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Edition

YOUNG EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS MAGAZINE.



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DEAR READER,

We are extremely excited to welcome you to this new edition of the YEA Magazine!

We have worked hard to bring to you different perspectives on the European Union and the Eastern Partnership, travelling across the continent to investigate what impact young people are having on their societies, and how they see the future.

This is the European Year of Youth, and with this issue, we aim to make a statement: young people and their rights and needs are at the heart of society, they need to be at the centre of decision-making and to have the space they deserve. Meaningful youth participation is essential to a healthy and democratic society.

Have a safe trip!

EU NEIGHBOURS east

'EU NEIGHBOURS east' is the EU-funded regional communication programme funded by the European Commission (DG NEAR) through the European Neighbourhood Instrument. Its 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 Partnership (EaP) countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the 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 activities.

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.

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 a thousand young people from the EU and EaP countries have performed the role of Young European Ambassador.





THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN THE POLICIES OF THE EU IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP.



By Ibrahim Mammadov

With the adoption of a new approach by the European Union to its policy in the Eastern Neighbourhood, we can clearly see a greater focus on youth policy and on the need for greater youth participation in many spheres. This aim was also reflected in the [Joint Declaration](#), agreed by the leaders of the region's countries and the representatives of the EU at the Eastern Partnership Summit on 15 December 2021. While understanding the EU's new policies in the region, it is also important to understand the role of youth in the Eastern Partnership as the driving force of future cooperation between the EU and the region.



Having framed 2022 as the “**European Year of Youth**”, the focus of the European Union's youth policy can be felt not only internally within the Union but also in its policy towards the countries of the Eastern Partnership (EaP). Throughout the text of the Joint Declaration, adopted at the EaP Summit in December 2021, we can find words such as “young” and “youth” a total of 12 times, with the participation of youth stressed

in spheres such as inclusive engagement with society, settlement of conflicts, enhancement of EU branding in the region, the tackling of the issue of disinformation, investment for the mobility and development of youth, promotion of civil society, youth organisation and many more. The declaration also underlines the importance of the views of youth by considering the outcomes of the Youth Forum in Slovenia in November 2021. Apart from that, the appreciation of the role of youth in the enhancement of relations between the Eastern Partnership countries and the EU can also clearly be seen in the Joint Declaration's stated aim to double the number of Young European Ambassadors.

To better understand the success of the EU in its policy towards youth in the Eastern Neighbourhood, it can be useful to look at the opinion of young people in the region on aspects such as awareness of the EU's financial support and investment in their country, the level of optimism for future perspectives and the use of new media. While analysing the data from opinion surveys, conducted in the EaP countries 2020 by the EU NEIGHBOURS EAST project, in cooperation with ACT LLC, it is important to note the perception of the EU as a positive actor in the region by the population of the countries in the region, and the fact that this rate is particularly higher among the young population. The opinion survey showed that among the age group 15-35, 50 percent in Azerbaijan, 41 per cent in Armenia, 33 per cent in Georgia, 38 percent in Ukraine, and 46 per cent in Moldova view the EU as a positive actor. (EU NEIGHBOURS east, 2020).

This perception of the EU as a positive actor in the region can be explained by a number of reasons, one of which is the rate of awareness of the population about the financial support of the EU in the respective countries. This rate of awareness of at least one EU project was also particularly high among the region's young population, amounting to 53 per cent in Azerbaijan, 49 per cent in Moldova, and 57 per cent in Ukraine.

The successful implementation of a number of projects focusing on the enhancement of youth participation in the social life of the Eastern partner countries has not only improved the general view of the EU as a positive entity in the region but also offered opportunities for young people, the sector of the population with the highest optimism in its expectations for the future. The quantification of this information can be seen in the individual opinion reports made for each partner country, where positive expectations for the future were recorded among 87, 69, 86, 79, and 79 per cent of youth in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, respectively.

While considering the greater success of the EU among the younger population of the region, it is also important to mention the prevalence of use of new media. The higher utilisation of the new media sources makes the information and content provided by the EU more easily accessible for the

younger generation. The same opinion survey shows that 78, 86, 93, and 85 per cent of the people aged 15-34 are keen on using new media in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine, respectively. One of the other important findings was the decrease in the use of new media with the increase in age group, which showed a clear backward correlation between these variables, showing the higher use of new media was more likely to increase the positive opinion of the population.

These opinion polls show that the EU is particularly popular among young people in the region. It is therefore vital for the EU to continue its focus on the improvement of the role of youth for the greater promotion of European values in the region. Considering the interests of the European Union in the region, which are based mainly on economic development, conflict resolution, and strengthening of the societal capacity of the region's countries, it is possible to observe the positive influence of the EU. Greater promotion of the values that are beneficial to the European Union's interests is possible through the facilitation of the role of youth in the region, as this is the part of the population that will shape the character and the degree of the cooperation with the EU in the coming decades.

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THE EUROPEAN IDENTITY OF UKRAINIANS.



Anna Fratsyvir, Young European Ambassador in Ukraine

Sometimes, we realise that we are part of something bigger in our lives. That we are surrounded by people who share our values and ideals. We understand that these people are our kindred spirits. And we are all part of something bigger. And this is what unites people around the European Union. It was constructed as a place for open minds, free souls, and bright creativity. In its brochures, the European Commission refers to people as “European citizens”, and each of us understands that it means not just a formality of a union, but its power of being joint and several in action, policy, and development.

The road to understanding this mutual origin might be difficult and even painful. I was 12 when I first heard that Ukraine was choosing to follow its European roots, despite the need to fight for it. I was 12 when I heard about people being killed because of their desire to be European. I was 12 when I firmly understood that we were Europeans, that have the audacity to go for it and to fight for it. The Revolution of Dignity was the first time I met the EU. It was the first time I felt it to be the right place for Ukrainians.

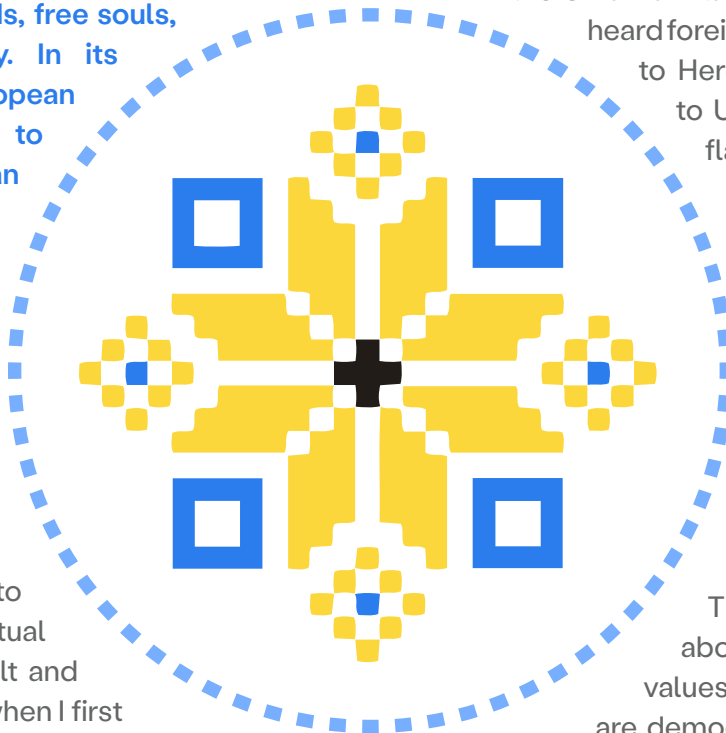
Now I'm a 19-year-old international communications student. I have spent hours reading literature on history, writing articles for the media I

am working at, analysing events, and understanding values. And that idea that came to my mind back then, when I was a schoolgirl who knew nothing about politics, has become so right and true.

The borders have been erased for me today. I was walking through the streets of Brussels and saw the Ukrainian flag waving everywhere. I heard foreigners answering “Glory to Heroes” at the call “Glory to Ukraine”. I also saw EU flags on the streets of Ukraine and heard children at school desks discussing the Union’s key values. And when walking the streets of Brussels or sitting in a Ukrainian park, I am firmly convinced that I am in Europe.

The European Union is about people. The core values shared by Ukrainians are democracy, freedom, human dignity, the rule of law, human rights, and equality. No matter how hard they try to take away our right to profess these ideals today, Ukrainians stand firm on their pro-European path and give their lives for their European identity.

And obviously, Ukraine is not only the gateway to Europe, Ukraine is spiritually, geographically, culturally, and mentally part of it. Common traditions and history unite us, common ups and downs make us stronger. Our unity is approved by the imprint of history, signed by the pen of time, and rooted in the community of our peoples.



Europe is the cradle of many countries: Ukrainians, like many other nations, evolved from their ancestral farmers. It all started with Trypillia, continued with Kyiv Rus, the Cossack Hetmanate, the Ukrainian People's Republic, and later, after a long period of the occupation of the Soviet Union, we became Ukraine.

The [preamble](#) of the Constitution of Ukraine underlines the irreversibility of the European and Euro-Atlantic course of the Ukrainian people. And this desire is not only a formality from the document, this desire to be part of the EU is in our sincere sense of kinship. We celebrate Christmas, sing during Eurovision, and eat Belgian chocolate and French croissants. We ski in the Alps or the Carpathians, sunbathe on the beaches of Odesa or Barcelona, and enjoy the beauty of Kyiv or Warsaw. Somewhere in the streets of Vienna walks a Ukrainian student who had the opportunity to study there, and young people from Greece, Romania, and Slovakia came to Lviv for a youth forum.

Today, a Ukrainian girl forced to flee her country due to the war communicates freely with a little boy from Estonia. They don't know each other's language, but they don't need it to understand each other. There is no barrier between them because they subconsciously feel their kinship. Adults also feel this kinship. According to a poll, 91% of Ukrainians aspire to join the EU.

I was born a European. I knew from childhood that I was free to choose my path, that I had the right to be myself and to defend my dignity. I have always been surrounded by people who shared and respected these views. And today, with thousands of people dying for this choice in the war against Russia, I am even more convinced

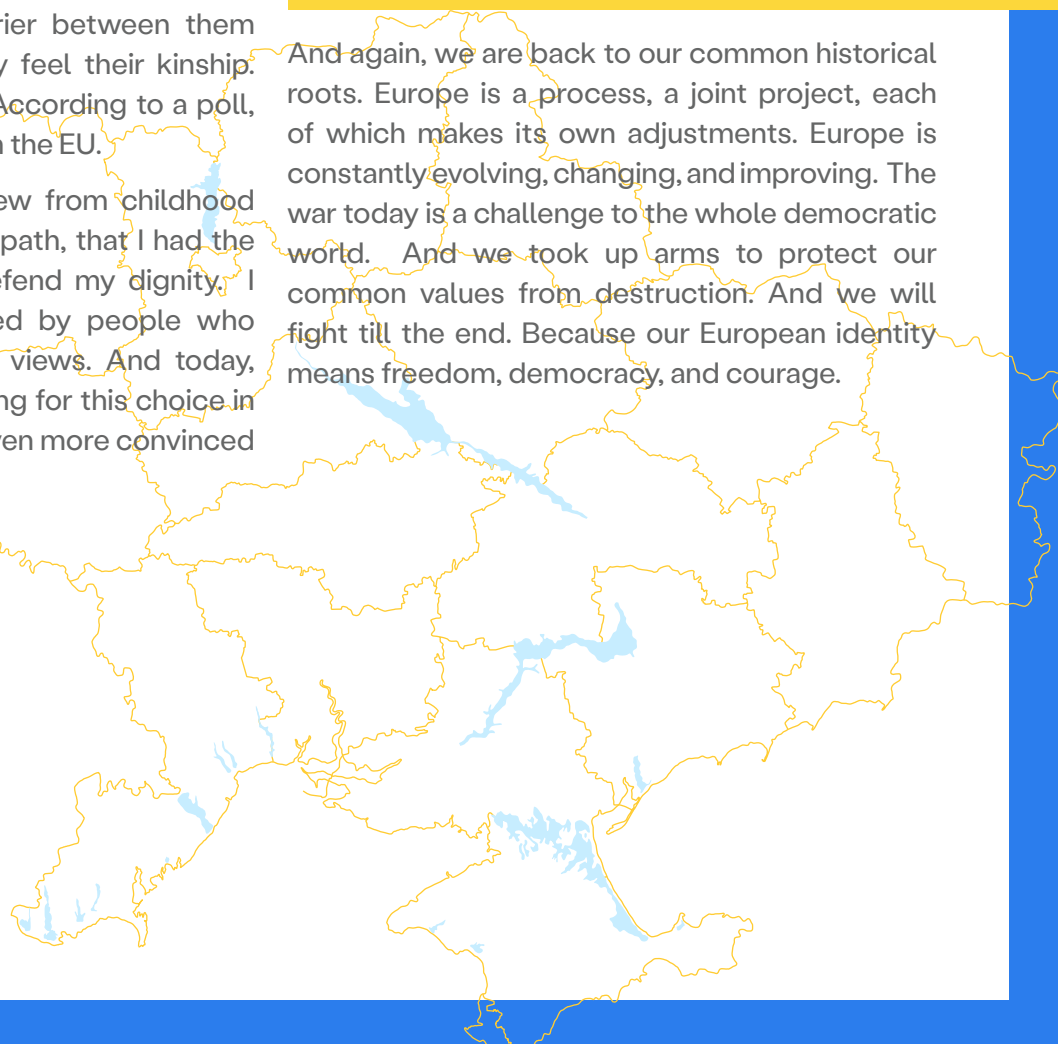
that we are committed to this idea. Ukraine has long been part of Europe. And Ukraine will never betray its choice.

