

European Parliament Report on Georgia - EU Association

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The European Parliament published a new report on Georgia-EU Association. The Association Performance Assessment, prepared at the request of the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) by the European Parliament's Research Service (EPRS), addresses a variety of issues.

The report refers to the period between April 2020 and February 2022, with a focus on effectiveness and outcomes. According to the document in 2020-21, the broader context in which the EU-Georgia AA is implemented has deteriorated as a result of international developments, primarily the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict over Nagorny-Karabakh.

According to the report, the rule of law has significantly deteriorated, as evidenced by the detention of opposition leaders, the lack of effective probe into the June 2019/July 2021 violent incidents, and the decision to abolish the State Inspector Service.

"In a context of sharp political polarization, democratic institutions have gradually been hollowed out of their substance and the ruling coalition increasingly concentrates power in its hands, while also restricting space for dissent."

According to the document, developments in the Georgian judiciary since 2020 were characterized by major setbacks in the implementation of the AA and, cites particularly 'the hasty and non-transparent appointments of judges, the failure to reform the Prosecutor General appointment, the changes brought to the law on Common Courts.'

"Changes introduced in 2020-21 are not based on either a consensus between the ruling coalition and the opposition or broad civil society participation."

The report emphasizes that Georgia remains a regional leader in terms of fighting corruption, however, anti-corruption reforms have slowed down in recent years and effective investigation and prosecution of high-level corruption is a major challenge. It also reads that Georgia's



Since April 2020, Georgia has significantly retreated in terms of basic democratic principles and key political commitments under the Association.

decentralization reform has primarily been driven by the need to promote more efficient management and investment rather than the will to foster effective governance at the local level.

The study also revealed that the situation of the Georgian media has significantly deteriorated - while the media environment is pluralistic, media polarization has increased in parallel with the political crisis. The journalists' working environment is becoming more challenging due to political interference with media work as well as verbal and physical attacks against journalists.

Civil society is assessed as robust, yet affected by the growing political antagonism in the country and the effectiveness of existing channels for consulting civil society is 'seriously questioned'.

Georgia was praised for taking significant measures to fight violence against women and improve gender equality at work. The entry into force of the Code on the Rights of the Child is also a major step forward for the protection of children, despite persisting challenges regarding crimes of sexual abuse and exploitation of children. Workers' rights are expected to improve substantially as a result of the amendments introduced to the Labor Code and the extension of the Labor Inspectorate's mandate. Discrimination and offenses against sexual minorities remain a major problem.

Since 2020, the report reads that Georgia has continuously fulfilled key EU requirements set forth in the visa-free regime and effectively cooperated with EU agencies and the Member States in fight-

ing criminality. Cooperation in foreign and security policy is also assessed positively; however, the study emphasizes that Georgia refused to join the sanctions introduced against Russia after the invasion of Ukraine in late February 2022.

Further, the document notes that although Georgia's economy was hit hard by COVID, the country has continued performing well in approximating its legal framework with EU standards and implementing the Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreement (DCFTA) related approximation requirements.

The report reads that whereas Georgia is on track in terms of legislative processes, it still faces important challenges in complying with its energy- and environment-related, especially with respect to energy efficiency.

Zelensky to UN: Either Expel Russia or Shut Down

By THE MESSENGER STAFF

The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, has called on the UN Security Council to take immediate action to bring peace to Ukraine and expel Russia from its ranks.

"And if you can not do that — shut down."

"Ukraine has a moral right to demand security reform. We have proved it.

Now we need decisions from the UN Security Council for peace in Ukraine. If you do not know how to make this decision — there are two things you can do:

Exclude Russia as it is the source of war. Russia is an aggressor and can not make decisions on its own aggression. After that you have to do everything to make peace. Show us how to make peace.

Or, if there is no other way, and if you can't do anything beyond talking, shut down," said Zelensky.

According to the President of Ukraine, Russia is a state that will transform the right of veto in the UN Security Council into the right of death.

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The UN might just shut down. Ladies and gentlemen, are you ready to close down? Do you think the time for international law is over? If not, then you need to act immediately. The UN Charter must enter into force immediately. The system needs to change. "A veto should not be the right to die," Zelensky said.



