

European Parliament Debates Georgia's Election Irregularities, Signals Stricter EU Conditions

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

In a debate held on November 13, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) addressed the controversial parliamentary elections in Georgia, raising concerns over alleged Russian interference and widespread irregularities. The discussion followed a last-minute adjustment to the European Parliament's plenary agenda, allowing MEPs to scrutinize the October 26 elections in Georgia and prepare for a resolution vote set for November 25–28.

European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas opened the debate, sharply criticizing the election's conduct. "These elections fall short of the standards expected of a country holding the EU candidate status," Schinas declared, noting violations reported during the campaign and on election day itself. He attributed an "uneven playing field" to the ruling party's use of state resources and its strategic emphasis on stability amid regional conflict.

Schinas also pointed out that the Georgian authorities had been using anti-EU rhetoric and suppressing dissent, which disproportionately affected the op-



position. Thousands of Georgian citizens, some waving European flags, have demonstrated peacefully in response to the election results, reflecting, as Schinas put it, "not only about them but also about us," referencing shared European values.

The EU's response to democratic backsliding in Georgia was

reiterated, with Schinas detailing the suspension of EUR 151 million in aid and Georgia's accession process effectively put on hold. "These measures will remain in place until the authorities change the course of actions," he stated, emphasizing continued support for civil society and independent media in

Georgia.

Schinas outlined the EU's expectations: Georgia must implement the reforms in the European Commission's Nine Steps, halt disinformation, and repeal divisive laws such as the Foreign Agents law and anti-LGBT measures. "The conditions are out there and are clear – democracy

and the rule of law. The sooner this is understood in Tbilisi, the better," he concluded.

The debate proceeded with MEPs weighing in on potential additional EU measures, adding further pressure on Georgia to align with democratic standards.

ISFED Presses CEC for Transparency on Voter Data; CEC Responds, Dismissing Allegations of Manipulation

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) has urged Georgia's Central Election Commission (CEC) to address outstanding questions about the

accuracy and transparency of voter data from the October 26 elections. ISFED called on the CEC to disclose receipts, reports on voter turnout, and detailed data on the gender composition of voters at each polling station.

ISFED contends that the CEC

has yet to clarify critical concerns raised in its November 7 statement, which questioned anomalies in gender-specific voting patterns. According to ISFED, unusually high discrepancies in male and female voter turnout at certain polling sta-

tions raise doubts about the integrity of the data, which could indicate irregularities in the voting process.

"If the CEC rules out data collection errors, the significant deviations in gender-based voter activity could suggest manipu-

lation during the election process," ISFED stated. They also pointed out that the CEC has not yet provided gender breakdowns of voters listed on special lists at each precinct, leaving questions around voter composition unanswered.

The CEC acknowledged minor errors in the data ISFED received, attributing inaccuracies in 11 precincts to human error. However, the CEC dismissed ISFED's concerns as exaggerated, accusing the organization of manipulating these minor inconsistencies into claims of widespread electoral fraud.

CEC officials called ISFED's framing of these inaccuracies "frivolous." Despite the CEC's assurances, ISFED maintains that without full transparency, unresolved questions will continue to cast a shadow over the election's integrity.



ISFED

სამართლიანი არჩევნების
და დემოკრატიის საერთაშორისო
სამომადგომეო



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Opposition CEC Members Meet Georgian President, Urge Election Nullification



