



Joint Statement on EU candidate status for Georgia
by the EU-Georgia Civil Society Platform

After Russia began its war of aggression against Ukraine, Georgia submitted its EU membership application, as did Ukraine and Moldova, on 3 March 2022. On 24 June 2022, the European Council recognised, on the basis of the European Commission's opinion on the matter, that Georgia should be given the prospect of becoming a member of the European Union, provided that a number of priorities were addressed.

Soon after, the government of Georgia started implementing these priorities. While some priorities have now been largely addressed, implementation of others is still at an early stage.

Georgia's visible progress in addressing EU fundamentals and in advancing reforms in the crucial areas of rule of law, human rights, strong institutions and democratic development has to be recognised. Georgian civil society – including watchdogs, think-tanks, academia, trade unions and associations – has been actively monitoring the progress, pointing out shortcomings in the process to the Georgian government. It has strived to be involved and has, on a number of occasions, succeeded in being included in consultations, and even in pushing for crucial reforms and changes to the law. The population at large is highly motivated to become more closely integrated with the EU and has been calling for the necessary steps to be taken in this regard. Each time the Georgian people have felt that their government has been taking measures that run counter to the Commission's opinion and to EU integration as such, they have raised their voices in protest against inadequate reforms and controversial laws.

Throughout the 30 years of the country's independence, the people of Georgia have been striving to build a democratic state, establish the rule of law, and thus contribute to international and regional peace and security over the past three decades, Georgia has not once abandoned its European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations. It has evolved to gradually integrate with European countries and has made significant progress in doing so. The Georgian people genuinely believe in Europe, in its values and in the principles of prosperity and freedom, and they wish to see the region, and in particular Georgia, continuing on this path.

All elements of Georgian society are united in their desire to put every effort into eliminating the institutional, legal and practical barriers hindering the country's progress along the path to European integration. In addition to the challenging geopolitical context, foreign antidemocratic forces have penetrated the country, waging a hybrid war to prevent the Europeanisation of Georgia and to destroy the people's trust and confidence in Georgia's European perspective.

With the help of the EU and European partners, Georgia and its people will succeed in overcoming these difficulties and will not deviate from their efforts to build a European state. The EU's recognition and support will give the population a further incentive to continue reforms, while disarming those trying to downgrade the spirit of hope in the country. Granting EU candidate status would play an immeasurably important role in this regard.

We, members of the EU-Georgia Civil Society platform, call on the European Commission to take into consideration the above-mentioned arguments and to recommend that the European Council grant Georgia EU candidate status.