

EU Puts Georgia's Accession on Hold Amid Concerns Over Political Intentions

By Liza Mchedlidze

The European Union has decided to suspend Georgia's accession process, citing concerns about the country's political direction. This decision was confirmed by EU Ambassador to Georgia Pawel Herczyński, who expressed his disappointment and outlined the reasons behind this move during a conference in Tbilisi.

"Unfortunately, for the moment, Georgia's EU accession has been put on hold. I sincerely hope that after the elections in Georgia in October, the newly-formed government, whoever forms the government, will restart serious work towards EU integration," said Herczyński.

On June 27, EU leaders, including presidents and prime ministers, met in Brussels and made several key decisions, including setting the next strategic agenda for the European Union and reaffirming their commitment to defending Ukraine. However, a crucial decision was also made to halt Georgia's accession process. This was clearly stated in the European Council's conclusions, which the Ambassador urged to be read carefully.

According to Herczyński, EU leaders are uncertain about the intentions of the current Georgian authorities, particularly concerning the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence. "This is a clear backsliding in the 9 steps, and also anti-western, anti-European rhetoric is



incompatible with the stated aim of joining the European Union," he stated.

The EU Ambassador emphasized that recent actions by the Georgian parliament have raised doubts among EU leaders about the country's commitment to European integration. The halt in Georgia's accession process is particularly disheartening, considering the progress being made by other candidate countries. "We are moving fast for-

ward with other candidate countries. As you know, the day after that decision, the EU opened negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova," Herczyński noted.

Despite the setback, Herczyński remains hopeful for Georgia's future within the EU. He stressed that the ultimate decision lies with Georgia and its people. "Georgia has been granted the status of a candidate country for EU membership. This decision was taken by una-

nimity by all EU member states in December of last year. However, how quickly Georgia will become a member of the European Union only depends on Georgians themselves," he said.

The EU has also decided to freeze its support for Georgia from the European Peace Facility, amounting to EUR 30 million for 2024. This decision was made at the last European Council meeting, reflecting the EU's concerns over the recent politi-

cal developments in Georgia.

The two-day conference in Tbilisi, titled "EU Enlargement: A Geopolitical Necessity and the Next Steps for the EU Candidate States," has brought these issues to the forefront, highlighting the critical juncture at which Georgia finds itself. The upcoming elections in October will be pivotal in determining the country's path towards EU integration and addressing the concerns raised by the EU leaders.

US State Department Dismisses Russian Claims of Seeking Regime Change in Georgia

By Liza Mchedlidze

Journalist Alex Raufoglu recently reported on X that the US State Department has strongly refuted Russia's allegations that the United States is attempting to orchestrate regime change in Georgia. These denials come in response to Russian claims that the US is pushing for a power shift following Georgia's October 26 elections, which the State Department has described as "completely false".

A spokesperson for the State Department stated, "I think it's quite obvious that it's completely false. It's not the first time and Russia has made allegations like that, with respect to US involvement in Georgia, and other countries around the world, that had been completely false and had been absurd." The spokesperson added, "And I would just point out the irony of the country, Russia, that is illegally occupying 20% of Georgia as we speak, making those absurd allegations about another country."

Russian foreign intelligence has propagated a narrative suggesting that the Biden administration is intent on discrediting the ruling Georgian Dream party through a meticulously planned information campaign. According to these allegations, this campaign is designed with what Russian intelligence describes as a "Hollywood script" filled with "anti-Russian enthusiasm", aiming to blame Russia for various issues.

The propaganda further claims that the US will accuse Georgian Dream of lacking political independence, potentially leading to Georgian ships abandoning European shores. Additionally, Russian intelligence has implicated Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili, suggesting she is being positioned to incite anti-government sentiments. The narrative states that Zourabichvili is expected to give an interview to an American media outlet, where she will accuse the Georgian authorities of



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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7511; Euro - 2.9783; GBP - 3.5266; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.1157; Swiss Franc - 3.0639

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undermining negotiations for Georgia's EU membership and warn of the adverse consequences of closer ties with Moscow, particularly highlighting the negative impact of Russian emigrants on Georgian citizens. Moreover, the Russian narra-

tive claims that Zourabichvili is preparing voters for a "political surprise" from the opposition, potentially leading to another "color revolution". It also claims that American advisors have directed the Georgian opposition to prepare protests around the election period, with an expectation of casualties among the demonstrators.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Georgia's Foreign Minister Responds to EU Funding Freeze Decision



Minister of Foreign Affairs Ilia Darchiashvili responded to the EU's decision to freeze 30 million in defense funding for Georgia, stressing the importance of enhancing Georgia's defense capabilities and expressing hope for the resumption of cooperation with the EU.

"Georgia needs to further strengthen its defense capabilities to better address existing threats. We hope that such decisions will soon return to their previous level," Darchiashvili said. He emphasized that cooperation with the EU is based on mutual obligations, which Georgia is fulfilling logically and sequentially.

Darchiashvili downplayed the EU ambassador's critical remarks, asserting that these micro-level decisions will not hinder Georgia's European integration efforts. He highlighted Georgia's ongoing

reform agenda and commitment to EU obligations, expressing optimism about starting negotiations for full EU membership despite current challenges.

"While negotiations are lengthy and challenging, we are ready to guide Georgia irreversibly on the path of European integration," Darchiashvili said.

Ilia Darchiashvili Meets with Javier Colomina at NATO Summit

Foreign Minister of Georgia, Ilia Darchiashvili, met with NATO's Special



Representative for the South Caucasus and Central Asia, Javier Colomina, during the 75th anniversary summit of NATO.

According to the ministry, the meeting focused on the agenda of the summit and significant issues pertinent to it. It underscored Georgia's participation in the summit as a reaffirmation of the country's successful integration process into NATO.

"The parties discussed Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration, emphasizing Georgia's role as a reliable partner of the alliance and its substantial contributions to Euro-Atlantic security," the statement read.

The discussion also acknowledged Georgia's advancements in Euro-Atlantic integration, particularly in bolstering defense capabilities, and underscored the importance of NATO's practical and political support.

Issues concerning regional dynamics, security challenges, and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine were also addressed. The parties emphasized the criticality of enhancing security in the broader Black Sea region as a cornerstone for peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic space.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to active cooperation in pursuing shared objectives.

EU4Youth IV: all-Ukrainian Youth Forum on recovery held in Kyiv

On 6 July, the All-Ukrainian Youth Forum 'State Builder: Youth in State Recovery' brought together nearly 500 key stakeholders and young leaders from across Ukraine to discuss and strategise on how to engage youth in the process of rebuilding the state.

Participants included government officials, experts, business leaders, and representatives from international organisations



and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), all sharing their expertise and perspectives.

Throughout the day, various sessions covered important topics such as youth engagement in the public sector, the role of education institutions and businesses in supporting state recovery and uniting Ukrainian youth both inside and outside the country.

EU4Youth IV National Coordinator for

Ukraine participated in a key discussion on supporting youth through non-governmental organisations. The National Coordinator presented EU4Youth IV initiatives and successes, emphasising the project's commitment to empowering young people and supporting their active participation in rebuilding the state.

The event was organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, All-Ukrainian Youth Centre, Kyiv School of Public Administration named after S. Nizhny and the Ukrainian Students' League with the support of international partners.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Wednesday, July 10

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 34°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 22°C

Thursday, July 11

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 35°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 22°C

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