

ORANGE

a European Youth Press magazine 

**SPECIAL EDITION W/ THE
YOUNG EUROPEAN
AMBASSADORS
INITIATIVE**



IN COLLABORATION WITH



EU NEIGHBOURS
east



EaP | Eastern Partnership 

DEAR READER



We don't know how you got here, but: welcome!

In the following pages you will find stories, articles and opinions about the EU and the Eastern Partnership, written by young people from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Portugal, Romania and many other countries.

We hope that, at the end of the magazine, you will have a better understanding of what the Eastern Partnership means to all of us, and what young people want and expect for their future.

EU NEIGHBOURS east

The 'EU NEIGHBOURS east' is the EU-funded Regional communication programme funded by the European Commission (DG NEAR) through the European Neighbourhood Instrument. The goal is to increase visibility and awareness, contribute to the improvement of public perceptions, and enhance understanding of EU policies and activities in the Eastern partner (EaP) countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, and their impact on the daily life of people. The 'EU NEIGHBOURS east' activities and results are reflected on its website and social media accounts: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and LinkedIn.

The 'Young European Neighbours' network

The 'EU NEIGHBOURS east' programme places a strong emphasis on engaging young people as part of its outreach work. For this reason, in June 2016, it launched the 'Young European Neighbours' (YEN) network, including the 'Young European Ambassadors' (YEAs) initiative.

The aim is to foster cooperation and sustainable links between young people and youth organisations from the EU Member States and the Eastern partner countries. The 'Young European Neighbours' network is primarily an online platform that facilitates the mutual exchange of ideas and information on the EU and promotes young people's engagement in outreach action. It focuses on people-to-people contact and dialogue-driven civic engagement activities, which contribute to an enhanced understanding and perception of the EU and a greater appreciation of its relationships with the Eastern partner countries.

The main role of the Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) is to network with young people from the EU and Eastern partner countries, exchange experience and knowledge, discuss matters of direct concern to young people, share best practices and work together for a better future.



DEAR READER

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There are currently around 500 young people from the EU and the EaP countries who have been appointed as 'Young European Ambassadors'. The 'Young European Ambassadors' (YEAs) regularly participate in dialogue-driven activities and engage online on a daily basis through the 'Young European Neighbours network' Facebook group. To date more than 1000 young people from the EU and EaP countries have performed the role of Young European Ambassador

European Youth Press

European Youth Press (EYP) is a network of youth media organisations in Europe. It works to build a society where empowered young media makers are actively participating and contributing to the public sphere by creating fair, independent and responsible media, fostering the development of democracy, international development and a sustainable future. Orange Magazine is the official multimedia platform of the European Youth Press. It provides an interactive platform for media coverage of EU and international conferences as well as initiatives linked to the EU. If you are interested in checking out some of our older editions, you can find them [here](#).

With 26 member organisations and several Committees, the EYP reaches more than 60,000 young journalists across Europe, forming a solid volunteer and professional infrastructure. It is a democratic, non-profit institution, founded and controlled by young media makers, with hundreds of enthusiastic, dedicated, active organisers, trainers, volunteers and a handful of paid project workers, all between 20 and 30 years of age.

The organisation serves the national structures through the development and coordination of projects on a European level.



CONTENT

05

01 - REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA'S LINGUISTIC ROOTS

07

02 - HOW DOES ARCHITECTURE IMPACT THE EUROPEAN WAY IN THE EASTERN PARTNER CITY BATUMI

10

03 - FREEDOM OF SPEECH EXPRESSED THROUGH ART IN COMMUNIST AND POST-COMMUNIST GEORGIA

12

04 - ARMENIA-EU RELATIONSHIP: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CEPA AGREEMENT IN POST-WAR REALITY

13

05 - EU FUNDED YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES - A SUCCESS STORY FROM ARMENIA

16

06 - THE CHALLENGES OF CIRCULARITY IN THE EU GREEN DEAL

19

07 - THE ROLE OF THE EU IN ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN GEORGIA

20

08 - IS THE EU POSING A THREAT TO GEORGIA'S CULTURE?

23

09 - GEORGIAN FEMINISM ON TV AND IN REAL LIFE

26

10 - GEORGIA'S CIVIL SOCIETY STRIVES FOR PEACE-BUILDING BETWEEN THE CONFLICT-DIVIDED PARTIES

CONTENT

28

11 - PROMOTING RULE OF LAW IN GEORGIA WITH THE HELP OF MOOT COURT COMPETITIONS

30

12- DID AZERBAIJAN ESCAPE FROM THE MALTHUSIAN TRAP?

33

13 - ENLARGING EUROPE EASTWARD: WHAT MAKES ARMENIA EUROPEAN?

36

14 - YOUNG EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS ARE CHANGING THE WORLD - INTERVIEW ELLADA GASPARYAN

38

15 - YOUNG EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS ARE CHANGING THE WORLD - INTERVIEW PASHA BABAYEV

41

16 - YOUNG EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS ARE CHANGING THE WORLD - INTERVIEW VAHE ASATRYAN

43

17 - YOUNG EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS ARE CHANGING THE WORLD - INTERVIEW TATIA PARADASHVILI

47

18 - YOUNG EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS ARE CHANGING THE WORLD - INTERVIEW VALENTIN JOSAN

50

19 - YOUNG EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS ARE CHANGING THE WORLD - INTERVIEW KATERYNA KRAVCHENKO

53

20 - OUR AUTHORS AND EDITORIAL TEAM

01 REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA'S LINGUISTIC ROOTS

A contention exists over the national identity and name of the mother tongue recognized by the main ethnic group in Moldova. The most frequently contested issue is whether Moldovans establish a subgroup of Romanians or a distinct ethnic group. Although there is a widespread agreement on the existence of a common language, there is still a dispute about the utilization of the expression of Moldovan language in certain political settings.

Romanian phonology and grammar developed in close contact with the Slavic, Hungarian, Turkish and Albanian languages. The standardized Romanian language was formed based on the Wallachian diversity of the Daco-Romanian, a group of most dialects in the Transylvanian Alps, from which region the language may have spread to the plains. Romanian literature began to develop considerably in the nineteenth century, when the forthcoming nation turned to other Romance countries for cultural inspiration, especially to France. This fact resulted in the re-Romanization— a period of "correction" of the Romanian language started in 1859 when a significant number of scientific Latinisms were introduced into the Romanian vocabulary and Slavic lexemes were actively removed. This process also brought the first linguistic differences between the Romanian and

Moldovan languages.

The base for the Moldovan language began to take shape in the 16th-17th century, and it was finally formed by the second half of the 19th century. The Moldovan language received official status in 1924 when the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was established on the left bank of the Dniester as part of Ukraine. At the initial stage of language construction, it was planned to create, based on the dialects of the local Transnistrian population, a proletarian Moldovan language as an antipode to the bourgeois Romanian language. This result was planned to be used in order to foment a revolution not only in Bessarabia but also in Romania.

"The base for the Moldovan language began to take shape in the 16th-17th century"

Leonid Madan started organizing a distinct Moldovan language structure in the middle of the 1920s at the Institute of Public Education in Kyiv, before the topic of a particular Moldovan language had gotten politically remarkable. In July 1927, the Moldovan Scientific Committee published spelling rules based on the Moldovan Grammar, developed by Leonid Madan.

Despite the efforts and elaborate tactics for the implementation of a new literary standard, the indigenization of the apparatus did not result in success. The mastery of Moldovan language did not represent a professional opportunity. If more qualified Russians or Ukrainians were available, local administrators did not tend to nominate less qualified Moldovans to higher posts.

The change to the Latin script was abrupt and unexpected. A local party resolution on February 2, 1932, announced the conversion to the Latin alphabet to be finished before the end of that year. The Latinization ended unexpectedly as it started. A resolution of the MASSR Central Executive Committee on May 19, 1938, restored the Cyrillic alphabet and reproved the Latinization tendency as ill-conceived for the cultural construction. The new Cyrillic standard represented a compromise between the extreme culture-building of the 1920s and the extreme pro-Romanian strategy of 1932.

After the accession of Bessarabia to the USSR and the formation of the Moldovan SSR in 1940, it was observed that the Transnistrian dialects were incomprehensible to the majority of Moldovans. In this regard, in 1951, with the support of Leonid Brezhnev, a reform was introduced on the basis of which the linguistic norm began to focus on the dialects of the central part of Moldova.

Finally on August 31, 1989, the new government of the Moldovan SSR definitely

abolished the Cyrillic alphabet on its territory and introduced Romanian spelling in Latin alphabet for the Moldovan language. The Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Moldova from 1991 names as the official language the Romanian. While the 1994 Constitution of Moldova gives the official language status to the Moldovan.



In modern Moldova, the main language of teaching in educational institutions is called Romanian and it is also studied as a subject in schools and universities as Romanian. The subject of Moldovan language in Cyrillic is taught only in universities and secondary schools of Transnistria optionally, starting from the first grade, along with the Ukrainian language.

On December 5, 2013, the Constitutional Court of Moldova issued the decree On the Interpretation of Article 13 of Part (1) of the Constitution in Relation to the Preamble of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Moldova, which some media presented as what the court supposedly recognized the official language of Moldova as the Romanian language based on the Latin alphabet. However, in this Decision, there is no exact

explanation about which is the final state language, but it is only indicated that the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Moldova is a single whole with the Constitution. The debates on the naming of the state language of Moldova as Moldovan or Romanian are continuing, always accompanied by a political connotation.

CEBAN CĂTĂLINA 9

02 HOW DOES ARCHITECTURE IMPACT THE EUROPEAN WAY IN THE EASTERN PARTNER CITY BATUMI

One of our greatest inspirations is the architect Alvar Aalto. He once said that "the ultimate goal of the architect is to create a paradise. Every house, every product of architecture should be a fruit of our endeavor to build an earthly paradise for people. This is why culture is so central to the architectural process. People are at the center. Architecture is one proof of the development of human civilization that has changed related to the circumstances at that time. The development of human civilization cannot be separated from the supported development of the culture. In other words, architecture which is born in one place is a cultural manifestation in that place."

Europe certainly has a long tradition of architecture extending back to ancient

times and those traditions have led to unique solutions to architectural problems in the various nations of Europe. It is evident that successful architecture takes inspiration from its physical and historical context. "There is a certain tradition, history, and continuity that you can read in European architecture," mentioned Spela Videcnik, architect and design critic.

Art Nouveau was a vibrant but short-lived phenomenon that flourished between 1890 and 1910. It touched on all the visual arts: fashion and furniture, pots and paintings, books and buildings. No object was too small or too large, too precious or too ordinary to be shaped by the designer working according to the ideals, moral and social as well as aesthetic associated with the Art Nouveau Batumi.

Following the discovery of oil in Azerbaijan in the mid 19th century, massive pipelines were laid throughout Georgia to bring oil to Europe. Money from the oil boom financed international style architecture all around the country. Hundreds of elegant fin de siècle buildings were built in Batumi, a large port on the Black Sea, bringing a European vibe to this charming city. Although in style neoclassical, their colours and shapes were far off the usual grid. In the meantime Tbilisi was a Mecca for numerous Art Nouveau artists. The best example of that exciting period is the cosmopolitan David Aghmashenebeli Avenue. Georgia's Batumi, is renowned as an Interesting European city one shouldn't miss the chance to explore.

A sunset walk on Batumi Boulevard and the adjacent parklands is a joy: designed and founded in 1881 by a Frenchman, Michel D'Alfons, it hugs the waterfront and its elegant formal plantings, cascades of flowers and shaded greens are dotted with cafes, table tennis, restaurants and rides for children. and its parks are as beautiful and graceful as any in Paris or London. Batumi city also hosted the 16th Batumi International Conference dedicated to the 10th Anniversary of Eastern Partnership.

