

# GEORGIA

## ON THE PATH TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION

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# GEORGIA ON THE PATH TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION

**T**he crises related to the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation towards the eastern partners of the European Union have encouraged EU institutions to speed up the integration process in the last decades. There is no doubt that Georgia now has chance to achieve the EU candidate status. In light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, arguments revolving around security issues could work in favour of Georgia. The following report puts forward recommendations for the Georgian government that can help make this positive scenario a reality.

The South Caucasus countries have since 2004 been treated as potential partners for the EU in its European integration projects and as future EU members. If we take into account the political and formal aspects of integration, the three countries of the South Caucasus are somewhat removed from the core of European integration. Membership in the Union is still the main point of reference. However, it is

***The EU has shaped additional mechanisms that facilitate cooperation with European partners, including those outside the Union itself.***

clear that there are several circles/levels of integration within the EU. The most fundamental of them all, the core of integration, is the informal union of states that founded the European Coal and Steel Community. All of those countries now belong to the Eurozone and are further interconnected through additional ties of special significance. Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg are bound together in the Benelux. In addition to EU membership, Italy, France and Germany are all linked through unique bilateral treaties such as: the Élysée Treaty and the Aachen Treaty (France and Germany), and the Quirinal Treaty (France and Italy). The next level determining deeper integration within the EU is the Eurozone. The third level includes all member states.

The EU has shaped additional mechanisms that facilitate cooperation with European partners, including those outside the Union itself. Relationships with these countries have been covered by neighbourhood policies that encourage integration with the help of such instruments as free trade zones, closer political cooperation in the field of security, etc. Relations with European states that are not EU members – such as the countries of the South Caucasus, including Georgia, are covered by these instruments. From this perspective another level of integration could be seen in the relations between the EU and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) which includes Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Iceland and Norway, as well as close treaty relations with Great Britain (in the past belonging to EFTA and to the EU).

Yet another level of countries participating in the political integration process on the continent, albeit with a lower intensity, is found among the European countries that have the EU candidate status (although not all of them are involved in formal accession negotiations). This group includes Albania, Montenegro, North-Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine. The most recent additions, Ukraine and Moldova, joined this group in June of 2022, but they are yet to commence negotiations over membership.

There is also a group of European countries that have signed an association treaty with the EU, but do not possess the candidate status. These are Georgia and Kosovo. In the case of Georgia, EU documents use the designation “European perspective” instead of membership. In this way it floats the possibility of membership in the foreseeable future after the completion of a set of requirements. An association agreement with the EU was also signed by Morocco. However, this is

a separate case as the country is a neighbour of the Union, but not located in Europe, which makes the question of EU membership more challenging.

27 EU member states, 4 EFTA countries, Great Britain, 7 EU candidates, 3 states associated with the EU, as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan make up the newly established European Political Community (EPC). Its main focus areas are political and security cooperation. The first summit of the EPC took place in Prague on October 6th, 2022. This recent initiative is significant because it is the most comprehensive political integration project on the continent focusing on common action in the spheres of security and stability, etc. It also indicates which states are considered European and have been selected for cooperation within Europe by the 'main actors'. This is the basis for the inclusion of the three countries of the South Caucasus. From the countries that lie in Europe only Belarus was not invited to the EPC Summit. This is understandable because of its support for Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine.

This recent acceleration of the EPC could be interpreted an attempt to find a political response to '*ruskiy mir*'. The EPC might also be seen as an alternative to the earlier French and British concepts of gradual integration within the EU (multi-speed Europe) or the practical implementation of *Europe à la carte*, giving room for states to integrate in selected areas. In the long term his format would clearly cover a broader group of countries than just EU members. For now, the EPC does not play an important role in European integration but is worth taking it into account because it treats the three South Caucasus countries on the same basis as other European states.