The support from the European Union is what helps us, and our efforts against the violence and tyranny help Europe. Let's be honest, the EU was established to stop wars and promote peace. It was created to contribute to civilization and the predictability of relations between countries, which at first felt like a dream plan after the long period of two world wars. And war seemed impossible now, in the 21st century. However difficult these times might be, we consolidated and progressed.

The moral duty of the European Commission is to pave the way for Ukraine's membership of the Union, said the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

“This is not a burden, this is our historical responsibility,” said von der Leyen at the GLOBSEC 2022 Bratislava Forum.

And again, we are back to our common historical roots. Europe is a process, a joint project, each of which makes its own adjustments. Europe is constantly evolving, changing, and improving. The war today is a challenge to the whole democratic world. And we took up arms to protect our common values from destruction. And we will fight till the end. Because our European identity means freedom, democracy, and courage.



COUNTERING DISINFORMATION ABOUT THE EU IN GEORGIAN SOCIETY.

 By [Luka Chitiani](#)

To many, the emergence of digital technologies has become a source of great pleasure and an enabler to gaining information with unprecedented speed. While this is true for most of us, information is a substance that's easy to manipulate, making societies extremely vulnerable to disinformation - especially if the society is deliberately targeted by an external aggressor.

This is exactly the case for Georgia, battered by a widespread disinformation campaign from its northern neighbour Russia. One of the key points of this campaign is to spread misleading information about the European Union. Indeed, such unconventional warfare has been ongoing ever since Georgia's declaration of independence in 1991, and in this article, I will examine disinformation in the context of Russia's hybrid warfare, before identifying and countering several key disinformation narratives.

Hybrid warfare became an especially interesting concept after 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea. In a way, this concept covers the complexity of the 21st century. If we look at the term 'hybrid', it is clear that it requires the combination or coordination of two or more components. Therefore, the definition of hybrid warfare is such: **"A type of conflict, where the adversary uses a unique combination of threats that targets the victim's vulnerabilities."**¹

So hybrid warfare combines multiple types of threats. It is important to understand what type of threats we are talking about, in order to see the true face of hybrid warfare. We can classify five aspects of hybrid warfare - military, political,

economic, societal, and informational. The military threat is easy to understand, it covers traditional warfare, as well as coercion through military advantage. This is the most intense aspect of the hybrid warfare - Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 became the victims of this brutal method, and Ukraine is still fighting against the invasion of Russia, which began on 24 February this year. The political aspect might be harder to understand, but its target is a country's statehood. In Georgia, there are many subversive groups that aim to undermine Georgia's political order, and we will talk about them later. Economic threats consist of sanctions and economic dependence, especially energy dependence. This issue is particularly relevant in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, where the EU's energy sector has been compromised due to its dependence on Russia. However, there are big changes coming and soon enough the EU will be free from Russian energy. The next aspect is societal, aiming to penetrate the country's society with subversive ideas.



¹ Frank G Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges", JFQ, 1st quarter 2009, accessed 10.03.2022, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/jfqhoffman.pdf>

These ideas can be based on religious, ethnic, and ideological sentiments. The final category is informational, and is the main talking point of this article². I would say that it is a complementary aspect, which goes along with all four of the other threats. Hence, I will be talking about disinformation in the context of these other categories. So time now to move on to the specific cases of disinformation and debunk them.

First, I want to talk about the most recent piece of disinformation that emerged with the tensions near the Ukrainian border before the invasion. This matter concerns Georgian neutrality. According to propagandists, a neutral status would mean that Georgia could potentially avoid any type of conflict with its northern neighbour and simultaneously use this chance to normalise relations with the occupied territories. Some even go as far as to call Georgia “the Switzerland of the Caucasus”. This narrative is obviously wrong and deliberately misleading. The first Republic of Georgia in 1918-1921 officially had neutral status, but unfortunately it did not stop Russia from invading and occupying Georgia for the next 70 years.³ Second, our neighbourhood and defence capabilities are nothing like those of Switzerland, so even if Georgia declared neutrality it would be unsustainable and would make Georgia more vulnerable. Finally, the declaration of neutrality is unconstitutional in Georgia. This is because we have openly stated our western aspirations in our constitution, and neutrality would therefore go against that commitment.⁴

Now it's time to move on to the most sensitive pieces of disinformation in Georgia. They concern culture, religion and Georgian identity. Russian propagandists are trying to paint the EU and the west in general as a source of perversion. They use all three of these categories in tandem in order to achieve maximum division and polarisation in Georgian society. These info attacks mainly target sexual minorities, which are notoriously oppressed in Georgia. Russian disinformation tries to paint the West as an entity that destroys and corrupts traditional values. As

Georgians are known for their pride in traditions and history, the narrative can be effective. On the other hand, they draw Russia as a defender of such traditional culture and values. So, Russia is positioned as a guardian of sacred values from the western ‘perverse’ influence. This narrative is extremely widespread. “Ertmorts mune dzma” (ერთმორთწმუნე ძმა) is an expression that refers to Russia - it literally means “Brother with similar religious beliefs”. This term is often used ironically, but other times, unfortunately, quite seriously.

This piece of disinformation is so easy to debunk that it can be hard to understand why it is so widespread and often so effective. First, if anything is endangering and has endangered Georgian culture it's Russia, not the EU. Russia has on a number of occasions tried to threaten the Georgian language. First, during the Russian Empire, then during the Soviet period. On their last attempt, in 1978, these attempts were met with the massive demonstration of 14 April, one of the first demonstrations in the USSR that achieved its goal – the survival of Georgian language⁵. Furthermore, the belief that Russia is a preferable ally because of religion is entirely false. Russian occupants in Abkhazia have destroyed churches⁶ and damaged unique frescoes that recorded Georgian history⁷. If we also consider that Russian invaders refused to stop their offensive on Orthodox Easter, it is pretty clear that religion is not the thing we should talk about with the occupier.

I have tried to show what kind of misinformation campaign Georgian society faces on a daily basis. This is a reality not only for us, but for other members of the Eastern Partnership as well. As a general recommendation, it is essential to have a society with a high level of media literacy, so that such simple pieces of disinformation will be ineffective. There also needs to be greater cooperation between civil society, government and international actors. And last but not least, I think that Young European ambassadors can play a crucial role in countering such blatant lies and spreading the truth. Finally, we must remember that we are #Strongertogether!

² Patrick J.Cullen, “Understanding hybrid warfare”, MCDC, January 2017, accessed 10.03.2022, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/647776/dar_mcdc_hybrid_warfare.pdf

³ <https://mythdetector.ge/en/why-does-military-non-alignment-not-guarantee-georgia-s-security/>

⁴ Constitution of Georgia. <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/30346?publication=36>

⁵ https://idfi.ge/en/14_april

⁶ <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2017/48>

⁷ <https://www.amerikiskhma.com/a/state-of-the-churches-in-abkhazia-138045188/538078.html>



GEORGIAN YOUTH FOR PEACE AND THE EU.



By [Salome Abramishvili](#)

During the last few months, the terrible images of death and destruction in Ukraine have made our hearts race. But the courage and the defiance of the Ukrainian people have also inspired young generations across the globe to come together and stand in solidarity with their Ukrainian brothers and sisters, emotionally, morally, economically, and politically.

The war in Ukraine is particularly sensitive for Georgian youth, because Georgians have lived through the same illegal, unprovoked and unjustified invasion from the Russian Federation in 2008, when many Georgians lost their homes, family members, relatives, and friends. Even though 14 years have passed since Russia's military aggression against Georgia, it is hard to call the current situation in our country peaceful. Along with the occupation of 20% of Georgia's territories, Moscow carries out daily [provocations](#), seriously destabilising the situation on the ground. The installation of barbed wire fences and various artificial barriers along the occupation line, kidnappings and illegal detentions of the local population, as well as the restriction of freedom of movement and access to agricultural land, deprivation of the right of ethnic Georgian schoolchildren to get primary education in their native language, renaming Georgian villages and erasing Georgian cultural heritage, are just a few examples of what the occupation of historic Georgian provinces has brought about. Taking into consideration Russia's illegal military build-up and intensified annexation process of Georgia's occupied territories, Georgian youth are brought up and live with the fear of a repeated full-scale Russian invasion.

Considering Russia's aggressive political actions, it should be said that not only are the territorial

integrity and sovereignty of Georgia and Ukraine challenged, but also the entire security of the Eastern Partnership. Before 24 February, 2022, when the war against Ukraine broke out, the Russian Federation has been illegally strengthening its [military presence](#) in Georgia, where it stations up to 10,000 troops, thousands of FSB personnel, and offensive multiple-launch missile systems in both the occupied territories of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region. Russia also illegally [maintains](#) almost 1,500 troops in Moldova's Transnistria region. For the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Kremlin [has established](#) a military base in Nagorno-Karabakh in the guise of peacekeeping forces, and without the engagement of relevant international organisations. Belarus is already Russia's key ally. Alexander Lukashenko, the authoritarian leader of Belarus, has led a hybrid attack on the West, which served Russian interests and has indirectly [supported](#) Russia's war efforts in Ukraine.



It is clear that Moscow is using this aggressive military and political presence in an effort to turn back the clock and reclaim Russia's lost sphere of influence. However, the EU Association Agreement, including the DCFTA, has become a game-changer in the region. Georgian society shares the values of the EU, including democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Georgian youth see the solution in NATO and EU enlargement, which is a powerful tool to foster peace and security in Europe. Integration into the European Union is a [constitutional task](#) for Georgia, and is supported by an overwhelming majority in Georgian society, regardless of party affiliation and sympathy.

Georgian youth [gather](#) every evening after school, university and work, carrying Georgian, Ukrainian, and EU flags, in front of the Georgian Parliament building, which is a symbolic place for us. On 9 April, 1989, at least 20 young people [were brutally killed](#) there by Soviet troops, who attacked peaceful protesters demanding independence. Seeing my generation, who show up every evening to support Ukraine, collect humanitarian aid, light candles for the victims of war crimes, and declare their strong desire for EU integration makes me realise that there is hope for a better and peaceful future.

"I was not even born when Russia started the occupation process of Georgia in the early 90s. My generation has only read and listened to stories from our grandparents and parents about Georgians who were tortured and killed by Russian troops. These all sounded like a



nightmare for all of us and the current war in Ukraine seems like a bad dream, which has come true. The youth of Georgia and Ukraine deserve to live in a country, where we are not punished for choosing freedom, independence, and democratic development," says Medea, 25, a sociologist, when asked to explain her reasons for participating in the demonstration.

"I am here today because I believe in the power of youth," adds 22-year-old Giorgi, a journalist. **"We, the youth of Georgia, condemn Russia's ongoing attack on Ukraine, as well as the occupation of Georgia's territories. We were the first who experienced the Russian invasion in 1991-93 and 2008. We want to make our voices heard to those who make political decisions in the EU and show them that our people [Georgian and Ukrainian] have fought and are still fighting for what we all believe in – freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. That's why we deserve to be part of the EU. We need your support in these sad and tragic times to end this aggression once and for all and go to bed with a peaceful mind,"**

says Giorgi.

Georgian society expects the EU to demonstrate political will and grant membership candidate status to Georgia, which will be a strong signal that each independent state is free to choose its path of development. Support for Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova's choice of European and Euro-Atlantic integration is crucial in preventing new geopolitical and humanitarian disasters and sending an important signal that aggression is not the way to change the European political and security architecture.

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SHINING A LIGHT ON LGBTQ+ LIFE IN GEORGIA: AN INTERVIEW WITH TBILISI PRIDE.

 By Freya Proudman

The acronym LGBTQ+ stands for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. The + sign represents all other people who may identify as part of this community.

Georgia's Yearly Rainbow Index Score from ILGA-Europe:

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
21%	36%	36%	30%	26%	26%	30%	30%	27%

The non-government organisation, [ILGA-Europe](#), monitors the situation of LGBTQ+ people and annually assigns countries a Rainbow Index score, which ranges from 0%, which represents “discrimination and gross violations of human rights”, to 100%, which represents “full equality and human rights”. To determine the score, ILGA-Europe examines 69 LGBTQ+ policy issues including a country’s laws on equality and nondiscrimination, family, hate crimes, hate speech, legal gender recognition, bodily integrity, civil society space, and asylum seeking.

While same-sex marriage is illegal in all Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, Georgia has the most inclusive and progressive LGBTQ+ [anti-discrimination laws](#). These laws prohibit discrimination in employment, goods and services, education, and healthcare based on someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity. While inclusive laws are fundamental, legal consciousness scholars such as [Kathleen Hull](#) and [Rosie Harding](#) have noted that laws do not inherently remove barriers to equality and inclusion in everyday life and that de-facto discrimination and marginalisation of minority groups still continues. Researcher [Hadley Z. Renkin](#) finds that the exclusion most commonly felt by LGBTQ+ people is social, and involves behaviours, attitudes, and one’s sense of cultural

citizenship. He defines cultural citizenship as one’s experience of citizenship in practice, which includes feelings of belonging and ability to participate equally and openly in both public and private spheres.

So the question remains, what is life really like for LGBTQ+ people in Georgia? The best way to understand is to ask and listen. I am excited to share with you my interview with Agatha (she/her), a “strong believer in equality and a vocal advocate for queer rights”. She is the Communications Manager of [Tbilisi Pride](#), an organisation born from the hard work of Georgian LGBTQ+ Activists who rallied together in 2019 to organise Georgia’s first-ever Pride Week!

Since then, Tbilisi Pride has become an even stronger voice for visibility and the improvement of LGBTQ+ lives. One of Tbilisi Pride’s flagship events is their “March for Dignity” which is similar to a Pride Parade. In 2019, a thousand people registered but unfortunately the group did not receive appropriate protection from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) against violent homophobic and far-rights groups. Determined to reclaim the public space that LGBTQ+ people are so frequently excluded from, The Tbilisi Pride team rallied together to protest outside the MIA premises. In 2020 a documentary called “[March for Dignity](#)” was released which tells their story.

