of the Association Agreement between Georgia and the European Union, signed on June 27, 2014, determine Georgia’s cooperation with the EU in the field of science and education. Namely, Chapter 12 of the Agreement provides for cooperation and exchanges in the fields of science, technology development and demonstration, while Chapter 16 deals with cooperation in the fields of education, training and youth affairs. In addition, an important resource for the educational and scientific sphere of Georgia is the 77-billion-fund of the EU research and innovation programme Horizon 2020, of which Georgia became a member in 2016 and under which 17 projects submitted by Georgian organizations with a total value of more than 5.2 million GEL have already been funded through competition. In addition, with a view to further developing the science capacity, the country will be returned a half of the membership fee already paid.

Georgia is an active participant of the ERASMUS + Programme of the European Union and ranks 8th among 131 partner countries in terms of successful projects. As a result, since 2015, the education of more than 1,500 Georgian students has been funded at leading Eu-

ropean universities. In 2016, Georgia won 1465 scholarships in ERASMUS + mobility programs; 1333 scholarships have been obtained through the International Credit Mobility Program; the education of 483 Georgian citizens at the world's leading universities has been funded by LEPL International Education Center.

DEVELOPMENTS AND NEEDS OF GEORGIA IN POST-SOVIET ERA AND IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIP WITH THE EU

Over the past 30 years, since the days of the struggle for independence and the very first day of declaration of independence, Georgia has endured several wars, armed conflicts and political and economic oppression, as a consequence of which the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region / South Ossetia are occupied by the Russian Federation. Intermittently the Georgian economy suffers a significant negative impact. With weapons, killings of innocent civilians, occupying its lands, bloodshed and demonstrations of force, the enemy is constantly weakening Georgia's sovereignty, undermining its territorial integrity, hindering democratic processes and the country's prosperity, thwarting development, independence and freedom; The consequences of the Russian Federation's interference in the country's sovereignty are painful: unemployment, poverty, etc ... Because Georgia desires to be independent, united, and civil and open to the peoples of the world and any state around the globe – the neighbour is waging a war against it.

The ethnic cleansing and massacres of Georgians has been officially recognised in international documents.

If not for partners and political friends, Georgia would have found it difficult to survive and continue a dignified life of a free state. Since the very first day of the declaration of its independence, such big world players as: the European Union, the United States of America (USA) and the other democratic world have been standing by little Georgia providing political, financial, technical and humanitarian assistance.

Any relationship and agreement between individuals, organizations and states bears on shared interests, mutual respect, benefit and support. Thus, the partnership between the European Union and Georgia and the signing of the Association Agreement is prompted by the desire of achieving mutually beneficial goals. The EU aims at ensuring peace, stability and security in its neighbourhood, as well as expanding trade, economic and political ties, while Georgia strives for strengthening its statehood capabilities in the post-Soviet era, fully and effectively ensuring its independence and sovereignty, neutralising the consequences of war, building a strong public and private sector, expanding business, manufacturing and trade, ensuring social stability, enhancing education and creating favourable conditions for well-being and prosperity of its people. Georgia and the European Union have been assisting each other in achieving the above-stated goals all along. However, needless to say that the amount, types and capacity of assistance are markedly different. Georgia is in desperate need of substantial financial and technical support to build a more prosperous, democratic, and civil state, develop the infrastructure (transport, road, water, sewage, school, etc.), create new technologies and innovations in the field of production, etc.

CONTENT OF THE EU-ASSISTED PROJECTS IN GEORGIA

For more than 24 years, the European Union has been remaining committed to supporting Georgia. Its assistance has been colossal all along. The EU has launched, supported, funded or co-participated in implementation of a multitude of favourable projects for the country:

- Constructing and renovating schools;
- Constructing roads;
- Developing the transport sector, increasing the number of modernised public transport, among others;
- Enhancing the quality of education and providing new oppor-

tunities for Georgian citizens, including free education abroad, scholarships and more;

- Providing support measures for ethnic minorities, IDPs and / or refugees; adopting the Law of Georgia on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination and elaborating anti-discrimination mechanisms;
- Financing and strengthening various businesses, including agricultural;
- Developing public services (one-stop-shop services, public health, crisis management, etc.);
- Strengthening the science capacity;
- Establishing a labour inspection mechanism and improving employee safety;
- Involving and integrating Georgia in global and regional programmes, including projects of diversification of the gas and oil routes (Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey close partnership);
- Promoting job creation;
- Preserving and taking care of Georgian cultural heritage;
- Training prosecutors, judges and other professionals;
- Facilitating the voluntary return of the persons outside Georgia to Georgia;
- Many more.

