



Normative Power vs. Democratic Backsliding European Values in the EU and Georgia

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Table of Contents

Preface

Executive Summary and Policy Recommendations

1. Introduction

2. European Values: Guiding Light and Policy Instrument

2.1 Anchoring European Values in EU Treaties

2.2 European Values in EU External Action

3. Corroborated and Contested: European Values in Georgia

3.1 EU Values Promotion in Georgia

3.2 Societal Contestation of European Values in Georgia

3.3 Georgian Governments and European Values

3.4 External Challenge(r)s to European Values in Georgia

4. European Values and EU Normative Power in Times of Democratic Backlash

4.1 European Values and their Challenge(r)s in the EU

4.2 Quo Vadis Normative Power Europe?

5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Authors

Preface

This policy paper is the result of a collaborative effort of the authors, Polis180, the Georgian Institute of Politics and Argo. It was inspired by the discussions we had during a workshop and conference, conducted from 16-20 September 2018 in Tbilisi as part of the project “Between a Rock and a Hard Place? Georgian, German and French Perspectives on European Values and Euro-Atlantic Integration”. We would like to thank the authors, editors and reviewers for their work on this paper and the workshop and conference speakers for their inspiring inputs.

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Executive Summary

European values are under attack. In the European Union, consensus on democracy, the rule of law and other values defined in Art. 2, Treaty on European Union has eroded – European integration based on shared values and norms has turned out to be a struggle rather than a matter of course. At the same time, particularly since the end of the Cold War, the EU has come to increasingly build on European values in its external relations, and to employ its normative power towards enlargement and neighboring countries. Thus, the question arises to what extent the increasing challenges to European values *within* the EU affect neighboring states directly, and affect the EU's ability to pursue its value-oriented policy towards them.

Aiming at providing answers to this question, this paper reviews challenges to European values in the European Union and its neighborhood, and investigates the nexus between the increased questioning of European values and the ability of the EU to act as normative power in its external relations. Focusing on Georgia as a prime case of the EU's normative power approach, this paper reviews the EU's numerous policies to support, amongst others, democratization, human rights and civil society and thus European values in the Eastern Partnership country. Often considered a 'front-runner' among the Eastern Partnership countries, Georgia's "irreversible Europeanization"¹ remains a model for other countries and a litmus test of the EU's normative power in its neighborhood. Nevertheless, Georgia has recently also faced criticism from the European Parliament for alleged elite corruption, insufficient human rights protection and other issues.² Moreover, as the international political environment is turning more hostile to value-based policy, and societies throughout Europe fall prey to far-right dissent, Georgia is also witnessing gains in its own domestic, far-right movement.³ Strikingly, the increasing contestation of European values and the decline of democracy in the EU are in turn used by the Georgian far-right to legitimize their own anti-liberal politics.

Finally, this paper will show that the contestation of European values within the EU may result in the Union losing one of its most important foreign policy tools. EU institutions dominated by anti-democratic, anti-human rights forces will certainly neither "lead by example", nor invoke democratic conditionality. This raises questions about the EU's future foreign policy actorness as well as the political trajectory of EU enlargement and neighboring states as a whole.

¹ Davit Zalkaliani, "Georgian Foreign Policy in a New Era", Chatham House, Russia and Eurasia Programme Meeting Summary, 18 March 2014,

https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/home/chatham/public_html/sites/default/files/20140318GeorgianForeignPolicyZalkaliani.pdf

² European Parliament, Committee on European Affairs, *Report on the Implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Georgia*, 15 October 2018, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2F%2FEP%2F%2FNONSGML+REPORT+A8-2018-0320+0+DOC+PDF+V0%2F%2FEN&fbclid=IwAR24PSnoTyDutK9Pgc9Dg3JFKWPw9nxkbN3Tokx63aHj1e2x6z44Q35InTo>

³ Adriana Stephan, "Defining the far right in Georgia: From neo-fascists to populist parties", *Georgian Institute of Politics*, October 2018, <http://gip.ge/defining-the-far-right-in-georgia-from-neo-fascists-to-populist-parties/>

Policy Recommendations

To European citizens and political activists, inside or outside of the EU:

- Work on reclaiming political discourses in favor of human rights and democracy. In times of rising illiberal movements, it is the joint responsibility of all Europeans to protect and promote the system of norms and values that serves to protect each individual's fundamental rights towards the state.
- Cooperate across cleavages and party lines. Liberal democracy is not a particular interest; it is the foundation of our societies, which is supported by a broad variety of actors.