## **ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN AND GEORGIA IN THE EASTERN POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

***At first, the three South Caucasian countries were not included in the ENP. However, this changed in the spring of 2004 following the successful Rose Revolution in Georgia***

Following the earlier overview of the three Caucasian states position in the legal and organisational terms of European integration, we now move on to how they are viewed in the framework of EU changing eastern policy. The most important stages in this process are the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership, association agreements and, finally, the EU candidate status of Ukraine and Moldova.

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was created in 2003. It treated all EU neighbours in a similar way, without any geographical limitations. The EU cooperated with countries from Europe, Asia and Africa within the framework of the ENP. The development of an EU program towards its neighbours was subject to other events such as: changes within treaties, political pressure for deeper integration and EU's eastern enlargement. The latter had implications for the neighbourhood of a now enlarged European Union. At first, the three South Caucasian countries were not included in the ENP. However, this changed in the spring of 2004 following the successful Rose Revolution in Georgia. The expansion of ENP can be traced back to the support of Central European politicians, who were by then participating in the political structures of the EU such as the European Parliament. However,

from the very beginning the ENP was criticised for lacking effectiveness as an EU eastern policy tool. This was because the Eastern Partnership countries were clear about their varying European aspirations. Paradoxically, the main proponents of EU's eastern policy, the 'new member states' at that time, were still relatively weak and inexperienced. Nevertheless, the expansion of the ENP could be interpreted by some states as a distant prospect of EU membership. In turn, almost right after the creation of the ENP politicians and officials started working on EU's eastern policy with potential membership in sight. This led to the establishment of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) as an element of the ENP alongside the Union for the Mediterranean (more ambitious than the competing concepts such as the eastern dimension of the EU or the Black Sea Synergy).

***The unsuccessful NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008 and the Russian invasion of Georgia four months later gave a strong impetus to the nascent idea of EaP.***

The unsuccessful NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008 and the Russian invasion of Georgia four months later gave a strong impetus to the nascent idea of EaP. Russia's aggressive policy in the region and its obstruction of Georgia and Ukraine's involvement in the NATO Membership Action Plan encouraged EU members to get behind the EaP. Six countries would join eventually, among them all the states of the South Caucasus. The Russian annexation of Crimea and its aggression in 2014 added momentum to the process of integration. The direct reason behind the Revolution of Dignity of 2013- 2014 was President Viktor Yanukovich's refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the EU. The events of the spring of 2014 in Ukraine prompted western partners to look for an agreement with three of the six neighbours covered by the Eastern Partnership: Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. This shortly resulted in the "associated trio" (3x3), a loose group of three countries with three new agreements with the EU: the Association Agreement, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement and the Visa Free Travel Agreement. From the legal viewpoint, these countries became privileged partners of the EU.

## **RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM AS A CATALYST FOR EU INTEGRATION**

Since 2004, the countries of the South Caucasus have been partners of the EU. The ensuing acceleration of EU's eastern policy was a direct result of the Russian Federation's imperial policies in the post-Soviet area and European integration was given renewed momentum by Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February of 2022. This time the "associated trio" was given an upgrade. Subsequently, the decision was made to offer the candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova, while Georgia received a "membership perspective". As powerful of a decision as this is, it was reactive in its nature. The historical analysis of how the EU has strengthened political ties with its eastern partners puts in question the Russian thesis on the "expansionist West". At the same time, it calls for a proactive EU eastern policy in the long term.

### **12 POINTS GO TO GEORGIA**

The recommendations made in June 2022 to the European Council by the European Commission regarding the candidate status of Georgia were formulated in a positive tone. Georgia should receive the candidate status after implementing a set of 12 conditions described as "priorities". First of all, the government should work to re-establish (1) dialogue between the different political forces in the country. This condition is a clear reference to the mediation on the local political scene conducted by Charles Michel, the President of the European Council. Secondly, there needs to be more democratic control (2) over state institutions in line with recommendations made by international organisations. Especially with regards to the agendas of the OSCE (ODIHR) and the Council of Europe (Venice Commission), which tells us that the main concerns relate to the Georgian electoral process, constitutional issues and the functioning of the judicial system. This leads to the third recommendation, namely the judicial reform (3), where the main focus is on the Supreme Court, Prosecutors Office, the process of selecting judges and the independence of the judiciary. The next point pertains to the creation of anti-corruption institutions