It was thanks to the assistance that Georgia has succeeded in building a new type of state. It has become a country of young democracy, coped with wars, developed tourism, introduced the Georgian culture, natural beauty, its richness and historical greatness to the world, produced and marketed goods and produce to different markets around the globe. Despite many wars, Georgia was able to stand up bravely, stubbornly and dedicatedly, did not betray its own choice and remained loyal to the support of partner countries.

NEW CHALLENGES IN THE EU INTEGRATION PROCESS

In the era of modern technologies and innovations, a new form of war has emerged – information warfare, hybrid warfare. Having failed to reach its goal through arms, the enemy has intensified the use of disinformation as a weapon to influence public opinion against the EU and thereby disrupt Georgia-EU relations. False information about the European Union started circulating in Georgia. The enemy tries to provoke anti-European ideas all around the country by portraying the EU as a danger to Georgian identity whose aim is to deprive us of our language, culture, customs, traditions and more. The Georgian government took an immediate action launching a wise and humane strategic communication processes to tackle the new challenge.

COEXISTENCE OF THE EU MEMBER STATES

The European Union is a unique union between 27 European states where decisions which are in the interest of each country and are favourable to all are made jointly. Every EU member state has its own state language, history, culture, way of life, constitution, customs and traditions. Their independence and cultural identity are preserved.

The 27 European countries are substantially different in many ways. There was a time when they, as fierce enemies, waged wars against one another but over time through constructive concessions and mutually beneficial actions they have been able to build a space of peace, prosperity, justice and security where any person feels protected.

The EU Member States have empowered each other in such a way as to maintain their independence, sovereignty, language, culture and customs.

THE EU INTERNAL MARKET

The 27 EU member states have an internal market without any internal borders or other regulatory obstacles to the free movement of goods and services. In the past, each state had its own customs legislation, different fees, taxes, rules all of which prevented effective trade between each other as they were, more often than not, discriminatory and protectionist. Finally, the EU countries agreed to remove any obstructive and restrictive barriers and established a common and equal rule for each other. Today, the internal market ensures the free flow of goods, which means businesses, traders and persons from any of the EU states can move, produce and sell goods freely and legally in another. In the EU internal market all the rules apply equally to all the states (large or small), legal entities and individuals, which has fuelled economic growth, strengthened businesses, stimulated production and trade, created more jobs, improved efficiency, raised quality and increased capital and prosperity for the people.

Nowadays, the whole world is striving to market and sell their products (goods, services) on the EU internal market – a free consumer market accounting for 500 million consumers. Countries outside the European Union (third countries) do not need to negotiate separately to trade with the EU countries since one rule applies to all the member states. Thus, third countries can directly negotiate with the European Union and enjoy the free movement of goods and services in any of its member states. Georgia has to deal with the same customs order in any EU country, whether it imports goods to France or Latvia. The fact has made the European Union's internal market very attractive and efficient and it is thanks to its organization that the EU is one of the largest economies.

The Association Agreement and the DCFTA open up great opportunities for Georgia in the internal European Union market.

ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT (AA) AND THE DEEP AND COMPREHENSIVE FREE TRADE AREA (DCFTA)

The EU and Georgia signed an Association Agreement on 27 June, 2014, which was provisionally applied from 1 September, 2014 after being ratified by Georgia on 18 July, 2014. The Agreement entered into full force on 1 July, 2016.

Signing the Association Agreement in 2014 was an important cornerstone as it significantly deepened political and economic ties between Georgia and the European Union with a long-term perspective of closer political association and economic integration, including establishment of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA).

The Association Agreement offers an excellent opportunity to invest in the future of Georgia. The document acknowledges Georgia's commitment to implementing domestic reforms which shall lead to sustainable development, ensuring respect for fundamental rights and freedoms and strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law, increasing production and prosperity, strengthening the social dimension, guarantying decent work and employment for all and reaching consolidation between generations (integrity and responsibility of the current generation for the welfare of the future generations). **With a view to achieving these results, the Association Agreement sets out the substantive obligations that Georgia shall fulfill and the time frame in which it shall fulfill them. Georgia has assumed responsibility for reflecting European standards in its national legislation and thereby started the approximation process of Georgian legislation to the EU law.**

The Association Agreement is a voluminous document with almost 1000 pages. The annexes to the Association Agreement set out a list of more than 300 European Union laws that Georgia needs to move closer to. Georgia shall approximate only for the benefit of Georgian people and the country, therefore, whether the European Association has healthy, effective and beneficial results should be checked

systematically. The Association Agreement provides for ongoing monitoring of the progress carried out by the Georgian government, the European Union and the civil society platform (non-governmental sector, private sector, experts).

