

EU to Provide 30 Million Euros in Support of Georgia's Defense Sector

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

According to the statement released by the Council of the European Union, Georgia's defense sector will receive support from the European Union in the form of 30 million euros. The Council adopted two measures under the European Peace Facility (EPF) to aid the Armed Forces of the Republic of Moldova and the Georgian Defence Forces in improving national security, stability, and resilience in their respective defense sectors.

"Today the Council adopted two assistance measures under the European Peace Facility (EPF) in support of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Moldova and the Georgian Defence Forces to enhance national security, stability and resilience in the defence sector of both countries," the statement of the Council of the European Union reads.

Josep Borrell, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, has stated that the European Union will continue to provide support for the modernization of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Moldova and the Georgian Defense Forces. He emphasized that this assistance is crucial, especially given the challenging geopolitical context, and is in line with their European aspirations.

"With these new assistances,



we continue to support the modernization of the capacities of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Moldova and the Georgian Defense Forces. In a challenging geopolitical context and in line with their European aspirations, we are helping to strengthen their defense sectors and enhance their ability to participate in EU military missions and operations. This is the third assistance package for both countries under the EPF, clearly underlining the EU's unwavering commitment to the region's security and stability," Josep Borrell said.

The European Council has stated that the most recent aid package, along with the previous ones, will contribute to improving the operational effectiveness of the forces in Moldova and Georgia. Additionally, it will help accelerate their adherence to EU standards, promote interoperability, and enhance their ability to protect citizens during crises and emergency situations. The aid package's objective is also to strengthen Moldova and Georgia's capabilities in terms of their involvement in EU military missions and operations in third countries.

As per the Council's statement, Georgia submitted a request for assistance on February 8, 2023. Before this request, the Council had approved an aid package of 20 million euros in December 2022 and another package of 12.75 million euros in December 2021. The recent request for assistance from Georgia builds upon the previous aid packages and is a testament to the EU's commitment to supporting the region's security and stability.

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili Meets with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE



The Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, met with the Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orban. As per the government administration's release, the discussion revolved around the current relations between the two countries and the potential for future collaboration in both bilateral and multilateral formats. They also talked about the importance of the annual Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), highlighting the common values shared by many countries.

The leaders discussed the possibility of enhancing economic cooperation in areas such as trade, investments, tourism, and agriculture. Gharibashvili expressed Georgia's commitment to realizing the full potential of economic collaboration with Hungary.

The meeting also addressed

Georgia's integration into the European Union, with Hungary's supportive stance towards granting candidate status to Georgia acknowledged. Gharibashvili noted that Georgia had fulfilled most of the recommendations and deserved the candidate status, which the country expects to receive by year-end.

"They discussed the prospects of deepening economic cooperation between Georgia and Hungary in the fields of trade, investments, tourism, and agriculture. According to the Prime Minister of Georgia, Georgia remains committed to the goal of fully realizing the existing potential for further strengthening economic cooperation with Hungary.

The perspective of Georgia's integration into the European Union was discussed at the meeting. The significance of Hungary's supporting statements regarding the granting of candidate status to Georgia was noted. According to Irakli Gharibashvili, most of the recommendations have been fulfilled, and considering the achieved progress, Georgia deserves the status of a candidate, which the country is waiting for by the end of the year," the statement reads.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili Expresses Belief in Georgia's Candidacy for EU Membership



The Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili expressed his belief in Georgia's deserving the status of a candidate for EU membership during his speech at the annual conference of conservative political action in Budapest. He reiterated that Georgia's belongs to Europe and that the country is as close to achieving this goal as ever.

According to Gharibashvili, Georgia is eagerly awaiting a fair and forward-look-

ing decision from Europe regarding its candidacy for EU membership. Gharibashvili emphasized that Georgia's desire to become a full member of the European family of nations, which is based on Christian values, has been a driving force for centuries.

The Prime Minister also noted that due to the extensive reforms implemented by his government, Georgia is now closer than ever before to achieving its goal.

"It is the ideal of freedom that drives Georgia for centuries in its quest to become a full-fledged member of the family of European nations. Europe, which is based on Christian values. As a result of large-scale reforms carried out by our government, today we are closer to this goal than ever before," said Gharibashvili.

The Prime Minister stated that the establishment of state institutions and the strengthening of public institutions deserve recognition from impartial and objective evaluators worldwide.

"The construction of state institutions and the strengthening of public institutions rightfully deserve the recognition of impartial and objective evaluators all over the world," said the Prime Minister.

Minister of Justice of Georgia meets with members of European Union Affairs Committee of German Bundestag

The Minister of Justice of Georgia Rati Bregadze had a meeting with members of the European Union Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag. Reforms were among the topics discussed during the meeting. Thomas Hacker, one of the members of the committee, mentioned that the issue of media freedom and Nika Gvaramia was also addressed in the meeting with the Minister of Justice.

Thomas Hacker stated that during their meeting with the Minister of Justice of Georgia, they discussed Georgia's development and its path towards Europe. The committee was informed about the progress that has been made in terms of legislative changes and reforms.