So if you ever decide to visit Batumi, you should have a walk in Europe Square. It is also called Era Square. The square, surrounded by XIX-XX century architecture, is one of the city's attractions. Here stands a statue of Medea, which holds a symbol of the glory and cultural development of old

Colchis - the golden fleece. The large fountain and the beautiful buildings of past centuries make this place attractive. Hotels, restaurants and cafés are located around the square, where you can have a pleasant rest and taste the most delicious dishes. Here you can also visit the Batumi Circus and enjoy the magical sights. Europe Square is one of the most wonderful places in Batumi for relaxation and fun. Feel free to feel Europe in Adjara, Batumi. Georgia is a very interesting Country, you can explore old and beautiful designs in the capital city, Tbilisi.



Tbilisi is a historical city as it has been the capital of Georgia since the V century. City's architecture is an authentic combination of different cultures. Here you can find Sulphur

bathes called Abanotubani, contemporary skyscrapers, Soviet-era buildings, and traditional Georgian houses with colorful wooden balconies. The stylistic variety of architecture is really impressive. So visit Georgia, and we will show you the most beautiful places!



What about the House of Georgia? Among Tbilisi's distinguished buildings that have endured centuries is Writer's House of Georgia – a perfect blend of European and Georgian architectural styles. The Art-Nouveau mansion once belonged to David Sarajishvili – a famous philanthropist, founder of Georgian brandy production, Doctor of chemistry and philosophy. He commissioned the construction of the house for the 25th anniversary of his wedding in 1905. German architect Carl Zaar, in collaboration with Aleksander Ozerov and Korneli Tatishev planned the building, while exquisite wooden interior belongs to the

Georgian craftsman Iliia Mamatsashvili. The terrace of the house is designed by ceramic tiles of the famous Villeroy & Boch Company. Tiles with similar forms and patterns were an extreme rarity and were produced only on special orders. Since the day of its construction, this building has

been an important center of the city's cultural life and still continues to be a place where the writers and artists are actively involved in art processes.

Some people compare some parts of Tbilisi to Paris and Barcelona. So if you really want to feel the European spirit with natural views and

meet kind people, then you should visit Georgia. Furthermore, you have the chance to explore Batumi, relax in Black Sea resort and enjoy tasty Georgian wine in any Skyscraper. Do not forget to invite your friends, too!

TSITSINO KHACHIDZE

03 FREEDOM OF SPEECH EXPRESSED THROUGH ART IN COMMUNIST AND POST-COMMUNIST GEORGIA

Distinctive art is created with freedom of expression, a free mind, and hands. Without freedom of expression and the ability to express personal views, any type of censored or limited art loses its uniqueness. 'Limited art' was created in Georgia under the communist ideology for years. Georgian artists have openly or covertly fought against censorship by expressing the meaning behind their works, so their unique ideas were still felt and recognized by people. There are a number of examples of Georgian works that have conveyed the message behind them. These works have become examples of the fact that art can push the limits. After leaving the communist regime, post-communist realism has been gradually taking shape in Georgian art. Individualism, courage, liberation from old stereotypes, creation of new, the discovery of the idea of sincerity, and finding freedom in the new reality with a new, modern approach - these concepts can be found in Georgian artists expressed in paintings, art installations, exhibitions, movies, etc.

Repentance (1984) - the movie directed by a Georgian movie director - Tengiz Abuladze, reflects restricted freedom of expression under the dictatorial regime in Georgia. The film criticizes the Soviet regime and all the government officials behind it. It satirizes the main message, as well as portrays characteristics for the time it was directed. A great example of it would be the city mayor's bodyguard, who wears knight uniforms, which was not characteristic for the time but corresponded to the city

mayor's authoritarian ways of governing. Therefore, surreal transformations are close to the real world with the meaning behind them. In this way, the director hid characteristics of the Soviet Union with shots uncharacteristic of the era.

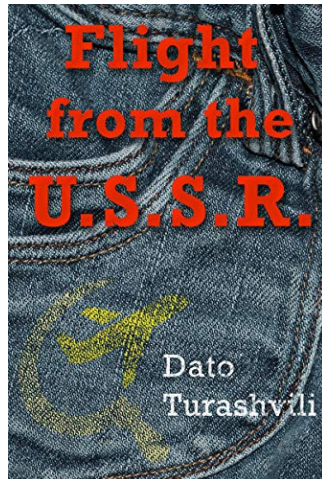


The film Repentance was released on the screens of the Soviet Union in 1986. Before releasing, director Abuladze himself was summoned for several investigative interrogations, as well as instructed to make changes in several scenes. The film distributed on videotape illegally before its premiere. It has received three prizes: 40th Cannes International Film Festival, gained international recognition.

Festival and gained international recognition.

It is interesting to note that after the collapse of the communist regime, Georgian artists got freed from restrictions of the USSR and found liberty from oppression for creating the party's unapproved art. However, this topic can be often found in Georgian literature, cinematography, and any form of art, as it became sentimental to Georgian artists. Contemporary Georgian artists often create works based on life under the communist regime. One example is the novel *Flight From The USSR* (ჰიბსტიდის თამბა), based on a true story written by Georgian writer – Davit Turashvili.

The book tells the story of several young people who seek to see life outside the Soviet Union. They attempted to escape the claws of the regime by hijacking a plane from Soviet

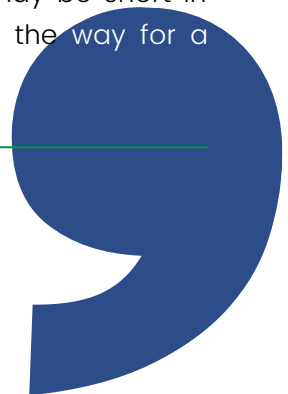


Georgia and wishing to enter the United States. The naive attempt was unsuccessful, resulting in casualties among the crew members and passengers of the aircraft. Their divergent way of thinking led to a fatal consequence. The Soviet authorities sentenced them to death. The man who was not on the plane at all but was a friend of the kidnapers got sentenced to death too.

The confrontation of young 'hostages' of the USSR has further illustrated adverse sides of communist soviet Georgia's reality in which they had to live. The freedom-seekers have tragically sacrificed themselves and other innocent people to the regime.

Human rights are paramount. All people should have the opportunity to be free, not to be afraid to express their opinions and raise their voices. Tengiz Abuladze's Repentance and Dato Turashvili's Flight from the USSR became clear examples of this, which despite the time difference of creation reflects that people aspire to freedom. Physical freedom may be short in some cases, but it will pave the way for a new generation.

MARIAM KEBADZE ●



04 ARMENIA-EU RELATIONSHIP: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CEPA AGREEMENT IN POST-WAR REALITY

After being signed at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels, in November 2017, and after a long ratification process, the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) came into force on March 1, 2021. It provides a broad framework for cooperation (e.g., energy, transport, environment, trade, human rights, civil society). The ultimate goal of CEPA is to improve Armenia-EU relations and deliver benefits to the Armenian citizens, which is crucially important for Armenia especially in the post-war era.

When talking about the significance of the CEPA agreement, the EU Ambassador to Armenia, Andrea Wiktorin, in the [interview with EVN Report's](#) - Maria Titizian, said: "I call it two Rs. It is **Recovery**, and it is **Reforms**. You have to decide how you want to shape your country after this terrible war, and I think there we stand ready."

According to the official website of the European Union, the EU-Armenia partnership has a long and positive history, thus making CEPA a natural continuation of the cooperation process. In every sector that the EU committed itself to in the scope of the mutually beneficial partnership, there was a positive dynamic. The EU provided support to build a stronger economy, governance, and society in Armenia. A few examples include the following facts:

- The EU is Armenia's biggest export market and accounts for around 22% of Armenia's total trade.
- EU is funding better energy exchange and transit between Armenia and Georgia.
- From 2015-2017, 1,300 students and academic staff participated in the Erasmus+ program.

After the Second Karabakh War, security issues, POWs remaining in Azerbaijan 6 months after the ceasefire agreement, humanitarian and socio-economic crisis, and the overall post-war and pre-election situation in Armenia, there is a natural shift in priorities. Going through the implementation process of CEPA, the EU, in cooperation with Armenia, sets priorities consulting with the Government, civil society, and the business sector (community). The EU ambassador also commented on Armenia's number 1 priority - realising the war prisoners: "I think it was very clearly said that we [EU] think that there must be the release of both the prisoners of war and captives; however you call them. This is really a humanitarian issue. Only if this is solved, there is a way for reconciliation."

The Ambassador stressed the role of the youth and the efforts the EU put to support them and emphasized her appreciation for

the Young European Ambassadors (YEA) from Armenia. "Some of them [YEAs] were also critical, but they believe in this country. They believe in cooperation with the European Union, and I think these are the people we should support who are the future of this country," said the Ambassador.

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With a long way to go, CEPA is a wonderful opportunity with broad cooperation tools to continue the EU-Armenia partnership and overcome this crisis and develop the country as well.

MARGARITA DADYAN

05 EU FUNDED YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

A SUCCESS STORY FROM ARMENIA

It is not a secret that the EU funded youth programmes play a crucial role in youth capacity development in Europe and beyond. These programmes enable the European and partner countries' youth representatives to grow professionally and individually, gain international experience, build valuable networks, build friendships with people from other countries, find their European identity and get their dream jobs. The following article shows how the Erasmus-Mundus experience completely changed the life of the EaP country student.

In recent years thousands of young students participated in the Erasmus+ and its predecessor Programmes. As a partner country, the Armenian students also exercised the opportunity to participate in those.

Seems like it was yesterday when I decided to apply to the Erasmus Mundus Euroeast Programme back in 2014. When applying to this Programme, I could not have imagined that this incredible experience would change my life so much. My study abroad at Adam Mickiewicz University had a tremendous impact on my personal and professional development taking into account several factors. I imagined one day that dream

First of all, the Erasmus Mundus Euroeast Programme helped me conquer my childhood dream to study at a prestigious university abroad. Born and raised in a middle-income family in Armenia, I could not have imagined one day that dream would come true. When I listened to the Erasmus-Mundus Euroeast Programme presentation at my home university, I realized that it was a perfect opportunity to follow my dream. Collecting application documents and applying to the Programme was the best decision I have ever made. When I got the confirmation email from the Programme, I thought the whole world belonged to me. I will never forget my family's excitement when I told them.

The student life at Adam Mickiewicz University was a fairytale for me. The academic atmosphere was outstanding; the professors were highly qualified and had international recognition. I got a chance to learn from them and enhance my professional capabilities. As an exchange student in the field of International Law, I have gained valuable experience. It has

allowed me to gain a global perspective as well as cultural awareness around me. I still find myself constantly learning and acquiring new skills within my environment. Throughout this experience, I have accomplished things I could have only dreamed of.

During the exchange programme, I got an opportunity to gain comprehensive knowledge about European values, such as respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law. After returning to Armenia, I am constantly sharing my knowledge and skills connected to European values within the Armenian society. My study tenure in Poland not only enriched my professional capabilities but also enabled me to discover European art, architecture, music, literature and common European cultural heritage.

My study abroad facilitated my professional development and helped me to meet new people from all over the world. I got a chance to build my international family abroad. It is incredible how you can estab-

lish a magnificent global family within a few months and keep interactions with them in the years to come. Even though six years have passed since my exchange programme, I am in touch with my Erasmusfriends. Sometimes we are meeting abroad and recalling our most memorable days. Erasmus Mundus experience



assisted me to discover my European identity. Erasmus has reminded me that I am Armenian and European, and those two identities are reconciled. This experience gives the space to consider what it means to be Armenian and what it means to be European.

As a result, I increased my knowledge of Europe and paid attention to European news. In other words, Erasmus enhanced my identification with Europe. Last but not least, Erasmus impacted my career development. Due to the high-quality legal education I received in Poland, I achieved my career goals. This experience enhanced my professional competencies, and I got a package of professional skills. I also improved my self-confidence and made more decisive decisions. At the end of the Programme, I became more tolerant and respectful toward others.