The DCFTA – Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement is a part of the Association Agreement (in particular, Chapter IV). In other words, DCFTA is an opportunity to develop and strengthen Georgian production, establish and create a market where business interests and environmental and social interests shall be protected. **The European Union has created and established a sustainable and free market where business and human needs are equally met, economics and trade serve people and, conversely, people, with their skills, intellect, education and opportunities, are the primary driving force of the economy. Together they create capital and prosperity, build a strong state and society. This is a unique market model.**

According to the DCFTA, any investor when pursuing activities shall:

- Protect nature of Georgia (water, air, land, plants), which is a guarantee of life and health of citizens of Georgia;
- Follow the principle of productive employment and decent work, which will enable Georgian citizens to maintain a healthy work-life balance, earn an income and boost their well-being;
- Ensure freedom of entrepreneurship, which will create conditions for free development and operation of businesses so as to allow them to act in compliance with the requirements of Georgian legislation and respect the interests of the people and the state of Georgia; where large and small businesses will have equal developmental opportunities and the former will not oppress the latter; where the state will support every enterprise equally and objectively and provide uniform help to the small and medium-sized businesses alike.

Georgia will benefit from new trading opportunities and easier access to the EU market as the DCFTA provides for the granting customs privileges in the EU internal market only for products originating in Georgia thereby giving the country and its businesses motivation and incentives and provides an opportunity of reviving and empowering national production. The European Union will eliminate all customs duties on goods originating in Georgia.

THE EU AREA OF FREEDOM, SECURITY AND JUSTICE

The European Union offers its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, in which the free movement of persons is ensured. The Union endeavours to ensure a high level of security through measures to prevent and combat crime, racism and xenophobia, and through measures for coordination and cooperation between police and other competent authorities of the Member States.

In 2017, the European Union adopted a regulation on visa-free travel in the Schengen area for Georgians travelling to the EU for a period of stay of 90 days in any 180-day period. Since the entry of the visa liberalisation into force, more than tens of thousands of Georgian citizens have travelled to different Schengen countries, without the need of paying visa issuance or border crossing fees. More than one million entries have been registered in the Schengen countries from Georgia. The ties between the peoples have deepened and various joint activities have been initiated. The Georgian citizens have had first-hand experience of the European lifestyle and have further got convinced in the European values as they have witnessed that any person in the European Union is protected and respected regardless of his/her race, skin colour, language, etc.

RESPECTING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union with its diversity of languages respects the language of each member state and recognises 24 official and working languages, which, in its turn, entails the following: all the regulations, laws and decisions reached are translated in all the EU's official languages and delivered to the people in their native tongue to allow wider access to them.

This principle is also enshrined in the Association Agreement, according to which, during the legal approximation Georgia shall translate the legislation of the European Union with a view to ensuring effective implementation of the Agreement, fully comprehending the European standards and correctly incorporating them in the national law. In addition, the European Union provides financial assistance to Georgia in translating the foreign legislation into the Georgian language.

According to Decree # 186 of the Government of Georgia On the Measures for Effective Implementation of the Association Agreement including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) between Georgia and the European Union, LEPL Legislative Herald of Georgia under the Ministry of Justice is assigned to translate the EU legislation into Georgian.

Should Georgia join the European Union, the state language of Georgia will become an official and working language of the European Union.

FAMILY AND MARRIAGE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Protecting the family and family unity is an integral part of the fundamental values of the European Union. According to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union:

- Everyone has the right to privacy and family life;
- The right to marry and to found a family is guaranteed by national law;

- The family enjoys legal, economic and social protection;
- In order to reconcile family and professional life, anyone has the right to be protected from dismissal during maternity leave, paternal leave and adoption leave.

Every member state of the European Union has its own historical, cultural, customary beliefs and worldview about the family. The right to marry and the right to found a family is guaranteed in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of these rights and is appropriately reflected in their respective constitutions. For instance, the constitution of Latvia, a member state of the European Union, states: “The State protects and supports marriage – a union between a man and a woman” The Constitution of Poland, another member of the European Union, states: “Marriage, being a union of a man and a woman, as well as the family, motherhood and parenthood, shall be placed under the protection and care of the Republic of Poland.”