Notably on 17 May 2021, as a result of Tbilisi Pride's incredible work, political parties signed an [inter-party memorandum](#) on LGBTQ+ rights and pledged to protect LGBTQ+ people's freedom of expression and assembly.

Two months later, in July 2021, the team returned to again organise the "March for Dignity". On 5 July, at the last minute, the event was cancelled because violent far-right groups began [attacking](#) and persecuting activists and media representatives. The state did not intervene to protect the LGBTQ+ people. The next day on 6 July, in an unprecedented level of [solidarity](#), 7,000 people joined the Tbilisi Pride team in front of the parliament to show their support for the LGBTQ+ community.

In April 2022, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) officially registered an application for "[Tbilisi Pride & Others v. Georgia](#)", which will examine the events of 5-6 July 2021, including the violence from far-right groups and the state's lack of intervention during the "March for Dignity". Tbilisi Pride hopes the ECtHR will conclude that there were violations in Article 14 (freedom from discrimination), Article 11 (freedom of assembly), and Article 3 (freedom from degrading treatment).

Tbilisi Pride has continued to organise many events and projects, including a theatre play called "Caucasian Metamorphosis" (2019), an international LGBTQ+ conference (2019), and the "Proud Families" programme, which offers support, unity, and empowerment to parents and families of LGBTQ+ people, and a donation-based Emergency fund which helps LGBTQ+ people financially.

Financial assistance is important because, despite the law which prohibits discrimination in employment, Agatha explains that in practice "many employers refuse to hire queer community members, especially transgender people, due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation

or gender identity". As a consequence, LGBTQ+ people are often "unable to afford adequate housing, live safely, and acquire basic needs".

Based on the experiences of Tbilisi Pride it's not difficult to understand why Agatha uses the words "violence, persecution, discrimination, and stigma" to describe LGBTQ+ life in Georgia. She mentions that part of the issue is that the anti-discrimination laws that exist "fall short of full realisation of respective rights and freedoms", which means that unfortunately, LGBTQ+ people remain "one of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in Georgian society".

Anti-discrimination laws may work better if there was greater awareness, normalisation, and acceptance of LGBTQ+ people as equals. However, this sort of awareness is impeded by various social, cultural, and political groups, which actively inhibit acceptance from disseminating throughout society. Agatha mentions for example the use of homophobic discourse and the spread of disinformation about LGBTQ+ people from politicians as well as the Georgian Orthodox Church. She explains that LGBTQ+ people are also "not reflected in the political agendas of the parties, which leaves them underrepresented in government". A lack of representation and accurate information about the LGBTQ+ community contributes to prejudice, stigma, and forces invisibility onto the community.

Anti-discrimination laws must be properly implemented and enforced throughout society. In Georgia the categories of sexual orientation and gender identity are included in protection from hate crimes; however, hate crimes continue to occur. In 2020, [133 "anti-LGBTQ+"](#) hate crimes were reported from Georgia to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Agatha emphasises the importance of training law enforcement authorities on "how to respond to and investigate alleged hate crimes" and that properly enforcing and upholding laws means holding perpetrators accountable.





Most importantly, the wider Georgian community must believe in the value of laws that protect LGBTQ+ people and choose to uphold them in their daily lives. “Raising awareness is essential to improving life for LGBTQ+ people,” says Agatha.

There is power in the Georgian community and youth to help LGBTQ+ people. Agatha believes that, “**young people are vital for the LGBTQ+ movement - they’ve been powering social movements for generations. Their support, energy, passion, and willingness to be involved, be seen, and heard can be a catalyst for change.**”

She is passionate when she says that “while there are many obstacles to overcome”, her work with Tbilisi Pride has many amazing aspects and catching a “**glimpse of happiness and moments of togetherness, peace, and joy, even in the darkest moments are crucial in continuing the fight**”. She shares that her favourite part is “**working with diverse individuals and seeing queer people showing their true colours!**” I couldn’t agree more that giving LGBTQ+ people a safe place to be their whole, beautiful, open, and authentic selves is essential.

There is so much to be done to help improve the lives of LGBTQ+ people around the world, and you can get involved! Go to your local Pride Parades, support Queer business owners and artists, raise awareness on social media, and if you’re in Georgia, young people are always welcome to become members or volunteers of Tbilisi Pride.

Source: @tbilisipride Instagram

7 YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN AZERBAIJAN: CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS.



By *Sevil Suleymanova*

According to the United Nations, youth is considered a category of people between the ages of 15 and 24. The number of young people worldwide is estimated to be 1.2 billion, or 16% of the global population.¹ The latest estimates by International Labour Organization suggest that 17.2% of the world's young population is not employed² which means that they do not have a job, but they are “available and seeking employment”.³ However the definition of youth as well as the conditions for unemployment varies depending on the country. This small research will look at the situation in Azerbaijan regarding the youth unemployment, the opportunities and challenges associated with it, and possible recommendations to improve the situation in the country.

SITUATION IN AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan has slightly over 10 million population and 2,376,000 of this population is considered young people. The Youth Policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan defines youth as those aged between 14 and 29. This is quite different from the definition of the UN and therefore has different results.

Latest statistics show that around 1,378,000 young people are considered as economically active, of whom around 1,224,000 are employed, while only 154,000 young people do not have any job.

The World Bank estimates that in 2020, the rate of unemployed among young people aged between 15 and 24 in Azerbaijan was 15.3%, an increase of almost 3 per cent from 2019.⁴ If compared with neighbouring countries Georgia and Armenia we can see huge differences. For example, in 2020 the unemployment rate of the youth in Armenia⁵ was 36.6% while in Georgia⁶ it was 36.4%.

The figures suggest that the situation in Azerbaijan is more promising among the South Caucasus countries, but experts have different opinions about these numbers. Independent economist Farid Mehralizade argues that there are some manipulations done by the government in terms of the figures. He points out that in Azerbaijan if anybody or his family has land, then that person is considered a part of the economically active population and we don't have exact statistics as to whether these people are actually using this land or not.

¹ United Nations, Global Issues/Youth, <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/youth>

² World Bank, Unemployment, youth total, (0% of total labour forces ages 15-24) (modelled ILO estimate), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>

³ World Bank, Metadata Glossary, <https://databank.worldbank.org/metadataglossary/jobs/series/SL.UEM.1524.ZS#:~:text=Youth%20unemployment%20refers%20to%20the,International%20Labour%20Organization%2C%20ILOSTAT%20database.>

⁴ World Bank, Unemployment, youth total, (% of total labour forces ages 15-24) (modelled ILO estimate) – Azerbaijan, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=AZ>

⁵ World Bank, Unemployment, youth total, (% of total labour forces ages 15-24) (modelled ILO estimate) – Armenia, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=AM>

⁶ World Bank, Unemployment, youth total, (% of total labour forces ages 15-24) (modelled ILO estimate) – Georgia, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=GE>

Moreover, sometimes this land is so small that using this land for economic purposes does not result in economic independence. Another issue is that housewives are considered economically passive, but not unemployed, and there is no exact figure on why these women can't find jobs. These two categories make up around 2,400,000 people and result in high manipulation regarding the unemployment figures. Considering these manipulations, the actual figures related to youth unemployment must be higher than the given statistics.⁷

YOUTH POLICY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH IN AZERBAIJAN

YOUTH POLICY

Youth Policy in Azerbaijan is determined according to the “Law on Youth Policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan”.⁸ This law was adopted in 2002 and it illustrates the main principles of the youth strategy of successive governments. These strategies are very encompassing and cover various areas, from assuring the participation of young people in the cultural life of the country to increasing youth employment. Moreover, every year, 2 February is celebrated as youth day in the country since 1997.⁹ The executive body for the youth development in Azerbaijan is the Ministry of Youth and Sports.¹⁰

OPPORTUNITIES

Since independence in 1991, youth policy has been an active and important part of government policy. In order to tackle the problems of the youth, the government has launched various initiatives. For

example, Student Unions have been created at universities to increase youth awareness.¹¹ The Azerbaijan Youth Fund helps young people and youth organisations with grants to implement their ideas.¹² The government has adopted the “State Programme: Azerbaijani youth” for the 2005-2009,¹³ 2011-2015¹⁴, and 2017-2021¹⁵ time periods. Currently, there is a programme called the “Development Strategy of the Azerbaijani Youth between 2015 and 2025”¹⁶ as well as the “2019-2023 State Programme for the socio-economic development of the regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan”.¹⁷ All of these programmes aim to reduce youth unemployment and create various opportunities for young people, not only in urban areas, but also in the regions. The government is also keen on sending young people to foreign institutions for academic education and adopted state programmes for both Master¹⁸ and PhD levels.¹⁹ These programmes are focused on developing the skills of the young workforce in the country and aim to help them to contribute to the development of the country. Moreover, there are also SME centres²⁰ across the whole of Azerbaijan to support small and medium-sized businesses as well as entrepreneurs. The government has also a programme on Sustainable Employment of the Youth in Azerbaijan²¹ to help them to launch their own business and to give them vocational skills. Many international and regional organisations such as the United Nations and European Union are also helping the government to build the development of young people in terms of both education and employment through various programmes and initiatives.

⁷ All statistics have been taken from the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, <https://www.stat.gov.az/>

⁸ Law on the Youth Policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, <https://e-qanun.az/framework/1619>

⁹ Speeches, interviews, statements of former Azerbaijani President – Heydar Aliyev, Page 97, https://files.preslib.az/projects/toplu/v2/f3_7.pdf

¹⁰ Ministry of Youth and Sports, <https://www.mys.gov.az/en>

¹¹ Azerbaijan Student Youth Organisations' Union, <https://www.atgti.az/en>

¹² Azerbaijan Youth Foundation, <https://youthfoundation.az/about-us/?lang=en>

¹³ Azerbaijani Youth State Programme (2005-2009), <https://e-qanun.az/framework/10692>

¹⁴ Azerbaijani Youth State Programme (2011-2015), <https://e-qanun.az/framework/21898>

¹⁵ Azerbaijani Youth State Programme (2017-2021), <https://e-qanun.az/framework/36474>

¹⁶ Development Strategy of the Azerbaijani Youth between 2015 and 2025, <https://president.az/az/articles/view/14132>

¹⁷ 2019-2023 State Programme for the socio-economic development of the regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan, <https://e-qanun.az/framework/41320>

¹⁸ 2022-2026 State Programme, <https://president.az/az/articles/view/55540>

¹⁹ 2019-2023 State Programme, <https://dp.edu.az/az/content/3>

²⁰ The Small and Medium Business (SMB) Development Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, <https://smb.gov.az/en/nav/about-us>

²¹ State Employment Agency, Sustainable Employment of the Youth, <https://dma.gov.az/layiheler/sosial-layiheler/genclerin-dayaniqli-mesgullugu-proqrami>

CHALLENGES

Looking at such huge state programmes and opportunities, one might be surprised that youth unemployment is still an issue in Azerbaijan. Some experts underline several reasons for the increasing youth unemployment and the inefficiency of these programmes. Independent economist Farid Mehralizade argues that the job sector in Azerbaijan is outdated, as the main export and budget of the country are based on oil. Moreover, there is no business freedom in the country and everything is monopolised, which affects the youth a lot. Another reason is a structural problem, as in the state agencies the average age is higher and there is no trust in young people, which creates hurdles for young people in stepping up the career ladder. There is also a political discrimination, as independent youth NGOs have problems in operating effectively and mostly government-supported NGOs can function properly. According to Valiyev and Babayev,²² educational institutions do not provide the students with the skills needed by the job market, and the vocational education training system is very weak in Azerbaijan. Moreover, the projects that are implemented by both local and international organisations are in the form of one-off actions and there is no measure of sustainability to see whether they have achieved their goals or not. Therefore, most of them are just cosmetic both in nature and in implementation. Furthermore, the state programmes and policies are developed generally and are vague, lacking concrete actions and most of the time not covering all vulnerable groups. All of these hurdles make it difficult to battle the issue effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite these challenges, the problems can be solved if the right measures are taken. For example, Farid Mehralizade suggests that economy and business should be free and customs levies should be decreased. Moreover, in Azerbaijan in every part of industry big organisations play a huge part but we also need the development of small and medium-sized business and social entrepreneurship in order to create a more diverse environment for economic growth.

There should be easy access for the young to financial resources, and interest rates for loans should be decreased. Moreover, institutional approaches towards young people should be changed and the participation of young people in the decision-making process should be ensured. Moreover, as Valiyev and Babayev make clear, innovating in the job market and the education system, strengthening VET in Azerbaijan, and providing inclusivity can have huge impacts on combating this issue.

I agree with all of these recommendations, and believe that we need to acknowledge our problems as a society rather than ignoring them, and to start working on them effectively. I strongly believe that once these recommendations are put into real practice, there will be an effective drop in the number of unemployed young people. These changes will also help international institutions, such as the EU and UN, to not only make cosmetic changes, but really help the young people as they do in other countries.

CONCLUSION

In the face of an ageing population, the whole world needs young people to bring fresh new energy to both the job market and other institutional areas. In order to do that, we need to really work on the plight of the young people by ensuring their own participation in the drafting and implementation of youth policies. In Azerbaijan, the government is highly focused on tackling the issue and provides many opportunities. But policies that are too vague, cosmetic projects, and excluding the youth from the decision-making process mean the problem of youth unemployment in Azerbaijan persists. It is highly likely that with the recommendations outlined in this article, much of the issue of youth unemployment can be solved. With greater government interest in tackling youth unemployment and increasing youth opportunities, I hope that the issue will be solved in the near future. But given the situation of institutions and institutional behaviour, expectations should not be higher than the current situation.