To sum up, Erasmus's experience helped me receive a high-quality education, discover European values and cultural heritage, meet new people, build my European family, find my European identity, and develop my professional skills and personality. Everyone should have the opportunity to have a similar experience.

NAREK YENOKYAN



06 THE CHALLENGES OF CIRCULARITY IN THE EU GREEN DEAL

WHY IS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE EAP REGION CRUCIAL TO ACHIEVE A JUST TRANSITION TOWARDS INDUSTRY 5.0?

Climate change and environmental degradation are an imminent threat, to people, regions, and countries alike. To mitigate them, the European Union has put in motion an ambitious policy plan (both at home and with international partners) in the bid to become the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050. If its plan sounds too bold, it probably is.

The EU Green Deal (EGD), the Union's trump card in making its economy sustainable and green, comprises an extensive set of policies meant to boost resource efficiency and circular economy, whilst restoring biodiversity and cutting pollution – all while “leaving no one behind”. However, the transition towards circularity, and inevitably, the next generation of sustainable, human-centric, and resilient 5.0 industry, will not happen on its own.

GREEN DEAL CRITICISM

The hard truth in fighting climate change is that the EU accounts for more than one-fifth of world CO₂ emissions, with a disappointingly slow pace in decoupling

industrialization from growth and environmental decay. Even with the overall number of emissions continuing to drop by over 20% since 1990, current estimates still suggest the EU is not yet on track to meet its Paris targets (limiting global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius) and to cut emissions by at least 55% by 2030.

The conceptual framework required for understanding what decoupling is, and what instruments are needed to achieve it, is also still at an infant stage. Today, much of Europe (and the world) functions within a system of linear economy (take-make-waste), heavily reliant on fossil fuels. To ensure a just transition towards a circular one (reuse-refurbish-recycle), more information must be provided to all relevant stakeholders (workers, industries, decision-makers) to equip them with the viable tools to translate circular challenges into green opportunities. The training and upskilling of workers in the sectors most reliant on fossil fuels is, too, of paramount importance, together with the social inclusion, connection, and education of industries and communities to reach industry 5.0 (reinforcing the active role and the contribution of industry into society and complementing the 4th Industrial Revolution approach with green research and innovation).

So far, the EGD flopped its own inauguration at a key summit in Brussels in 2019, with three EU members refusing the pledge to achieve net-zero emissions later in the same year. Behind the scenes, the work on

the EGD was also marked by the presence of fossil fuel juggernaut ExxonMobil, leading to NGOs such as Greenpeace calling out on the European Commission to boost climate targets to at least 65% GHG emissions reductions. The EC's response? It launched an additional regulation plan: the Just Transition Fund (JTF), within a mechanism of the same name.

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

The EC claims that at least €1tn needs to be allocated for the EGD to be implemented over the next years, with the biggest share, €503bn, coming from the EU budget, and the rest, from national governments and the private sector (plus €100bn in the "just transition" of industry workers). But €1tn might not be enough to ensure the decoupling of growth from resource consumption, and the propulsion of a green, sustainable EU economy. When asking whether the EGD can make a real difference, the short answer would be, it needs to. This is because the current measures do not suffice in lowering emissions by 2030, all whilst handling the required, disruptive change towards green growth (all without creating extra safety nets for the workforce in the fossil fuel sector, or marginalising regions). This is especially important in the bilateral and multilateral agreements the Union has with international partners and neighbours.



EAP FOR ENVIRONMENT

A riveting example, in this case, is the role of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region. The EaP, which consists of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine, is an important player in the discourse for achieving the aims of the EU Green Deal.

Under the aegis of the EU Neighbours East, this joint policy initiative aims to strengthen relations between the EU and the six partner members, including on the commonly agreed goals for circular economy and climate mitigation. As such, within the important political momentum of the 10th anniversary of the EaP, the EU4Environment Action was launched.

By bringing together environmental and economic actors, EU4Environment fosters the delivery of policy and legislative change that make planning and investment greener, stimulating, thus, the modernisation of EaP industries by adopting new business models and creating green jobs. It also promotes better environmental governance, the protection of land and forests, and sustainable trade in the Eastern region. With five implementing partners - three UN agencies (UNECE, UNEP, and UNIDO), the OECD, and the World Bank Group - EU4Environment clusters its work into five thematic areas, namely: greener decision-making; circular economy and new growth opportunities; an environmental level playing field; ecosystem services and livelihoods; and regional knowledge sharing and coordination.

WAYS FORWARD

To achieve the second component on circular economy and new growth opportu-

nities (implemented by UNIDO and UNEP), the commitment of the EU4Environment Action goes well in line with with national and regional efforts of the EaP region (Azerbaijan 2030 Agenda for green growth, Georgia's development of a Circular Economy Strategy and Roadmap, or Moldova's 2030 Green Economy Package, to name a few). The recording of such endeavours is crucial in creating a paradigm shift for industries to become low carbon and resource-efficient.

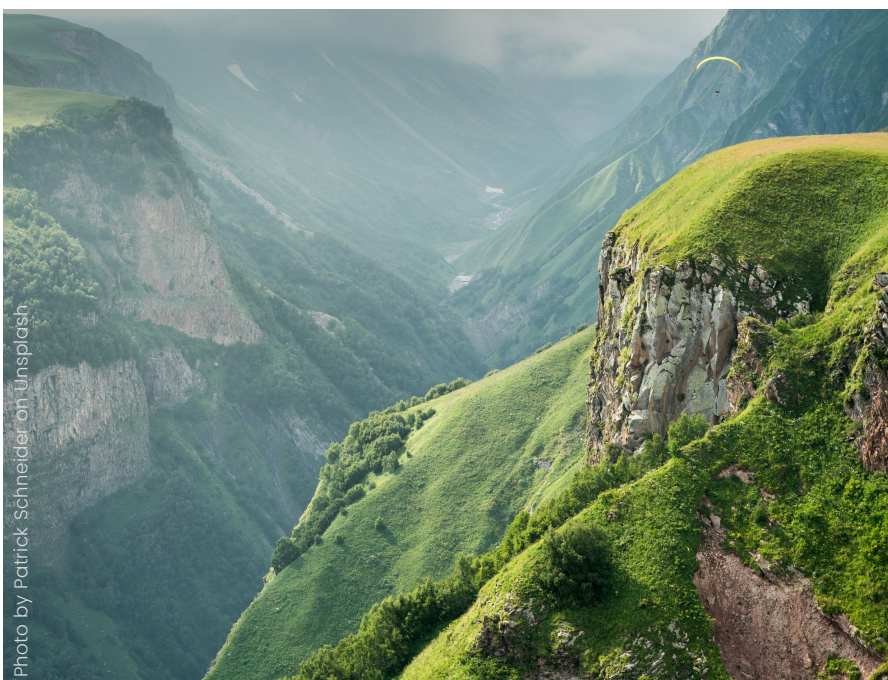
By doing so, they benefit from new openings to create value (human, technical, and biological), as circular economy remodels how industries design, create, and consume resources throughout their lines of production. Based on three principles (elimination of waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems), the circular economy principles can change how certain resources (steel, cement, aluminium, and plastic) are produced and used, leading to a reduction of GHG emissions of up to 40% by 2050. This is why industries must play an active role in providing solutions to the current challenges in society (including the

preservation of resources, climate change, social stability and education). Reviewing existing value chains and consumption patterns can also make them more durable against external shocks (helping them to adapt, evolve, and embrace the green and digital transition while staying competitive).

"to become green and sustainable, resource decoupling must become the tenet of all new industrialisation developments"

All in all, the leitmotif of the conversation remains the same: to become green and sustainable, resource decoupling must become the tenet of all new industrialisation developments, encouraging industries and international actors alike to invest in green growth and circularity. As such, technological and social innovations, combined with rapid digitalisation, bring forth a vital opening to make decoupling a reality and pave the way for industry 5.0.

ROXANA CLAUDIA TOMPEA 9



07 THE ROLE OF THE EU IN ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN GEORGIA



Photo by Lukas Blazek on Pexels

future. Another violation of women's rights happens when distributing property and inheritance. Parents often leave their immovable property only to male children because it is believed that a girl should get married, live with her husband and depend on him. Finally, although women graduate from universities, their employment rate is lower.

In Georgia, women face gender-based discrimination in every sphere of life. Women are victims of violence, both physical and psychological. New cases of domestic violence are revealed every day. Even though recent campaigns by feminists have boosted women's self-confidence to speak out about violence, there is still a lot of work to be done in this regard.

It is important to note that early marriage habits forced girls under 18 to marry without getting a proper high education. As a result, so many young girls are deprived of the opportunity to find decent jobs in the

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 has worsened the situation in this regard. Statistically, violence against women has increased and many independent women have lost their jobs, often their source of income.

The EU is actively involved in promoting gender equality in Georgia, since way before the pandemic. It plays a key role in promoting and protecting human rights in general, with the implementation of many important projects to address gender inequality, raise awareness about women's rights and create opportunities in the country.

For example, in the summer 2020, a photo competition “Women in Georgia Copying with COVID-19” was implemented. The aim of the project was to bring into reality the problems that women went through during COVID pandemic. The EU is actively funding projects that will ensure the success and overall growth of female entrepreneurs. At the same time, it provides empowerment for women in business. On the Facebook Web-page of European Union in Georgia examples of the women are published, who have turned their family activities and hobbies into small business after enrolling in the EU-funded entrepreneurial school. The EU also provides significant social campaigns aimed at eliminating psychological, sexual, and physical violence in society.

I believe that young activists, with the support of the European Union, will soon achieve gender equality in Georgia, and women will be protected by the law and at the same time protected from the stigmas and views that still exist in Georgian society.

The importance of protecting human rights and gender equality is recognized by younger generations as never before, also following the growth in number and quality of exchange projects and opportunities that the EU provides to Georgian youth.

The EU's significant contribution to strengthening Georgia through a variety of democratic and liberal values is essential to Georgia's future empowerment and to the acceleration of the European integration process.

RUSA MIROTADZE 9

08 IS THE EU POSING A THREAT TO GEORGIA'S CULTURE?

The desire of the Georgian society to become one of the members of the European family is quite high and this is confirmed by the statistics too. According to the polls, the vast majority of Georgians (78%) support unification with the European Union. However, it is noteworthy that two out of five people consider the EU a threat to Georgian culture. It is interesting to explore what encourages their fears to arise?

Through internal or external information operations, actors hostile to the country's pro-Western future seek to establish the notion that membership implies a renunciation of one's traditions and values. However, if we list a small part of the EU-implemented projects in Georgia in the field of culture, it will be difficult for such a conspiracy to remain on a rational basis.

The European Union has spent up to half a million euros to preserve traditional Georgian handicrafts and bring them in line with modern market requirements. Skilled workers taking part within the EU-supported project “Folk Crafts Perspectives in Georgia” and the Georgian Arts and Culture Centre chose twenty-one art studios to supply with funding. However, in this case, it is interesting to know the terms of the grant, the knowledge was given to at least five people. One is to promote traditional activities, but another is to ensure its future sustainability as well.

BE MUSEUM (BeMuse) is a universal Preparing Program and a blended-learning involvement for the experts in museum-related fields in Georgia, Armenia, and

Azerbaijan. The goal of BeMuse is to reinforce its participants' leadership and administration skills. The program includes training, lectures, webinars, peer conversations, group problem-solving exercises, and panels with senior-level executives, with a focus on museums' social, educational, and economic roles, as well as audience development and engagement, digital influences, and qualified practices in museums. The predicted outcome of it is to have qualified staff in accordance with the standards of the modern world, which in turn will make the Georgian culture effectively spread, therefore more interesting and attractive.