The above and other examples attest to the fact that the European Union never interferes in the aspects of any country’s identity and worldview on marriage and family. Thus, the European Union has never expected, nor will it expect Georgia in future, to change its attitude towards the family and marriage.

THE EU ASSISTANCE TO GEORGIA

The EU support to Georgia aims at improving the quality of life of ordinary Georgians in a tangible and visible manner and provides at least 350 million GEL to Georgia annually in grant assistance, which goes to various areas, including economic and private sector, agriculture, education, public administration, justice, environment, transport and culture.

With the help of the European Union, a new site has been created, which describes more than 160 projects that Georgia is currently implementing with the EU assistance. This site is:

<https://eu4georgia.ge>

<https://eu4georgia.ge/ka>

In this context, in 2017-2020, the European Union has allocated financial assistance in the amount of 371 million to 453 million euros within the framework of the Single Support Framework for Georgia: 40% of this amount went to Economic Development and Market Opportunity Growth Projects; 20% – Good Governance and Institutional Strengthening Projects; 15% – Energy Efficiency, Environment and Climate Change Projects; 10% – Mobility and People-to-People Contact Projects; 5% – Strategic Communication projects; 5% – Civil Service Reform Projects; 5% – Additional Institutional Capacity Building Projects.

Simultaneously, Georgia is a beneficiary of the European Union Regional and Multi-State Action Programme Fund. In addition, Georgia receives assistance and support under Horizon 2020, Erasmus + and Creative Europe.

Amid Covid-19 pandemic and the state of emergency, while the European Union itself was facing major challenges, the EU offered Georgia 1.5 billion GEL support package to help it cope with the economic fallout. This was an unprecedented support from the European Union to Georgia the aim of which was to help the country cover its immediate financing needs, deal with the existing problems and cope with future economic and social challenges.

THE EU LABOUR STANDARDS AND AA

By virtue of considerable efforts and financial assistance of the European Union, a labour inspection tool has been elaborated in Georgia with a view to monitoring and protecting the employee safety.

With extensive support of the the European Union, changes were made to the Labour Code of Georgia, which constitutes a major step forward as it offers much greater protection to workers and improved standard of labour rights.

In accordance with the Association Agreement, Georgia shall diligently protect human rights through creating high standards and conditions for full and productive employment and decent work for all. Pursuant to the EU Labour Law and practices, decent employment is a guarantee of a person’s decent life, decent living conditions and a decent personal and family life.

Every citizen of Georgia who wants to work must feel protected and dignified. Substantial is the EU’s assistance to Georgia in this field as well.

With a view to creating decent working conditions, Georgia should reflect in Georgian legislation and practice the EU Labour Law standards of limitation of maximum working hours, to daily and weekly rest periods and to an annual period of paid leave, limitation of overtime and securing fair pay; prohibition of employee harassment; payment of maternity leave, protection of the labour rights of the minor in a way that employment does not interfere with his/her education, moral, physical development and security; monitoring of the employee’s health by the employer as well as by state and others.

Job creation is one of the key priorities for the EU in Georgia. European integration entails job creation in trade, economic and social fields. To this end, the European Union is assisting Georgian small and medium-sized businesses financially and technically. It is due to this support that small and medium-sized businesses are creating jobs. According to the EU 2019 Annual Association Implementation Report, the assistance provided to 521 small and medium-sized businesses (implemented within the framework of the “Produce in Georgia” program) led to creation of 18,270 more jobs throughout the country.

GEORGIAN GOODS ON THE EU INTERNAL MARKET

Georgian wine, beer, lemonade, furniture (pets), laurel, medicine and medicinal plants, mineral water, fruit juice, jam, vegetables, berries, churchkhela, dried fruits, tea, wool, building materials, accessories and others go to the EU market.

Some practices:

Georgia is one of the five largest exporters of **hazelnuts**. The largest export market of Georgian hazelnuts (60% of the market) are European countries. More than 75% of Georgian hazelnuts are exported to Western European countries. Turkey is the strongest competitor in the EU market. However, the advantage of Georgian hazelnuts can be considered its high fat content, which is 7-8% higher than of Turkish hazelnut varieties.