²² A. Aliyev and A. Babayev, "Azerbaijani youth in transition: Is the state youth policy effective enough?", *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2021, pp. 4-8, <https://doi.org/10.1177/18793665211046066>

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8

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN ARMENIA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION.



By Nvard Phogosyan

The unemployment rate is the number of unemployed individuals divided by the total labour force. Inadequate education and lack of productivity is costing jobs. Unemployment increases progressively as educational levels decrease, and the education system is failing to produce the skills for the labour market. Labour supply is affected by the increase in the number of job seekers over the years.

Youth unemployment has a negative effect on the individual and the family, but also on the broader community in the form of serious economic and social consequences. This includes economic welfare, production, and erosion of human capital, social exclusion, crime and social instability.

In a recession, the youth unemployment rate often rises more sharply and recovers more slowly than the average unemployment rate.



ARMENIA

In 2020, the estimated youth unemployment rate in Armenia stood at 36.59 per cent.

There are many problems related to the labour market in Armenia, including high unemployment, low wages, hidden employment, supply and demand gap. As a result, young people often have difficulty finding work. This leads to a brain drain and young people trying to leave Armenia because they do not have the opportunity to find work - indeed, every year, 40% of young people who go abroad to study do not return to Armenia.

Unfortunately, many young people in Armenia, graduates in vocational education, lose their jobs or end up working outside their profession, doing any work to make ends meet.

This is because there is a mismatch between the supply of the education system and the demand of the labour market, which in turn reflects on the quality of educational services, the gaps in professional orientation and, accordingly, incorrect choice of professions by young people, and low level of applied knowledge in vocational education.



EUROPEAN UNION

In February 2022, 2.581 million young persons (under 25) were unemployed in the EU, of whom 2.101 million were in the euro area. As of February 2022, Greece had the highest youth unemployment rate in Europe, at 31.1 per cent, with Spain coming second at 29.8 per cent.

In the European Union, Spain, Greece, Italy, Portugal and France stand out with a stable high level of youth unemployment. At the beginning of 2013, in Spain and Greece, the figure was 60%. Due to the risk of discrimination, racial, linguistic and sexual minorities are more vulnerable in the labour market.

Having the opportunity, many young people in European countries prefer to continue their studies longer because they cannot find a job.

There is a dual labour market in the European Union. Trade unions do not pursue the goal of creating new jobs for the unemployed, and are mainly focused on protecting the interests of local workers. This leads to the protection of employees with longer-term contracts, leaving younger employees with less protected contracts. As a result, young people lose their jobs more easily.

Recently, another category has emerged to describe the economic situation of young people, the so-called NEET rate. NEETs are defined as “Young people neither in employment nor in education and training”. The indicator on young people who are neither in employment nor in education and training corresponds to the percentage of the population of a given age group that is not employed and not involved in further education or training.

Italy has the highest NEET rate among the European countries with levels above 20%, followed by Bulgaria (19.3%), Croatia (18.5%), Romania (18.1%), Greece (17.2%) and Spain (15.6%). The lowest NEET rates can be found in Iceland (4.6%), the Netherlands (4.7%), Norway (5.0%), Luxembourg, Denmark, Germany (6.2%) and Sweden (6.7%).

Thus, both in Armenia and in the European Union, young people often face the problem of unemployment. Comparing these problems, we understand that many young people face common problems of defencelessness and educational level. By involving young people in social activities, supporting them in choosing a profession, implementing educational and legal regulations and acquiring positive experience, it is possible to achieve success in solving the problem.



THE IMPACT OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION ON THE VALUES AND SKILLS OF WOMEN IN ARMENIA.



By Sona Chitchyan



It's no secret that non-formal education has an important impact on the values passed on to youth. It teaches us to be creative, flexible and social. There are many examples of people who have been transformed by taking part in trainings and youth projects.

Armenian youth are no exception. One of the best examples is Goharik Tigranyan, researcher in the field of education, focusing on the implementation of the right to education. She is currently working at the International Republican Institute in Armenia, mainly on a project which aims to strengthen the Government and National Assembly. She grew up in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, in a loving family. During her years studying at Yerevan State University, she took part in many youth exchanges and trainings, both as a participant and, later on, as a trainer. When she spoke to us, she highlighted two of main experiences as part of activities organised by the European Youth Foundation (EYF) and Erasmus+, which shaped her view of the world.

The first one that she remembered vividly was the Youth Peace Camp organised every year by the EYF under the Council of Europe. This was a conflict resolution and conflict transformation training, bringing youth from different sides of conflict areas together to think and talk about peace. It was a great opportunity for younger generations to talk to potential new friends, who they could never otherwise imagine encountering due to the conflict between their states.

At the peace camp, Goharik found herself involved in many good conversations that made her realise she could also make friends on the other side of the conflict, with people who thought very wisely and who also hoped for peace and cooperation between nations. She says the experience was one of the best ways to

break the stereotypes in her mind about what the other side thinks and wants. This made her believe that peace dialogue is very important for conflict resolution. The skills and values gained during this training helped her during the war in 2020, when she volunteered for mobilising resources needed for displaced populations by finding a place for them to stay, collecting clothes and other day-to-day necessities. She says it was hard for her to think about peace during the period of war, but now when she looks back, she realises that having dialogue and recovering peace in the region is crucial for everyone involved.

The second experience she underlined was a combination of Erasmus+ trainings on personal development. Those made her see her core values as an individual and what her goals would be as a future specialist. The journey helped her realise her traumas and start her journey of healing by sharing her story with peers.

During the pandemic that began in 2020, Goharik continued working on educating and sharing her skills with young people from various regions of Armenia. When asked about the difficulties of that period, she says the shift to online platforms happened very fast and worked well for her as she found it was much easier to facilitate trainings online for different people whom she would have to travel to if they had been in person. The pandemic made Goharik value face-to-face communication and dialogue more and more, as she found it to be more honest and safe for participants.

Goharik still continues working in Armenia and using the flexibility gained from non-formal education, even in formal settings. She is one of the many more who are fighting every day to make others' lives easier and better. Her story is a great example of the huge impact that trainings and exchanges can have on young people.

10

FROM DIVISION TO UNITY OF PURPOSE TOWARDS UKRAINE – HOW IS THE EU ADDRESSING THE GAPS IN THE PROTECTION OF THOSE MOST VULNERABLE?

 By *Roxana Claudia Tompea*

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, more than 12 million people have fled their home in search for a safe haven, with over 7.1 million being internally displaced within the country¹, and another 5.7 million crossing its borders (at the time of writing, 11.05.2022)². This is the largest exodus Europe has witnessed since World War II. Equally unparalleled is the welcoming stance of Ukraine's EU neighbours towards the refugees, especially among civilians. But what are the risks attached to those vulnerable, and which laws govern the EU policies that protect them?

In an unprecedented, and surprisingly unified response, the European Union (EU) agreed in record time to activate the Temporary Protection Directive to help the people fleeing the war in Ukraine. It became active on 4 March and ever since, it guarantees immediate protection and a clear legal status to millions of Ukrainians in the EU.

What does temporary protection mean?

“Temporary protection is an exceptional measure to provide immediate and temporary protection in the event of a mass influx or imminent mass influx of displaced persons from non-EU countries who are unable to return to their country of origin”.³

The Directive, which was adopted in the aftermath of the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, was triggered for the very first time in February 2022, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Due to the scale of the estimated arrivals, a clear risk was identified for the asylum systems of the EU countries, which would then negatively affect the efficiency of national asylum processes and, directly proportional, the rights of those people applying for international protection.

To address such limitations, the Directive entails a Union-wide framework for granting immediate group-based protection status in the form of residence permits and socio-economic rights. Bound to an initial period of one year (with the possibility of extension of up to three years), it mainly focuses on offering immediate access to employment or self-employment activities, accommodation, social welfare and means of subsistence, equal access to education, and family reunification rights.

Putting the Directive into a more formal footing, the Commission also released a set of clarifying guidelines to the EU Member States (MS), specifying who is entitled to temporary protection, what is considered adequate protection under national law, and what specific rights and free movement opportunities are granted within the Union. As part of these core rights, a moral imperative was also to tackle the issue of children and unaccompanied teenagers.

¹<https://www.iom.int/news/71-million-people-displaced-war-ukraine-iom-survey>

²<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-60555472> and <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

³https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en

Since 28 February, when the Ukrainian president imposed martial law and forbade all men aged 18-60 to leave the country⁴, women and children became a highly desired target for yet another type of predators, organised criminal groups. Exhausted, confused, hurt, and in despair, the refugee influx of civilians are 90% women and children, which are also the two most vulnerable and exploited groups of victims in the world. The longer the war continues, the higher is the risk for more Ukrainian civilians to fall victims to human trafficking.

Minors make up more than half of all refugees from the war in Ukraine, with more than 1 million having already arrived in Poland, and hundreds of thousands more in Romania, Moldova, and Slovakia. UNCHR and UNICEF continue to warn of the risk of trafficking and exploitation, while simultaneously scaling up partnerships with civil society organisations. In this sense, the two UN agencies have established “Blue Dots” in key refugee-hosting countries (Moldova, Romania, Slovakia). These are one-off safe spaces which provide information to travelling families, help identify unaccompanied or separated children, and ensure their protection from exploitation.⁵

Currently, most individuals fleeing the war are travelling by their own means, based on informal assistance provided by private individuals and volunteers, without proper documentation or communication channels, and relying on ad hoc travel arrangements, both nationally and internationally (across the EU member states). Without undermining the brave stoicism of civil society groups in any way, private resources and volunteerism do not suffice to ensure equal access to travel, accommodation, education, or entry onto the labour market. What is more, the lack of transparency and oversight can jeopardise even further the status and condition of the refugees.⁶ As the crisis grinds into the third month of war, traffickers and criminal networks can take clear advantages of those stateless or without proper documentation or support.⁷

Remarkable in this sense is how volunteers have sprung into action to set up protection.

From dedicated hotlines to organised safe rides, and provision of official reception centres, large numbers of volunteers have successfully disseminated critical information, both online and in person, thanks to the current digital means of communication.

But the discussion on how to coordinate the reception of Ukrainian refugees still remains entangled. The EU is providing direct humanitarian aid to Ukraine (as are individual member states), and at the same time, it is mobilising funds to help the member states better manage the refugee influx. The European Commission is also working to provide emergency assistance to those in need, including by supporting countries like the Republic of Moldova to strengthen its response.

Long-term prospects

Russia’s invasion may have finally provided the impetus to drive political reform back into the EU apparatus, securing a revitalisation on aspects such as policy on migration, asylum, and refugees. Nevertheless, the Temporary Protection Directive remains an emergency measure only. To remain successful, it needs to be paired with sustainable medium/long-term strategies and meaningful ways to manage them. By activating the Temporary Protection Directive, EU policymakers may have set an important and constructive precedent, and even though it is not the best instrument, it is the only one available right now.⁸

On a par, what is equally important is to grant swift access to health care, housing, and other basic needs for the waves of refugees, and to share the European responsibility for managing migration in the interconnected world. Such narratives are already becoming burdensome, as the war in Ukraine is showing significant impact in other regions, and in various sectors such as food security, energy security, and transportation.

All in all, the European Union positions itself as more united than it has ever been in the past century, and paradoxically, it could use the opportunity not only to rejuvenate its relationships with the West, but to repair and even reignite its unity of purpose into #MovingForwardTogether with the East.⁹

⁴ <https://www.hitc.com/en-gb/2022/02/25/why-cant-men-leave-ukraine/>

⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/two-million-refugee-children-flee-war-ukraine-search-safety-across-borders>

⁶ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/14/ukraine-crisis-eu-and-member-states-must-now-work-together-put-commitments-practice>

⁷ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2022/4/62569be24/ukraine-crisis-creates-new-trafficking-risks.html>

⁸ <https://www.icmpd.org/blog/2022/the-war-in-ukraine-and-the-renaissance-of-temporary-protection-why-this-might-be-the-only-way-to-go>

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_5203

PHOTO SECTION: ARTWORKS FROM THE EAP.

ARMENIAN MASTERPIECE Meruzhan Khachatryan



If you are interested in Art – check this one!

Meet an amazing artist from Yerevan who is truly talented and embraced for his creativity, productivity, and individuality. Meruzhan Khachatryan is a modern artist who creates modern paintings and is not afraid to use the colours. Each of his paintings is unique, colourful, and eye-catching, and many countries are glad to have his masterpieces in private collections.

The artist is focusing on such thematic as Armenian landscapes, Armenian still life, penetration, Ararat Masis, Armenian Genocide paintings, Armenian stones painting series and others. Having such an art piece at home will attract the attention from your guests and invitees.

<https://fineartamerica.com/art/paintings/armenian>
<https://meruzhan-khachatryan.pixels.com>
Source: <http://www.bestartgifts.com/paintings.html>



AZERBAIJANI WORK OF ART

If you are ever in the area of Baku, don't miss out on visiting the Azerbaijani National Museum of Art, and the Azerbaijani National Art Gallery. Not only are you going to find over 14,000 pieces of art in each museum, but also get inspired by the diverse topics that you can find across each of those paintings.

For me personally, an extra motivation to visiting those two museums, is taking a closer look at the work of Altay Hadjiev, a prominent Azerbaijani painter, who has been awarded for his work more than one times. He was owner of the honorary title of "People's Artist of the Republic of Azerbaijan" in 2002 and his recognition only grew in the course of his life. Hadjiev not only brought to life paintings influenced by the Azerbaijani, oriental culture, but since he studied in Ukraine, he learned the traditions of classical European painting. The combination of those two aspects of creativity led him to creating unique works of art and establishing himself in the art world.