Opera(e)Studio is a formative project aimed at young opera singers under the age of 32 who have completed their formal training but have yet to make their stage debut and require additional comprehensive training to align themselves with the current labor market demands of European opera houses to improve their employability. The project establishes a framework for singers, agents, artistic directors, and theaters to meet, giving singers a better understanding of the sector and its internal connections while



also serving as a showcase for their work, encouraging exposure and internationalization of their careers.

The Eastern Partnership Culture Programme (2011-2015) increased Georgia's participation in cultural cooperation by promoting cooperation among public institutions, civil society, cultural organizations, and academic institutions in the region and the EU.

Georgia has also benefited from the Black Sea Cross Border Cooperation project "Pilot model for mobilizing common cultural characteristics for creative destination management in the Black Sea Basin" (2013),

which supported cultural and educational initiatives aimed at establishing a common cultural environment in the region through cultural networking and educational exchanges.

In addition to the many projects that have already been implemented, even at this point, the EU is offering another opportunity to the Eastern Partnership countries to develop their cultural sector and economy. EU4Culture launches call for towns and cities in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and



Ukraine to create a cultural development plan. A grant of up to €300,000 will then be awarded to one town or city per country to implement its strategy. If we still have to be afraid of things, perhaps not to miss the chances (like this) to have a strategic plan for the development of our own culture and sufficient finances to secure it. at least once you were proud to see the beautiful felt works exhibited in Mtskheta or you are filled with happiness with the international success of the Georgian opera singer or if your elderly neighbor turned a craft, he learned from his grandfather into a source of income and started a small business. After an objective analysis of the facts, it is impossible not to see the financial and intangible resources spent by the EU in all this. However, the value of this unity is also interesting: for decades, the diversity of 27 countries has set a successful example of both cultural and economic strength. You may think that diversity is a threat, however, there is always a way to counteract irrational fear with real experience. In other words, you can also sing Krimantchuli in Brussels and thus make all parties happy.

SOPIO GOGITADZE 9

**"You may think
that diversity is a
threat, however,
there is always a
way to counteract
irrational fear with
real experience" -**

Sopio Gogitadze

09 GEORGIAN FEMINISM ON TV AND IN REAL LIFE



Photo by Lindsey LaMont on Unsplash

The first feminist movements in Georgia started in the 19th century. Women were part of the first parliament of Georgia and marginally contributed to the policy-making processes. Looking at feminist activities at the beginning of the 20th century, progress was incredible. Feminism was just taking off. However, processes did not continue as expected. The soviet revolution delayed feminist waves in Georgia since the late 90s. Planned economy strictly defined male and female roles within the conceptual structure of Georgian society. So Georgian feminists in the 90s had to start from scratch.

Since then, so much has changed, women have spoken up and have become extremely relevant. Georgian feminists contribute to the promotion of women's rights, and they educate people about domestic violence and sexual harassment. They are also huge supporters of LGBTQ+ communities in Georgia. "Safari" provides various financial benefits, access to services, and education to women being victims of domestic violence gives them shelter and support to develop at an educational and personal level.

However, within modern Georgian societies, awareness regarding feminist groups and their activities is very low, and Georgian girls are often ashamed to call themselves Feminists, as it is considered to be something "bad", something against their families, brothers and fathers, something against their femininity. Even from a very young age, I was taught my

rights and gender equality, however, growing up within a very small rural community where I found myself being only feminist, facing teachers who could not understand the concept of Feminism, made me thinking about roots of negative attitude towards feminism and, especially, Georgian feminism. Here I started seeing the role of Media, which was mishearing feminist voices.

"growing up within a very small rural community [...] I found myself being the only feminist" -

TAMARI UTIASHVILI

As in every society, mainstream media have a huge role in building people's mindset. And unfortunately, Georgian society is still influenced by strictly structured entertainment from the Media, not taking into account vulnerable groups. Also, According to a research conducted in 2018 by Heinrich Boll Foundation in Georgia, only 0.7% of media coverage was about Georgian Feminists.

There are several examples of how the media caused feminists activists to lack sympathy from the audience. First of all, going through the TV shows, it is noticeable that feminists always were seated to debate with "tumultuous man" who are most likely to louden their voices and use stereotypical phrases to insult feminist activists and women in general.

For example, in one of the famous TV shows - Prime show, a famous Georgian blogger who debated about quotes in parliament compared ruling the country to

making dough, to highlight how difficult it can be. That can easily explain where he sees women as part of society. Another trick used against feminist activists, we can observe is using religion against feminism. There always used to be one of the representatives of Georgian Church pointing out how feminism is against religion, especially when it comes to the abortion and "my body my choice" movement.

One of the most well-known issues feminists addressed in the past few years is the "Pro-choice campaigns". It led to huge amounts of hate speech towards them, again due to the media. The media never identified the pros of the concept and showed it only in a negative way. Personally, young me watching the news at that time refused to be recognized as part of the Georgian feminist community. And now I understand - That kind of feminism media showed me was fabricated and might have misled lots of other young girls, too. The idea behind it was so much more than freedom for sexual life. The media wanted to define what is acceptable for the traditional Georgian mentality. Something people would support, without considering the damage it brings to equal rights.

The same applied to making fun of the law about sexual harassment and calling it "Law against staring" without actually explaining to people why it is important for the constitution to defend people from sexual abuse. Feminists who used to support lots of different positive changes within the Georgian society used to be shown as very aggressive and radical activists who aimed to "ruin" young women in Georgia.

Fortunately, insults can't stop women, nevertheless strengthen and motivate them to fight. Even Though Georgian feminists dealt with so much hate and negative attitude from society, and without even having a proper platform, with the huge support of different EU and UN, because of their non-stoppable spirit, Georgian feminists still found ways to address the issues considered to be important to promote equality in Georgia.

Today's feminist activists have a tv show on Formula. Indeed, lots of online newspapers that refused to give a speech to feminist activists today support them to grow and reach more and more hearts and minds.

Although there have been many developments and so much has been done to support equality and promote women's rights in Georgia, there is much more to do to develop gender equality, for the benefit of society as a whole.

TAMARI UTIASHVILI



10

GEORGIA'S CIVIL SOCIETY STRIVES FOR PEACE-BUILDING BETWEEN THE CONFLICT-DIVIDED PARTIES

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia has witnessed ethno-political tensions with its autonomous regions; one of them was South Ossetia. Later the conflict turned into a war. The peak of this dispute was in 2008 when Russia invaded Georgia. Later on, the Kremlin recognized the so-called independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, two breakaway regions of Georgia. Since then, official Tbilisi has been a victim of a series of illegal actions of the Kremlin: Kidnapping of Georgian citizens by Russian soldiers and “creeping occupation” which seems to be never-ending.

Given this unsettled crisis, some Georgian non-governmental organizations are trying their best to bring the people from conflict-divided parties together in the framework of various international projects. One of them is the “Civil Forum NGO,” which was established back in 2007 by Georgian and Ossetian youth activists, aiming to support the Georgian-Ossetian dialogue and youth participation in the process.

“Our priority is the peacebuilding, team-building, and youth engagement in the process through the non-formal education. Since 2011, under these activities, we have been carrying out these

different projects with the non-conflict-sensitive topic”, Lali Omiadze, the Executive Director of the “Civil Forum” says.

According to Omiadze, they invite young generations from both sides to take part, who are the most vulnerable groups in terms of breaking the stereotypes about the “enemies.” As she says, they deliver such kinds of activities that Georgians and Ossetians become really open and communicative with each other. The facilitators are trying hard to avoid any misunderstandings and prejudices between the parties. Lali Omiadze says that sometimes they have highly motivated participants, however, youngsters from the Tskhinvali side have some security concerns as it is risky to loudly say that they are part of the project, consequently, the NGO strictly asks the participants not to publish openly about the project.

“We even had some cases when the Ossetian participants had dropped out from the project at the very last minute because they had some pressure from their local authorities”, the Executive director recalls. Lali Omiadze says that some founders of the “Civil Forum” are based in Tskhinvali and they disseminate the information in a secure way about the upcoming projects as it is impossible to

make an open call for the Ossetian participants there. The organization is very careful when it comes to the selection of the participants since they want to make sure that the Ossetian participants and their families feel safe.

An NGO mainly implements the projects in some third countries, which are seen as neutral places, where the Ossetian participants can go freely. Nevertheless, during the last three years, the "Civil Forum" has managed to invite the Ossetian youngsters in Tbilisi to attend workshops, trainings, and some internships.

"Ossetians really get trust from our side and their wish to come to Tbilisi and attend some activities means that we step forwards and it is really safe for them to come and cooperate with us", Omiadze reckons.

The Executive Director of Civil Forum regrets that there are not a lot of organizations in Georgia that work for the Georgian-Ossetian dialogue because most of the Georgian NGOs focus on the Georgian-Abkhazian direction. Omiadze believes that her organization will make some influence on some local level, but on a much bigger scale, their efforts are not enough.

"Why do we choose young people and not older ones? Because this new generation, maybe in a maximum of 10 years, will be

decision-makers. You know how much influence private relationships can have in such kinds of circumstances the process to go towards the good", she supposes.

Mostly, the organization is dependent on some international donors to implement their projects. One of such donors was the EUMM Confidence Building Facility. It is noteworthy that the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM Georgia) is an unarmed civilian monitoring mission deployed in September 2008 following the EU-mediated Six Point Agreement, which ended the Russo-Georgian war.

The NGO plans to continue this way in the hope of peaceful, harmonious coexistence.

The "Civil Forum" has already implemented 10 projects in order to build trust and confidence among Georgian and South Ossetian communities. The NGO plans to continue this way in the hope of peaceful, harmonious coexistence. Could the people's diplomacy reinforce the fragile peace in the Caucasus region? Could the wounds of the conflict stop deepening? Could the reconciliation between the communities win over the divisions? – The degree of optimism remains extremely high in this regard.

TORNIKE KAKALASHVILI ●

11 PROMOTING RULE OF LAW IN GEORGIA WITH THE HELP OF MOOT COURT COMPETITIONS

In a society characterised by inclusion, diversity, justice, unity, and non-discrimination, EU values are shared by all EU countries. One of the main values on which the EU is based is the Rule of Law. This is the unique principle that all democratic countries should share. Having Moot Court competitions in countries is one of the best ways to promote the implementation and promotion of the Rule of Law. One of the most successful Moot to be known to promote the Rule of Law in Georgia is called the EU law moot court. It is co-organized by the EU Law Department of Georgia's Ministry of Justice and the Georgian Justice Training Center with the help of GIZ and Sakpatenti. The event's focus is European Union Intellectual Property Law. It invites Law Faculty students to improve and deepen their understanding of EU law and the principles upon which it is established. It has become a tradition to hold this particular moot annually. The project's main goal is to

raise students' awareness regarding the EU Court of Justice's work and the Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU. Furthermore, it aims to develop and sharpen students' material-legal and procedural skills.

The EU Law Moot Court is divided into several rounds. First of all, students must fill the application form to register. They should demonstrate enthusiasm and a desire to engage in moot court as well as acquire and improve crucial skills for attorneys.

Then, the second round is about presenting written legal memorandums. That is one of the most difficult aspects of the moot court. Students have to conduct research on a certain case. Typically, the presented scenario has intricate challenges that are difficult to resolve. Even though this is difficult for the participants, it enables them to nourish their writing and research abilities. Furthermore, they do a legal study of EU legislation, which undoubtedly aids them in better understanding of the Rule of Law, and therefore the core and fundamental principles upon which the EU is founded. This moot court assists unquestionably them in gaining a deeper understanding of EU legislation during their studies.



Photo by Tingey Injury Law Firm on Unsplash

Finally, the third round takes the form of oral rounds. Competing in moot court competitions allows students to hone their advocacy skills, improve their public speaking abilities, and actively participate in legal interpretation in European union law. The skills are not only beneficial for future trial attorneys. The lesson to be learned is that every argument does indeed have two sides, and thus can be backed up with equal conviction.