Research suggests that Georgia has the second-best climate, after New Zealand, for growing **kiwis** in Poti-Zugdidi-Gali-Ochamchire. One of the advantages of Georgian kiwis is high sugar content. The sugar content of Italian kiwis is 13.9%, while the sweetness content of Georgian kiwis is 17.3%. Today the company "Nergeta" sells kiwis grown in the village of Ingiri, Zugdidi region in the European Union.

"Georgian **herbs** grow at a very good time of the year: from September to May. This is the period when Europe is in need of herbs" - this is how the Dutch company Bilancia evaluated Georgian herbs, after studying the potential for sale in the EU. 550 small entrepreneurs and 10 large companies grow about 25,000 tons of herbs a year in 1000 greenhouses in Imereti.

Wool is the first animal product to be exported to the European Union. Two wool companies: Georgian Wool Ltd. and Georgian Wool Company Ltd. have been recognised by the EU.

Georgian **honey** has a unique aroma and taste, so it always deserves high praise in various international exhibitions. Honey is the second animal product to which the European Union fully opened its market.

The internal market of the European Union is large and there is a high demand for products. That is why it is important for producers in Georgia to create cooperatives - to unite efforts, capital and resources. The creation of such associations is also supported by the

European Union. For example, the Georgian government, with the help of the European Union, has introduced the European practice of farmers' cooperation. Today, there are more than 1,500 registered agricultural cooperatives in the country, bringing together more than 13,000 farmers. The EU has provided €4 million in direct grant assistance to more than 200 cooperatives bringing together more than 2,000 farmers. More than 7,200 farmers were trained with the assistance of the EU funding.

FOOD SAFETY AND PRODUCT SECURITY – PROTECTION OF HUMAN LIFE AND HEALTH

Products and food originating in Georgia, in order to be sold on the European Union market, shall meet the standard of safety and security as they have profound impact on the quality of human life. The individual is at the heart of all the EU activities and everything, including business, should serve his/her well-being; thus, food safety testing means safety of human life and health.

Food safety depends on the health of water and soil, phytosanitary and hygienic norms of plants and animals, the correctness and cleanliness of food processing technologies. Therefore, each segment of the production process is checked “from farm to fork”. For example: in order for the meat to be harmless, it is necessary for the animal to be kept clean, to be given healthy food, supervised by veterinarian (what diseases it transmits, what medicines to give), slaughtered, stored and packed properly, etc.

To ensure safety and security, the Government of Georgia adopts resolutions. for example:

- Resolution No. 483 of 2019 of Georgian Government on Rules for Identification-Registration of Livestock and Registration of Holdings and Temporary Holdings Where Livestock is Kept;
- Decree of the Government of Georgia N553 of December 15,

2017. “Technical Regulation – Procedure of Control of Potato Ring Rot”;

- Others.

Establishing safety standards means that any farmer and entrepreneur shall think not only about his/her profit, but also about the people’s well-being. **It is not only a matter of caring for the person, but also for the producer, the farmer’s reputation, name and dignity. Such is the European standard.**

Some wrongly argue that Georgia should produce safe and harmless food and products in order to sell them in the EU market. The statement is inherently wrong - Georgia must make safe products not only for the EU market but also for local consumption and for other countries’ needs. The products shall not do harm to either Georgian or foreign citizens.

To make the food produced in Georgia healthy and harmless, various food research and testing laboratories are needed. The European Union is committed to assisting Georgia in this respect as well. At present, there is a laboratory network throughout the country, which includes the LEPL State Laboratory of Agriculture, namely 3 zonal diagnostic laboratories (Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Akhaltsikhe) and 8 regional laboratories (Gori, Marneuli, Dusheti, Gurjaani, Ambrolauri, Ozurgeti, Zugdidi and Batumi) under its auspices, which not only help establish and maintain a standard of safety, but also create jobs.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

In accordance with the Association Agreement, a high level of protection of consumer rights, an integral part of human rights, must be ensured. Satisfied customers means business and production are competitive and act in line with customer requirements.

Customers are satisfied when they have a choice and affordable prices, high quality products and services; when they are informed (no deception occurs) and treated with respect. In the European

Union, considerable attention is paid to consumer rights, for which purpose laws have been adopted and various protection mechanisms have been put in place.

Influenced by European integration policy, some aspects of consumer protection in Georgia have evolved into positive practices. For example: some stores have **no-questions-asked policies** and take back clothes (for replacement) or faulty goods.

