Annual implementing report on the EU association agreement with Georgia

2021/2236(INI) - 14/12/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 430 votes to 52, with 126 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation of the EU's Association Agreement with Georgia.

Parliament welcomed the decision of the European Council to recognise the European perspective of Georgia, within its internationally recognised borders. This decision is a strong signal of political support for the European aspirations of the people of Georgia and Georgia is urged to seize this historic window of opportunity.

The Georgian authorities to meet the highest standards of democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to address the reform priorities set out in the Commission's opinion and taking into account the agreement negotiated on 19 April 2021, in order to demonstrate unambiguously their political determination to implement the nation's ambitious European aspirations, as expressed in Georgia's application for EU membership submitted on 3 March 2022

Territorial integrity and security

Parliament welcomed the strong reaction of Georgian society in support of Ukraine. It called on the authorities to align themselves with EU sanctions and to ensure that Georgia is not used to circumvent international sanctions related to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

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. It called on the EU to continue to pursue its engagement for the peaceful resolution of the Russia-Georgia conflict.

The resolution 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. 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 to allow the establishment of international security mechanisms on these territories and to allow the EU Monitoring Mission unrestricted access to the whole territory of Georgia.

Political dialogue and elections

Parliament stressed the need to build and foster trust between all political and institutional actors and between these actors and the Georgian people. It deplored the decision of the ruling Georgian Dream party to withdraw from the negotiated agreement of 19 April 2021, the provisions of which propose a path towards strengthening democracy and the rule of law and reducing polarisation in Georgia.

The Georgian authorities are called on to complete the country’s electoral reform and address persistent shortcomings in electoral campaigns and the conduct of elections in time for the 2024 parliamentary elections and in line with the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations, in particular on pressure on voters and candidates by public officials and electoral contestants and allegations of intimidation, coercion and vote-buying, and on the misuse of administrative resources during the electoral process.

Rule of law, good governance and media freedom

Parliament 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 invited the authorities to address the shortcomings identified by the Venice Commission in the nomination and appointment of judges at all levels, in particular to the Supreme Court, and of the Prosecutor-General in order to bring the process fully 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 resolution 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;

- work on its deinstitutionalisation strategy and action plan, in line with the requirements of the Code on the Rights of the Child, as violence against children in a family context and in residential care, foster care and educational institutions remains a significant problem;

- 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

Parliament welcomed Georgia's positive track record in approximating its laws and establishing a fully functioning market economy. It called for the opportunities offered by the economic and investment plan to be exploited to build an economy ready for integration into the EU's single market. It asked the Commission to examine the possibilities offered by the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement to increase the volume of trade between the EU and Georgia through coordinated support, with an emphasis on support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Sectoral cooperation

The Commission and the Council are called on 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.