Last year's winning team member Ms Elizabet Kakabadze has given us some comments regarding her experience in EU Law Moot Court. "One of the most satisfying parts about the moot was that it was an ongoing experience, our team members were improving in every round. Also, the organisers arranged training sessions for participants, and they invited qualified lecturers, which definitely helped us gain deeper knowledge and a better understanding of EU law. This moot court didn't require any special prerequisite, for instance, the background knowledge in EU law. This truly showed organisers desire and intent to raise awareness about EU law positively. I am really grateful that I had the chance to participate in this competition. It definitely helped me to widen my visions about EU legislation and the Rule of Law."

The organisers - EU Law Department of Georgia's Ministry of Justice also provided some comments regarding the moot court.

"The moot court of 2021 exceeded our expectations, as the number of registered university teams increased, as well as the level of preparation of participants in the written and oral stages of the competition. The teams demonstrated a high level of knowledge of the problematic issues raised in the moot court and their possible resolution, indicating to us that students' interest in EU law is growing every year."

Also, the organisers mentioned the difficulties they had to overcome:

"Given the pandemic situation in the world, the EU Law Moot Court in 2021 was conducted remotely, using the online platform, which was initially a challenge for us. However, in the end, the format change did not cause significant difficulties and the event was held without interruption and the participants gained and nourished many important skills."

This clearly demonstrates the function of moot courts in broadening and transmitting knowledge about the Rule of Law. It would be beneficial if Georgia's experience in holding EU Law Moot Court Competitions is shared by other EAP countries as well.

TATIA TURAZASHVILI 9

12 DID AZERBAIJAN ESCAPE FROM THE MALTHUSIAN TRAP?

The development in science and technology have made researchers rethink economics and approaches to growth. According to Paul Romer (Romer, 1990), Economy should be divided into 2 categories, objects and ideas. In Romer's theory objects include almost all goods and ideas are merely defined as ways of using the objects. Later Jones (Jones, 2018) uses the concept of idea and object economy in his works citing to Romer's understanding. To oppose these two categories, Jones used a "rivalry" understanding, meaning in contrast to objects, ideas are "non rivalrous"- being used by one person does not decrease its usefulness to another. Thus, ideas have upward sloping income returns.

"The development in science and technology have made researchers rethink economics and approaches to growth."

One criticism to that could be the initial costs for innovation. To balance it, there comes the patents and intellectual property rights. This gives innovators short-term superiority and they can compensate for their initial research costs. The importance of innovation on a national level is that it is effective to escape the Malthusian trap. The term comes from the essay called "Principle of Population " by Robert Malthus published in 1798. It can be understood as an antonym for sustainable growth, where the ongoing growth will boost the population growth, which will

exceed the first, and result in scarcity and crisis. The stage before the downfall or where the crisis starts could be defined as steady state level. Later, this crisis and declining life standards will decrease population growth, and while production growth will be higher than population growth, the economy will grow and the process will repeat itself, which leaves the economy to the trap.

There is criticism of this theory even at a fundamental level. One important point to this paper is how countries can achieve sustained growth, or to stay in steady level forever (with minor short-term deviations). Another crucial question would be "What will happen if the innovation stops?" After a surplus effect of innovation even when it stops, the economy will return to its new steady state level, which would be greater than the previous one, and as the ideas are "non rivalrous", growing population can still use them (C. I. Jones, D. Vollrath, 2013). Here, nations try to stimulate innovation using various tools.

Also, one important fact should be kept in mind that, from one world perspective, innovation in one country, could be easily adopted in others. Jones analyzes innovation growth through 2 aspects, first is the general innovation by population, and the second is innovation by researcher. The difference is that, even if the ideas are "non rivalrous" themselves, researchers are rivalrous like objects, meaning that they cannot fully participate in both research and production. Thus, the portion of the

population that takes part in research is excluded from the potential production group.

Although this seems fairly simple, not all countries are growing on the same level, and there are still some countries that still didn't escape from the Malthusian trap. Thus, to roughly generalize, developed countries escaped the Malthusian trap, while developing countries are still circling there. For Europe, in Malthusian point of view, escape from trap is related to mass mortality due to several illnesses, urbanization and wars that lead to lowering population growth. Also, the Industrial Revolution itself also played an important role in this process.

One could raise another question that is "why not all countries are not innovative on the same level". One way to explain this, could be the culture as the core of society. To make it simple, nations grouped in 2 categories called individualists and collectivists. Each of them has their own advantages and disadvantages. Individualist societies are more advantageous in innovation, while collectivists are better at coordinating production.

Gorodnichenko and Roland made a cross-country regression with several instrumental variables, including certain genes- "the frequency of the S-allele in the serotonin transporter gene 5HTLLPR, that made people more suitable for depression in stressful situations, and the frequency of the G allele in polymorphism A118G in the μ -opoid receptor gene, creating a stronger psychological pain from social exclusion" (Yuriy Gorodnichenko, Gerard Roland, 2017).

According to their research the United States is the most individualistic country in their sample, and according to U.S census data, people from individualistic cultures have a likelihood to work in science and research. As the conclusion of their research, individualism has a significant effect on income per worker. The assumption made by the authors is that high social status granted to successful people with discoveries is the reason for that, because in collectivist cultures, confirmation is more important than differentiation. Also, collectivist countries with more paternal insights giving this superiority to people in religion, army and other related activities. Comparing the advantages of these categories, although due to better production setting collectivist cultures could develop more than individualistic cultures, in the long-run they will be surpassed by the latter.

"The country [Azerbaijan] is in a Malthusian trap, as population growth is higher than non-resource economy growth."

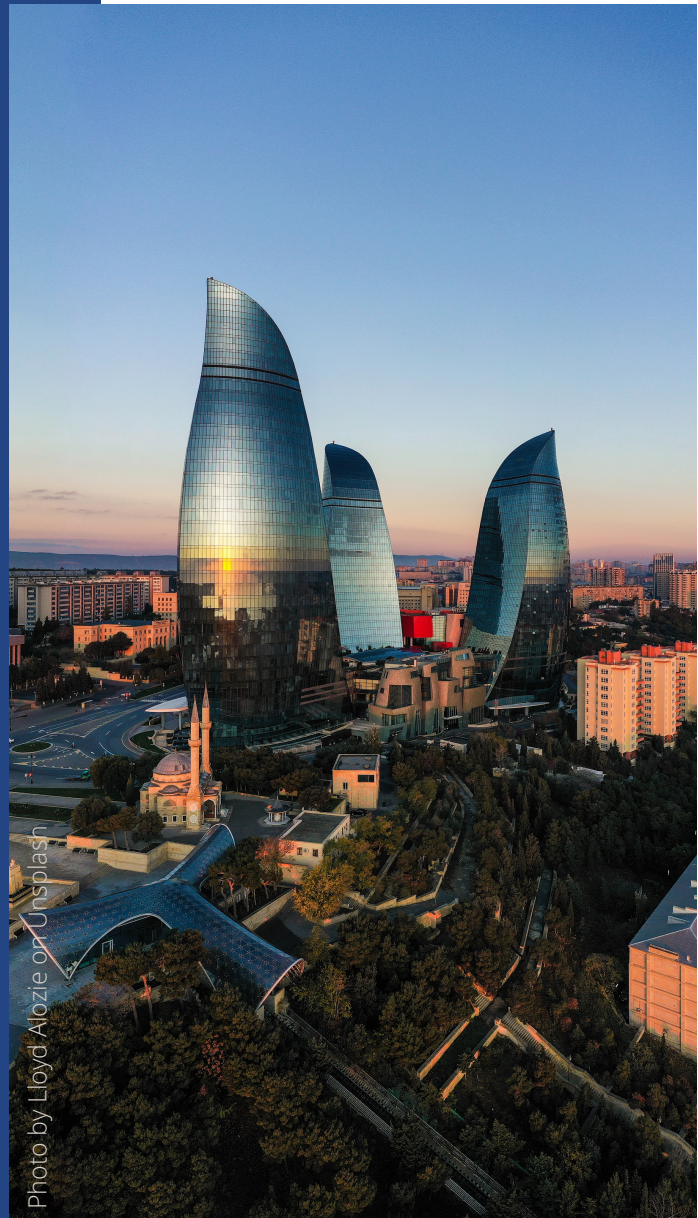
From the results of Geert Hofstede's 6D model of national culture, Azerbaijan is a collectivist nation. Analysing its economy, the current economic situation is mostly based on trade of resources and by high revenue from the economy is implementing some technologies, but still not developing innovation. That's why, excluding resource funding, the country is in a Malthusian trap, as population growth is higher than non-resource economy growth.

Here, the resource funding has an almost equal effect of technology as shifting the

steady state level that discussed above. Due to all of this Azerbaijan can be considered as an object economy, and still circling in the Malthusian trap as the majority of developing countries of the world. As a suggestion to escape the trap, the example of Japan would be useful. Despite its collectivist culture, Japan is one of the most innovative countries. As the explanation of this paradox, using the “conformity” specific of its culture for stimulating the innovation by lifting the educators and innovators in society can be shown as an example for other collectivist countries. The second suggestion would be to optimize the advantage of collectivist cultures- production chain and use the outcomes of the growth for developing innovation like China.

In conclusion, for escaping the Malthusian trap, and achieving sustained growth collectivist countries like Azerbaijan, should develop their production at first as this is the natural specifics of these cultures. Second, they should use the other specific “conformity” to benefit innovation and research by granting high status to these types of individuals.

ISA ALLAHVERDIYEV 



13 ENLARGING EUROPE EASTWARD: WHAT MAKES ARMENIA EUROPEAN?

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is difficult to define in terms of belonging. With a Soviet communist past and contemporary post-Soviet challenges, the six countries of the Partnership hardly fit into certain geographic, political or cultural boundaries. An intriguing question that usually arises on the issue of EaP belonging is the following: How and why is the Eastern Partnership European? Is it accurate to call it Europe(an) at all? What makes this multi-lingual, multi-cultured, and inherently diverse geopolitical unit European and to what extent does the European belonging change from one EaP country to another?

In an attempt to further the discussion on the issue, this article seeks to examine the European belonging of the Armenian people, the overwhelming ethnic majority of the Republic of Armenia, one of the EaP states situated on the border between Asia and Europe. In evaluating the extent of the European belonging of Armenia and the Armenian people only one approach will be taken as a point of departure- the Armenian heritage and history. The current socio-political landscape of the Republic of Armenia and the scale of its European orientation will not be discussed, leaving a place for future input and contributions on the issue of the 'European-ness' of Armenia.

At the core of the ethno-religious development of the Armenian people lies the Christian religion. The Armenian culture, mindset, and value system have been immensely influenced and conditioned by Christianity since the 4th century onward.

Without engaging in any sort of racist, nationalistic or far-right discourses that Europe and Armenia are inherently, and only, Christian, it is safe to argue that the Armenian Church has developed and shaped the Armenian identity in similar ways the Catholic and Protestant Churches formed the identity of the peoples of Central-Western Europe. Although representing different denominations of Christianity, both the Western forms of Christianity and the Armenian Apostolic Church share a plethora of traditions, values, and beliefs that are rooted in the principles of the Christian faith.

"Europe and Armenia [...] share a crucial value system and identity marker that is the Christian religion."

Despite the emergence of modern secular states in Europe and beyond and the decreasing significance of religious belonging and identity, it is still hard to deny the role of the Church and Christianity in the construction of what Europe and Armenia are nowadays. Hence, I argue that in the historical development of Europe and Armenia, of the European and Armenian, those two share a crucial value system and identity marker that is the Christian religion.

Another curious aspect of the Armenian heritage that links the Armenian people to Europe is the Armenian language. As a language with a rather distinct alphabet,

vocabulary, and sound system, Armenian is hardly understood in an entanglement of what we call 'European languages.' However, the Armenian language has been long proved to be a distinct member of the Indo-European language family. Here it is again imperative to state that it is not my intention to argue, neither I believe that



there is no Europe outside the Indo-European ethno-linguistic bond. That being said, the Indo-European language family represents the biggest linguistic landscape of Europe, and the fact that the Armenian language is a member of that landscape adds to the discourse of common origins between the Armenian people and the peoples of the rest of Europe.