One of his most famous paintings is Aşiq Pari. It depicts Ashiq Peri or Ashiq Pari, an Azerbaijani poet and folk singer. She is remembered as one of the first women to compose in the tradition of Ashik and for her skill of composition. The vibrant colors of the painting bring the creativity and passion of the singer forward and catch the eye of the public.



Source: [Altay Hajiyev - Baku :: The Museum Center of the Ministry of Culture of the Azerbaijan Republic](#), [Light Perry - Ens.az - 4 languages news and encyclopedia, latest news, latest news](#)

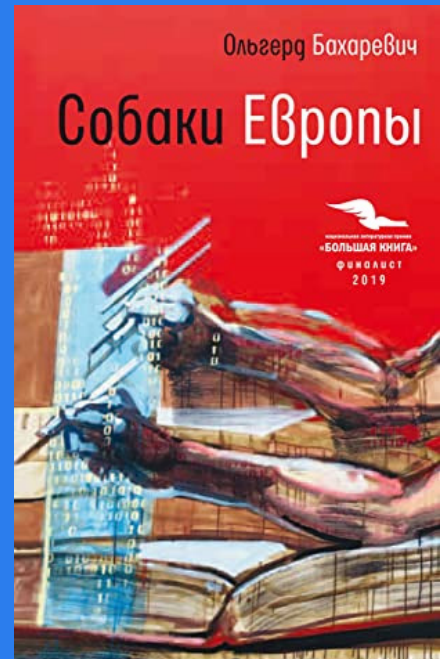
NOVEL FROM BELARUS

For those who are interested in modern Belarusian literature and have knowledge of the Russian language, have a look at “Sobaki Evropy” from the Belarusian author Olgerd Bakharevich. His novel, called “Dogs of Europe” in English, was nominated for the award ‘Big Book’ by the publisher ‘Vremya’. With his work he tries to interlink people from different nationalities with the same preference for Europe.

The novel tells six stories which are connected with each other. It is mainly about human and national loneliness and different kinds of illusions. He writes among other things about a state that does not need the past and might become dangerous to the future just by the enormous power of the word. It is a fictional novel that nevertheless deals with the strong longing for Europe.

“Dogs of Europe” is a remarkable work which also has been performed by the Belarus Free Theatre in the Barbican Theatre in London (UK) in March 2022 (www.europeantheatre.eu/news/dogs-of-europe-to-premiere-in-london).

Watch the trailer here: <https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2022/event/belarus-free-theatre-dogs-of-europe>.

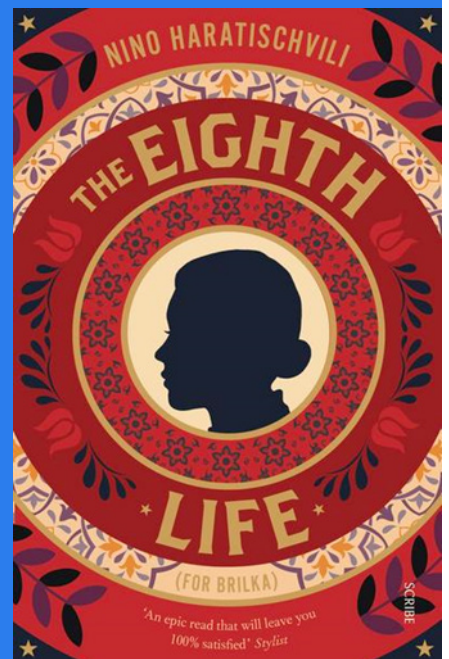


For more recommendations on Belarusian literature and other contemporary Belarusian writers check out the following link: <https://justarrived.by/en/blog/top-10-contemporary-belarusian-writers>

GEORGIA

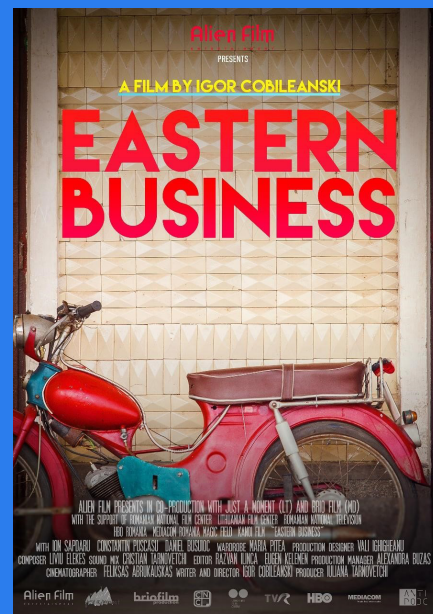
THE EIGHTH LIFE (DAS ACHTE LEBEN). Nino Harataschwili (2014).

Have you ever read a Georgian novel? Have you ever been interested in the history of this country? If you answered no to the first question and yes to the second, then I can only advise you to buy “The Eighth Life” by Nino Harataschwili. This thick book tells much more than one story: it is several novels in one, each following the life of one of the author’s family members, and all following the life of her country, Georgia. And despite the subdivision of the story into sub-narratives, there is never a break, never a pause. We follow the lives of the protagonists as they seamlessly pass the baton to each other, and the century passes as quickly as we read the book. We see the events unfold as they unfold, sometimes funny, sometimes tragic, sometimes touching, but always described with remarkable subtlety and delicacy. And always, their little story joins the big story, the one with a capital S, that of other Georgians, never named but in whom we clearly recognize Stalin and Beria. This book makes no secret of the harshness of life in the Soviet era, and more than once one comes to admire the way in which the heroes of our story manage to live their lives despite all the difficulties. You close “The Eighth Life” with a certain bitter-sweet nostalgia, and the impression of having understood Georgia, its people, a little better; and a great desire to go there yourself.



MOLDOVA

Think carefully about how many movies from the Republic of Moldova have you seen. I do not mean the movies made in the times of the URSS, I mean after the independence. Search for Republic of Moldova on your usual trusted film websites – IMDb, MUBI, Letterboxd – you will find quite a lot of stuff you did not know, some shorts, feature films, and documentaries. Sadly, as written by Brandon Konecny in [this text from 2017](#), the cinema scene in Moldova faces some difficulties. From brain drain to lack of resources, there are many factors hindering Moldovan Cinema. However, I come to say: give it a try! Eastern Business (Afacerea Est), from 2016, is a fun and enjoyable way to tiptoe Moldovan cinema. It tells us the story of two Moldovan friends with few recourses that try to navigate society to achieve their dreams. In Portuguese we have the word “desenrascar”, which I believe is a perfect description for this film. If you are faced with a problem, you will find a quick and easy solution on the spot and continue head up high. The film was directed by Igor Cobileanski, one of the most important directors in today’s R. Moldova. His other film, La limite de jos a cerului, even got submitted for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, so this is also worth checking out. Eastern Business is not an innovative formula, since it is a road-trip film, but it is an enjoyable depiction of ordinary life with a touch of humor, pleasant photography, and good acting that makes the scenes unfold in a natural rhythm. Despite this humorous ambiance, this is a film that also has something to say about life and Moldova’s place in Europe.



UKRAINE

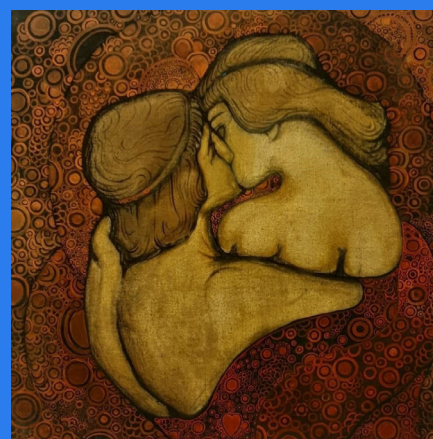
THE KISS - VSEVOLOD MAKSYMOVYCH

More than ever, it is important to highlight Ukrainian culture and give it the attention it deserves. Ukraine is a country with an ancient and rich cultural heritage. As beautiful and varied as it is, this heritage is unfortunately largely unknown to the international public. To honour Ukrainian culture and contribute to giving it the attention it deserves, we would like to present a Ukrainian work that is dear to our hearts.

Among all the masterpieces in the National Art Museum of Ukraine in Kyiv, there is one painting that may have made a particular impression on the visitors who saw it. This painting, made by the artist Vsevolod Maksymovych in 1913, is entitled “The Kiss”.

Despite his short life, Maksymovych (1894-1914) was one of the main representatives of Ukrainian Art Nouveau. His most significant works were produced mainly between 1912 and 1914. They are characterised by inspirations from Greek and Roman figures, abstract rounded forms and the frequent use of the colour red. The majority of his paintings represent the concerns and interests of his time: mysticism, sexuality, gender representations.

The majority of these elements can be found in “The Kiss”. There is something deeply captivating about this painting. Since they are at the centre of the painting, our attention is first focused on the two figures exchanging a kiss. Gradually our perception is extended to the abstract, red, rounded forms that seem to be almost in motion and surround the two figures. The kiss itself seems to be reinforced by this strange environment. The result is a captivating and fascinating painting which, more than a century later, has not lost its charm.



Picture from Tanguy's personal archive

1

EUROPEAN YOUTH SHOWS SOLIDARITY! THE NEW REALITIES OF YOUTH ACTIVISM.



By [Semka Rostyslav](#)

Young people in Ukraine, just like all over the world, studied, developed, travelled, had plans for a week, for the summer, but on 24 February, the life of young people in Ukraine radically changed. Now there is a war in Ukraine that is happening because the Russian dictatorial regime is trying to crush the desire of the people of Ukraine to live democratically and freely, to be part of the European Union. Now Ukrainians are giving their lives to defend their choice and the future of the country. They fall asleep and wake up to the sound of an air raid alert, but nevertheless, Ukrainian youth believe in the European future of their country.

But what does it mean to be European? Are there European values outside the EU countries? It is possible to find answers to these questions by analysing what is happening in Ukraine now. This article looks at the solidarity of European youth with Ukrainians, shows how youth activism has changed and how young people influence global challenges.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, in her speech at the plenary session of the European Parliament on 1 March, said that the war in Ukraine is “[a moment for the unity of](#)

Europe”[1]. This is not just about Ukraine. It is a clash of two worlds, two polar sets of values. This is a clash between the rule of law and the rule of the gun; between democracies and autocracies; between a rules-based order and a world of naked aggression. But the youth is not the least important in this clash. Young people from all over the world are showing support and assistance in overcoming the conflict. European youth are interested in the situation in Ukraine and how to help. This is both informational support and dissemination of true news about Ukraine, as well as #StandforUkraine demonstrations and personal support. And young people in Ukraine are showing a new level of civic activism.

To understand this topic, the best way is to ask those people who are at the epicentre of the situation. The first experience I would like to share is the story of Kateyna Davidkova. Since 2016, Kateryna has been the coordinator of the SG Platform NGO, as well as a member of the National Youth Council of Ukraine. Before the war, she always communicated with students and youth of Kyiv about the importance of inclusion, about increasing motivation.



When I asked why she decided to continue her civilian activities during the war, Kateryna replied as follows:

“From the first day, I understood that I was responsible for the people who needed my help. These were the students with whom I worked, both Ukrainian and foreign students. And I could not sit still when everyone has to fight for victory in their place. Therefore, I did everything possible from my side! I helped international students with secure transfers, bomb shelters, and translation of up-to-date information on war and evacuations. I personally made Molotov cocktails, helped to find humanitarian aid and housing for Ukrainians online, made informational publications for international media and friends, provided informational support to Ukraine on social networks, and helped weave military nets.”

According to Katerina, everything has changed in youth activism and youth policy in the direction of volunteering. Everyone felt that the country needed them. Young people who were previously not interested in getting involved in activism are now united for a common goal.

The next, and no less interesting, experience is from Yelyzaveta Pidopryhora. Yelyzaveta is 20 years old, she has a long experience of volunteering and was the head of the ESN (Erasmus Student Network). A couple of weeks before the start of the war, she returned from the University of London, where she was studying under the Erasmus programme.

Yelyzaveta recalls how her friends from abroad helped her:

“I have many friends abroad, in the European Union. When I started my work at the Humanitarian Centre, where I collected aid for Ukrainian hospitals and the military, I turned

to my international network. Many began to help financially by donating money to buy medicines. A large number of my friends went to demonstrations, shared information on social media. Some even printed posters about how to help my Humanitarian Centre and put them up in their universities.”

Yelyzaveta is sure that the super power of youth lies in unity: **“Today young people are not afraid to talk about problems and are ready to act. Thanks to wide international networks, youth can unite and jointly respond to global problems.”**

Young people from Europe are actively included in the solution of global challenges. Jonas Schmidt is doing his bachelor’s degree in Political Science and Sociology at the Technical University of Dresden and he is also a Young European Ambassador. Since 24 February, Jonas has done his best to support Ukraine and its people, both outside and inside Germany. He told us what young people in Germany are doing and how they can try to support Ukrainians.:

“24 February was a terrible day for me, but I quickly realised that I can’t just sit around. The first thing I did was to donate money to the Ukrainian charity ‘Come back alive’. I also thought about what else I could do. Soon the first requests came from Ukrainian friends who joined the Territorial Defence. In the beginning, there was a lack of everything there. What they needed most were helmets, bulletproof vests, tourniquets, but also cars to transport the members of the unit. It wasn’t really easy to organise such things, unfortunately, and I did not succeed. In the meantime, however, I have found my vocation: I work as a volunteer for an organisation at the main railway station of Dresden called “Bahnhofsmision”. It’s a Christian organisation that usually helps all people in need. This usually includes homeless people or lost children. They just help anyone who needs help at the main station. Now they have a new area of responsibility: they help refugees with everything they need, such as food, drinks, a warm place to sleep or they take them to the emergency shelter for some days.”

