

# Copenhagen+1 and Candidacy to Georgia

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## Introduction

On November 8, 2023, the European Commission published the progress reports of 10 countries and issued recommendations on the enlargement policy (Enlargement Pack 2023<sup>1</sup>). On December 14, 2023, the EU (European Council) decided to enlarge the EU; Georgia was included in the Enlargement Pack among ten countries and was granted the status of Candidate.<sup>2</sup> This is a great historical day for the state and people of Georgia. At long last, a lot of effort, hard work, struggle, complex political paradigms, geopolitical aspects and the specifics of the period/time came together and led to the nomination of Candidacy. We cannot overlook the fact that Georgia has a war with Russia, frozen conflicts, occupied territories (Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region), very weak naval power, unsustainable national economy, criminals exported from Russia. Despite all this, the EU somehow "devi-

ated" from the principle of regionalism, Georgia was "removed" from the South Caucasus countries, the line of enlargement "crossed" the Black Sea and reached Georgia. The EU acted towards Georgia with the highest devotion and standard. The European Union is a peacemaker by nature; Its fundamental values are peace and security, competitive market and sustainable economy, welfare and freedom of citizens. In these values, the EU has expressed confidence to Georgia and has given the right to join the family. Invitation to the family is not only related to being organized and having a good knowledge and implementation of laws. On the contrary, there may be mistakes, disputes, errors, but we should be able to sit together on the same throne of values. It should also be borne in mind that the EU is expanding slowly, with only 22 states joining in 72 years<sup>3</sup>. On the

<sup>1</sup> European Commission Press release on Enlargement Pack 2023, European Commission Reports, <[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/%20en/ip\\_23\\_5633](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/%20en/ip_23_5633)>

<sup>2</sup> European Council Conclusions, 14-15 Dec, 2023, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2023/12/14-15/>> <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/68967/europeancouncilconclusions-14-15-12-2023-en.pdf>>

<sup>3</sup> The EU (European Community) has been in operation since the signing of the Treaty of European Coal and Steel (1951), which evolved from the signing of the 1957 European Economic Community and Euratom Treaties. It was founded by 6 states: France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. It was expanded seven times in total: 1. 1973. - Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark; 2. 1981 - Greece; 3. 1986 - Spain and Portugal. 4. 1995 - Austria, Finland, Sweden. 5. 2004 - Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Malta, Cyprus. 6. 2007 -

other hand, the following nuance is worth considering, that in the last 31 years, Georgia has not abandoned the struggle for freedom and the European future (this battle continues to this day in various forms) and after recovering from every punishment and wound for this choice, Georgia always looked towards Europe.

currently, very different information is being spread in Georgia, including misinformation, about the EU and its enlargement policy; Comparisons with other countries, especially Ukraine and Moldova, are not made in a proper way (objects of comparison are selected incorrectly). On the other hand, a critical opinion towards the EU's foreign policy and, in general, an analytical understanding of the events taking place in the EU in the last two decades (from scientists and specialists) are perceived as anti-European actions. Such a polarized approach limits the scientific study of the EU, the dissemination of real information, and the development of a critical vision. It is important to emphasize that the problem of polarization in Georgia is not only addressed to politicians, in general, society and people are significantly (often aggressively) polarized around vital issues, trying to monopolize opinion or not allow different views. For example, it is worth mentioning that now the polarization is about the following: "getting the candidacy status is the merit of the government"; "Getting the candidacy status is the merit of the opposition"; "Getting candidacy status is the merit of the people"; "Getting candidacy status is the merit of the civil sector". However, when the EU makes a decision on granting the candidacy status (on enlargement), it is essentially necessary to have the following two fundamental and initial conditions: the government of the country must want to join the EU; The country's population/people must want to join the EU (this includes the civil sector, the political spectrum, etc.). Thus, without declaring the will of the government and the will of the people (without the combination of both), the EU would not even begin to discuss the issue of Georgian.

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Hungary, Romania. 7. 2013 - Croatia. (Great Britain left the EU). Currently, there are 27 states in the EU.