Apart from the religious and linguistic similarities, there have been many historical ties between Armenia and Europe. To name and list all of those historical ties and connections is beyond the reach of this article. One of those ties, however, I consider particularly intriguing and worth mentioning. It is a lesser-known fact but there was a French-Armenian dynasty of the Lusignan that ruled over the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia on the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean in the 14th century.

In fact, this was the last Armenian dynasty and its last king Leo/ Levon V was granted a couple of towns (Madrid, Andújar, Guadalajara, and Villareal) in what is known today as Spain by John I but spent his last

years in Paris, France and was buried there. Hence, interestingly the last Armenian king had French and Armenian origin, was granted towns in modern-day Spain and is buried in Paris. The House of Lusignan and the life of the last king of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, therefore, are prime examples of the historical ties of the Armenian people with Europe.

This article attempted to assess the extent of the European belonging and identity of Armenians and Armenia. The Armenian heritage and history were revisited in the account of their compatibility and mutuality of what is generally perceived as Europe or European. With fact-based examples of religion, language, and history, the article illustrated how Europe and the European resonate in Armenia and the Armenians. Nevertheless, the main aim of the article, as stated in the beginning, is to encourage and further discussions on the European belonging of the EaP region and its member states from various angles.

NERSES HOVSEPYAN 9



IN

TER

VIEWS

YOUNG EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS ARE CHANGING THE WORLD – A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS WITH YEAs

14 INTERVIEW WITH ELLADA GASPARYAN FROM ARMENIA

Mafalda

Hello, Ellada! Thank you so much for collaborating in this series of interviews and sharing your experience as a YEA and your thoughts about the EaP. Who is Ellada? How would you describe yourself?

Ellada

Thanks for having me, Mafalda! It's great to share my experiences and thoughts with EU YEAs! My name is Ellada Gasparyan and I'm from Armenia. I have studied at Yerevan State University, and my job is related to literary criticism. I love doing fictional translations. I love nature and outdoor life very much, and one of my passions is hiking. I like to discover the secret corners of Armenia, which has so many beautiful landscapes. While studying at the university, I had many volunteer experiences, but the most memorable one was teaching Armenian at Diaspora Summer school. It was really challenging to teach your language to foreigners and Armenians who lived in foreign countries. Now, I am working as an international events coordinator in the biggest IT company in Yerevan. Besides that, I love French movies, English literature, Italian cuisine, and Armenian Wine!

Mafalda

That sounds super interesting and I already

see we have some things in common! It is really nice to meet you! So, how long have you been a YEA?

Ellada

I've been part of the initiative since 2019, so it's already been more than two years that I am happy to be called a Young European Ambassador.

Mafalda

Great! And what was the main reason why you became a YEA?

Ellada

I was always interested in EU opportunities and following different EU pages on social media. One fine day, I saw a post about becoming a Young European Ambassador. I remember I was very excited to challenge myself and I applied right away!

Mafalda

Ahah! I believe it was the same with me! Can you tell me about your experiences as a YEA? What projects did you organise?

Ellada

Well, we are organising many informative visits to the different regions of Armenia, during which we introduce EU opportunities to our audience. There is a lack of information about it in some Armenian regions, and every time we tell people about all the opportunities, we see how excited they get. One of the most successful projects was the coffee truck that we parked near the Republic Square, in Yerevan. We

invited people for a coffee and chatted about human rights.

Mafalda

Wow! That's amazing! I believe that the simplest projects can be the most impactful ones and that sounds like an incredible activity! Congratulations! And if you could choose your favourite YEA project, what would it be?

Ellada

Every project is important to me, but my favourite was the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership. It was inspiring to see all the work, the staff, and the ambassadors from other countries in Brussels. We shared so much information! Sharing experiences is one of the most important things to me. It was amazing!

Mafalda

Yeah! Unfortunately, I was not a YEA at the time, but I can only imagine how incredible it must be to meet everyone in person and share experiences! So, we already talked about your experiences as a YEA, but now I want to know: what is the policy area that is closer to your heart? And why?

Ellada

That's a good question! The closest one to my heart would be "Stronger Society", because I believe everything starts with a single person. If we want to have a stronger environment, stronger governance, and a stronger economy, we must have a well-educated, well-informed, intelligent, and prudent society!

Mafalda

I totally agree with you! I would also select "Stronger Society" as the closest to my heart among the priority areas of the EaP! So, with that said, if you could change or improve

something in your country, what would it be?

Ellada

Hm... The first thing that came to my mind is that I would love to make my country more comfortable and appropriate for people with disabilities. Especially nowadays, after the war, we have so many young people who used to live differently. Now, their lives and their actions are limited. They have limited opportunities and that's unfair. I would really like to make my country accessible for everyone!

Mafalda

Yes, I totally understand you. I had the chance to work on a project about disabled people in my country and I understood how hard their daily-lives can be, so I'm supporting you on that! So, we are almost at the end of our interview, but I would still like to ask you: what is your dream for the EaP countries?

Ellada

Good question! I would definitely like to see sustainable development and equal rights in EaP countries.

Mafalda

And what about the EU?

Ellada

Keep moving forward with "stronger together"! (Laugh)

Mafalda

Definitely! Thank you very much, Ellada, for joining me on this project! It was great to talk to you!

Ellada

Thank you, Mafalda, for inviting me! It's always a pleasure to cooperate with YEAs from different countries!

15 INTERVIEW WITH PASHA BABAYEV FROM AZERBAIJAN

Mafalda:

Hello, Pasha! Thank you for joining this series of interviews about the YEAs initiative and how we are helping to change the world! I'm Mafalda Infante, an EU-based YEA from Portugal and I'm happy to learn a bit more about you and your thoughts about the Eastern Partnership! So, can you tell me a bit about yourself?

Pasha:

Hi Mafalda! Thank you for inviting me for this series of interviews, I'm honoured to be part of this challenge! Well, my name is Pasha Babayev and I'm a YEA from Azerbaijan, currently living in The Netherlands. I did my Bachelor's degree in International Relations in Baku. I am a Global UGRAD Exchange Program Alumnus and spent a semester at Juniata College in the United States in 2017, which helped me broaden my horizons and gain international experience. The highlight of my Bachelor years was undergoing an internship at the UN Baku office and participating in multiple international conferences and trainings, including Erasmus Youth Exchanges. Last year, I was accepted to the EMJMD European Politics and Society program with a scholarship, so currently, I live in the Hague, the Netherlands, in a studio apartment overlooking the beautiful canal, and waiting to be vaccinated!

Mafalda:

Ahah! That sounds like a great experience! And speaking about experiences, how long have you been a YEA? And what was the reason why you joined the network?

Pasha:

I joined the YEAs, in 2018, after participating in EuroSchool, a several-day-long training session organized by EUDEL Aze. That was where I heard about this initiative for the first time. As someone who is passionate about human rights, democracy, activism and youth work, I thought this network was a perfect opportunity for me to develop my own skills and help the Azerbaijani youth in the process as well.

Mafalda:

That sounds like the perfect reason! The YEAs initiative is, indeed, a great opportunity to promote human rights, democracy and youth engagement! So, still on your experience as a YEA, in which projects were you involved?

Pasha:

I was involved in numerous projects as a YEA. For the International Human Rights Day, I organized a cooking masterclass for children with special needs at one of the local restaurants in Baku.

Also, as a part of a working group activity, we conducted an environmental workshop in the Botanical Garden for IDP children. Besides that, one of the most impactful training that we arranged was an anti-bullying workshop for Baku schoolteachers. I was also a YEAs selection committee member, interviewing incoming candidates and nominees. So, I can say being a YEA has been a very meaningful experience so far, allowing me to actually create impactful projects for our society.

Mafalda:

Yes! Being a YEA can be such an inspiring and impactful experience and from what I see, you organised amazing projects! Can you name your favourite activity you organised as a YEA?

Pasha:

Except for the projects mentioned previously, I found attending youth centres in various cities of Azerbaijan to hold info sessions on fully-funded youth opportunities to be extremely exciting and inspirational. Sharing my experience as someone who enjoyed life-changing journeys across Europe available to young people free of charge and giving advice on how to best seize these opportunities made me realize how privileged I was to have had decent education and knowledge of the English language. It struck me that most do not have the resources to enjoy the rights I do and might need to work disproportionately harder to get to others' starting points. I consider myself lucky if I were able to contribute to the achievement of their dreams.

Mafalda:

That's amazing to hear! And I totally agree with you! So, I see that promoting human rights is a major goal for you. If you could

choose a policy area that is close to your heart under the scope of the EU-Eastern Neighbourhood relations, what would it be? And why?

Pasha:

Yes, definitely human rights, specifically LGBTQ+ rights! Azerbaijan is far behind not only Europe, but also the entire eastern neighbourhood region in this aspect. I wish the EU chose a more decisive action in order to promote LGBTQ+ rights in Azerbaijan by organizing more activities, projects and holding talks with the local LGBTQ community on how best to address homophobia. LGBTQ+ rights is a challenging topic to discuss in Azerbaijan, including with the authorities, but I believe the EU, as a human rights promoter, could do much more to support our LGBTQ+ citizens, who struggle every day for freedom and equality.

Mafalda:

Yeah, indeed! I believe LGBTQ+ rights are a major concern for the Young European Ambassadors and we can also do even more to call for a stronger EU's action on this matter! From your previous answers, I see that you have great ideas on what could be improved in the Eastern Partnership countries, as well as in the EU's response. Can you give me some more examples of what you would change in



Azerbaijan?

Pasha:

Human rights, democracy, rule of law, but also the education system. Not surprisingly, the level of education is intrinsically linked with the level of democracy. A stronger academic freedom must be ensured and the education system must reorient to the Western model.

Mafalda:

Thank you very much, Pasha, for sharing your thoughts! We are reaching the end of the interview but I still have two final questions to ask. First, what is your dream for the EaP countries?

Pasha:

A democratic region where fundamental rights of every person are ensured regardless of their gender, race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

Mafalda:

And what about the EU? What is your dream?

Pasha:

A responsible Union of states willing to help strengthen democratic institutions and empower and inspire civil society in the neighbourhood countries and around the world, ensuring access to the same rights and freedoms that EU citizens are lucky to enjoy.

Mafalda:

Thank you so much, Pasha, for such an inspiring interview! Hopefully, in the future, and with the YEAs contribution, your dreams will come true!



16 INTERVIEW WITH VAHE ASATRYAN FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Mafalda

Hi, Vahe! It is so nice to count on your participation in this project! Welcome!

Vahe

Hi, Mafalda! Thank you for inviting me! I'm glad to join you for this interview!

Mafalda: So, for those who don't know you yet, can you tell me a bit about yourself? Maybe some interesting facts besides your studies and professional background!

Mafalda

So, for those who don't know you yet, can you tell me a bit about yourself?

Vahe

Yes, sure! Well... I sing and play the piano, I love reading, listening to music and cinema in general. I'm from the Czech Republic, which is famed for its 'City of a Hundred Spires' - Prague - as well as world-class beer! Fun fact: The country also has the highest per capita beer consumption in the world, and hosts the EU Agency for the Space Programme. Incidentally, I studied at King's College London and the London School of Economics, completing my Bachelor's and Master's degrees respectively in Political Economy and International Social & Public Policy. I'm a young professional now working in research and data analytics. As a Czech citizen of Armenian heritage, I have volunteered in a wide array of local and international organisations throughout the years, notably for the AGBU - the Armenian General Benevolent Union - as well as the Tekeyan Trust in London, both of which work tirelessly in promoting humanitarian, educational and socio-economic development initiatives in

Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora.