According to Jonas, volunteering is extremely important for European youth, and many organise large-scale events on their own. Many Germans have hosted refugees into their homes.

Here is another concrete example that Jonas shared:

“At the main station and in emergency shelters, the refugees are mostly taken care of by volunteers (many young people among them) – even at night, in their free time! Our entire aid system would collapse without their help, which is why I am very glad that so many people want to help.”

Summing up, these young people who shared their stories do not know each other and are located in different regions, but they are united by common ideals and solidarity. European solidarity - it is about maximum support, it is unity for the sake of peace, the protection of the common interests of democracy and humanity. This is a common struggle against aggression, against crime, against evil!

References:

1. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_22_1483



12

EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE: IDEAS COMING TO LIFE.



By *Matilde Fabrizio*

Have you ever found yourself in bed thinking about that sparkling idea you just came up with and couldn't go back to sleep?

I believe that the best ideas come to us in a flash, out of the blue when we're not even aware that we're looking for them (I usually have some great revelations when brushing my teeth). Unfortunately, however, the same is not true for the tools that we might need to put that idea into practice! In fact, it often seems impossible to find what we need to implement a project that we care about. The road is full of obstacles that dampen our enthusiasm and desire to act for something we believe in.

However, we are not alone. Thanks to the European Citizens' Initiative, we can now actively participate in the political life of the Union, giving voice to our vision. European citizens' desire for greater participation has been heard, with the creation of a powerful resource that allows change-makers and active citizens to bring their projects to life.

WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT WORKS:

this tool for participating in the political life of the European Union exists thanks to the Lisbon Treaty. The first ECIs were registered in 2012. It consists in giving real application to the right of initiative. Citizens can propose directly to the European Commission the production of new legislation through the signature of 1 million European citizens from at least 7 countries of the Union. The content of the proposal must concern at least one of the areas of competence of the Commission.

Once the initiative has been presented, the examination phase begins, during which it is also possible to meet representatives of the Commission and present one's idea in plenary sessions of the Parliament. The procedure is

certainly time-consuming, but it allows you to get directly to the heart of the Union's decision making.

SOME DATA:

to date, 6 initiatives have been accepted, therefore transformed from simple ideas into something more. The number may seem small but suffice it to say that behind each of them there are at least 1 million European citizens who have joined together to make their voices heard and make their place in the European political landscape. Currently, there are 16 initiatives with an ongoing collection, 3 at the verification stage and 88 that have already been registered.

The big changes we always hear about are often the result of the micro-actions of each of us. Being a citizen means being aware of the tools that are put at our disposal to exercise our rights. This is why being up to date and informed is usually the first step, since it makes us aware of our possibilities. When I found out about ECI, I immediately felt the need to share this discovery with other young European citizens, who, like me, strive to concretely take action to shape our ideas.

Our vision is what makes us unique. We now have the possibility and a supportive network that is ready to give it the value it deserves.

In my opinion, the European Citizens' Initiative represents the democratic spirit that lies at the very basis of our Union, since it enables citizens to stand up for what they care for, coming together as one.

I hope that while reading this piece an amazing, brilliant idea just came across your mind. Now you know what to do with it.

13 GETTING INVOLVED TO MAKE THE EUROPEAN UNION WORK BETTER: WHERE, WHEN AND HOW?



By Nicolas Vande Kerckhove

Whether you are young or older, there are many opportunities to make the European Union (EU) work better.

In this article, Nicolas Vande Kerckhove – a YEA from Belgium - lists some of these initiatives set up by the EU, but also by other institutions and organisations, and which are very often also open to the Eastern Partnership countries.

Dear readers, get ready to know everything about where, when, and how to get involved for the good of every European citizen and to make our society a better place.

Collaborating and working together to make the life of every European citizen more pleasant, isn't that a great project?

This is of course only possible by encouraging Europeans to get involved in one of the many available initiatives. However, it soon becomes apparent that the relevant information is often buried under a ton of jargon on the website or social media pages of the many European institutions, as well as other bodies, NGOs and government organisations that promote the European project in any way. In other words, these initiatives do exist, but it is difficult to find them.

Whether you are interested in the environment, digitalisation, cybersecurity, culture, art, energy, exchanges between European countries, the economy, history, entrepreneurship, leadership, etc., the EU often invites everyone to contribute to building the world of tomorrow. Let's discover some of these initiatives now:

First, I would like to start with our own, the **Young European Ambassadors (YEAs)**.

"The Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) initiative is a non-political, voluntary, vibrant communication network connecting and building bridges of friendship among young

people from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the EU Member States and the United Kingdom. The aim of the network is to raise awareness about the EU's cooperation with its Eastern partner countries, showcase the tangible results of this cooperation, contribute to policy dialogue on various topics, help increase civic activism and work together for a better future."

Unity (Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen; August 2021)



However, you should know that the maximum age to participate in this initiative, set up by the European Union in 2016, is 26. By becoming a YEA, you organise and take part in meetings, quizzes, conferences, exchanges, and awareness-raising campaigns, and you also travel and meet other young people from 34 European countries.

Then, I should tell you about a programme called [Horizon Europe](#). This seven-year research and innovation programme has been set up by the EU and is funded in the amount of €100 billion. It is mainly aimed at legal entities from the EU and associated countries, including the Eastern Partnership. Thus, the EU offers funding to support:

“European partnerships in which the EU, national authorities and/or the private sector jointly commit to support the development and implementation of a programme of research and innovation activities.”

The players in question must be prepared to revolutionise society with their inventions, whereas the private sector does not always dare to take risks. Five clearly defined missions have been identified for this programme:

- **Adaptation to Climate Change**
- **Climate-neutral and smart cities**
- **Cancer**
- **Soil Deal for Europe**
- **Restore our Oceans and Waters**

Afterwards, I would like to continue with [SALTO](#) (Support, Advanced Learning, Training Opportunities for Youth). It is a network “of seven Resource Centres working on European priority areas within the youth field”.

“SALTO-YOUTH provides non-formal learning resources for youth workers and youth leaders and organises training and contact-making activities to support organisations and National Agencies (NAs) within the frame of the European Commission’s Erasmus+ Youth programme, the European Solidarity Corps, and beyond.”

The YEAs in Katowice, Poland (2022)



And if you are in the Eastern Partnership, [SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus](#) supports cooperation between EU and Eastern Partnership countries within Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps.

During SALTO trainings, the following costs are covered by the EU: complementary insurance, training and language courses, accommodation, and food (varying from country to country). All in all, if you are ready to learn and develop your competences by leading concrete projects, do

not hesitate and take a look at the website called the [European Youth Portal](#).

Fourth, it is essential to touch upon the **Erasmus+ programme**. You can either apply [as an individual](#) from the EU, from outside the EU, or as an organisation. This programme – which exists for 30 years already - allows young people to get funding to **“spend part of their studies at another higher education institution or with an organisation in Europe.”**

However, it does not only concern students per se, since this programme is also aimed at young people interested in teaching, training or even volunteering abroad. Nevertheless, this young person should be either an apprentice, a pupil, a higher education student, a recent graduate, a training student or staff¹, or an education student or staff² to be allowed to take part in one of these initiatives organised by the EU.

Let me provide you with some concrete examples to understand the potential of the Erasmus+ programme. Did you know that a young citizen who wants to do an internship in another European country - or in a partner country of the EU – to gain work experience while studying, could apply for an Erasmus+ scholarship to reduce the costs? Furthermore, pupils are also invited to apply for an Erasmus+ grant to develop new competences useful for their future career. Besides, if we want a better and more efficient EU, it is essential that our young Europeans know the reality on the ground. Therefore, the initiative within the Erasmus+ programme framework called **DiscoverEU** also offers young people to “**develop life skills of value to your future, such as independence, confidence, and openness to other cultures**” while travelling by rail and discovering our continent. This last initiative is aimed at 18-year-old residents of the European Union, the EFTA and EEA (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway), or acceding or candidate countries (North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey). The Eastern Partnership countries are not currently included.



The Erasmus+ programme



¹ The training staff must be working in “education, both in teaching and non-teaching capacities” (source: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-individuals>).

Do not hesitate to check the fantastic website of the EU Commission for further information. It is better to take a chance and try to get a scholarship even if you are not sure it will succeed. This programme has already helped millions of people achieve their dreams. So why not you?

Fifth, let’s talk about the exciting programme called the **European Solidarity Corps**. If you are between 18 and 30 and ready to help people, then you can participate in volunteering activity, a traineeship or job, or a solidarity project in the framework of this programme. The Programme is open to Eastern Partnership countries, and the maximum duration of participation is one year, with the areas of activity covering a variety of subjects: from creativity and culture to education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, environment and natural protection, health and wellbeing, physical education and sport, working with refugees and migrants, social challenges, as well as disaster prevention and recovery (source: https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/young-people/about_en). You can find some of these opportunities on the map below:

Activity country Activity type Activity topics

- Any country - - Any - - Any -

Starts after Ends before

Starts after Ends before

Clear search

Show map

EU funded volunteering opportunities –
Interactive Map



Then, there is another programme called **EU Aid Volunteers**. This is an “initiative bringing together volunteers and organisations to provide practical support to humanitarian aid projects of disaster-affected communities”. So do not hesitate to surf their website if you want to help the neediest, if you are over 18 years old and if you are a European citizen or a long-term resident in the EU.

² The opportunities offered to the teaching staff “are available to both staff working in the education sector and to individuals working outside the sector invited to share their knowledge and experience” (source: same as above).

Also, another name must sound familiar to you. Have you ever heard of the [College of Europe](#)? Here too you can get involved in the European project but on a different scale. As stated on their website,

“The founding idea was to establish an institution where university graduates from many different European countries could study and live together in preparation for careers related to European cooperation and integration.”

Today, this postgraduate institute of European studies is divided into two campuses: one in Bruges and the other in Warsaw. Organising conferences on the EU and its neighbours, meeting diplomats and politicians who have the power to make things happen, writing a quality thesis that could change minds forever and learning two new foreign languages are all part of this university programme. Eastern Partnership and EU students are warmly invited to apply.

The College of Europe also regularly [offers scholarships](#) for students coming from countries of the European Neighbourhood so look out for the next wave!

In the same spirit, there are many [European schools](#) where children can follow a curriculum based on foreign language learning, as well as international and European affairs to a lesser degree than at university. In short, “they provide children with a multilingual and multicultural education at nursery, primary and secondary levels.” All in all, these schools enable children to be trained in the European project from an early age.

In addition, there are many internships that you can do at the EU that allow you to work on a specific matter. So, you can act directly from the inside of our union alongside actors ready to show you all its workings.

If you wish to collaborate with the European Parliament (EP), two options are possible. The first one is a traineeship in the Secretariat (called [Schuman traineeship](#), taking place either in Strasbourg, Luxembourg, Brussels or in the Member States Liaison Offices). The second one is a traineeship with an MEP (Member of the European Parliament). While working for an

MEP, the trainee will help in a variety of fields and complete specific tasks at the European Parliament in Brussels or even Strasbourg. In both situations, the trainees must be older than 18 years old and “be nationals of a Member State of the European Union or an accession/candidate country” even if “a very limited number of traineeships to nationals of other countries can also be offered” (same source as above).

If you wish to collaborate with the European Commission (EC) or any other European institution somewhere on the European continent, then you should definitely apply for a Blue Book traineeship programme. You can fill out your application in one of the working languages of the EC: German, French, or English. You should know that “the traineeship is open to all EU citizens, regardless of age. [However], [a] limited number of places are also allocated to non-EU nationals” (source: <https://traineeships.ec.europa.eu/how-to-apply>). The trainee’s “daily work consists of:

- **Attending and organising meetings, working groups, and public hearings**
- **Researching, drafting and editing documentation – including reports and consultations**
- **Answering citizens’ inquiries**
- **Supporting the management of projects**
- **Translating, revising translations or researching terminology” (same source as above)**

Schuman traineeship and Blue Book traineeship



Furthermore, 2022 is the **European Year of Youth**. That is why many events are being organised to celebrate it. This year, young people take the floor to give their opinion. The focus is on “a better future - greener, more inclusive and digital” (source: https://europa.eu/youth/year-of-youth_en). Now, let's take a concrete example: the EU Youth Dialogue. This allows young people and decision-makers to discuss and debate. Through it, the young generation can express itself freely about its fears and expectations. It is also a way to make a difference and to point out problems that hinder the good functioning of our union. Check the interactive map on the website of the European Year of Youth to find out more about other youth mobility projects.

In addition, the country holding the **Presidency of the Council of the European Union** also regularly organises initiatives aiming at reshaping the EU. At the moment, France holds this position. So please visit this website to keep up to date with its activities.

Moreover, many **institutions funded by the Member States** – sometimes with additional funding from the EU - are setting up activities connecting young and/or older people in order to give them the tools to shape Europe in their own way. This topic cannot be covered in full, but let's just take a few examples.

The first one is the **Office franco-allemand pour la Jeunesse (OFAJ)**, which is an international organisation - based in Paris, Berlin and Saarbrücken - promoting Franco-German cooperation while organising activities around Europe. As stated on their website, “the OFAJ supports youth exchanges and projects in France and Germany in various ways: school and university exchanges, language courses, twinning of cities and regions, sports and cultural events, internships and professional exchanges, travel grants, research projects.”

Another one is the **Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)** based in Singapore, which is focussing on “[...] **strengthening Asia-Europe relations through [...] seminars, workshops, conferences, publications, web portals, grants and public talks.**” During their activities dedicated to young Europeans and Asians, the participants have the opportunity to meet brilliant stakeholders – such as civil society, politicians, NGO leaders, activists, international organisations, etc. - from both

continents to reflect on major reforms of our social system (with certifications at the end of the whole process). Unfortunately, the Eastern Partnership countries are not listed among the European partner countries of the intergovernmental process “established in 1996 to foster dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe”.