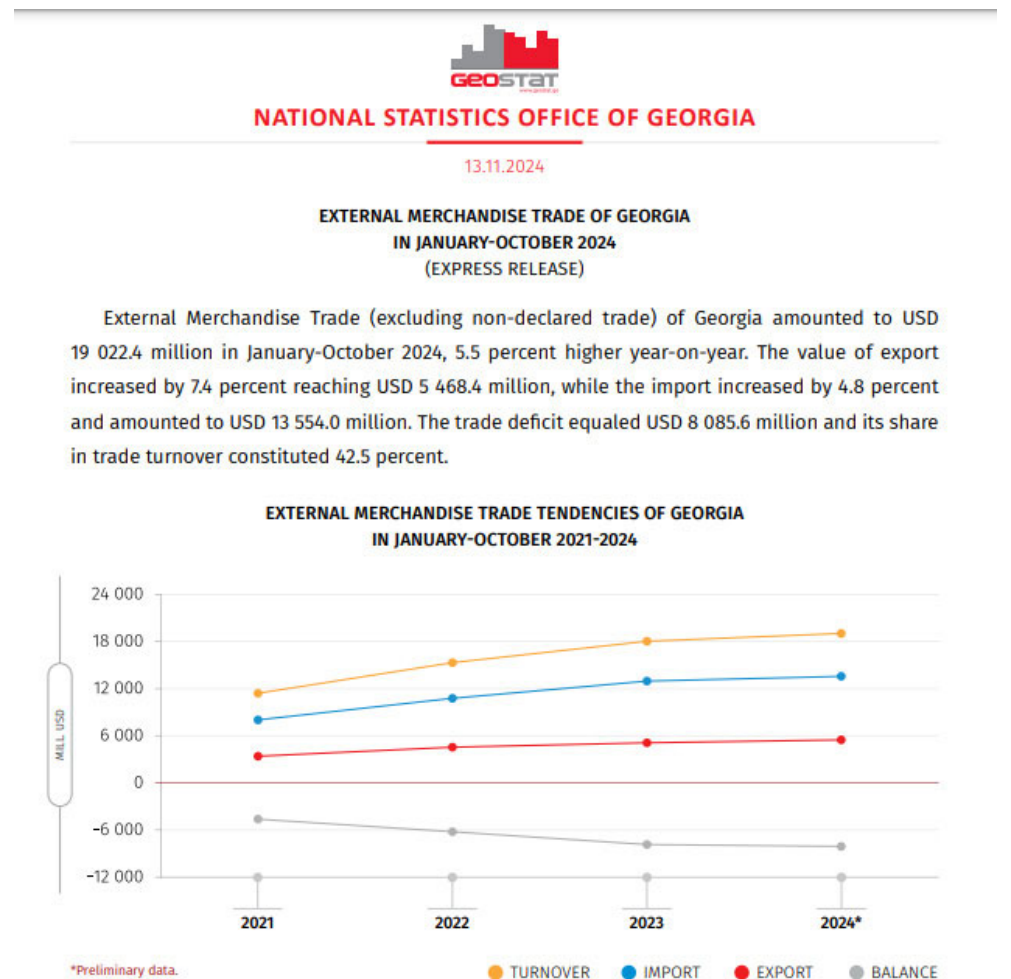
Opposition members of Georgia's Central Election Commission (CEC) met with President Salome Zourabichvili at the Orbeliani Palace to discuss alleged systemic electoral issues. Giorgi Sioridze, a representative from Strong Georgia, briefed the media afterward, emphasizing the need for Zourabichvili to be fully informed about what he described as a coordinated effort to compromise the electoral process.

According to Sioridze, opposition representatives who observed the election's administration shared their insights with the President, arguing that recent claims of minimal violations misrepresent the scale of the issue. He criticized the Georgian Dream for framing the matter as isolated incidents rather than a pattern of manipulation. "We are not dealing with individual violations but with a systematic capture of the Georgian voters' will," Sioridze stated, adding that there is now a legal basis to invalidate the October 26 elections.

Ana Kobakhidze, representing the United National Movement, highlighted that the President was interested in the details surrounding the pre-election period, election day, and subsequent events. Kobakhidze explained that opposition CEC members did not participate in administrative tasks related to the election's organization, which, according to her, gave them a unique perspective on potential procedural risks. Kobakhidze affirmed plans for continued collaboration with the President, noting that the opposition has scheduled additional meetings to further explore election concerns.

Georgia's external merchandise trade rose by 5.5% in the first ten months of 2024, according to data released by the National Statistics Service of Georgia (Geostat) on November 11. The total trade turnover, excluding undeclared trade, reached USD 19.02 billion, reflecting steady growth amid global economic uncertainties. The report highlights a 7.4% increase in exports, which reached USD 5.47 billion, while imports rose by 4.8%, totaling USD 13.55 billion. Despite these gains, the trade deficit stands at USD 8.09 billion, representing 42.5% of Georgia's total trade turnover.

Georgia's Foreign Trade Grows by 5.5% in 2024, Driven by Rising Exports



COP29 in Baku starts with world leaders climate action summit

On 12 November, world leaders gathered in Baku, Azerbaijan, for the world leaders climate action summit kicking off the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29).

The EU was represented by European Council President Charles Michel. In his address to the COP29 plenary, President Charles Michel called for an ambitious new collective quantified goal. He insisted on the shared responsibility for the climate crisis and the need to expand the donor base that will contribute to achieving the collective goal.



"The world is on a knife-edge: Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the war in Gaza and the tragic crisis in the Middle East, civil wars in Sudan," Charles Michel said. "These and many other conflicts are causing humanitarian disasters for civilian populations and polarising our societies around the world. Violent imperialism, eternal vengeance and collective punishment are poisons that endanger us all."

Charles Michel added that in 2023, the EU and its 27 member states contributed 28.6 billion in climate finance, and encouraged others to follow suit, including the G7 and emerging economies.

"We must choose the survival instinct over collective suicide. And take action for a fair and inclusive transition. The EU is up to the challenge," said the European Council President.

The summit was also attended by President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, President of Moldova Maia Sandu, Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Kobakhidze and Alexander Lukashenko, Head of Belarus. (euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Thursday, November 14

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 12°C

Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 2°C

Friday, November 15

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 15°C

Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 4°C

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On the occasion of the Founding Day of the Bundeswehr, the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany H. E. Mr. Ernst Peter Fischer and Defence Attaché Lieutenant Colonel (GS) Andreas Sebald held a Reception on November 12.





