

Features of EU Enlargement Policy: A Vision from Georgia

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“Make men work together, show them that beyond their differences
and geographical boundaries there lies a common interest.”

Jean Monnet

Abstract: The European accession policy has acquired a special and exceptional character since 2022 against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war. The separation of the Association Trio countries (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia) caused a non-uniform assessments in Georgia (giving candidacy to Ukraine and Moldova, and potential candidacy to Georgia). In the situation of extreme polarization and politicization of opinions, it is important to outline the legal and historical facts regarding the specificities of EU–Georgia relations and to evaluate scientifically Georgia’s geopolitical destiny (the possibility of joining the EU) in the light of global and regional processes. The article presents the various aspects of the difficulty and complexity of the EU enlargement towards Georgia, which actually go beyond the context of the full fulfillment of the twelve conditions given to Georgia by the EU; synchronization

¹ The views expressed in this article are those of the authors in their personal capacity and should not be understood to represent Gori State University or the Caucasus University.

of commitments issued by the European Commission for all Association Trio countries, making clear that the only distinguishing condition for Georgia in reality is the issue of depolarization; the possibility to fulfil the condition of depolarization in the current political situation in Georgia; the context of the historical dynamics of divergent approaches of the EU towards Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia; the priority of saving the results of the 30-year struggle for freedom against the backdrop of Russia–Georgia wars, and the European future in Georgia and overcoming the ongoing distrust between Georgia and the EU (as the highest value) compared to the value of conditionality.

Keywords: *candidacy, conditionality, enlargement, European Union, Georgia*

1. Introduction

The common interest that remains between the EU and Georgia, despite their differences, geographical distance, geopolitical gravity, and the current breakdown of mutual trust, has the potential to save the relationship and safeguard the most valuable outcome of years of effort.

The armed conflicts and wars instigated by the Russian Federation in continental Europe polarize people's attitudes towards war and peace (see Krastev & Leonard, 2022; Borrell, 2023b). In the age of disinformation, movements of ultra-nationalist, on the one hand, and ultra-liberal, on the other hand, are experiencing extreme polarization; the democracy index has decreased in European countries as well (see Attila, 2018, pp. 30–48; Kottosová, Tanno & Chen, 2023). Despite the imposed sanctions, Russia has the resources to use human capital, economic leverage/markets, energy resources, foreign relations, and Baker's countries against democracy and Europeanization. This process is highly visible and transparent in Georgia, and not only here. Current processes in Georgia are not independent and indigenous. This is a reflection of changed circumstances and overwhelming negative impacts at the global or regional levels. The international community's sanctions against Russia are quite late, at least after Russia–Georgia 2008.

Within the framework of the Association Trio, is the granting of potential candidacy to Georgia and the granting of candidacy to Ukraine and Moldova actually related to the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of specific obligations? In such an era, what is the perception of Georgia on the issue of granting or not granting EU membership candidacy to Georgia on the aspects of fulfillment of the Copenhagen political criteria (the twelve conditions)?

The method used in this article is the description and synchronization of primary sources (official documents of the EU), political processes (facts and historical data) of the European integration and EU decisions, which are essentially necessary in order to transparently and clearly understand the logic and sequence of the EU enlargement policy and approaches towards Georgia.

The article represents the critical (personal) vision of the authors, whose generalization paradigm is not diverging from the opinion of many in Georgia.

2. Conjuncture of EU 2022–2023 assessments in relation to Georgia

The decision of the European Council of June 23–24, 2022, states that “[t]he European Council recognizes the European perspective of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia. The future of these countries and their citizens lies within the European Union.” From the Association Trio, Ukraine and Moldova were given the candidate status, and Georgia—the potential candidate status. According to the decision of the European Council, “[t]he Commission is invited to report to the Council on the fulfilment of the conditions specified in the Commission’s opinions on the respective membership applications as part of its regular enlargement package. The Council will decide on further steps once all these conditions are **fully met**.” Twelve priorities were developed for Georgia, seven steps for Ukraine, and nine steps for Moldova (Communication COM(2022) 405, 406 and 407 final). In the analytical evaluation document (Commission Staff Working Document, SWD(2023) 31 final), the European Commission did not mention the occupation of territories of Georgia by the Russian Federation, Russia–Georgia wars, or several armed conflicts on the territory of Georgia (starting from 1992), ethnic cleansing of Georgians, or the ongoing creeping occupation by the Russian Federation.