Mafalda

You definitely have an impressive background! It's always inspiring to talk to you! What about your experience as a YEA?

Vahe

I've been a YEA since 2018 and, lately, I have been an active member of the Events Management Team and Partnerships and Impact Team. I have also been a core team member of the Dialogue Initiative, a special joint project between EU-EaP YEAs aimed at fostering greater ties and areas of mutual cooperation. I have been Team Leader of the EU-Armenia DI and also supported the organisation of the EU-Georgia DI. I am likewise a Speaker & Team Member in 'Europeans at Heart,' the official EU YEAs Podcast Series, and a Mentor in the EU YEAs Mentorship Programme. Most recently I became an editor in the YEAs Magazine as well, where this interview will be published!

Mafalda

Ahah! Yes! And we've been working on some of these projects together, such as the Dialogue Initiative and our beloved podcast! It's been an amazing journey! But what was the reason why you joined the YEAs Initiative?

Vahe

Yes, indeed! I found out about the YEAs Initiative from friends who had previously applied to the programme as well. As a Czech/EU citizen of Armenian descent, I believe that building bridges and working together across borders are the most powerful ways through which we can ensure

a sustainable and peaceful future for Europe based on solidarity. The YEAs Initiative not only creates a vital platform for cross-cultural dialogue, but also provides the unique opportunity for young people, such as myself, to actively engage in issues affecting our collective lives - whether they be socio-political, economic, security-related, environmental, or otherwise. When we effectively understand each others' history and points of view, we form a fruitful basis for trust and continuous cooperation, realising that there is more that unites us than divides us. The YEAs are committed to a shared framework of values underpinned by democracy, human rights, the rule of law, solidarity as well as the promotion of regional peace and stability. It is based on these values, high principles and the above collective reasons that I applied to become a YEA!

Mafalda

Yes, I couldn't agree more! And I can tell that, from all the YEAs I already interviewed, we are all on the same page, which is amazing to see! So, you already mentioned your roles as a YEA, what was your favourite project so far?

Vahe

My favourite project thus far, which I both organised and took part in, is the Dialogue Initiative. For me, it stands at the core of the YEAs Initiative and what we do, and allows for us, EU YEAs, to enter into constructive dialogue and partnership with our friends in the EaP. The planning and implementation - though made more difficult by the realities of the pandemic and long-distance communication - have been facilitated by a myriad of Zoom calls, online brainstorming sessions, focus group meetings, endless hours of joint research, as well as presentation preparation. The most

incredible and delightful impact has been getting to know and build an encouraging network of like-minded young people across the EU-EaP space. I believe these foundations will serve us superbly for further projects and milestones down the line. As the saying goes, we are #StrongerTogether!

Mafalda

Definitely! And, as you know, this is also my favourite project and it's been amazing to meet such inspiring young people from the EaP countries! Moving on to some of your ideas about the EaP, I wanted to ask you: if you could choose an area of cooperation that is close to your heart, what would it be?

Vahe

Hmm... I would love to engage in peace-building and foreign/security policy in the Eastern Neighbourhood, as I believe it is the most imminent issue affecting Europe's easternmost regions. Several semi-frozen conflicts continue to plague the development of the EaP countries, and as a hotbed for competing foreign and supranational interests, I believe the promotion of dialogue, peace-building, security, solidarity and stability would not only benefit the development of the region as a whole, but also bolster its chances of full European integration and full-fledged acceptance of universal values.

Mafalda

And what about the EU? What would you change if you could? And also, what do you think the EU could do for EaP countries that is still not being tackled.

Vahe

Reforming the process of European integration, particularly with the departure of the UK in mind, as well as strengthening the cohesiveness and effectiveness of EU

foreign policy. As for what the EU could do for EaP countries, I believe the EU could do more to promote regional peace, prosperity and stability, by acting as an important partner, spearheaded by its vital array of universal values.



Most importantly, the EU could strive to fill the vacuum in the socio-political and security landscape that is currently being filled by Russia and Turkey - especially in the Caucasus. The EU's positive influence could be even greater if it acted steadfastly,

decisively, substantively and courageously, to protect its values in its periphery.

Mafalda

Thank you for sharing your thoughts! We are almost at the end of our interview, but I still have two things to ask you. What is your dream of the EaP? And for the EU?

Vahe

Good question! My dream for the EaP countries is for them to join the EU and to build lasting peace in a currently volatile region. As for the EU, I would like it to be more cohesive, effective and organised when dealing with shared challenges!

Mafalda

Thank you, Vahe! It is always great to hear your thoughts! Thank you for joining the interview! And, as usual, talk to you soon!

Vahe

Cheers, Mafalda! Thanks for having me! See you soon!

17 INTERVIEW WITH TATIA PARADASHVILI FROM GEORGIA

Mafalda:

Hello, Tatia! It is so nice to interview you for this project! Thank you for accepting the invitation! For those who don't know you yet, can you tell us a bit more about yourself?

Tatia:

Hi, Mafalda! It is great to be here! Thank you for inviting me! So, about me... I feel honoured to be able to say that I have been a Young European Ambassador for around

10 months and that some months ago I became the Vice-Coordinator of Young European Ambassadors in Georgia. Besides that, I am an International Relations Specialist, and a co-founder/ executive director of the non-governmental organization Young Leaders' International Academy that aims to engage and empower young leaders at both the local and the international levels through projects, workshops and trainings. Our priority is to

projects, workshops and trainings. Our priority is to support the dissemination of reliable information to the young people about the opportunities that involve volunteering, non-formal and formal education, exchange programs in Europe and the U.S., as well as raising awareness about environmental issues, gender equality and women empowerment! I am so proud of our team that is working so hard despite the pandemic situation and with limited resources to bring our goals into reality and make a change in our community!

Mafalda:

That's super inspiring! And it sounds like an amazing project! Congratulations! So, going back to your role as a YEA, can you describe it a bit more?

Tatia:

Yes, sure! I am a volunteer Vice-Coordinator of Young European Ambassadors in Georgia. As a YEA I have been part of different online and offline projects at local and international levels. For example, I can proudly recall my participation in trainings about disinformation, raising awareness about the EU, as well as organizing a European Council online simulation project to involve Georgian youngsters in the decision-making process. There have been interesting campaigns as well, that proved to us that creativity is a key to spreading the correct information. This whole journey with my colleagues is captured in my vlogs available on the YouTube platform!

Mafalda:

It is amazing to know that we can find vlogs about your experience as a YEA on YouTube! I can tell you that I already watched some of them and I highly recommend our readers to do the same!

Tatia:

Thank you, Mafalda!

Mafalda:

So, Tatia, what made you join the Young European Ambassadors initiative?

Tatia:

Well, I found out about the initiative from my friends who became YEAs earlier, and as soon as I got more information about the network, I was super motivated to be part of this amazing family. I've joined the initiative because I believe this platform supports the innovative ideas I had for the community, it would give me the opportunity to expand my horizons, and to share my knowledge and experience with others. The process of becoming a YEA was absolutely interesting and engaging. The selection process was itself experimental, because for the first time YEAs recommended the candidates and the process took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am more than happy about having a mentor who guided me during the different stages of the process. Later, my colleagues and I joined the mentors' team and supported the new candidates. Personally, all the values of the EU are equally motivational for me. Respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law should be recognized and followed by all the countries to have a striving and safe environment for the society!

Mafalda:

That's definitely true! And what about the projects you organised or attended so far? Can you tell me what was your favourite?

Tatia:

As a YEA, I have been part of different interesting projects in different regions of

Georgia, as well as of international projects with YEAs from different countries. The most special one was cycling in the centre of Tbilisi with my fellow YEAs and representatives of the EU delegation in Georgia. The goal of this massive campaign was to protect the environment and to reduce the pollution in the city. With the help of my colleagues and the participants, I have created a vlog about this event to help spreading information to as many people as possible. But my favourite project so far was an online simulation of the European Council. I have successfully organised this project twice with the help of my amazing colleagues: Nino Turiashvili, Dea Magalashvili, and Giorgi Mamulashvili. We have worked hard to organise the online project that would gather motivated youngsters from all over Georgia. We have delivered proper training about the EU structure to the participants, who later represented different countries and had an active discussion about a specific topic: "Should EU countries open the border to the EaP countries during the COVID-19 pandemic?". The project lasted for a couple of hours and successfully engaged young people, who got the practical experience of the European Council working structure, debates and public speaking. I am really proud of this achievement and would like to express my gratitude to the organising team and the participants once again!

Mafalda:

That's such an amazing idea! And an inspiring one for YEAs in other countries, including in the EU! You already mentioned some values that are important to you as a YEA and a citizen. If you could choose an area of cooperation that is close to your heart under the scope of the Eastern Neighbourhood, what would it be? And why?

Tatia:

Under the scope of the Eastern Neighbourhood, I would work on strengthening institutions and good governance, as well as on mobility and people-to-people contacts. I would like to use my professional knowledge and experience to contribute to the process of strengthening governance and connectivity. In my opinion, we still need to address and work on the issues related to these spheres!

Mafalda:

Interesting! And so, if you could change or improve something in your country, what would it be?

Tatia:

That is a great question! In my opinion, Georgia is on the way to development and this process is full of opportunities and obstacles at the same time. I would pay more attention to the communities in the regions, I would love to see more awareness-raising campaigns about strong governance and the power of each citizen in the process of creating strong democratic institutions. This is fundamental for a striving state!

Mafalda:

And following your previous answers, what do you think the EU could do for your country that is still not being tackled?

Tatia:

The EU is actively supporting the developing processes in Georgia and the results of the collaborations in different spheres are obviously fruitful. Our people and government consider the EU as one of the most reliable friends and allies. EU-Georgia relations successfully cover issues related to political dialogue and reform, political



association, justice, and freedom and security. Economic and sectoral cooperation, as well as trade-related matters, foreign and security policy, and peaceful conflict resolution are top priorities where the EU collaborates and supports Georgia. I think all the spheres where Georgia could be assisted and guided are covered in the priority goals of the Eastern Partnership.

Mafalda:

Thank you so much, Tatia, for sharing your incredible ideas! We are reaching the end of our interview, but I would still like to ask you two final questions. So, first, what is your dream for the EaP countries?

Tatia:

My dream for the EaP countries is a peaceful and stable development. These countries took many successful steps for ensuring human rights, freedom, democracy, equality, and the rule of law. This process is complex

and requires constant dedication. So, I dream to see the sustainable results of this dedication from each country. Also, it is super important to solve the crisis provoked by the pandemic in EaP countries, so we can mitigate its effects on the countries development.

Mafalda:

What about the EU? What is your dream for the EU?

Tatia:

The goal to create a continent of peace, solidarity, and shared prosperity was achieved by the EU, but now it is important to maintain this European Dream and be surrounded by neighbours that share the same values. The Covid-19 was a huge crisis for the whole world, and so, my dream for the EU is about its' recovery plan to turn the pandemic crisis into an opportunity to be fulfilled!

Mafalda:

Thank you again, Tatia, for sharing all your inspiring ideas with us! It is always great to talk with you!

Tatia:

Thank you for inviting me, Mafalda! It was a pleasure!

18 INTERVIEW WITH VALENTIN JOSAN FROM MOLDOVA

Mafalda

Hello Valentin! Thank you very much for joining this interview! How are you?

Valentin

Hi, Mafalda! I'm good, thank you! How are you? It is my pleasure to join this project. Thanks for inviting me!

Mafalda

Thank you! So, let's get started! Can you tell me a bit more about yourself?

Valentin

Yes, of course. I am a Moldovan sophomore at New York University Abu Dhabi, interested in economics, politics, international relations, and governance and administration. My passion for these subjects has been materialised over time into active civic involvement and initiative on a national and international scale. Hence, I had the great privilege to help organising Moldova's latest MUN and TEDxED, and undertake an assistantship job in the Parliament of the Republic, whilst promoting and keeping close to my heart European values at home, as well as in the UK and the UAE - countries where I've been obtaining my education.