and procedures (4). The European Commission has provided a detailed summary of its expectations in this regard. This is followed by a recommendation to introduce “de-oligarchisation” (5) measures. The sixth point deals with how to fight organised crime (6) in Georgia. The next priority refers in detail to the functioning of the media (7) in Georgia. It includes detailed recommendations in this regard (e.g., that criminal proceedings instituted against media owners will meet the highest legal standards). The European Commission also focuses on the issue of discrimination (8) and aggression towards minorities in the country, especially with regards to human rights, minority rights and underprivileged groups. The ninth recommendation concerns the equality of genders (9) and combatting domestic violence. This leads to the next point concerning the participation of citizens and civil society (10) in decision-making. The penultimate priority requires Georgian courts to take into consideration the verdicts of the European Court of Human Rights (11). Finally, the last point refers to the provision of electing a qualified and independent Ombudsperson (12).

These recommendations presented by the European Commission are formally divided into two groups: the ones that have been described in detail and therefore allowing a precise opinion on if they have been implemented or not (anti-corruption reforms or judiciary reform) and the ones that would depend on an interpretation (de-oligarchisation or social participation). The verdict on if they have been introduced or not would thus be a general verification of the reform process in Georgia. The formal assessments made by EU institutions will be central, just like the analyses made by experts and politicians (MEPs and specific commissioners).

Therefore, Georgia is not officially a candidate but has moved to the EU enlargement portfolio.



## **SOUTH CAUCASUS AFTER FEBRUARY 24TH**

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The fallout from the military escalation beyond February 24th, 2022 for the South Caucasus could be divided into three parts. The first is the direct consequence of an exodus of Russians to neighbouring countries. Russians began to look for a safe haven in the countries south of Russia's border just after the escalation of the conflict on February 24th. This was done in the hope of avoiding potential repercussions caused by the war, shielding their businesses from losses, moving economic activities elsewhere, etc. The second part refers directly to Vladimir Putin's announcement of a partial mobilisation.

From the strategic point of view, it is worth noting that the war against Ukraine has weakened Russia's position in the region and contributed to Turkey and China's growth in importance. It is in this context Azerbaijan is attempting to play a significant role as a regional broker for Turkish policy. An important aspect is Russia's waning political influence throughout the frozen conflicts it supposedly manages. An interesting test ground for this are the peace talks on Nagorno-Karabakh.

From Russia's point of view the most impactful consequence is the reduction of "strategic depth". This term has traditionally been among the most crucial ones when it comes to Russia's own perception of security. It means the physical distance between the potential

frontlines, the empire's centre, its industrial heart, etc. Imperialist Russia has treated its neighbours, including the South Caucasus countries, as an element of this depth.

## **THE REACTION OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS COUNTRIES TO RUSSIA'S AGGRESSION ON FEBRUARY 24TH**

The reaction of the Georgian government to Russia's invasion of Ukraine was clearly below the expectations of its western partners. In the first half of 2022, this coincided with the scepticism of the representatives of EU institutions towards the authorities in Tbilisi, which was a result of a disappointment with the slow pace of reforms and growing reservations about the functioning of the judiciary, especially having in mind earlier commitments by the Georgian side. Both of these issues had a negative impact on how Georgia was viewed as an associated partner of the EU. This failure was on the part of the Georgian authorities. The third reason was the inability to solve the internal political conflict. In the eyes of external observers this was also the responsibility of the government and the opposition. This was significant because Charles Michael was personally involved in attempts to resolve the political conflict in Georgia between 2021–2022. When considering the overall disappointment with Georgia, it must also be mentioned that the government did not join the sanctions against Russia put in place by EU members and institutions. It became clear that there was a difference in the reaction between Georgia and Moldova, who had the same legal status in its relations with the EU (Association Agreement, DCFTA and visa free movement).



