

Opposition to Support Georgian Dream Resolution on Georgia's EU Integration



► The resolution was registered by the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on European Integration, Maka Bochorishvili at the bureau sitting on 1st of March and the project initiation procedure has started.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Georgian Parliament's draft resolution on EU integration, submitted by the Georgian Dream, calls on the Georgian executive to step up efforts towards Georgia's European integration and to implement the Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU, in preparation for Georgia's EU membership.

At the same time, according to the 13-point draft resolution, the Parliament of Georgia calls on the EU member states and EU institutions to take all necessary steps to accelerate Georgia's accession to the European Union in accordance with Article 49 of the EU Treaty, in accordance with the European perspective.

The resolution is guided by the unwavering will of the citizens of Georgia to integrate into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, by the historic choice set forth in Article 78 of the Constitution of Georgia, which stipulates "all necessary steps to ensure Georgia's full integration into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization" and considers the aspiration of the citizens of Georgia to make Georgia, as an integral part of Euro-

pean civilization and a bearer of European values, a full member of the EU.

According to Georgian Dream MP Sozar Subari, a draft resolution on Georgia's EU integration has been prepared for a long time, work on it has been underway so far, and 'now there is a situation when the process can be lobbied in an accelerated manner'.

"Against the background of Russian aggression in Ukraine, we are receiving signals from Europe. The resolution on accelerating EU membership is a response to these signals. We want to hear the voice of the Georgian people," Nikoloz Samkharadze, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, told reporters.

The opposition will be actively involved in the discussion of the resolution and they do not rule out that they will support it. Opponents of the ruling team believe that it is important to get the document on time so that Georgia is not left out of the game.

Paata Manjgaladze, a member of the "Strategy Builder" party said that it is absolutely possible to adopt a resolution of the Georgian Dream by consensus, however this should happen in an expedited manner and not after two weeks. Teona

Akubardia, a member of the parliamentary Reform Group and Levan Ioseliani, the leader of "Citizens" have expressed similar positions.

According to Manjgaladze, ALDE (The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe), at the initiative of "Strategy Builder", "Republican Party" and "Free Democrats," supported Georgia's quick accession to the European Union with a resolution, and now it is important for the "National Movement" to work with its partner "People's Party" and "Georgian Dream" with the "Social Democrats", which will increase the support of the European Parliament on this issue.

Lelo MP Salome Samadashvili assessed the draft resolution submitted by the majority without consulting the opposition as 'weak', since it doesn't say 'anything new' in the background of the new political situation, doesn't outline clear political positions nor issues clear instructions towards the executive branch. According to her, it is good if it is adopted by the parliament, but resolution alone will not be enough to use the window of opportunity for EU integration and Georgia.

"Another paradox I want the public to

notice is that the text of the resolution talks about sanction, related to the occupied territories of Georgia - asking the West to strengthen the sanctions regime among them, and on the other hand you have a PM who says that no sanctions make sense and therefore Georgia won't join, this is an example of why the current government's position is absurd."

Previous day, the European Parliament passed a resolution in support of Ukraine. According to the text of the document, the European Parliament condemns the actions of Russia and Belarus in Ukraine and calls on the EU to tighten sanctions.

At the same time, in a recently adopted resolution the European Parliament called on the EU institutions to start working for Ukraine to receive the status of a candidate country for EU membership and to continue working towards the country's European integration under the Association Agreement. The resolution was adopted by the European Parliament by 676 votes to 13.

Ukraine, in parallel with the talks with the Russian side in Belarus on February 28, formally applied to the European Union for the status of a candidate country.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.2244 | EURO - 3.6039 | GBP - 4.3188 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 3.1359 | SWISS FRANC - 3.5029 |

Georgia's Economic Dependence On Russia Increased In 2021, TI Says

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

According to a report issued by Transparency International Georgia, Georgia's economic dependence on Russia increased in 2021 following the COVID-19 pandemic-related drop of 2020. However, the report reads that the dependency has not reached the 2019 pre-pandemic level due to the decline in tourism. Regardless, TI stresses that Georgia's links with Russia including in trade, tourism, and remittances are 'threatening' to the country.

According to TI, in 2021, compared to 2020, exports of Georgian products to Russia increased by 38% and reached USD 610 million, with Russia becoming the second biggest importer of Georgian goods after China. It is also noted that Russia was the biggest exporter to Georgia after Turkey in 2021. Georgia imported from Russia products valued at over USD 1 billion, exceeding the pre-pandemic (2019) figure by \$ 51 million.

According to the report, there are more than 7,000 companies



► Georgia's economic dependence on Russia is mainly determined by foreign trade, tourism, and remittances.



► Non-governmental organization Transparency International.

registered in Georgia, all or part of the shares of which are owned by companies and citizens of the Russian Federation. Out of these companies, 1,230 were registered from 1995 to 2012, and up to 5,500 - in 2013-2020. A record number of new companies - around 1,200 - were registered in 2018. The report reads that large Russian companies are represented in all sectors of the Georgian economy, including energy, industry, transport infrastructure, financial sector, communications, gambling business, and restaurants and hotels.

According to TI, the country's economic dependence on Russia carries risks as Russia has repeatedly used economic leverage against Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, and other countries since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The report cites Russia banning gas and electricity export to Georgia as well as banning the import of Georgian products to Russia in 2006.

Remarks by President Charles Michel after his meeting with President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili

We had, with the President, a very good and important meeting. You know that we are facing extremely difficult challenges. The EU has a very clear, very firm and very united position, and we are convinced that it is important to cooperate very closely with our friends and our partners. You know my personal engagement to your country, to Georgia.

I've tried to do my best over the last months to support all the positive efforts for stability, for economic reforms, and for democratic reforms in Georgia. And we are very clear, together with the European Commission and the European Parliament - we want to demonstrate our clear and concrete support to maintain all the efforts, to strengthen



the ties between Georgia and the EU.

We have identified the important priorities on which we should work together, and we will be totally committed because in these extremely difficult times, it is very important to stick together, to express a very clear message of support for international law, the rules-based international order, the multilateral approach and full respect for the UN Charter. These are important principles. And we understand very well that it is important to make concrete progress to make sure that the strong ties between Georgia and the EU are very visible and tangible for the people in Georgia.

consilium.europa.eu

THURSDAY		MARCH 3	
Day		Light rain	High: 14°C
Night		Rain	Low: 4°C
FRIDAY		MARCH 4	
Day		Windy	High: 7°C
Night		Partly cloudy	Low: 1°C

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