Currently, the issue of criteria for granting candidacy status is the subject of the biggest discussion and debate in Georgia. The decision to grant candidacy and the enlargement policy has always been the highest political agenda in the EU (including such cumulative aspects as: geopolitics, economic policy, security policy, policy of values). To call for an opinion from outside (from abroad) and not from Georgia, the article published by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs states that:

*Ever since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Brussels has understood enlargement to mean expansion into strategically important regions... There is little evidence of reform momentum in most of the Western Balkan countries – unlike in Moldova and, even under conditions of war, in Ukraine, Not least for this reason, the EU continues to develop its enlargement process incrementally... As for Georgia, its alignment rate reflects its balancing policy towards Russia, while Serbia has been cultivating intensive relations with Russia and China for years, sometimes in a provocative manner, at the same time as conducting accession negotiations. Under President Aleksandar Vucic, Belgrade's domestic and foreign policy is neither comprehensively nor consistently geared towards EU membership. Moreover, Serbia is the only country in the Western Balkans that has not joined Brussels' sanctions against Russia.<sup>4</sup>*

To turn the above scanty outline into a more academic-legal plane, the document adopted by the European Council in Copenhagen on June 21-22 1993 and other official sources of the European Commission will be discussed below. The review of these documents will make some aspects of the EU enlargement policy more open and transparent, and

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<sup>4</sup> Lippert Barbara, The EU Is Set to Add Gradualist Elements to Its Enlargement Doctrine, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, #1, Jan, 2024, <<https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2024C01/>> <[https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2024C01\\_EU\\_Enlargement.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2024C01_EU_Enlargement.pdf)>

will make it easier to understand the complexity of Georgia's inclusion in the enlargement space.

### 1. European Council Copenhagen Conclusion

Copenhagen Document of 1993<sup>5</sup> consists of several parts, namely:

1. *Growth, Competitiveness and Unemployment*
2. *The single market and common policies*
3. *GATT*<sup>6</sup>
4. *Enlargement*
5. *Relations with Malta and Cyprus*
6. *Relations with Turkey*
7. *Relations with the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe*
8. *Pact on stability in Europe*
9. *Russia*
10. *Ukraine*
11. *Former Yugoslavia*
12. *Relations with the Maghreb*<sup>7</sup> countries
13. *Conclusions reached by Foreign Ministers*
14. *Common Foreign and Security policy - Preparatory work on security*
15. *A Community close to its citizens*
16. *Fraud affecting the Community*
17. *Racism and Xenophobia*

*Annex 1: Entering the 21st century orientations for economic renewal in Europe*

*Annex 2: Cooperation with the associated countries geared to the objective of membership*

*Annex 3: Declaration on Bosnia-Herzegovina*

*Annex 4: Foreign Ministers, meeting on the occasion of the European Council in Copenhagen on 21 and 22 June 1993, agreed on the following conclusions*

The above structure reflects well the priorities, tasks and challenges of the EU in the 90s. This document decided the future development policy of the EU, which was followed by the fifth, sixth and sev-

enth waves of EU enlargement. In 1993, the decision about further enlargement of the EU was taken at a time of great changes: the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, the emergence of new independent states. By the time of the adoption of the Copenhagen document, **Austria, Finland and Sweden** were already candidate countries for membership, negotiations were already underway with them and it was decided to enlarge in 1995. Thus, the Copenhagen document (and the new criteria for enlargement based on it) actually concerned the countries of the post-Soviet space and their future accession. The document confirms that during this period expansion towards **Malta and Cyprus** is already under consideration; Special attention is focused on ensuring the effectiveness of the implementation of the association agreement by **Turkey**; The document establishes the term "**European Agreements**" and "**Associated Countries**". Association Countries are determined so: *the countries of Central and Eastern Europe with which the Community has concluded or plans to conclude Europe agreements ("associated countries"), on the basis of the Commission's communication prepared at the invitation of the Edinburgh European Council*<sup>8</sup>. The decision of the 1992 European Council of Edinburgh refers to the 1992 report of the European Commission<sup>9</sup>, according to which *The principal framework for the Community's relations with the countries concerned in the coming decade will be the Europe agreements. As well as it is stated here that the high political dialogue with Visegrad countries has started; It is necessary to prepare the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) for European integration. European agreements have a foreign policy dimension; The new relations towards the CEE countries are referred to as "Return to Europe".* It is men-

<sup>5</sup> EUROPEAN COUNCIL IN COPENHAGEN 21-22 JUNE 1993, CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRESIDENCY, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21225/72921.pdf>>

<sup>6</sup> The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

<sup>7</sup> African countries (with some specificity and selection).