Taking into consideration the content of the terms and obligations given to all three countries, their complexity and severity, it can be said for certain that the aspect of political polarization is particularly emphasized with Georgia; other obligations overlap to some extent and include content that is generally typical for post-Soviet countries and countries with permanent negative influences from Russia (see Appendix 1).

It should be emphasized that the Commission Opinions (on Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, Communication COM(2022) 405, 406 and 407 final) touched the issue of compatibility rates of all the three countries with the common foreign and security policy of the EU under the cluster of External Relations—namely, Georgia’s alignment rate was 53% in 2021 (61% in 2020; 55% in 2019; 54% in 2018; and 56% in 2017); Moldova’s alignment rate was 62% in 2021 (68% in 2020; 80% in 2019; 72% in 2018; and 69% in 2017); Ukraine’s alignment rate was 79% in 2021 (81% in 2020; 63% in 2019; 46% in 2018; and 80% in 2017). These data show that the levels of compatibility with the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) change over the years, although they are dynamic, and the countries maintain a positive position. Here, the geographical context of Georgia, the number of active and passive wars and conflicts, the creeping occupation, the factor of economic and energy independence, and others should be taken into account.

In February 2023, the European Commission (2023a) published an analytical assessment of the implementation of the Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (AA/DCFTA) in all three countries. According to the results of the mentioned assessments, Georgia maintains an almost equal position compared to Moldova and Ukraine, which is a positive position, and testifies to the continuity of the rapprochement process and the dynamism of the implementation of the AA/DCFTA. At the same time, in some areas, the implementation of obligations with a better quality and more quantity is also recorded on the part of Georgia (Civil Georgia, 2022).

3. Some aspects of the complexity of European integration of Georgia

EU enlargement is a political, geopolitical, economic, and legal decision. The policy of expansion acquired a special character in the 1990s, when the Soviet bloc and the Soviet Union were dismantled. It can be safely said that the Copenhagen criteria, developed by the EU, were largely determined by the situation of the countries of the post-Soviet space. Instead of two large states (the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia), dozens of new independent states emerged in the neighborhood of the EU, and all turned to the EU seeking help and support. The EU faced a new reality: the economic principles of its operation needed significant transformation and henceforth establishing in the construction of the EU not only the largest economy where “all trade roads lead to the EU” (Kardava, 2023, p. 12) but also the largest area of peace, freedom, justice, and security. The EU is not inclined towards a policy of quick and many accessions. During its 72 years of operation, it has welcomed a total of 22 states as its members (the EC of 6 founding states expanded seven times). The EU did not refuse the post-Soviet countries from joining, but established complex reform criteria—political, economic, legal (and geographical)—which continue to serve as the basis of diplomatic restraint or refusal of membership, alongside positive decisions on enlargement.

In 1994, the EU signed partnership and cooperation agreements with Ukraine and Moldova. Only two years later, the EU signed the same agreements with Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. In 1997, the EU signed the same agreement with Russia, and later with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. In 2003, the European Commission issued a Communication on Wider Europe – Neighbourhood (Communication COM/2003/0104 final). This Communication does not mention the Black Sea, related security issues, or Georgia. Moreover, according to this document, the EU considered the issue of relations with the neighboring countries from the perspective of accession; the countries of the South Caucasus are excluded from this space, indicating their geographical location (“Given their location, the Southern Caucasus therefore also fall outside the geographical scope of this initiative for the time being”), while Russia, the Western Balkan countries, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus are objects of special attention (Communication

COM/2003/0104 final, p. 4).² Later, in 2004 and 2005, according to the decision of the European Commission, Georgia received the Action Plan of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP AP). In 2009, the Eastern Partnership Declaration was signed between the EU and six countries (Joint Declaration 8435/09). The Eastern Partnership (EaP) envisages two formats of relations: joint (multilateral) and individual (bilateral) between the EU and the EaP countries. The aspect of the European perspective towards Georgia was not voiced within the EaP either; however, as a result of Georgia's significant efforts and external support, the country was formally promoted and became part of the EaP dimension of Association Trio, along with Ukraine and Moldova.