EQUALITY POLICY AND THE FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

In the framework of the European integration policy, in 2015 the Parliament of Georgia adopted the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, which defines concepts and mechanisms of elimination of every form of discrimination in any relationship, be it labour relations, education, religion, language, nationality, property, social or marital status, skin color, gender or others.

Harassment as well as differential treatment are considered discrimination. Harassment is the persecution, coercion and / or undesirable behavior of a person on any grounds, which is intended to cause harm to a person and create a terrifying, hostile, humiliating, offensive or abusive environment for him/her. **Differential treatment** is when an action is taken against a person that worsens his/her condition compared to another person in a similar condition.

Differential treatment is not always discrimination. There are people around us who need empowerment, support and equal opportunities. Therefore, differential treatment of a pregnant woman, a person with limited capabilities, a representative of an ethnic minority group, etc. shall not be considered discrimination. **However, such differential treatment is permissible only when it is reasonable, proportionate and necessary for achieving a legitimate aim and it is moral, ethical and needed for establishing a democratic society.**

Source List:

Constitution of Georgia, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/30346?publication=35>

ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part <https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/2496959>

Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, <https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/2339687?publication=1>

The Foreign Policy Strategy of Georgia 2019-2022, <https://mfa.gov.ge/getattachment/MainNav/ForeignPolicy/ForeignPolicyStrategy/2019-2022-clebis-saqartvelos-sagareo-politikis-strategia.pdf.aspx>

National Security Concept of Georgia, <https://mod.gov.ge/uploads/2018/pdf/NSC-GEO.pdf>

Partnership and Cooperation Agreement , <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1212956?publication=0>

Decree N 765 of the Government of Georgia on the Approval of the Government Communication Strategy on Georgia's Membership to the EU and NATO for 2017-2020;, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3650131?publication=0>

Ordinance №533 of 2017 of the Government of Georgia on the approval of the "Unified Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia 2017 - 2021" Annex 1, <https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/3924876?publication=0>

Decree No 186 7 February 2014, Tbilisi On the Measures for Effective Implementation of the Association Agreement including The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) between Georgia and the European Union <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2250269?publication=0>

Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

EU for Georgia, ENPARD, Newsletter, <http://enpard.ge/ge/newsletters/newsletter01/>

Legislative Herald of Georgia, www.matsne.gov.ge

<http://eugeorgia.info/ka/>

dcfta.gov.ge

<https://eu4georgia.ge/>

GEORGIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Caring for, keeping and preserving cultural heritage for posterity is the sacred duty of every citizen of Georgia. According to Article V, Paragraph VI of the Constitution of Georgia, “the State shall take care of the protection of national values, identity and cultural heritage, and of the development of education, science and culture.” and Article XX, Paragraph IV of the Constitution states that “everyone has the right to take care of cultural heritage. Cultural heritage shall be protected by law.”² Cultural heritage is protected by the Law on Cultural Heritage adopted by the Parliament of Georgia in 2007.³

Since the signing of the Association Agreement between the EU and Georgia in 2014, the approximation of cultural heritage protection policies and legislation to the common European space has been an important task for Georgia, which in turn should have a positive impact on the development of the sector and its future prospects. In this regard, it would be helpful to know what prospects this agreement envisages in the field of education and science.

The Association Agreement provides for Georgia’s rapprochement with EU policies and practices in the field of education and science with special emphasis on higher education. Improving the quality of higher education must be in line with the EU’s Agenda for Modernisation of Higher Education and the Bologna Process. Capacity building in the field of higher education aims to support the modernisation, accessibility and internationalisation of higher education. Cooperation in the field of academia is strengthened, which envisages increasing institutional cooperation between the EU member states and Georgian higher education institutions, sharing the European experience

2 <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/30346?publication=36>

3 <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/21076?publication=14>

in developing curricula, improving university infrastructure, introducing new methods of administration, as well as increasing the number of exchange programs and getting students from partner countries involved in the full cycle of joint master's degree programs. Consequently, access to quality European education for Georgian students is increasing through participation in European scholarships and exchange programs, which also contributes to Georgia's integration into the EU educational and scientific space. In addition, the agreement makes the relevant programs of partner countries available to Georgian science, increases the involvement of Georgian researchers in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, facilitates the implementation of joint projects, exchange of researchers and more. The agreement also provides for the promotion of lifelong learning and cooperation in the development of vocational education and vocational training, which will help solve the problem of employment.