<sup>8</sup> European Council in Edinburgh, 11-12 Dec, 1992, Conclusions, <[https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/20492/1992\\_december\\_-\\_edinburgh\\_\\_eng\\_.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/20492/1992_december_-_edinburgh__eng_.pdf)>

<sup>9</sup> European Commission, TOWARDS A CLOSER ASSOCIATION WITH THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, Report by the Commission to the European Council Edinburgh, 11-12 December 1992 <<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/45ecfd2a-0ff3-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>>

tioned as well that *The Europe agreements provide for cooperation on the approximation of legislation, as this is an important condition for economic integration. A legal environment compatible with Community law is a major incentive for foreign investment and a vehicle for improved access to Community markets.* It is underlined that the PHARE<sup>10</sup> will be the major instrument for economic and technical assistance within the framework of European agreements. In 1993-1997, the countries receiving PHARE aid were: **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, FYROM**<sup>11, 12</sup> The Commission's 1992 document also noted that, in addition to cooperation with CEE countries within the framework of European agreements, it is necessary to understand how to expand relations beyond this framework.<sup>13</sup>

Understanding who the EU considered to be associated countries (with a view to future enlargement) at the 1993 Copenhagen summit is very important. That is why the European Commission document of 1992 was invoked above. The European Council in Copenhagen decided the following: *“The European Council today agreed that the associated countries in Central and Eastern Europe that so desire shall become members of the European Union. Accession will take place as soon as an associated country is able to assume the obligations of membership by satisfying the economic and political conditions required.”* **The conditions were following:** *“Stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human*

*rights and respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Membership presupposes the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.”* Exactly these conditions are the Copenhagen criteria, which are called the political, economic and legal criteria for joining the EU. The European Union implemented the decision made in the 1993 document and **CEE countries joined the EU.** Enlargement is a two-way process: a country must want to join the EU, having the ability and the will to accept the Copenhagen terms; The EU, on the other hand, should make a decision on such expansion, which will be useful and safe for a) the common European policy, b) the interests of the member states, and c) for the accession country.

The Copenhagen document of 1993 drew attention to other countries as well, not only the associated countries implied under European agreements. The document refers to **other CEE countries**, namely **Albania**, as well as the **Baltic States, Ukraine**, the former Yugoslavian country **Bosnia-Herzegovina**. Moreover, the Copenhagen document refers to the **Russian Federation**, stating the following:

*“The European Council welcomed the progress made recently in the negotiations on a partnership and cooperation agreement with Russia. It expressed its hope for an early conclusion of such an agreement, in the context of creating a contractual relationship between the Community and Russia which reflects the political and economic role which Russia plays on the international scene and where consultations - also at the highest level - are a regular feature of the relationship....The European Council is looking forward to continuing the close cooperation with Russia in the political field and to jointly contributing to the solution of international crises. This is seen as an essential contribution to peace and stability in Europe and the world.”*

The Copenhagen document also refers to cooperation with **African countries**, specifically naming

<sup>10</sup> European Community Programme which channels Economic and Technical Assistance to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

<sup>11</sup> former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

<sup>12</sup> European Commission, The PHARE Programme Annual Report, 24.03.1998, < <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:51998DC0178&rid=1>>

<sup>13</sup> See part 3 - BEYOND THE EUROPE AGREEMENTS, European Commission, TOWARDS A CLOSER ASSOCIATION WITH THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, Report by the Commission to the European Council Edinburgh, 11-12 December 1992 <<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/45ecfd2a-0ff3-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>>

which countries and the specifics of relations with them.

**The 1993 Copenhagen document does not apply to Georgia.** Here, in general, it is mentioned that the EU is helping the former members of the Soviet Union.

Considering the above, **in the 1990s, the EU circled the enlargement arc and named all the countries and geographical areas that are currently members of the EU and are beneficiaries of the Enlargement Pack 2023, except Georgia. At that time, Georgia was neither considered nor implied.** According to the Copenhagen document, the EU offered Russia joint cooperation in the field of peace and crisis management (at that time, the armed conflict in Georgia had already occurred in the Tskhinvali region and the armed conflict in Abkhazia was ongoing); With the Copenhagen document, the EU also defined the lines of deepening ties with African countries in trade and other areas. **All Black Sea countries (directly or indirectly) are mentioned in the Copenhagen document, but not Georgia.** Therefore, we can call the decision of the European Council of December 14, 2023 "**Copenhagen+1**" and a "**political miracle**" for Georgia.