## THE GEORGIAN SOCIETY AND THE INTEGRATION WITH EU STRUCTURES

***The unique feature of Georgian society is that it combines a strong pro-European position with a conservative approach in domestic politics.***

“Belonging in Europe” is a political postulate that has become a permanent element of Georgian politics, and in reality, a part of Georgian political identity. Georgia was one of the Soviet republics where the Sovietisation process, which included eliminating the local language and culture, was the slowest. The most important events of modern Georgian history (Rose Revolution of 2003-2004 and its consequences) are seen through the prism of aspirations to gain affiliation with the West. 51% of Georgians would prefer the EU as the main political partner of their country. 47% of them would like the USA, while 24% mention Ukraine. Some 89% of the respondents say that Russia is the main threat, while 11% say they fear Turkey<sup>1</sup>. The unique feature of Georgian society is that it combines a strong pro-European position (also partly driven by a hope to free itself from the Russian imperial sphere) with a conservative approach in domestic politics. On the other hand, the person who enjoys the highest level of trust is Ilia II, the highly conservative Patriarch

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1 International Republican Institute, *Public Opinion Survey Residents of Georgia | September 2022*, <https://www.iri.org/resources/public-opinion-survey-residents-of-georgia-september-2022/>, p. 51-52.

**Official  
Tbilisi is not  
able to block  
the pro-EU  
attitudes of  
the Georgian  
society.**

of Georgia (88%). The second most trusted institution in the country is the patriarchate (68%), just behind the army (74%)<sup>2</sup>.

The current public opinion polls confirm the pro-western orientation of the Georgian society. As many as 85% support (*fully and somewhat support*, with 70% of these *fully supporting*)<sup>3</sup> the integration of Georgia with the EU<sup>4</sup>. According to the survey, 60% of Georgians would be willing to sever trade relations with Russia if it meant deeper integration with the EU and display of limited support to the escapees running from mobilisation in Russia. A more detailed analysis of the public opinion in Georgia leads to the following conclusions: the European policy of the Georgian government is clearly inadequate and incompatible with the expectations of the society – for both pro-governmental voters and the ones supporting the opposition. Over the last two decades Georgia has become one of the most pro-EU countries on the continent. While holding on to a degree of scepticism towards integration with the West, official Tbilisi has resorted to conservative attitudes in the Georgian society. Nevertheless, it is not able to stop the general trend. It also must be emphasised that there are still politicians in the government and the ruling party that have a pro-European approach to the country's foreign policy (like Foreign Minister Ilia Darchiashvili or the Chairman of Foreign Relations Committee at the Parliament, Nikoloz Samkharadze).

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- 2 International Republican Institute, *Public Opinion Survey Residents of Georgia | September 2022*, <https://www.iri.org/resources/public-opinion-survey-residents-of-georgia-september-2022/>, p. 26-27.
  - 3 International Republican Institute, *Public Opinion Survey Residents of Georgia | September 2022*, <https://www.iri.org/resources/public-opinion-survey-residents-of-georgia-september-2022/>, p. 68.
  - 4 International Republican Institute, *Public Opinion Survey Residents of Georgia | September 2022*, <https://www.iri.org/resources/public-opinion-survey-residents-of-georgia-september-2022/>, p. 70.

## ARGUMENTS FOR GRANTING GEORGIA CANDIDATE STATUS

The main argument for granting Georgia a candidate status to the EU is connected to the issue of identity. The Georgian society is undoubtedly among the most pro-European in Central and Eastern Europe. The awareness of the European roots of the country and support for integration are fundamental elements of the social consciousness of Georgian citizens. The current state of Georgia's integration with European structures is decidedly below the aspirations of the society.