Clearly, this includes cultural heritage and the opportunity to receive European education in the field of cultural heritage, as well as the rapprochement of Georgia's cultural heritage, scientific study and general management within the common European space. It should also be noted that long before the Association Agreement with the European Union, Georgia had begun to take care of its cultural heritage, both in terms of legal framework and practical activities, with a view to bringing it into line with European international conventions.

The responsibility assumed by Georgia under the international conventions to which it is committed requires the country pass on its cultural heritage, as a key part of the memory of humankind, to future generations in their original state and in full diversity as a reminder of the continuous development of humankind. The European civilized world attaches special importance to cultural heritage as it a fundamental value of any country and preserving it should be the primary concern of any society.

In order to accelerate the integration of Georgian culture into the European cultural space and allow Georgian monuments to occupy

a proper place in the world's cultural heritage, the protection of our national cultural heritage should become a priority in building a democratic state of Georgia. The protection, study and research of Georgia's cultural heritage is a key requirement of both international and European conventions, as well as of the European Union as a whole.

In this regard, the accession of Georgia to the 1992 La Valletta European Convention for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage, an essential document in regulating the complex processes taking place in the field of cultural heritage today, was of great importance. The practical implementation of the requirements of the Convention contributes significantly to the study of the existing heritage, its protection and popularization. The technical and scientific mutual assistance provided by the Convention facilitates to the sharing of experience. The Convention addresses the most painful problems in urban planning, such as those directly related to urban-sprawl and the preservation of historic sites in old towns. It also defines international legal norms in this area for the central government and self-governing bodies of the country in order to set priorities correctly and objectively. Since the purpose of the Convention is the protection of cultural and archaeological heritage, the countries that have ratified it shall establish an appropriate legal framework for the registration of archaeological heritage, classification of historical monuments and zones, and the creation of archaeological reserves. In addition, member states shall ensure the legality, control and safety of excavations and of other archaeological activities and make sure they are performed by specialists having the needed qualification.

Along with the La Valletta Convention, Georgia acceded to the Granada Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, which sets out the legal procedures for the protection of archaeological heritage. According to the Convention, each State Party shall carry out the measures prescribed by law within the framework of their relevant power and authority, while at the same time taking into account the specifics of each state and region. This should ensure the protection of monuments, buildings and architec-

turally significant sites from any harmful impacts. The Granada Convention calls on member states to develop legislative procedures to prevent the demolition of historic buildings, the construction of new buildings or any alterations that would harm the overall appearance of historic buildings.⁴

According to these international conventions, historical sites and the adjoining territories shall be considered an integral part of the World Heritage. Every state has an obligation to protect such heritage and make it a part of modern social life. Each historical site and the area around it must be perceived in a combined context. Therefore, great attention should be paid to harmony and the aesthetic aspect. The similarity, connection or contrast of the components of a group of buildings, giving each of them their unique character and historical features, must be preserved. Historic and surrounding areas shall be protected from any harm, especially from improper use, alterations and damage caused by pollution. At the same time, modern urbanisation, due to its enormous sprawl and the abundance of buildings, creates the danger of destruction of historical sites and carries the risk of their actual destruction. It is therefore the duty of the architectural authorities and town-planners not to allow distortion of views on monuments.

With the support of the the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT), on June 24, 1995, representatives of 70 countries in Rome adopted the *Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects* providing for certain sanctions should cultural property be illegally exported from the territory of a country. The affected party shall not only be the owner of the object or the state, but also the new owner of the stolen or illegally exported object legally purchasing it and being unaware of its cultural value. Should the object be confiscated, he/she is entitled to compensation.⁵

The role of the European Union in the protection of Georgia's cul-

4 http://www.parliament.ge/files/714_9879_341434_kulturuli_memkvid_dacva.pdf

5 http://www.parliament.ge/files/714_9879_341434_kulturuli_memkvid_dacva.pdf

tural heritage was not limited to its theoretical and legal assistance to Georgia's accession to European conventions. Particular steps were taken, which involved not only providing financial assistance but also active involvement of European specialists in the process of overcoming the challenges facing the country's heritage. With the help and participation of European specialists, samples of initial registration or passports of Georgian monuments of spiritual culture were elaborated and prepared, based on the field experience of the EU countries (Italy, France, Spain, Croatia).