## 2. Georgin within the Framework of the ENP and EaP

When joining the EU, the geographical criterion is often discussed. In 1987, Morocco applied to join the EU. The application was rejected on the grounds that Morocco is not a "European" country. According to the definition of the European Parliament, the criteria for accession required by the Treaty on the EU, - **the country must be European**, - can be interpreted in different - geographical, cultural, political contexts, because there is no uniform understanding of this criterion ["European"<sup>14</sup>]. An association agreement was made with Turkey, which is in Asia, but Turkey is con-

sidered to be historically part of the "European Concert". Each case is subject to political assessment.<sup>15</sup> These political assessments are, of course, built on a variety of factors and often vary across time and space.

**The European Commission, when in 2003 it issued a communiqué on a wider Europe and laid the foundation for the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), indicated in a footnote that "Given their location, the Southern Caucasus therefore also fall outside the geographical scope of this initiative for the time being".**<sup>16</sup> Thus, even in the 2000s, here (within the ENP) Georgia is not implied. Ukraine and Moldova are the countries of special attention of this document and they are considered as beneficiaries of this initiative. Later, the Commission recommends in 2004 that Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan (South Caucasus) join the ENP.<sup>17</sup> In general, it should be emphasized that Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia take place as a logical sequence in the logical chain of European integration and EU foreign and security policy in terms of resources, geopolitics, geography, which does not mean Georgia's backwardness or failure, but rather the sequence of EU policy vision and actions (this is confirmed by the Copenhagen document, the 2003 communiqué of the European Commission, the fact of geographical continuity and etc.). **In Georgian politics this issue has always been rationally and correctly understood because the inviolability of this logical chain was well-realised.** The practice of the EU to expand by land extension and to create politi-

<sup>14</sup> Niessen Annie, A History of the States' Europeanness from the EEC/EU Institutions' Perspective: (Re)considering the Current Relevance of the Institutional Interpretations in Light of the Recent Crises, EUSA International Biennial Conference, 2019, <file:///C:/Users/EKA/Downloads/NIESSEN%20A.\_Paper%20EUSA%20Conference\_Denver%202019.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> European Parliament, Briefing No 23, Legal questions of enlargement, <[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/briefings/23a2\\_en.htm](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/briefings/23a2_en.htm)>

<sup>16</sup> COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours, 11.03.2003, p.4, <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52003DC0104>>

<sup>17</sup> European Commission, COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION European Neighbourhood Policy, 12.05.2004, <[https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2019-01/2004\\_communication\\_from\\_the\\_commission\\_-\\_european\\_neighbourhood\\_policy\\_-\\_strategy\\_paper.pdf](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2019-01/2004_communication_from_the_commission_-_european_neighbourhood_policy_-_strategy_paper.pdf)>

cal, cultural and economic unity (especially the area of free movement and the internal market with a single customs union) is strongly related to the principle of geographical unity, continuity and continuity as well. That's why, no matter how a part of the people of Georgia thinks that Georgia is a more advanced country in the policy of rapprochement with Europe, the logic of the EU expansion policy could not start with overseas Georgia, but always was and will be on the route - Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia. (Note: those who are non-polarized and indeed are interested in real assessments of the European integration of these three countries would do well to read and compare the European Commission's reports of November 8, 2023 on these countries<sup>18</sup>).

In addition to the above, the EU is characterized by the principle of regionalism in its enlargement policy, for example, enlargement to the north, enlargement to the south, enlargement to the east. As mentioned in the documents of the ENP policy of 2003 and 2004, Georgia is mentioned in a number of subsequent documents together with Armenia and Azerbaijan as a country of the South Caucasus. However, taking into account the European progress of Georgia (in the framework of the Eastern Partnership initiative/EaP since 2009), Georgia is considered an Eastern partner country (together with 5 other countries), and after the conclusion of the Association Agreement (2014), Georgia practically moved to the ranks of the **Association Trio** (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia) and somehow separated (politically in the sense of European Integration) from Armenia and Azerbaijan.