The decision from June 2022 to grant candidate status to the associated countries from the Eastern Partnership, namely Moldova and Ukraine, was of strategic and political nature. It was a reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Similar arguments should be formulated with regards to Georgia. The conviction that the situation in the Caucasus is of crucial importance for European security has been a feature of Polish political thought. This goes back to the time when politicians from the Great Emigration of the nineteenth century attempted to convince western powers of the legitimacy of supporting the struggle of the Caucasian nations against Russian imperialism. Retaining and increasing the pro-European attitudes of the Georgian society lies in the interest of the EU. This is also true from the point of view of the security of the EU and as a tool limiting the influence the Kremlin has in the Caucasus and the "soft underbelly" of Russia overall.

***Supporting the pro-European attitudes of the Georgian society lies in the interest of the EU and limits Kremlin's influence in the Caucasus and Russia's "soft underbelly" overall.***

Another strong argument for granting Georgia the candidate status is the fact that it has advanced relationships with the most important international organisations, including the ones where EU member states already participate. After 2004, Georgia became one of the most committed NATO partners. This is not only true when it comes to participation in missions (Afghanistan and Iraq), but also with respect to the modernisation of its armed forces (military spending at 8% in 2009) and the synchronisation of its military structures with those of the West. It has most likely made the greatest progress among post-Soviet states in reforming its military according to western standards. It also has valuable experience from its activities in international fora such as the Council of Europe, OSCE, WTO, etc.

After 2004 the Georgian state has proven that it does possess the capabilities to introduce dynamic reforms. It should be remembered that Georgia signed the Association Agreement with the European Union on June 24th, 2014. Furthermore, it is also connected to the EU through the DCFTA and the visa agreement. As a result, Georgia finds itself amongst a small group of countries with an advanced legal relationship with the EU. Even if the pace has slowed, it still ranks as 35th in terms of economic freedom. The state structures of Georgia can also boast of a number of trained experts and officials prepared for negotiating the accession to the EU itself.

## **ARGUMENTS AGAINST GRANTING GEORGIA CANDIDATE STATUS**

The most important argument against fast-tracking the EU candidate status for Georgia is the slow implementation of the 12 priorities outlined by the European Commission in June 2022.

***A strong argument weakening Georgia's case is its muted reaction to the Russian aggression against Ukraine.***

There are some other issues that should be discussed, as they could be used to construct further arguments "against". A strong argument weakening Georgia's case was, and remains, its muted reaction to the Russian aggression against Ukraine. In contrast to Moldova for example, Georgia barely supported western sanctions against Russia. However, this could be viewed from the position of the public which holds a strong pro-Ukrainian and anti-Russian sentiment. Georgians are one of the largest groups of foreign volunteers fighting in Ukraine against the Russian aggression. The unwillingness to join the sanctions regime is mainly to be found among the ruling political elite, which controls the decision-making processes.

The political situation in the country is another obstacle to Georgia's candidacy prospects. A clear indicator is the treatment of the imprisoned former president Mikheil Saakashvili. There are visible political motives behind depriving him of his liberties through the use of selective justice. This is evident in the type of accusations Saakashvili is facing. This situation has a hugely negative impact on Georgia's international reputation. The former president still has a positive image among western audiences and remains the most recognisable Georgian politician.

***A strong argument against Georgia's EU membership is its weak economy, which would "probably not withstand competition in the free single market".***

His imprisonment is connected to an array of issues related to the very functioning of the political system, the judiciary and the media. These problems have been important in the assessment of the domestic situation of Georgia and were reflected in opinions about the political dynamics. Georgia is plummeting in the media freedom rankings. In the most recent report prepared by Reporters Without Borders, the country dropped from the 60th place to 80th<sup>5</sup>.

Another potential issue that is brought up against Georgia as an EU candidate is its location in the South Caucasus, in the "borderlands of Europe". This argument can, however, be approached from the security perspective and because Georgia's position on the outskirts of Europe can only strengthen to the safety of Europe. At the same time, it should be noted that Cyprus, an EU member state, is also an Asian country in terms of geography. A serious formal argument is the issue of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, frozen conflicts Georgia is not responsible for. Though it should be remembered that Estonia joined the EU without delimiting its border with Russia, while in Cyprus the EU has arguably helped alleviate the division.