With the financial support of the Norwegian state, the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia implemented a landmark project to create the Cultural Heritage Database Management System and GIS portal, which is an innovative, contemporary system of international standards, offering the country a new, structured informational space for managing cultural heritage. Through this system, various state agencies will have access to complex information on monuments/sites, on their precise location and territories. The System and GIS Portal comprise information on existing cultural heritage monuments/sites in the country, their protection zones, murals, stone carvings, as well as movable cultural values stored in museums and museum-reserves under the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia. In addition, it includes databases of Georgian cultural heritage, archival data, architectural drawings of specific monuments, photos, bibliography, etc. What is more, GIS Portal provides the opportunity to fill in and update the information on cultural heritage monuments and sites, from anywhere in the world, in the interactive mode.⁶

Of course, the existence of such a portal in the XXI century is important and necessary, especially since many countries in Europe (including the EU) cannot boast of such a feature. However, the EU support is not limited to the above-mentioned. With the help of hands-on involvement of European specialists, the process of restoration of Vardzia's unique frescoes, Mtskheta Jvari Cathedral, Gelati,

6 <http://memkvidreoba.gov.ge/>

the unique antique mosaic of Dzalisi and many other important monuments was carried out.

European (German, British, Polish, Spanish) archaeologists have long been involved in the research of such important archeological monuments of Georgia, such as Nokalakevi, Gonio, Kutaisi, Kobuleti-Pichvnari, Nazareli, Natsargora, Dedoplis Gora, Khrami Gora, Dmanisi, Armanlo Sakdrisi. In total, more than € 1 million has been spent by the EU on the fieldwork and scientific publications of these monuments.

The joint scientific grant programme of the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia and the Italian Research Council (CNR) has been fruitful in the field of scientific study of Georgian cultural heritage, especially in terms of scientific conferences and joint publications.

Many Georgian universities closely cooperate with different EU educational and scientific centres. The cooperation varies from sending exchange students to the EU countries to sending them to long-term scientific business trips. In this regard, the cooperation between Tbilisi Ivane Javakhishvili State University and Venice Ca Foscari University deserves a special mention. In recent years, many young Georgians have completed master's, doctoral or postdoctoral courses at the University and have been awarded master's and doctoral degrees. Sokhumi State University has been cooperating fruitfully with the University of Wittenberg, Germany for years as a result of which a number of its graduates completed their doctoral programs at the University of Wittenberg and received their academic degrees from it. It should also be noted that at both universities (of Venice and the University of Wittenberg), Georgian students worked, studied, researched, and defended their papers on the problems related to Georgian cultural heritage (the culture of Mtkvari-Araks, Trialeti, Late Bronze Age, or Colchis).

Various EU universities and research centers are actively publishing Georgian scientific papers (in English, German, French, Italian, Spanish) on Georgian cultural heritage sites to make them available to the

rest of the world. It is noteworthy that the publication of the works of Georgian authors is financially supported by these universities or scientific centres and several tens of thousands of euros are spent by the European Union on scientific research and publications on Georgian cultural heritage. What is more, this type of research contributes to the involvement of the European scientific community in the study of Georgian cultural heritage and its popularization throughout the EU and across the globe. The Georgian National Museum, which has partnerships with top EU museums such as the Louvre, Prado, Pergamon Museum, Capitulum and other leading museums, plays a special role in promoting Georgia's cultural heritage. Proof of this is the exhibition of important monuments of national heritage in these museums, such as Colchian goldsmithing, the ancient metallurgy of Georgia, the masterpieces of Pirosmiani and others. More importantly, some European museums hold exhibitions of their collections in Georgia. The last decade has been extremely fruitful in this respect, as Georgian art lovers have been able to see masterpieces of the greatest Italian Renaissance or modern artists. This cooperation continues successfully. In the future a number of Georgian exhibitions will be held in famous EU museums while the Georgian public will be given an opportunity to see many world-famous masterpieces in Georgia.

More importantly, European specialists are deeply involved in the rehabilitation and restoration of the heritage of national and religious minorities in Georgia, a clear example of which is the Armenian St. Gregory Church (Surb Gevork) in Tbilisi, the frescoes of which have been restored by Italian restorers.

That Georgia has opted for the European path of development is clearly demonstrated by the example of the cultural heritage. Many more could be recalled, but we believe it was enough to show how Europe has been striving to allow Georgian people to preserve and pass on to future generations the great culture created over the centuries - an integral part of European cultural heritage.

Source List:

<http://www.parliament.ge/ge/gavigot-meti-evrokavshirtan-asocire-bis-shetanxmebis-shesaxeb/associationagreement1>

<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/30346?publication=36>

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ISBN: 978-9941-9702-5-2



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