A third one is called Europa macht Schule (“**Europe meets School**”). This programme “**promotes cross-cultural exchange as an active contribution to understanding between the peoples of Europe. [...] Guest students from all over Europe [...] present their home country and its specific cultural, historical, social and political characteristics in creative ways in schools throughout Germany.**”

Anyone from Europe - and beyond - could potentially apply as this program is designed for international students based in Germany. (Attention, you need to speak German for this one!)

The last one is the category of **young leaders' forums or simulation games**, which are often organised by institutions, NGOs or higher education establishments. One of them is called SPECQUE and is the largest French-speaking European Parliament Simulation. Last year, it took place in Amiens (France) and several thousand euros from the EU were allocated to this gathering of young people reflecting on motions aiming at improving the lives of European citizens, considering the place of democracy in our society, reforming our union, and pointing out current issues of our society.



IN CONCLUSION

Finally, it is important to note that participating in one of these initiatives helps to generate new interest in the EU, to strengthen the democratic debate and to bring citizens together around a common cause which can then shape their daily lives. The EU, or any other NGO or institution financed by the EU, by investing sometimes huge sums of money, invests in the long term, in the wellbeing of everyone, and brings the neighbouring countries – the EU Neighbours East and the EU Neighbours South - closer to the EU member countries and to the European citizens.

Moreover, it is also worth acknowledging the fact that this overview is not an exhaustive list.

I could for example also name the EU Climate Pact Ambassador programme (which is open to everyone in the world – i.e. anyone ready to fight climate change), the Conference on the Future of Europe, the Foundation Bernheim, a citizens' panel for people aged 18 to 30 called Europe? Yourope! organised by the Brussels Parliament and where citizens debate together on European democracy, as well as many other initiatives. Keep in mind that these websites help you find opportunities for Europeans eager to change the world. So, take a look and start contributing to the wellbeing of everyone on our continent and in its neighbourhood.

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Images:

- Image 1: Painting potentially made by Sol LeWitt, Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen (taken in August 2021 by the author of this article).
- Image 2: The YEAs in Katowice, Poland (2022), <https://www.facebook.com/euneighbourseast> (accessed on 1.05.2022).
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14 ERASMUS+ JOURNEYS - DESIRED BY MANY, LIVED BY SOFI.

 *By Sofi Abrahamyan*

In this article, you will discover how Erasmus+ projects shaped Sofi as a person, and how she reasserted her core values and turned over a new leaf, making a fresh start.

Hi, my name is Sofi Abrahamyan, Young European Ambassador from Armenia, and enthusiastic veteran of Erasmus+ exchanges. It's no exaggeration to say that they have changed my life!

What is it exactly that EU-funded youth exchanges offer to young people like me? They allow groups of young people from different countries and with different cultural backgrounds to gather in one place and focus on various important topics through non-formal learning processes. More importantly they aim at fostering intercultural dialogue and communication.

Now, I will swim through my memories and take you along each of my journeys. I'll tell you about the interesting facts I discovered during each project, and how these projects shaped me as a person.

In November 2019, I took part in my first ever Erasmus+ youth exchange project, held in Dilijan, Armenia. The topic was "Media Change". At a time when we are witnessing urgent calls to better manage the media environment, it is more important than ever to become more media-literate. With the help of different educational activities, workshops and simulation games, we discussed lots of topics related to media itself: what is manipulation and how to avoid it, what is propaganda and what is it for, how to differentiate fake from real news. As a result, I've developed new skills in this sphere, which help me in my everyday life.

Now about my first and most exciting international experience: at the beginning of 2020, I boarded a flight to the UK.

One of the advantages of Erasmus+ projects is that they give you an opportunity to take some

extra days in case you want to travel and discover the country at your own expense. And I couldn't but take the chance to discover London. I made my dream come true: as a big fan of Harry Potter I went to King's Cross Station. That was the moment I felt the happiest. I felt as if I was going through the wall to Platform 9¾ that would take me to Hogwarts.



Instead, the next day I was headed to Totland Bay on the west coast of the Isle of Wight - a small island off the south coast of England, where the project was taking place. The topic of the project was "Make a change", inspired by a Michael Jackson song: if you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and make a change. It was an extremely gripping and interesting Erasmus+ project, during which we touched on various important topics, such as issues in diverse cultures and how we should find solutions to the problems concerning these. We also discussed the social situation and issues in many countries, especially developing countries, that face gender inequality, stereotypes, discrimination, issues of IDPs and refugees. We organised forum theatres to try to see these issues from different perspectives and find possible ways to settle them and become culturally competent.

The summer promised to be unforgettable and the proof came in another project, this time in the picturesque Lori region of my homeland (my favourite region of Armenia). The topic was "The Voice Within". The theme already hinted that we were about to find out our inner power and set our goals in life. Through different sessions, creative activities and meditations we defined our intrinsic motivation and inspiration, went deeper into our personality, found peacefulness within, and felt the earth beneath our feet.

This project gave me my two soulmates: Anahit and Hayk (by the way, Hayk is doing his Erasmus Mundus in Belgium). While unfortunately all of us live far away from each other, that isn't a barrier for keeping our friendship strong.

Autumn came with another project about social entrepreneurship, which took place in Granada, Spain. It aimed at raising awareness of social entrepreneurship skills among young people and developing entrepreneurial competences. Through team-building activities, we came up with our business strategies, addressed some social issues and strengthened our sense of initiative. During the project we also visited Alhambra and walked along the footsteps of ancient history.

The start of 2022 was just as exciting! This time, I headed to a small village called Kozyczkowo in Northern Poland. It was interesting for me to

discover that in that region some people consider themselves as native speakers of both Kashubian and Polish. This was my first training course, which was intended more for youth workers. The topic was "The journey of introspection". This project was definitely a life-changing experience for me. I defined my core values, and I discovered that the most important one for me is the harmony within myself and with the outer world. I got in a deeper relationship with myself by recognising my emotions and diving deeper into them. And I rediscovered the sun within me by finding other suns around me.

I really appreciated every single moment spent in the project: the way we gathered around the fireplace and discussed, the way we cared for each other, the way we had the courage to speak about our struggles and the way we got supported.

And surely the cocoa night will never slip from my memory. During the project, singing mantras was one of the most peaceful moments of my life. After the project, we carried out follow-up activities in our communities and transferred the knowledge, the experience to other youngsters.



“Once Erasmus, always Erasmus”

Erasmus takes you on a journey which gets you away from destructive thoughts and emotions. It takes you to the unknown and fascinating world where you feel free, appreciated, and you simply feel your true self.

As a result of these EU-funded projects, I look at myself in the mirror and see a completely different person that I love and am proud of. I have experienced growth, got a wider knowledge of EU values, considerably improved my leadership, management, teamworking, and communication skills. Other than that, I had the chance to present my country Armenia, with its ancient history, rich culture and delicious cuisine.

I saw myself becoming more and more confident. I saw the light within me, which needed a push to shine, and these projects have definitely given me that push. I got valuable experience and information by building international bridges. So, spread your wings and take your own journey.



15

THE FUTURE OF CITIES IN THE EASTERN PARTNER COUNTRIES.



By Mariam Morchadze

Cities have a multi-faceted role in strengthening solidarity, liberal democracy and, in general, European values. The countries of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) are the future of Europe. What do European and EaP cities have in common, and why can EaP cities be considered European? What are other things beyond architecture, which speak about cities and their citizens?

In this article, we have interviewed Georgian urban planner, Sophia Todua, who is trying to answer these key questions regarding the cities of the EaP countries, their similarities and differences with cities in the European Union.

WHAT DO THE CITIES OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES HAVE IN COMMON WITH EACH OTHER?

Sophia Todua: Although there are many differences between the EaP countries, the similarities are still great given that the post-Soviet reality in these countries still exists. Here are some key common features:

- All EaP cities are so-called “Cities in Transition”. Some are developing faster, some slower, though all of them are in a development period. The collapse of the Soviet Union caused the same problem in these countries. This is true when we say that many new settlements emerged during the Soviet era. A good example of this is Gori, which is an artificially created city, because factories were built there, people settled and new neighbourhoods emerged. The same is true in cities of other EaP countries. When the Soviet Union collapsed, economic ties were lost due to the collapse of the system. It so happened that these cities became deindustrialised and could no longer sustain their human resources - too many are already flowing out of these towns and moving to the big cities. For example, 1.5 million people already live in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, out of 3.5 million in the whole country.

- During the Soviet Union, there we had the so-called “SNIP” – Construction Norms and Regulations - absolutely everything was built based on this document in every city in the Soviet Union. When different cities are organised according to a single document over so many years, they are clearly uniquely similar to each other.

- Before independence from the Soviet empire, there was no private property. Suddenly a cadaster appeared in the 90s. This system has given rise to a similar scenario in all the EaP countries.

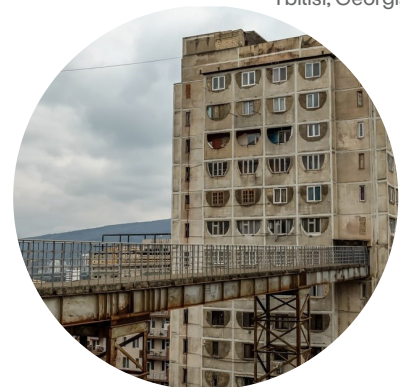
- The process of decentralisation is now underway in all six countries and yet cities are often unable to set the goals they want on their territory. On the other hand, because the system used to be very centralised, today the problem is that human resources in the local executive bodies are not qualified because they are drained.

- There is also a great cultural similarity in the sense that there is a large age gap between the generations of the residents of these countries. The younger generation is radically opposed to the visions of adults and likes what the future of the West offers.

Minsk, Belarus



Tbilisi, Georgia



- And the path - the path of EaP cities is towards the West and therefore our connection to Europe unites us. We are implementing various projects in terms of urban development, both in terms of urban planning and administrative governance. We are talking about sustainable urban development and digitalisation, which is a key indicator of smart cities. We are also trying to take steps in this direction.

WHAT DO THEY HAVE IN COMMON WITH EUROPEAN CITIES?

Historically, EaP countries and consequently cities have been bordering Europe. Consequently, Western influence is felt both in terms of planning and architecture. In Georgia, for example, we have many settlements or districts that are either built under the influence of the Germans or the French or representatives of other European countries or with their direct involvement.

Cities in EaP countries lean towards European values. We like their quality of life, their cities, and we think we have the same potential. A good example of this is the emergence of new concepts and terms in the system of governance, such as "sustainable development", "digitalisation rate", "smart cities" and so on.

In terms of climate, we are like the continent of Europe - the countries of the Caucasus in the south, and Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus - in the north.

WHAT DISTINGUISHES CITIES OF THE EAP COUNTRIES FROM EUROPEAN CITIES?



"I am a big believer in Europe, but Europe is its citizens", says @MathiasDeClercq.



12:41 PM · Nov 5, 2021 · Twitter Web App

The environment in European cities is tailored to the individual resident. Planning there is done based on the needs that have already been outlined. When we go to European cities, we have less to drive, walking is much more comfortable, because the environment is adapted to people, created for them to live. This is the main difference between

cities in the EaP countries and European cities. This is changing slowly because before us city planners were mostly architects and their vision extended to the entire district. And we got to places where the quality of life is very low and the city creates discomfort for you on a daily basis, which affects your mood, your daily life, your health, and so on.

HOW DO EAP CITIES CREATE A SENSE OF BELONGING TO EUROPE FOR THEIR RESIDENTS?

It is true that there are no systematic changes in our country, but some projects funded by international funds are being implemented. This creates a feeling that we belong to Europe. We started talking about green spaces being very important in the city, setting up bicycle lanes to encourage cycling mobility, digitising data, talking locally about local economic development and urban development. This in turn creates the feeling that, like European cities, we are talking about common challenges in our cities.

BESIDE THE SPECIFIC STYLE OF ARCHITECTURE, WHAT ELSE DO EUROPEAN CITIES HAVE IN COMMON?



Marek Prawda, Former Polish Ambassador to the EU, in #Eurocities2021: "Closer cooperation is not an ideological process, but a matter of survival."



2:03 PM · Nov 5, 2021

Urban planning in European cities is done by observing the local requirements. Although Berlin and Paris differ architecturally from each other, the planning in both cities is tailored to the local culture and the level of environmental humanity is also high in both cities. And the overall value - the desire for the city to be green, vibrant, sustainable and cultural - is another common indicator of European cities.

Hopefully, the path which the cities of the EaP countries are walking along will bring them to a new level of development that will ensure democracy in communities, local economic growth and so much more for the cities to become greener, more sustainable, livable and smarter.

16

UNDERCOVER NO MORE - A STEP CLOSER TO EQUALITY.



By [Mariam Ketsbaia](#)

Being equal to someone means being held to the same standards, and having equal rights and opportunities to grow. Yet many define equality as what is most beneficial to them, or in a way that global society has perceived it for centuries. So, if you had a choice to take an easy way out, would you? If covering up your identity was a way to fit in, would you forget your true self?

Short Film Festival in EuroClub
Kvareli /© EuroClub Kvareli



In March 2022, the French Embassy in Georgia held the Short Film Festival at the Kvareli EuroClub. The topics of these films included gender equality, the perception of women's role in society, and their health. However, one film touched on a significant issue for me - the fact that it is much easier to pretend to be

someone else because we may not be accepted and welcomed if we are any different. It reminded me of how women, centuries ago, wrote under male pseudonyms, like the Brontë Sisters, Louisa May Alcott, and more. They knew it would be almost impossible for a book with a woman's name to achieve success or even get published.