A strong argument against Georgia's EU membership is its weak economy, which would "probably not withstand competition in the free single market". It is true that Georgia's economy is based mainly on tourism, property and services. It was strained by the war that took place in August 2008 and the consequences of Russia's occupation (20% of the country's territory). Meanwhile, these arguments have not been used against Moldova or Ukraine and should not be used against Georgia.

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5 The World Press Freedom Index report is further discussed at [Agenda.ge](https://agenda.ge/en/news/2022/1564scscsc)  
<https://agenda.ge/en/news/2022/1564scscsc>



## A NEW EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

The decision on granting EU candidate status to Moldova and Ukraine, and the opening of a membership perspective for Georgia changes the situation of the Eastern Partnership. There should be a discussion on reforming the Eastern Partnership, while discussing Georgia's candidacy. It is clear that the countries engaged in the integration process: Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia (after the implementation of the 12 recommendations) should remain within this framework. The EU relations with the candidate countries will require the application of different instruments facilitating cooperation and a wholly different approach, especially when accession negotiations commence. Their progress in implementing European law and building a common market should be appreciated and could lead to fast-tracking their integration. It will be important to release the pre-accession funds which will prepare different sectors of these countries economies to fully embrace their membership in the Union. Poland and other countries of our region that successfully implemented such programmes two decades ago could be helpful in transferring their knowledge in this regard. In the medium term the remaining countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus – should stay in the EaP, which is a tested initiative where countries can take different path to integration based on the principle of *more for more*. Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia can only play a positive role in strengthening these European connections among the six countries. On a global level, a reinvigorated EaP can help the EU grow its position in the process of peace building and reconciliation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. This renewed energy can also support civil society and the exiled government of Belarus, introducing their problems to other international organisations such as the OSCE or the UN and its agencies. In the long term, the Central Asian countries should be part of the next level of European integration, especially in the context of EU's energy security. This was clear in the new agreement between the EU and Kazakhstan from November 2022. It is totally conceivable that the EaP could be expanded eastwards using some of the existing mechanisms to facilitate integration.



## CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

1. First and foremost, over the course of the next year Georgia must introduce legislation that lead to **the implementation of the 12 priorities presented by the EU**. The main responsibility lies with the parliamentary majority and the MPs working on concrete solutions. This process should be finalised by July 2023, so that the institutions evaluating Georgia's preparedness in the second half of the next year would have the time to make the recommendations for grant candidate status still in 2023.
2. The process of implementing the 12 priorities should be **supported by the experiences of parliamentary representatives from EU member states**. They should share their experiences and advise on the proposals prepared by their Georgian colleagues. This could be done by representatives of countries that already cooperate with Georgia, like Poland, Romania (Black Sea cooperation), Baltic states or the Czech Republic. European political parties should intensify their cooperation with their Georgian counterparts and offer extensive internships, which may help improve the political culture. Such cooperation would also help present the Georgian perspective in Europe. This should be supported by political groups in the European Parliament.

3. The Georgian political elite has to launch **a new initiative sending a clear signal that it is united behind the country's EU bid**. A unified position from the political elites would be instrumental in shaping a positive image of Georgia in the West.
4. The **ruling elite must solve the political conflict**, including the case of Saakashvili. The imprisonment of the former president of Georgia is having a hugely detrimental effect in the eyes of European decision makers, showing clear indications of selective justice. For now it is in the interest of the government in Tbilisi to inform the international public opinion about the health and condition of the former leader of the Movement for United Georgia. Western politicians and diplomats should be allowed to meet with him and become informed should his health deteriorate. It is not possible to rectify this issue without working out a method to resolve the political conflict and release the politician.
5. The **Georgian political elite must engage in the political compromise negotiated together by Charles Michel**, the President of the European Council. All sides of the Georgian political scene should be encouraged to comply with it.
6. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, being potential EU member states, **should all be included in a program of institutional cooperation with the EU on a political and administrative level**. The representatives of these three countries should become permanent observers in the Committee of the Regions (local government representatives) and in the European Parliament (political representation). This initiative should come from the governments of these countries.
7. The Georgian government should emphasise its role in four areas: **European energy security, cooperation with NATO, the process of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict resolution and expertise on Central Asia**. This is especially useful when Kazakhstan is changing its political orientation. An effective policy in Tbilisi could raise Georgia's standing in becoming the country most aligned with western institutions among the state actors located in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. From the point of view of these countries, the importance of relations with the EU and NATO will increase in the context of the visible failure of