The next turning point was related to the EU granting the Association Trio visa liberalization action plans (VLAP) and evaluating their implementation. Dialogue with Ukraine and Moldova started in 2010, and with Georgia in 2012. As always, traditionally, Georgia's involvement in various formats of European integration took place later here as well. However, the evaluation statistics from the European Commission are very noteworthy: during the VLAP implementation, Georgia received a visa-free regime as a result of **four** reports and monitoring in 2013–2015, in 2 years; Moldova received a visa-free regime as a result of **five** reports and monitoring in 2011–2013, in 2 years; and Ukraine received a visa-free regime as a result of **six** reports and monitoring in 2011–2015, in 4 years (European Commission, n.d.).

In 2014, association agreements were signed with Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova. Despite the fact that at this time, the EU's evaluations towards the three countries also declared different development dynamics, the policy of unity and joint process of the Association Trio towards the EU was maintained. However, aspects of benefits and DCFTAs were regulated in different perspectives for all three countries (European Commission, 2014). Ukraine and Moldova joined the Energy Community in 2010, and Georgia in 2017.

In 2022, Ukraine and Georgia were given the status of candidacy, and Georgia was given the status of potential candidate. It should be emphasized here that the traditional approach of the European Union—first to grant potential candidate status and then candidate status—was used only in relation to Georgia in 2022 (see Appendix 2).

² “It reaffirmed that enlargement will serve to strengthen relations with Russia, and called for enhanced relations with Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and the Southern Mediterranean countries to be based on a long-term approach promoting reform, sustainable development and trade. At the same time, the Council reaffirmed the European perspective of the countries of the Western Balkans in the Stabilisation and Association Process.”

4. Factors hindering Georgia's candidacy: twelve recommendations only?

According to the EU's approach, the conditions must be fully met. What does this formulation mean (is it deterrent or stimulatory?) Is full implementation (within a very short period) possible? Does the problem lie in the completion or failure of the twelve conditions or is it more geographical and geopolitical?

As mentioned above, the decision to enlarge the EU is not a narrowly legal one, but it is a far-reaching, pragmatic political, economic, and geopolitical decision of the EU and its Member States. It has been announced in the EU that granting candidacy to Ukraine is a moral and geopolitical decision (Paul & de Castro, 2022); similarly, the granting of candidacy to Moldova is also geopolitical and should not have been disassociated from Ukraine (Macron in Basso, 2022). However, statements in relation to Georgia were focused narrowly and solely on the fulfillment of obligations. In the case of Georgia, there was no emphasis on the history of continuous and brutal battles or wars with Russia for the freedom and survival of Georgia (nor on the ethnic cleansing of Georgians, which is recognized by the international community and in international documents (see United Nation Resolution A/RES/62/249; OSCE, 1996; 1999; etc.)).

The EU, among others, stands at the crossroads of war and peace, and the processes taking place within it, in the format of foreign and security policy, are fully understood in Georgia, including political crises, the Brexit, disputes with Poland over the rule of law and justice issues, parliamentary elections in Slovakia, difficulties with Hungary, and others. In this context, endorsing a new wave of enlargement is not an easy matter; it is complex and represents a very bold step for the EU. However, the EU's decision has, in a somewhat indirect and implicit manner, revealed a desire to limit the geographical scope of expansion and to realize the original vision articulated in the 2003 Communication.

Granting Georgia potential candidacy status is a sign of recognition, respect, and appreciation of Georgia by the EU. However, directly appealing to the incomplete fulfillment of the twelve conditions is not well and fully understood, considering the above factors. Of course, there arises a legitimate question: is this still more closely related to geopolitics and geography? In this context, the following factors are also very important: Georgia has no

military naval forces;³ Turkey and Russia maintain hegemony on the Black Sea (Cagaptay, 2022); and the EU does not have territorial continuity (in the context of enlargement) with Georgia. Georgia is a Black Sea Security country, although it is seen as a country of the South Caucasus region (the president of France, the country that generated and led the idea of the EC) did not equate Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia with each other, but Moldova was geopolitically separated from the South Caucasus countries); for the “European Political Community” (see European Commission, 2023b), it is a priority to quickly resolve security, defense, energy, and infrastructural issues. Georgia does not have an independent energy policy and security levers, the productivity and competitiveness of the Georgian market is weak (President of the European Commission stated on October 6, 2023, that the process should be mutually beneficial and that our (common) great strength/power is the single market), and challenges with the Balkan countries are not yet over (Bechev, 2022). The non-granting of candidacy to Georgia in this conglomerate, only to be accused of incomplete fulfillment of the twelve recommendations, is a difficult position to support and explain to the pro-European people of Georgia.