Additionally, Hacker raised the issue of Nika Gvaramia and media freedom, requesting to visit Gvaramia but was refused due to the general policy of not allowing foreigners to enter prisons in Georgia. The committee did not discuss the topic of Mikheil Saakashvili.

"We had a meeting with the Minister of Justice of Georgia. We talked about Georgia's development and path towards the European Community. We received information about the achieved legisla-



tive progress and reforms. Also, on my behalf, I once again asked to visit Nika Gvaramia, and once again I was refused. I was told that foreigners do not have the opportunity to enter the prison in Georgia. This is a general decision, so it is not possible for me. The issue of Mikheil Saakashvili was not discussed. We talked about progress, media freedom, and the special case of Nika Gvaramia," said Thomas Hacker.

Opinion & Analysis

Georgian Government Continues the Anti-Western Policy

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

The public opinion survey published by the International Republican Institute (IRI) on April 25 had great political resonance. The results of the study showed that the anti-Western policy that has been going on for years was not only ineffective but also counterproductive. The number of supporters of integration into Western structures has increased, and the absolute majority considers Russia a hostile power and condemns the government's pro-Russian policy.

When commenting on the results of the research, the government representatives used the traditional 'solution' - they declared the research as a whole falsified, 'absurd flat numbers' and 'fun research'. The results of the survey were not welcomed by some opposition parties, who are unhappy with their low ranking in the survey. However, probably no party will be satisfied with the party ratings pre-

sented in the study.

The research has clearly shown that integration into Western structures is a historical choice of the Georgian people. 89% of respondents are in favor of Georgia joining the European Union (75% - fully, 14% - partially). If we compare the similar survey conducted in March 2022, the number of supporters of joining the European Union has increased by 5%. 77% of respondents are in favor of joining the European Union, even if it leads to the severance of trade relations with Russia. However, the policy of the Georgian Dream tied Georgia to Russia economically. 80% of respondents support joining NATO (65% strongly, 15% somewhat).

Such results of the survey were observed despite the ongoing anti-Western propaganda carried out by representatives of the Georgian Dream and members of the People's Force formally separated from it.

The main message of this propaganda even today is that the West is trying to "draw Georgia into a war" against Russia, and that is why they did not give it the status of a candidate for the European Union, they did not lack personal insults for European parliamentarians and

American politicians, who are actually friends of Georgia.

The absolute majority of the population of Georgia did not believe that 'Georgia's western orientation means war', that there is no choice between 'the West' and 'peace'. The choice is made between Europe and the Russian swamp.

The survey showed that the majority of the public does not like Russia either politically or economically. 87% of respondents consider Russia to be the biggest political threat to Georgia. Government officials claimed that politics and the economy should be separated from each other, but 76% of respondents consider Russia to be the biggest economic threat to Georgia. The interviewees do not like the settlement of tens of thousands of Russian citizens in Georgia, their covert purchase of the real estate, and the start of uncertain business activities.

They do not like that the current government of Georgia not only does not oppose it but also promotes it. It has been clear for a long time that an openly Russia-oriented government is unacceptable to society. "Georgian Dream" also understands this well and talks about the fulfillment of 12 requirements of the

European Union.

The IRI survey revealed a split in public opinion regarding the foreign vector of the Georgian Dream. According to 45% of respondents, "Georgian Dream's foreign policy is pro-Russian (25% - pro-Russian, 20% - more pro-Russian), and according to 38%, it is pro-Western (17% - pro-Western, 21% - more pro-Western). 17% of respondents refused to answer this question.

The public opinion poll also showed that the majority did not support the adoption of the 'foreign agents' law, and 61% support the transfer of Mikheil Saakashvili to another country for treatment. "Georgian Dream" does not intend to release Saakashvili, but continues to talk about foreign agents. It should be noted that Mikheil Saakashvili's approval rating was 36% and exceeded Bidzina Ivanishvili by one percentage point.

According to the IRI research, if the elections were held at the end of March, 19% of respondents would support the Georgian Dream, 14% would support the National Movement, followed by two parties with a 3% rating - "For Georgia" (Gakharia) and 'Girchi - more freedom'. 4 parties with a 2% rating - Labor, Lelo, Girchi, and Strategy-

Agmashenebeli.

These indicators are catastrophic for the Georgian Dream, although it is ahead of all other parties, but in total the opposition exceeds it several times. But the reality of the upcoming elections should be taken into account - the parliamentary elections of 2024 will be held in the presence of a 5% threshold.

According to the current ratings, only two parties Georgian Dream and National Movement pass this threshold, while the rest of the parties remain beyond the threshold. With large financial and administrative resources in the hands of the Georgian Dream, it allows it to think about another victory.

In such conditions, the issue of unification is still a serious problem for the opposition. The National Movement will try to find allies, although several small pro-Western parties may still try to create a "third political center", with the argument that the voters do not want the Georgian Dream, but neither do they want the return of the "National Movement" to power. The point of view of 42% of the respondents that their interests are not expressed by any political party should be reported to the opposition.

Weather

Friday, May 5

Day ☀️ Clear

High: 23°C

Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy

Low: 10°C

Saturday, May 6

Day ☁️ Partly Cloudy

High: 23°C

Night 🌧️ Few Showers

Low: 13°C

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