Annual implementing report on the EU association agreement with Georgia

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Sven MIKSER (S&D, EE) on the implementation of the EU's Association Agreement with Georgia.

On 3 March 2022, Georgia submitted its application for EU membership against the background of strong public support for Georgia's European aspirations and the new geopolitical situation resulting from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Members welcomed the European Council's decision to **recognise Georgia's European perspective** within its internationally recognised borders. They therefore called on Georgia to seize this historic opportunity.

The Georgian authorities are called upon to meet the **highest standards of democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms**, and to address resolutely the reform priorities set out in the Commission's opinion in order to demonstrate unambiguously their political determination to implement the nation's ambitious European aspirations.

Territorial integrity and security

Members reiterated their full support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. They called for continued efforts to achieve a **negotiated peaceful resolution of the conflict** and to end the Russian occupation of Georgian territory.

The report strongly condemned Russia's illegal occupation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) and the ongoing illegal ‘borderisation’ activities in these regions. Members expressed concern about the urgent security, humanitarian and human rights situation in the occupied territories of Georgia. Russia is urged to respect its international obligations under the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008, in particular its obligation to withdraw all its military forces and security personnel from the occupied territories of Georgia.

Political dialogue and elections

Deploring the fact that the political landscape in Georgia continues to be deeply polarised, the report called on all political actors to refrain from aggressive or divisive rhetoric and to join forces in order to avoid undermining their key goal of Georgia's accession to the European Union through the implementation of **ambitious democratic, judicial and anti-corruption reforms**.

The Georgian authorities should, before the 2024 parliamentary elections, complete the country's electoral reform and address persistent shortcomings in campaigning and the conduct of elections. The excessive influence of vested interests in economic, political and public life needs to be curbed.

Rule of law, good governance and media freedom

The report stressed the importance of implementing an **ambitious, genuine and thorough justice reform** based on a transparent and effective post-2021 judicial reform strategy and action plan. It called for a thorough reform of the High Council of Justice, which should be carried out before the appointment of its remaining members, in a transparent, merit-based procedure in line with European standards.

In view of the persistent phenomenon of state capture and the lack of progress in the **fight against corruption**, Members reiterated their call on the Georgian authorities to step up the fight against corruption and organised crime.

Despite a strong Georgian legal framework to guarantee freedom of expression and media, Members are concerned that the media environment and the safety of journalists have deteriorated. They called on Georgia to **guarantee media freedom**. They also stressed the importance of continued efforts to increase the resilience of Georgian society to Russian propaganda and disinformation campaigns that try to influence Georgian politics and public opinion.

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms

The report condemned the violence perpetrated on 5 July 2021 against peaceful participants in the Tbilisi Pride march and journalists covering the event. It strongly condemned the lack of diligent investigation or prosecution of those responsible for the organisation of the violence.

The Georgian authorities are called upon to:

- ensure the protection of human rights of women and other vulnerable groups, such as the LGBTQI+ community and ethnic minorities;

- fully implement in practice human rights and anti-discrimination legislation and combat impunity for serious violations;

- continue to improve women's representation and equal treatment at all levels of political, economic and societal life, eradicate inequality in the labour market and the gender pay gap;

- implement legislation to combat gender-based and domestic violence and feminicide.

Economic and trade relations

The report called on the Commission to review the opportunities available to them by the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement to **increase the trade volume** between the EU and Georgia through coordinated support, with a focus on support for small and medium-sized enterprises and structural reforms, including developing quality infrastructure, such as laboratories in Georgia for EU certification of sanitary and phytosanitary, and technical barriers to trade standards.

Sectoral cooperation

The report called on Commission and the Council to establish enhanced and structured political dialogue with Georgia and other candidate and potential candidate countries in order to advance further economic integration and legislative harmonisation. Members also stressed the importance of enhanced transport, energy and digital connectivity as a means of making full use of the geographical and economic potential of Georgia at all levels, especially in small, medium-sized and rural municipalities.