### 3. European Integration legacy of Georgia and Georgia in the European Association Period

In 2019, the statement of the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee noted that EaP<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> European Commission, Progress reports 8 Nov, 2023, Enlargement Pack 2023, < [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/strategy-and-reports\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/strategy-and-reports_en)>

<sup>19</sup> EaP – Eastern Partnership, which includes the cooperation between the EU and 6 Eastern countries, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The declaration was signed in 2009.

opened a new opportunity for EU membership.<sup>20</sup> In 2020, preparations for the EU membership application by 2024 became part of the Georgian government's program in 2020.<sup>21</sup> In May 2021, a memorandum of understanding was signed at the level of foreign ministers of the Association Trio in Kyiv<sup>22</sup> where it is mentioned that the countries (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia) will act in a coordinated manner and develop the policy of dialogue and mutual cooperation with the institutions of the EU in order to join the EU. In 2022, the Russian Federation again attacked Ukraine and started the war. In 2022, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia applied to the EU with a statement on EU accession. In the same year, in 2022, according to the decision of the European Council, Ukraine and Moldova were given the status of candidacy, and Georgia was given the status of potential candidacy.<sup>23</sup> In one year, the European Council made a decision to start accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova, and Georgia was given the status of a candidate.

Currently, Ukraine and Moldova are one step ahead (which is natural and explained above).

The decision to grant the candidacy status and the enlargement is one of the biggest political agendas in the EU, which at the same time is a matter of the highest national interest of each member state of the EU. The decision to enlarge should essentially be tied to the common European interests of the EU and the

<[https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31797/2009\\_eap\\_declaration.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31797/2009_eap_declaration.pdf)>

<sup>20</sup> <<https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/the-positive-assessment-of-the-activity-of-georgia-for-2014-2018-by-the-eu-georgia-parliamentary-association-committee>>

<sup>21</sup> <[https://www.gov.ge/files/68\\_78117\\_645287\\_govprogramme2021-2024.pdf](https://www.gov.ge/files/68_78117_645287_govprogramme2021-2024.pdf)>

<sup>22</sup> Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine On Establishing Enhanced Cooperation on European Integration – the “Association Trio”, 2021.

<<https://mfa.gov.md/ro/content/memorandum-understanding-between-ministry-foreign-affairs-ukraine-ministry-foreign-affairs>>

<sup>23</sup> European Council, 23-24 June 2022, Conclusions, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/57442/2022-06-2324-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>>

national interests of the EU member states. Here, supranational and national, union and national unity and harmony should be manifested in the highest standard. **The decision on enlargement cannot be narrowed down to a purely legal level, and even very successful signs of European rapprochement cannot create primacy/predominance over higher interests such as geopolitics, economic policy, security policy, policy of convergence of values.**

If we well-understand the EU's foreign policy and enlargement interests after the Copenhagen document, the EU's decision-making towards Georgia has been complex and difficult. Georgia is „sandwiched“ between the interests of the Black Sea hegemonic states (Russia and Turkey), Georgia's territories are occupied; Georgia is a country in the South Caucasus region (the context of Armenia and Azerbaijan and their interests need to be taken into account); Georgia lacks a sustainable, competitive and industrial national economy; Georgia is dependent on Russia for energy (and other areas); Georgia's welfare growth rate is low, emigration is high, consumer prices are extremely-above "reasonable"; Georgia has a high polarization; Some aspects of the implementation of the EU recommendations have a politicized nature; The alignment of Georgia's policy with the foreign and security policy of the EU is less than that of Ukraine and Moldova; As a result, in 2022, the EU set 12 conditions for Georgia, along with granting potential candidacy to Georgia. (The fact that Georgia has fulfilled many of its obligations under the Association Agreement/DCFTA, in many cases better than other countries and has achievements is not ignored by the EU, on the contrary, it is documented. But as mentioned above, the policy of enlargement is more than the fulfillment of specific commitments).

On the other hand, Georgia, after the declaration of independence, created a "noisy and resounding" policy of its individualization and distinctiveness - active participation in international, EU and regional projects, involvement in energy diversification programs, joining international treaties, conventions, agreements, joining international organizations (from 90's), propensity for progress, shocks of reforms, innovative approaches, ideological-strategic communi-

cation, fight against corruption (since 2004), overcoming extreme pressure from Russia, overcoming the objections of a multi-vocal population, dealing with provocations, mitigating and managing the worst consequences caused by the occupation, continuity of legal approximation (since 2014); In addition to this, - a continuous movement for European values, an unyielding struggle for freedom, several wars with the Russian Federation. Of course, during the 28-year period of European integration, there were many serious recommendations and remarks from the European Commission<sup>24</sup>, however, at the same time, the state of Georgia and the Georgian people were considered a model of reforms and resilience. Georgia has steadfastly maintained the vector of European development, and the official Euro-Atlantic integration policy was not changed with the changes of Governments<sup>25</sup>. The legacy is preserved