Covering your identity and hiding who you are to avoid people judging and bullying you is not a thing of the past. The film outlined that as well. The most disappointing example was a female employee encouraging a fellow woman to change her distinctive name to a more casual one. Why? To make it easy. For whom? It depends on whom you ask. Nevertheless, is it worth it? NO, and let me explain why. Whenever we demand something, we have to know why we are doing it and its value to us all. If we do not respect ourselves enough to live our lives as we are, how can we ask others to do so? I have always considered it my obligation to lead by example. Therefore, the first step to gender equality is accepting ourselves and believing that we are no less than anyone, no matter the gender. Because, in the end, everything starts with us.

Even after a plethora of international and national documents, countries, and organisations pledging to be equal toward women, society's general perception remains the same. The [Regional Report for Eurasia by the Social Institutions and Gender Index \(2019\)](#) underlines that "discrimination against Eurasian women is most pervasive within the family. Despite legal reforms promoting greater gender equality, deep-rooted social norms and practices inspire such discrimination." Standing up to centuries-old social perceptions of women is not easy, but not impossible either. At some point in our lives, we have to decide whether living in the shadow of a stigmatised society is something that we want. If we do not, be ready for the path that is anything but easy, unfortunately. Painting of the Bronte Sisters | © Wikimedia Commons

The answer to my very first question is no, not any more. I would rather face the harsh reality and fight. I have learned not to take myself for granted and am still learning how to empower others to do the same. I have realised that I should know my value before asking anyone to know it. And the first battle we have to win to achieve equality is the struggle within.

We still have a long way ahead to see the goal of an equal world come to fruition. However, I know that TOGETHER we have the power to change it, so why don't we start now?

Painting of the Bronte Sisters
© Wikimedia Commons



PHOTO SECTION: YEAs IN SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE.

EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM
IN POLAND,
April 2022, Katowice, Poland



PHOTO SECTION: YEAs IN SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE.

GEORGIANS
#STANDWITHUKRAINE,
March 2022, Tbilisi, Georgia



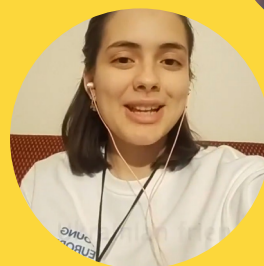
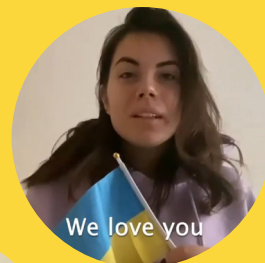
PHOTO SECTION: YEAs IN SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE.

YOUNG EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS
FROM ARMENIA AND MOLDOVA
#STANDWITHUKRAINE



PHOTO SECTION: YEAs IN SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE.

YOUNG EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS
FROM EU
#STANDWITHUKRAINE



Young European Ambassadors from EU #StandWithUkraine

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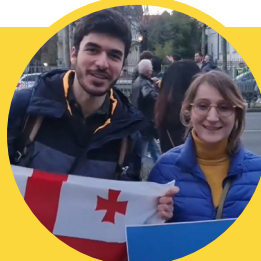


PHOTO SECTION: YEAs IN SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE.

YOUNG EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS
FROM MOLDOVA SEND
HUMANITARIAN AID TO CHERNIHIV



1

BIOS & PHOTOS.



SOFI ABRAHAMYAN

Sofi is a third-year student majoring in Translation Studies. She works at Wikimedia Armenia NGO coordinating the Wikiclub in her community and teaches other youngsters Wikipedia tools and editing skills. Being a huge fan of Erasmus+ projects, she thinks that her experience during those projects has contributed significantly to her better understanding of EU values.



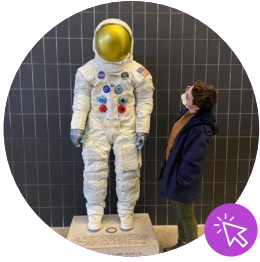
SALOME ABRAMISHVILI

Salome is the Assistant to the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee at the Parliament of Georgia. She is also a Policy Analyst for the project "Roadmap to Kremlin Policy in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region" at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies. Previously, Salome briefly worked as an author at Forbes Woman magazine in Georgia. She has completed the Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellowship at Wake Forest University in the United States and a summer school on Integrity at Transparency International in Lithuania. She has also been an Erasmus exchange student at the Department of European Studies at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași (Romania) and Wszechnica Polska University in Warsaw (Poland).



JULES BIGOT

Currently on Erasmus in Prague for his third year of his Bachelor's degree, Jules studies at SciencesPo Paris and specializes in the European Union and Central and Eastern Europe. Having grown up in a very European environment in Brussels, Jules has always been driven by the desire to meet new people and talk about Europe. That is why he got involved in various EU-related initiatives such as This Time I'm Voting, JEF Europe, Le Taurillon, Europe Direct and now the Young European Ambassadors initiative.



SONA CHITCHYAN

Sona got her Bachelor's degree in Physics from Yerevan State University, studying Physics and is currently doing her Master's at Michigan State University researching Supernovae. Sona joined the YEA network in 2020. Her interests include science, and formal and non-formal education and she enjoys all the possible conversations on human rights and democratic values.



LUKA CHITIANI

Luka Chitiani is a third-year bachelor's student at Tbilisi State University majoring in international relations. He has been actively engaged in volunteering since 2016. Since then, he has participated in various major and minor projects and training. In 2021, Luka spent his summer semester at Kadir Has University through the Erasmus+ program. Furthermore, at the beginning of the year, he and his friends founded an NGO called the Question Mark Movement which aims to strengthen liberal values in Georgian society. He hopes to have a positive impact on his community.



JASMIN DARWICH

Jasmin is a Young European Ambassador from Republic of Moldova. She's a high school student, and she strongly believes that we are always stronger together. She loves learning new languages and reading books. She believes in the power of inspiration, and how that makes it possible for people to learn, improve and dream more.

Her experience as a Young European Ambassador, in her words, changed her to be the best version of herself, learning and getting involved with many activities.



MATILDE FABRIZIO

Matilde is a student in Political Science and International Relations at the Cesare Alfieri University of Florence. Her dedication to international affairs goes far beyond a simple passion and interest in her studies; thanks to the many experiences she had abroad, she has always felt part of a community much larger and broader than just that of her home country. Matilde believes in a world in which the diversity of countries and cultures is a richness and an opportunity for everyone, and she works every day to see it realized. Her goal as a Young European Ambassador is to move further the gaze of those who still cannot see this world.



TATIA INJGIA

Tatia is an eleventh-grade student, who lives in Gori, Georgia. She is a socially active young person and has experience working as a volunteer journalist and manager of many organizations. She has participated in mock court trials, and her writing was included in a book, “Ten Stories by Ten Authors”.



GULSARA JABBARLI

Gulsara is a 19-year-old economics student, who is passionate about learning about economic issues and potential solutions in both her nation and throughout the world. She has been a Young European Ambassador from Azerbaijan since 2021, and she regularly participates in Young European Ambassadors’ events. She is now working on a research paper titled “Azerbaijan’s Economic Growth and Unemployment from 2000 to 2020”. She hopes to become more specialized in research in the future and to publish more academic works. Writing a blog, she claims, was a fascinating and fruitful experience that taught her a lot about the economic connection between the EU and Azerbaijan. She hopes more people would be able to learn from her article and become more aware of the EU’s influence on Azerbaijan’s economy.



MARIAM KETSBAIA

Mariam is a recent graduate of Tbilisi #143 Public School. She has been actively engaged in educational and enriching short-term projects and activities in various fields nationwide and internationally. She is a proud alumna of EducationUSA Georgia Leadership Academy, American Corner Tbilisi, and Yale Young Global Scholars Program. Mariam joined the Young European Ambassadors initiative in the Spring of 2021. Since then, she has led and participated in multiple activities organized by YEAs in Georgia. In 2022, Mariam represented Georgia and the initiative at the European Forum of Young Leaders in Katowice, Poland. She is also a volunteer English Teacher at the American Corner Tbilisi and holds National Award for Volunteering. Mariam enjoys networking, singing, and writing blogs and motivational speeches.



IBRAHIM MAMMADOV

Ibrahim has earned his Bachelor's degree at ADA University, majoring in International Studies, where he has spent his 6th semester studying at the University of Bologna as an exchange student. He has experience as the Research Assistant of the Mexican Ambassador in Azerbaijan, working on research topics related to Eurasian Transport Corridors, European Energy Security, and Central Asian Affairs. Ibrahim also works as a Researcher Assistant at the Caucasus Policy Analysis Center (CPAC), where he focuses on Central Asian Affairs and Armenia-Azerbaijan relations. He has gained experience as an Intern in the Political and Consular departments of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Italian Republic and an Intern in the Political and Economic sections of the Embassy of Mexico in Azerbaijan. His main areas of expertise include Post-Soviet Affairs, focusing on the Central Asian and Southern Caucasus regions, Conflict Resolution and Conflict Studies.



MARIAM MORCHADZE

Mariam graduated from the School of Governance of Caucasus University in Tbilisi with a major of Public Administration. Between 2014-2019 she studied at two different universities as an exchange program student, in Warsaw and Nijmegen. In 2018 Mariam was appointed as a Young European Ambassador and since then she has been actively involved in promoting the European values in the young community. After a year in 2019, she joined the EU initiative "Mayors for Economic Growth" as a Junior Expert and assisted the Local Authorities of Georgian Municipalities to elaborate the Local Economic Development Plans. In the framework of the EU projects Mariam conducted two different research to identify to what extent the culture and creative industries (CCI) sector is integrated into local development plans and what challenges the local representatives of the CCI sector are facing in their development. Besides, Mariam carries out several projects in Georgian cities related to urban development and studies cities as a complex cultural phenomenon.



NVARD POGHOSYAN

Nvard is currently studying in the second year of the accounting faculty of the Armenian State University of Economics. In parallel with her studies, she leads an active social and volunteer life. She is the lead of the Aragatsotn regional council of the Local School of Democracy. She is a member of the NDI debate club and Uniting Bridge NGO. She implements small projects aimed at community development and democratization.



FREYA PROUDMAN

Freya is a Young European Ambassador from the United Kingdom. She is originally from Wales, but was raised in the United States of America. She currently resides in London and is studying for a Master's degree in Russian and Eurasian politics from University College London School of Slavonic and East European Studies (UCL SSEES).



ROSTYSLAV SEMKA

Rostyslav is a Young European Ambassador and youth activist from Ukraine. Master's student at Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics majoring in management of foreign economic activity. Since 2019, he has been a project coordinator at an NGO. He is also a GFC (Global Fund for Children) "Spark Fund" panellist .



SEVIL SULEYMANOVA

Sevil is a gender and education enthusiast. She has been in youth work for more than five years, working on different topics, such as women empowerment, ecology, human rights, and education issues in her country, and also attended many workshops on these topics locally and internationally. Being a Young European Ambassador helped her to be more active in her country and make small changes through certain projects and activities on anti-bullying and women's issues. She is currently enrolled in a Master's in International Relations and a research project by Economic Policy Research Center in Georgia where she is researching on the women's representation in the parliaments of Georgia and Azerbaijan since 1918. By contributing to the research about youth, education, and gender she wants to be a senior expert in Gender and Education.



ROXANA TOMPEA

Roxana studied International Relations, Diplomacy, and Public Administration across four European universities. She holds a dual Bachelors degree from the University of Essex (United Kingdom) and Universität Konstanz (Germany), and a Masters of Advanced International Studies (MAIS) from the Diplomatische Akademie Wien and Universität Wien (Austria). Since 2014, Roxana has been working in the diplomatic field across various government bodies and international agencies (Ministry of Internal Affairs, embassies and consular sections, intergovernmental and international organisations). In 2018, she decided to direct her passion towards the field of international development and be an agent of change in the sustainable development of societies, economies, and industries. In her current capacity at the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), she fosters the promotion of resource efficiency and circular economy principles in the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) members. In her spare time, since her appointment in 2012, she is also a dedicated European Youth Parliament (EYP) alumna, a Model UN and Junior Achievement (JA) volunteer, and a team member for TEDxVienna.



TATIA TURAZASHVILI

Tatia is currently studying master of law at the Beijing Institute of Technology. In 2015, she won the “Most Literate Writer” competition, held by “Sulakauri Publishing”. In previous years, she participated in different olympiads and received lots of experience as a result. She also received a Gold medal for “excellent study achievements” at school. In 2016, Tatia joined Young European Ambassadors and has been involved in YEAs activities since then. In 2019, Tatia completed an internship at the non-profit organization of the Tbilisi City Hall – “My Lawyer”, where she was giving free legal aid to those who couldn’t afford it. She is actively involved and participates in various conferences and competitions, such as the 28th Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot and 19th Annual Willem C. Vis EAST International Commercial Arbitration Moot. In 2021, Tatia also took part in the 19th Cietac Cup, which is not only an international but also a very prestigious competition in China. Together with her team she even won the third prize on behalf of the Beijing Institute of Technology among other Chinese universities. Currently, she works as an Associate at a law firm “J&T Consulting”.



NICOLAS VANDE KERCKHOVE

Nicolas completed his Bachelor’s degree in Literature, Culture, Linguistics and History of Germanic languages at the Université Saint-Louis in Brussels, and a Master’s degree in Comparative Indo-European Linguistics at the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich. In June 2021, he obtained his Master’s degree from the College of Europe in Natolin - Poland - where he studied European Interdisciplinary Studies. During his studies, he taught ancient and modern languages. As a Young European Ambassador (YEA), he is currently collaborating with other YEAs on projects in order to develop long-lasting cooperation and to build strong ties between young people from the European Union and from the Eastern Partnership countries.