Enlargement will always be a merit-based process (Borrell, 2023a). But in this very new situation, it is highly important to reconsider the principle of differentiation in such a manner that the higher value is not violated. Borrell’s opinion is likely to be taken into account: “EaP policy must meet the challenge of how to combine inclusivity amidst greater differentiation among participant states” (Borrell, 2023a).

Statements in political-legal documents and comments by officials of the EU, suggesting that the full fulfillment of conditions (fully met) will be the evaluation criteria for Georgia, are also neither transparent nor understandable. In a country grappling with excessive threats from the Russian Federation in a period of reduced democracy and amidst various challenges at the regional and global level, in the background of the Russia–Ukraine war, and concentrating primarily on maintaining peace and countering Russia’s aggression, the expectation of understanding and fully meeting the conditions within one year (from June 2022 to the end of 2023), before the extension window closes, seems unrealistic. It was mentioned above that the issue of depolarization is particularly critical in the case of Georgia, and significantly distinguishes the situation from that of Ukraine and Moldova. It can be safely said that achieving full implementation is

³ As a result of the 2008 legislative amendments, the provision on the Georgian military naval forces was deleted from the Law of Georgia ‘On Defense of Georgia.’

improbable: the conditions for full implementation can be very useful for any political force opposed to Georgia being granted the candidate status now. Why is the insistence for conditions being “fully met” perilous? It is because with the improbability of meeting the depolarization criterion, the Georgian nation stands to lose a lot and maybe everything. What do the Georgian people lose? First, they risk not seeing the real results of the 30-year struggle for European integration. The people of Georgia have withstood all kinds of Russian aggression, occupations, wars, pressures, influences, disinformation, hoping for freedom and a European perspective, but are losing the power to sustain this hope. They stand to lose the chance to counter the narrative that “Russia is invincible” and as a small nation no one will oppose it; they lose the ability to consolidate the nation and real depolarization; they also lose the ability strengthen the pro-European society; and the ability to strengthen Georgia’s position in a complicated regional context.

5. Conclusion

The EU’s decision, based on principles of inclusion and not exclusion, the will for mutual reconciliation and rapprochement, the strengthening of the idea of loyalty and mutual devotion, the understanding of Georgia’s 30-year struggle, and measuring and analyzing the current situation in Georgia within regional actions from the side of the EU will be a guarantee of the durability of democracy and the support for Europeanization not only in Georgia, but also in the law and politics of the EU.

When balancing the values, prioritizing the higher value will make the fulfillment of the twelve recommendations more feasible after being granted the candidacy status.

The ongoing actions in the EU, neighboring regions, the Association Trio countries and worldwide as well, demand transformation policies in both the EU and its partner countries, to adapt to the prevailing geopolitical and geostrategic realities. Overcoming distrust in the “family” will definitely be achievable if Georgia is granted the candidate status. The logic and sequence of the EU enlargement policy is clear, as outlined in official EU documents and decisions, and it will never deviate from the geographical line—first Ukraine, Moldova, and then Georgia overseas. Saying “no” to Georgia twice will carry risks that far outweigh those associated with conditionality. Thus,

the final decision of the EU regarding its future enlargement policy and the inclusion of Georgia in it will be quite difficult, yet the most politically astute, pragmatic, and value-driven decision the EU has ever made.

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United Nations Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 15 May 2008, A/RES/62/249, 29.5.2008.

Appendix 1.