the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization. Georgia should present the implementation of the Association Agreement with the EU in terms of security.

8. The Georgian government should establish **an international group of experts or a think tank in Tbilisi focused on the issues of the South Caucasus, Central Asia and Iran**. An important element of how to promote Georgia in western structures is the presentation of Georgian expertise in security issues and emphasising the country's role in this field.
9. Georgia must take on **a clear and principled position with regards to respecting international law in organisations such as the UN, OSCE and others**. Many political partners and friends around the world expect a clear position on Russia's violations of international law and war crimes. This includes both institutions and opinion leaders. The ambivalent response to Russian aggression puts the country's reputation into question.
10. The Georgian government has to take **a clear position on the presence of Russian deserters and other citizens on its territory**. It has to present a clear vision of how Georgia will manage their integration within the country. The presence of large numbers of Russian citizens provokes questions on how they affect security and political stability.
11. The few **Georgian politicians active on the European stage should lobby in favour of Georgia's candidacy to the EU this year**. Georgia needs initiatives coming from outside the domestic political landscape. Georgia needs political and information support. The group of political allies of Georgia should widen their lobby activities in Brussels and other European capitals in hope of changing the decision made in June 2022. Poland, regardless of its internal Georgian political sympathies, should have a special role in this process especially when it comes to security issues.
12. There must be **a new programme promoting Georgian culture in the EU and US with the participation of the country's cultural and intellectual elites**, including representatives from circles not connected with the government. This must kick off in 2023. It would be wise to involve different segments of Georgian culture, as well as science and certain elements of tourism (history, monuments and archaeology).

13. It is necessary to create **a programme that would take advantage of the highly qualified Georgian diaspora in the West**, so that they could influence western partners and lobby for Georgia's candidate status to the EU. The electoral regulations should facilitate voting abroad.
14. The prospect of EU candidacy should be presented by the Georgian government **as an opportunity to enforce the social rights of Georgians and to obtain education for the younger generation**. The opponents of the EU – Russia in particular – tries to create an impression that integration with EU structures is mainly “an attempt to pressure Georgia into changing its customs”. The positive transformation in the areas of infrastructure and environmental protection that took place in Central Europe following the enlargement should be highlighted. Cooperation between local governments, educational centres and NGOs must be supported.
15. Georgia should also potentially be **a partner of the EU in the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan**. The country has a unique expertise and has repeatedly mediated talks between the leaders of its southern neighbours. Together with European and American diplomacy, the government in Tbilisi could become an alternative to Moscow as a facilitator of talks. Moreover, Georgia also has very good experience in “hosting” the European Union Monitoring Mission in its territory. These experiences may serve as a *modus operandi* in the context of a potential peacekeeping force in the Karabakh region.
16. There needs to be a **new programmes of civic and European education in Georgia**. It should be implemented at the level of schools and universities. It should also help train leaders across civil society, local government and national politics. The programmes should involve member of Georgian diaspora.
17. Georgia has **an extensive network of honorary consulates**. Having in mind the limited resources Georgia has for public diplomacy, this is a viable tool for building networks of supporters across the EU. It should be used for the mobilisation of forces supporting Georgia's membership perspective in 2022.

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