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.0857; Euro - 3.3822; GBP - 4.0500; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.6624; Swiss Franc - 3.3326

Persons Accused Of Violence Against Journalists and Cameramen Sentenced to 5 Years In Prison



Akaki Nakashidze, Tornike Davlasheridze, Davit Kutaladze, Otar Gelashvili, Tsotne Chikhladze, and Gia Giguashvili were sentenced to 5 years in prison.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

On Monday, Tbilisi City Court found six persons guilty of physical violence against now-deceased TV Pirveli cameraman Aleksandre Lashkarava, as well as TV Pirveli journalist Miranda Baghaturia and a Public Broadcaster cameraman during July

5 anti-Tbilisi Pride rally. The decision was announced by Tbilisi City Court Judge Nino Eliashvili.

Tbilisi City Court sentenced Davit Kutaladze, Otar Gelashvili, Gia Giguashvili, Tornike Davlasheridze, and Akaki Nakashidze to five years imprisonment. The six defendants were convicted of partici-

pation in group violence on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, interference with journalistic activity, Persecution and intentionally inflicting less severe health damage.

The judge, citing insufficiency of medical conclusion, reclassified the charge against Tsotne Chikhladze and found him guilty under Article 126, which stipu-

lates violence. Chikhladze was initially charged with grievous bodily harm against Iliko Tvaliashvili, the cameraman of the Public Broadcaster.

The state prosecution, in this case, has presented several pieces of evidence in court, including videotapes showing violence against journalists by detainees. The prosecution questioned several witnesses, including law enforcement officers, who described in detail the violence perpetrated by the accused.

One of the victims, Miranda Baghaturia, thanked Judge Nino Eliashvili for the verdict, noting that perpetrators should

serve in jail for journalists to continue their work in a safe environment.

On July 5, far-right activists attacked fifty-three journalists. So far only 27 perpetrators involved in the violent attacks have been arrested or convicted. Baghaturia, TV Pirveli Journalist, has recalled that at least 20 people were involved in the beating of Lashkarava as their crew was reporting the situation. The activists and organizers of the homophobic rally also attacked the Shame Movement office, one of the co-organizers of the Tbilisi Pride parade.



On July 5, far-right activists attacked fifty-three journalists during a homophobic rally.

Dombrovskis: EU is finalising fifth package of sanctions against Russia

The EU is finalising a fifth package of sanctions against Russia, European Commission Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis told a press conference after the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN).

This is the EU's response to the Bucha massacre – "Russia's latest atrocities and its callous attitude to non-combatants – innocent civilians – that have shocked the world".

Dombrovskis added that the EU would continue to ramp the sanctions up as long as Russia continues its aggression.



He also said that EU countries should coordinate and work together, including with the EU's global

partners, "to make sure that sanctions are properly and quickly enforced, not circumvented".

"Any loophole should be closed off, quickly and firmly. Sanctions that exist only on paper are just that – paper. We want sanctions to continue biting Putin's regime hard in the real world," said Domrovskis.

Roberta Metsola: Europe must speed up its policy of zero dependence on the Kremlin

European Parliament President Roberta Metsola briefed the chamber on her visit to Ukraine and called for more logistical, humanitarian and military support as she opened the session yesterday.

The atrocities committed by the Russian army in Ukraine are horrific, shameful and disgraceful, the president said, adding that footage from Bucha and Irpen underlines the level of threat facing Ukraine and the rule-based global world order.

"These are war crimes perpetrated by war criminals; these coordinated acts of inhumanity cannot remain unanswered. We will hold all those responsible to account," said the President, adding that this would mean immediately adopting a new package of forceful sanctions, and targeting those who bank-

roll and support Putin.

According to Metsola, Europe must speed up its policy of zero dependence on the Kremlin, and disentangle itself from Russian energy supplies, implement binding embargoes and stop in-

directly funding the bombs.

After her speech, MEPs observed a minute's silence in memory of the victims of Bucha, Irpen and all victims of war, terror and violence.

(eunighbourseast.eu)



Weather

Wednesday, April 6

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 20°C
Night Showers
Low: 10°C

Thursday, April 7

Day Showers
High: 12°C
Night Showers
Low: 9°C

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