



Joint conclusions

7th Joint Meeting of the European and Georgian Domestic Advisory Groups under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement

Brussels (hybrid format), 29 November 2022

The representatives of the European and Georgian Domestic Advisory Groups (DAGs), set up under the Trade and Sustainable Development chapter of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Georgia, held their seventh joint meeting on 29 November 2022.

The participants expressed their commitment to fulfilling the mandate laid down in the Trade and Sustainable Development chapter of the Association Agreement to monitor the implementation of the chapter and to provide advice to the parties to the agreement.

The two DAGs discussed the following issues:

- labour;
- the environment; and
- the economic pillar of sustainability.

They agreed that these issues would remain high on the agenda of the DAGs as long as the necessary measures had not been taken in Georgia to regulate the situation in a satisfactory manner and in accordance with international and European standards.

They welcomed the Council decision of 23 June 2022 to award Georgia the European perspective and took note of the priority areas set out in the Commission's opinion on Georgia's application for membership of the European Union, published on 17 June 2022, and in particular the call to enhance civil society involvement in decision-making processes at all levels.

They also took note of the results of the ex-post evaluation of the implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with the European Union.

With regard to ***labour-related questions***, they specifically:

1. reiterated their call to revive stalled social dialogue and collective bargaining processes to improve labour rights, and ensure decent work, including occupational safety and health;

2. called for the Labour Inspectorate to carry out a fully-fledged role, by increasing the number of labour inspections, and by ensuring transparency and providing public access to all inspection records. They reiterated their call for ratification of ILO Conventions 81, 155 and 129, while underlining the need to enhance the implementation of other ILO Conventions, in particular the fundamental ones;
3. underlined the need to promote and implement equal pay legislation; in this regard, they encouraged the use of gender-neutral job evaluation and classification methods;
4. reiterated that the minimum wage remained extremely low, and that legislative amendments were required for the minimum wage to be increased at national level, in compliance with international standards, and called for measures to promote collective bargaining;
5. called for measures to be taken against sectoral and occupational segregation, and for improved maternity protection, social care and childcare systems in order to encourage the participation of women in the labour market. They called for an increase in parental leave assistance at national level in both the public and private sectors;
6. called on the Government to take further steps in designing the Social Code since this process had stagnated, and reiterated their call for ratification of ILO Conventions 102 and 190;
7. pointed out that only moderate progress had been made towards eliminating the worst forms of child labour, which were sometimes a result of human trafficking; they stressed that the issue still remained a systemic problem, which must be addressed with both practical and legislative measures;
8. called on the Government to start taking action on the transition from informal employment to formal employment, based on ILO Recommendation No. 204; they pointed out that informal employment in the agriculture sector was at 28.8% and that thus one third of workers were not covered by labour laws and social rights at work;
9. called for recognition of the gig economy and other non-standard employment and for these forms of employment to be covered by the Labour Code, which would stop the practice of neglecting the labour rights of these workers;
10. called for ratification of ILO Convention 189 regarding domestic workers, who, in the majority of cases, worked informally in Georgia; in this regard, they pointed out that the Labour Inspectorate's mandate did not cover informal workers despite the requirements of the ILO principles;

With regard to ***environment-related issues***, the DAGs:

11. welcomed the amendment of the national waste management strategy and the approval of the new action plan and called for their full implementation;
12. underlined that developing comprehensive sustainable waste management policies was one of the key aspects of the circular economy;
13. called for the development of framework legislation on agricultural biodiversity (a special law "on agricultural biodiversity"), which would establish the legal basis for conservation of both crop wild relatives and endemic species and local varieties of cultural plants, local breeds of agricultural/domestic animals, as well as endemic microorganisms and fungi involved in food production (fermentation);
14. called for comprehensive measures to restore, disseminate and, popularise endangered endemic species and varieties obtained through popular selection (among other measures: incentives for producer groups through grants and educational programmes, and the immediate development and application of exclusive rules for the certification of the seeds of plants endangered by genetic erosion and of other local (traditional) species and for placement on the market).
15. welcomed Georgia's progress in the field of climate change and called for full transposition of EU legislation in line with the Association Agreement, including the progress made on Kigali Amendment ratification;
16. called for the adoption and implementation of a low-emissions development strategy in order to lay the foundations for climate neutrality;

With regard to the ***economic pillar of sustainability*** under the provisions of the TSD chapter,

17. underlined the need to improve conditions for MSMEs, given that they were hit hard by the pandemic, to continue to support MSME development, especially in the form of small grants, and to reinforce measures to encourage female entrepreneurship and opportunities for vulnerable groups;
18. called for an increase in the pace of Georgia's approximation to the EU acquis.