**In this political scenario, the EU and Georgia performed an act of great devotion towards each other.** On the one hand, the EU, which is under economic, humanitarian and social challenges due to the environment of Russian threats, anti-peace threats and the ongoing war in Ukraine, and on the other hand, occupied Georgia, which is under Russian blackmail, war and intimidation, have overcome all claims and objections to each other, and the **EU has accepted the most far-reaching, the most valuable, the most courageous and the highest standard domestic and foreign political decision** - regarding the granting of candidacy status to Georgia.

<sup>24</sup> Since 1996, when the EU and Georgia signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), than until today, In particular, from 2007, the dynamics of European integration of Georgia has been annually assessed by the European Commission, which is published and documented.

<sup>25</sup> The state and people of Georgia are an example of extreme polarization. Each new and subsequent government after the recognition of independence does not cooperate with the previous government, does not recognize the positive results of the succession and is characterized by the aggressive tendencies of the past.

#### 4. Future of the Enlargement and Conclusions

On December 14, 2023, the EU adopted a new enlargement policy and brought 10 states into the accession area. This increases the responsibility not only of the enlargement countries, but also of the EU. Yes, definitely the EU has made a political and value-based judgment towards war-torn Ukraine, Neutral and CIS member Moldova, slow-progress-showing Western Balkan countries and overseas Georgia, but from now on, the EU is stepping up monitoring and assessing the dynamics of countries' compliance with the 6 clusters and 35 chapters<sup>26</sup>.

At the same time, the EU, in accordance with Regulation 2021/1529, based on the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III)<sup>27</sup>, will use the following indicators to assess the country's progress:

1. **Political criteria** (source: European Commission).

2. **Attitude towards the EU: Percentage of population with a positive general attitude towards the EU** (source: European Commission/EU Delegations).

3. **Composite indicator on Union acquis alignment** (source: European Commission).

4. **Composite indicator on economic criteria** (source: European Commission).

5. **Expenditure on social protection as % of GDP** (source: Eurostat) and **Employment Rate of persons aged 20 to 64 and changes in the Gini coefficient of a beneficiary over time** (source: Eurostat).

6. **Digital skills** (source: Eurostat).

7. **'Ease of doing business'** (source: World Bank).

8. **Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP** (source: Eurostat). Share of re-

newable energy in gross final energy consumption % (source: Eurostat).

9. **Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions avoided** (tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>-eq) with IPA III support (source: European Commission). **PM 10 concentrations compared to the EU daily limit value (50 µg/m<sup>3</sup>)**; (Source: European Environmental Agency).

10. **Areas of marine, terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems under a) protection, b) sustainable management with IPA III support.**

11. **Good neighbourly relations, such as number of cross-border partnerships established, formalised and implemented, percentage of intra-regional trade to GDP** (Source of data: National statistics, Regional Cooperation Council), **number of persons crossing the border/day, and number of goods transporting vehicles crossing the border every day** (Source: Transport Observatory).<sup>28</sup>

As mentioned above, the inclusion of Georgia in the Enlargement Pack 2023 was a rather complex and difficult topic for the EU. Granting the candidacy status to Georgia is also a field of **political miracle** and from now on it can be boldly called "**Copenhagen+1**". In the conditions of such success, political luck and progress, **the government of Georgia, the business of Georgia, the political spectrum of Georgia, the civil sector of Georgia and the people of Georgia as a whole have a great obligation of - unity on the European path, mutual criticism on the path of development, professionalism and good-will on the path of building the market and economy, responsibility and good public service to the people on the path of good governance, humanism on the path of Rule of law and law-application, peaceful coexistence and acceptance of differences on the way of spiritual development.**

<sup>26</sup> See the example of structure according to the Progress Report 2023 Georgia from European Commission, <[https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD\\_2023\\_697%20Georgia%20report.pdf](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_697%20Georgia%20report.pdf)>

<sup>27</sup> <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1529>>

<sup>28</sup> Kardava E., Chelidze G., EU Bulletin, Dec, 2023, Supported by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, <<https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/779988-asociacia-evropis-droit-pridrix-ebertis-pondis-mxardacherit-gtavazobt-evrokavshiris-biuletens>>