Mafalda

That sounds amazing! What about your experience as a YEA? How long have you been part of the initiative and what are your main roles?

Valentin

I am a YEA since 2019, but as of 2020 I am a mentor within the Moldovan network of YEAs, taking also part in the EU#Economy and

EU#HumanRights teams. During my time in the initiative, I moderated two editions of a disinformation training session, organised and participated in some social events and activities, and attended several workshops with regional European experts, as well as one in-person conference in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Mafalda

Great experiences, I see! And what was the main reason for you to join the initiative?

Valentin

I like to think I've always been a true European in my heart, so the act of joining the YEAs was quite natural and a matter-of-course. I decided to officialise, or rather find an "excuse frame" for my unconditional respect for European principles such as equality, liberty, tolerance, or inclusion, and the Young European Ambassadors initiative seemed to be the most fitting opportunity. I was applying with friends, I already knew people from the project, and the application and integration process was smooth and easy, so it was a huge pleasure to get involved with the Moldovan team right from the beginning.

Mafalda

And how has the experience been so far? What was your favourite activity?

Valentin

Gamarjoba, Sakartvelo! Many YEAs reading this will probably only be able to imagine how it feels to participate at a European conference taking place in person, yet I had the pleasure to be selected for such an event in Georgia, in the autumn of 2019,

before the pandemic. For three days, I followed several discussion panels regarding the threat of Kremlin-initiated disinformation in the EU and the EaP region, with speakers from a multitude of professional backgrounds – from politics and journalism, to religion and active citizenship, and I learned a lot about the topic. The knowledge acquired helped me to implement back home the training sessions I mentioned previously and developed my own perception of fake news and propaganda to a new level, one of deeper understanding and better analysis. It goes without saying that I had the chance to visit the beautiful Tbilisi, taste its delicious khinkali and the fantastic wine, and meet some good friends I have there; because the YEAs initiative is not only about official meetings and event organisation. We have fun, discover cultures, and spend good time together.

Mafalda

I'm sure it was a great experience! Unfortunately I joined the network during the pandemic, so I did not have the chance to meet everyone in person, but I can't wait! But speaking about the EaP, if you could choose an area of cooperation that is close to your heart under the scope of the eastern neighbourhood, what would it be? And why?

Valentin

Hmm... I would choose the domain that lied at the foundation of the creation of the European Union – economic interaction. The ESCC – the predecessor of the EU, was created with the intention of establishing a centralised control of steel and coal, that was thought to reduce drastically tension between European countries and bring peace to the continent. It's been 70 years since the emergence of such an alliance, and the EU area, that comprises the majority

of Europe, is now militarily calmer than ever. The communitarian bloc heavily invests in the EaP countries. It offers grants and access to projects and advantageous credits, creates jobs and funds entrepreneurship plans, provides logistical and informational assistance. Direct investment from the EU builds up to 71% of the total investment Moldova receives, and 67% of our exports go to the common European market. We resist economically thanks to the EU, and it makes Moldovans even more eager to follow the path of European integration.



Mafalda

Yes, that's true! You were speaking about Moldova. So, if you could change/improve something in your country, what would it be?

Valentin

I think a big problem we have at home – probably one that needs urgent attention, is the highly dysfunctional justice system. In 2014, the world was struck by news that caused stupefaction, anger, and understandable mockery – 1 billion dollars had simply disappeared from three of our main banks. Until now, practically no-one has been convicted in regards to this case.

This massive dilapidation caught everyone's eyes, but instances of misappropriation of public funds, significant acts of political corruption, and many more behaviours that can easily fall under the scope of the penal code and remain unnoticed by prosecutors happen every day, and I could sense myself the grandeur of the dirt while working in the Parliamentary office. The justice system should work for the country, not for some limited interest groups. If there is no punishment for unlawfulness, a state is condemned to failure. In the case of Moldova, justice reforms are strongly needed not only to encourage economic and political progress, but to continue our process of Euro-integration and have access to European funds - especially after the recent unprecedented decision of the European Commission to provide us with 600 million euros. We can look at the most developed countries to understand what should be changed in our justice entrenchment, but good examples are right under our nose - Romania and Georgia. Hopefully, Moldova will also become one day an example for the region.

Mafalda

Thank you for sharing your thoughts! And speaking about the EU, What do you think the EU could do for your country that is still not being tackled?

Valentin

I honestly struggle to find a pertinent answer for this question. Some people might argue the EU does nothing to influence the EaP political classes and filter out the individuals who impede the countries from adopting democratic ways of development. Here it is important to understand how much the European Union values state sovereignty and the ideology of non-implication in internal affairs, a position that is sometimes

critiqued but totally legitimate and follows the lines of the European credo. This doesn't really give a response to the question, but I believe no answer is an answer too. I can add, however, that the EU could be a better player in the Transnistrian frozen conflict, because it is a member of the 5+2 negotiations format for finding a long-lasting peace agreement. With this being said, it should be stated that the situation is too complex to move from a dead point if only the EU manifests greater political will and openness.

Mafalda

We are reaching the end of our interview, but I still have to questions to ask you! What is your dream for the EaP countries? And also, what is your dream for the EU?

Valentin

I have three main wishes for the EaP countries, especially in the light of some recent unfortunate events: prosperity, peace, and respect for the will of the people. I know amazing people from all six states. Young people who value freedom of expression and opinion, the right to self-determination and fair trial. Citizens who love their countries and want them to flourish, but incredibly hurt because of some current happenings. True leaders who dare to dream and imagine a future with no more conflicts, wars, and severe infringements of human rights. I want you to keep generating and keeping alive such people, Eastern Partnership. And I also wish you to experience a successful and fast European integration. But these are not mutually exclusive. As for the EU, I could write a whole essay on this, or a few simple, yet incorporating words. First, I wish the EU to resist through time and space. In 70 years, it has shown incredible strength and determination, despite numerous attacks

and falls. I want these breakdowns to only consolidate the Union. Second, my dream for the EU is to further see it spreading its convictions around the globe. I want it to create a new pandemic – this time one of values, that awakens and empowers instead of killing. And third, I wish it to extend its boundaries in the next years by at least a bit. Six countries of the EaP is not that much.

Mafalda

I think we both agree on that! Thank you very much, Valentin, for such an inspiring interview!

Valentin

Thank you for inviting me, it is always good to share some thoughts about the EaP!

19

INTERVIEW WITH KATERYNA KRAVCHENKO FROM UKRAINE

Mafalda

Hi, Kateryna! Thank you for accepting the invitation to talk about your experience as a YEA and your ideas for the EaP! Tell me a bit more about yourself!

Kateryna

Hello, Mafalda! Thank you for inviting me! Well, my name is Kateryna Kravchenko and I'm from Ukraine. Since I am a big fan of statistics, I would summarize my life with a series of numbers, can I?

Mafalda

Yes, sure! That Sounds great!

Kateryna

So, I had the opportunity to live in 6 different countries; I'm trying to advance my skills in 5 languages; I spent 4 years studying Economic Cybernetics in Ukraine; I took part in 3 different Erasmus+ programmes; I pursued an Erasmus Mundus Degree in International Development Studies for 2 years; and, of course, I am 1 member of a big and united family of YEAs across the EaP and the EU!

Mafalda

That sounds like a life full of great experiences! And speaking about numbers. How long have you been a YEA?

Kateryna

Oh, yes! That's an important one! 7

months, since October 2020!

Mafalda

Oh, great! Just like me! And what's your current role as a YEA?

Kateryna

Currently, I'm part of the Mentorship Team!

Mafalda

And what about the reason why you joined YEAs? What were the enthusiasm and the values behind it?

Kateryna

As it often happens with word of mouth, I discovered the Young European Ambassadors thanks to my friends. I put a pin on that and decided to apply after I finished my Master's program. The values, goals and views of YEAs are strongly chiming in with mine, so I felt incredibly happy to join the initiative.

Mafalda

And I'm sure the initiative is glad to have you! What is the favourite project you organized or attended as a YEA? Why?

Kateryna

Well, hopefully, with the ease of lockdown and the better situation around the COVID-19 situation, we will shift to primarily offline activities. Thus, I feel like the best projects are yet to come! The whole experience of being a part of the YEAs in Ukraine for me was connected to online activities. Maybe that's why my first online event, which I conducted on the topic of the European Solidarity Corps programme, was one of the most memorable for me. Our "firsts" somehow stick with us, they say.

Mafalda

Yes, definitely! So you already mentioned a

bit of your background and experiences. But if you could choose a cooperation area that is close to your heart under the scope of the eastern neighbourhood, what would it be? And why?

Kateryna

Hm... I would choose cooperation in the area of healthcare. In the EU's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the EU greatly supported the EaP countries through the Team Europe initiative, including support of SMEs and provision of vaccines via the COVAX program. Besides, the EU combats disinformation in the field of vaccination against COVID-19. The background for such passion is partially due to my thesis topic connected to the healthcare inequality on the example of vaccination in Ukraine.

Mafalda

Well, that sounds like an amazing and fundamental topic according to what we are living now! So, you already mentioned a bit about your country, including your studies that go around it. If you could change/improve something in your country, what would it be?

Kateryna

There is always room for improvement! However, if looking closely, I think small changes, such as the availability of sorting bins near each multi-apartment house would be of great value. Fortunately, such sorting bins in my city are already available in the big supermarkets; yet organic waste is not being collected. Besides, the machines accepting plastic and glass bottles in the supermarkets in an exchange for some sum for purchasing the products in the supermarket (so-called "pfand") could give an additional incentive to citizens to separate waste.

Mafalda

Yes! Waste management is a very important topic in every country! And on the EU side, what can the EU do for Ukraine that is still not being tackled?

Kateryna

I believe that capacity building has amazing effects on development prospects. Traineeships, internships, volunteering opportunities and youth exchanges can provide such capacity for young people. Sadly, the number of places for traineeships in EU institutions (e.g., Bluebook or Schuman) are either limited to a certain minor number or restricted for non-EU citizens at all. The number of ESC volunteering opportunities opened for non-EU residents is significantly lower as well. Such early-career options are a great lifting opportunity for young people, directly contributing to capacity building. Increasing the number of such opportunities as knowledge and professional exchange between young professionals from the EU and the EaP countries, Ukraine in particular, could definitely aid in being stronger together.

Mafalda

Thank you! I think that's great feedback that the EU institutions should take into account! We are reaching the end of our interview, but I would still like to ask you: what is your dream for the EaP countries?

Kateryna

I wish that the EaP countries maintain a strong cooperation track both with the EU and with each other!

Mafalda

And what is your dream for the EU?

Kateryna

Maintaining integrity, solidarity and fairness!

Mafalda

Thank you very much, Kateryna, for joining me on this project and for sharing your thoughts!

Kateryna

Thank you, Mafalda!



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Roxana Tompea studied International Relations and Diplomacy, Modern Languages, Politics and Public Administration in four European universities. She holds a dual Bachelors degree from the University of Essex (United Kingdom) and Universität Konstanz (Germany), and a Master of Advanced International Studies (MAIS) from the Diplomatische Akademie Wien and Universität Wien (Austria).



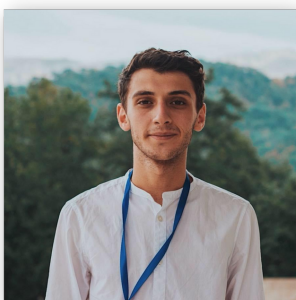
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AUTHORS



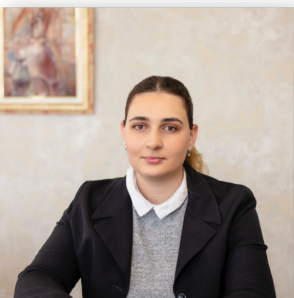
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