Georgia	Moldova	Ukraine
Address the issue of political polarization , through ensuring cooperation across political parties in the spirit of the April 19 agreement;	-	-
Adopt and implement a transparent and effective judicial reform strategy and action plan post-2021 based on a broad, inclusive and cross-party consultation process; ensure a judiciary that is fully and truly independent, accountable and impartial along the entire judicial institutional chain, also to safeguard the separation of powers; notably ensure the proper functioning and integrity of all judicial and prosecutorial institutions , in particular the Supreme Court and address any shortcomings identified including the nomination of judges at all levels and of the Prosecutor-General; undertake a thorough reform of the High Council of Justice and appoint the High Council's remaining members. All these measures need to be fully in line with European standards and the recommendations of the Venice Commission.	Complete essential steps of the recently launched comprehensive justice system reform across all institutions in the justice and prosecution chains , to ensure their independence, integrity, efficiency, accountability and transparency , including through efficient use of asset verification and effective democratic oversight ; in particular, fill all the remaining vacancies of the Supreme Council Magistracy and in its specialized bodies;	Enact and implement legislation on a selection procedure for judges of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, including a pre-selection process based on evaluation of their integrity and professional skills , in line with Venice Commission recommendations; Finalize the integrity vetting of the candidates for the High Council of Justice members by the Ethics Council and the selection of candidate to establish the High Qualification Commission of Judges of Ukraine;
	Across all these areas, address shortcomings identified by OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe/the Venice Commission;	
Guarantee the full functioning of all state institutions, strengthening their independent and effective accountability as well as their democratic oversight functions; further improve the electoral framework, addressing all shortcomings identified by OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe/Venice Commission in these processes.		

<p>Strengthen the independence of its Anti-Corruption Agency bringing together all key anticorruption functions, in particular to rigorously address high-level corruption cases; equip the new Special Investigative Service and Personal Data Protection Service with resources commensurate to their mandates and ensure their institutional independence;</p>	<p>Deliver on the commitment to fight corruption at all levels by taking decisive steps towards proactive and efficient investigations, and a credible track record of prosecutions and convictions; substantially increase the take up of the recommendations of the National Anticorruption Centre;</p>	<p>Further strengthen the fight against corruption, in particular at high level, through proactive and efficient investigations, and a credible track record of prosecutions and convictions; complete the appointment of a new head of the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office through certifying the identified winner of the competition and launch and complete the selection process and appointment for a new Director of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine;</p>
<p>Strengthen the fight against organized crime based on detailed threat assessments, notably by ensuring rigorous investigations, prosecutions and a credible track record of prosecutions and convictions; guarantee accountability and oversight of law enforcement agencies;</p>	<p>Strengthen the fight against organized crime, based on detailed threat assessments, increased cooperation with regional, EU and international partners and better coordination of law enforcement agencies; in particular, put in place a legislative package on asset recovery and a comprehensive framework for the fight against financial crime and money laundering, ensuring that anti-money laundering legislation is in compliance with the standards of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF);</p>	<p>Ensure that anti-money laundering legislation is in compliance with the standards of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF); adopt an overarching strategic plan for the reform of the entire law enforcement sector as part of Ukraine's security environment;</p>
<p>Implement the commitment to "de-oligarchization" by eliminating the excessive influence of vested interests in economic, political, and public life;</p>	<p>Implement the commitment to "de-oligarchization" by eliminating the excessive influence of vested interests in economic, political, and public life;</p>	<p>Implement the Anti-Oligarch law to limit the excessive influence of oligarchs in economic, political, and public life; this should be done in a legally sound manner, taking into account the forthcoming opinion of the Venice Commission on the relevant legislation;</p>

Undertake stronger efforts to guarantee a free, professional, pluralistic and independent media environment, notably by ensuring that criminal procedures brought against media owners fulfil the highest legal standards, and by launching impartial, effective and timely investigations in cases of threats against safety of journalists and other media professionals;		Tackle the influence of vested interests by adopting a media law that aligns Ukraine's legislation with the EU audio-visual media services directive and empowers the independent media regulator ;
Move swiftly to strengthen the protection of human rights of vulnerable groups , including by bringing perpetrators and instigators of violence to justice more effectively;	Strengthen the protection of human rights, particularly of vulnerable groups , and sustain its commitments to enhance gender equality and fight violence against women;	Finalize the reform of the legal framework for national minorities currently under preparation as recommended by the Venice Commission, and adopt immediate and effective implementation mechanisms.
Notably consolidate efforts to enhance gender equality and fight violence against women;		
	Increase the capacity to deliver on reforms and provide quality public services including through stepping up implementation of public administration reform ; assess and update the public administration reform strategy;	
	Complete the reform of Public Financial Management including improving public procurement at all levels of government;	
Ensure the involvement of civil society in decision-making processes at all levels.	Enhance the involvement of civil society in decision-making processes at all levels.	

Appendix 2. EU membership candidate and potential candidate countries.

Country	Granting potential candidacy (year)	Granting candidacy (year)	Opening negotiations (year)
<p>Republic of Albania Official language: Albanian Population: 2,875,763 Recognized minority languages: Aromanian, Greek, Macedonian, Recognized minorities: Greek, Aromanian, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Serb, Roma, Egyptian, Bosnian, Bulgarian people. Religion: 59% Islam, 17% Christianity...</p>	2003 https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/albania_en	2014	2018
<p>Bosnia and Herzegovina Official languages: Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian. Population: 3,475,000 Ethnic groups: 50.1% Bosniaks, 30.8% Serbs, 15.4% Croats, 3.7% others. Religion: 51% Islam, 46% Christianity...</p>	2003 https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/bosnia-and-herzegovina_en	2022	
<p>Montenegro In 2006 Montenegro's parliament declared independence from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. NATO member. Official language: Montenegrin Population: 602 445 Ethnic groups: 45% Montenegrins, 28.7% Serbs, 8.6% Bosniaks, 4.9% Albanians, and others Religion: 76.0% Christianity, 19.1% Islam...</p>	Formally from 2008 https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/montenegro_en	2010	2012
<p>North Macedonia Landlocked country. As a result of a dispute with Greece the country name has been changed. Official languages: Macedonian, Albanian. Official regional languages: Turkish, Romani, Serbian, Bosnian, Aromanian. Population: 1,836,713 Ethnic groups: 58.4% Macedonians, 24.3% Albanians, 3.9% Turks, 2.5% Romani, 1.3% Serbs, 0.9% Bosniaks, 0.5% Aromanians, others. Religion: 60.4% Christianity, 32.2% Islam</p>	2003 https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/north-macedonia_en	2005	2020 2022 Screening process started.

<p>Serbia Montenegro and Kosovo were separated from Serbia. Population: 6,647,003 Official language: Serbian. Ethnic groups: 83.3% Serbs, 3.5% Hungarians, 2.1% Roma, 2% Bosniaks, others Religion: 90.6% Christianity, Islam 3.1%...</p>	<p>2003 https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/serbia_en</p>	<p>2012</p>	<p>2014 formal start 2021</p>
<p>Türkiye Official language: Turkish. Population: 85,279,553 Ethnic groups: Turks (78–80%), Kurds (13–15%), other Religious: Islam 99.8%, 0.2% Christianity.</p>	<p>1999 https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/turkiye_en</p>		<p>2005 In 2018, the Council decided that accession negotiations were at a standstill.</p>
<p>Ukraine Official language: Ukrainian Population: 33.2 million Ethnic groups: Ukrainian (77.8%), Russian (17.3%), others. Religion: 87.3% Christianity, other.</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>2022 https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/ukraine_en</p>	
<p>Moldova Official Language: Romanian. As of March 2023, the only official language of Moldova is Romanian, and all references to the Moldovan language in the Constitution and legal bills have been amended to refer to Romanian. Population: 2,512,758 Ethnic groups: 82.07% Moldovans/Romanians, 6.57% Ukrainians, 4.57% Gagauzes, 4.06% Russians, 1.88% Bulgarians. Religion: 91.8% Christianity, others.</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>2022 https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/moldova_en</p>	
<p>Kosovo Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia was enacted in 2008. Independence has not been recognized by Serbia and five out of 27 EU Member States. Official languages: Albanian, Serbian Population: 1,761,985 Regional languages: Bosnian, Turkish, Romani Ethnic groups: 92% Albanians, 4% Serbs, 2% Bosniaks, 1% Turks, 1% Romani. Religion: 95.6% Islam, 3.7% Christianity, others.</p>	<p>Kosovo applied for EU membership in 2022. EU adopted visa-free travel for Kosovo in 2023. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/kosovo_en</p>		

<p>Georgia Official Language: Georgian. Official regional language: Abkhaz. Ethnic groups: 86.8% Georgians, 6.2% Azerbaijanis, 4.5% Armenians, others. Population: 3,688,647 Religion: 88.1% Christianity, 10.7% Islam, others.</p>	<p>Georgia applied for EU Membership in 2022. Georgia has been granted potential candidacy in 2022.</p> <p>Since 2017, Georgia Since 2017, the right to use the visa-free regime in the Schengen area has been granted.</p> <p>https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/georgia_en</p>		
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