To EU institutions and Member State governments:

- Work on strengthening European values domestically - for instance, by launching Art. 7 procedures where appropriate. Even if illiberal alliances prevent them from being approved in the Council, they serve as important symbols for what is at stake.
- Provide stronger support to the European Values Instrument that is currently being negotiated.
- Do not play out support for civil society and democracy *within* the EU against support for civil society and democracy abroad.
- Provide strong support to the implementation of frameworks such as Association Agreements concluded with neighbors, and thereby, to the latter's democratization processes. This includes being more critical of violations of jointly agreed upon norms.
- Support more people-to-people exchange between EU citizens and European neighbors, in order to generate better understandings of each others' realities.

To governments of EU enlargement candidates and neighbors:

- Aim at deepening your own citizens' understanding about political realities in the EU, in order to decrease potential disillusionment - do not make false promises.
- There is no *right* to EU accession. Thus, ask yourselves what you can do to convince Member States that your membership will yield benefits to the EU.

1. Introduction

"The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail."

In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens."

Art. 2 / Art. 3 § 5, Treaty on European Union⁴

European values are under attack. The values enshrined in the treaties, the values that form the basis of European integration, are increasingly challenged – by European citizens and governments alike. The alleged "cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe",⁵ from which European values are said to derive, turned out to be less deeply-rooted than commonly believed during the 1990s and 2000s. This poses challenges not only to the EU's internal policies, but also to its external action. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and particularly since the Amsterdam Treaty "enshrined values in the provisions on EU external action",⁶ the EU has pursued its ambition to act as "normative power" on the international stage – aiming at promoting its values abroad and thus supporting the democratic development of surrounding countries. But to what extent can the EU exert this normative power abroad when it does not possess the strength to protect European values domestically? And what does this imply for surrounding countries and the EU's policy towards the South and East? Examining the state of European values in the EU and in Georgia, a country where the European Union has been seeking to exert its normative power, as well as the interplay between how European values are understood in the EU and Georgia, this paper provides answers to these questions and gives recommendations for EU external action in times of the increased questioning of liberal and European values.

What are European values in the first place? According to Foret and Calligaro (2018), values are "cultural representations and points of reference about what is good or bad"; they are "produced by a social convention and asserted by an institution".⁷ By progressively enshrining European values in EU treaties over the course of the last decades, the EU institutions "put an end to the interrogations on values by imposing certainties on their meaning and hierarchy". While European values ultimately remain vague, Foret and Calligaro argue that this vagueness is

⁴ Consolidated Version of Treaty on the European Union, *Official Journal of the European Union* C 326, October 26, 2012, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12012M%2FTXT>.

⁵ Preamble, Consolidated Version of Treaty on the European Union.

⁶ R. Coman, "Values in EU Governance. How and Why Do Political and Social Actors Stand for the Rule of Law?", in *European Values. Challenges and Opportunities for EU Governance*, Foret, Francois & Calligaro, Oriane (Eds.), (Milton Park/New York: Routledge, 2018), chapter 4, pp.83-98; p.87.

⁷ Francois Foret and Oriane Calligaro, "Analysing European Values: An Introduction", in *European Values. Challenges and Opportunities for EU Governance*, (Milton Park/New York: Routledge, 2018), pp.1-20; pp.3f.

“pivotal to their social and political role” – as European values serve to build unity in the absence of consensus. However, this vagueness also makes them vulnerable: the current “weakening of the [European] institutions leads to a revival of doubts and conflicts”.⁸

These conflicts are most obviously reflected in the recently launched Article 7 procedures, which set out to determine a “clear risk of a serious breach by a Member State of the values referred to in Article 2”.⁹ In 2017, the European Commission asked the Council to launch the Article 7 procedure for Poland, claiming that the country’s executive and legislative branches interfere “with the composition, powers, administration and functioning of the judicial branch”.¹⁰ In September 2018, the European Parliament asked the Council to launch the same procedure for Hungary, arguing that the country exhibits a “clear risk of a serious breach...of the values on which the Union is founded”. It also made the connection to the EU’s external action, arguing that Hungary’s policies have “a negative impact on the image of the Union, as well as its effectiveness and credibility in the defense of fundamental rights, human rights and democracy globally”.¹¹ But European values are not only being challenged in Central and Eastern Europe: in Europe’s West and North, radical right-wing parties have gained ground or come to power, building their success on xenophobic rhetoric which “drives up international tensions and undermines the stability created over the past sixty years in Europe”.¹² The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights’ *Fundamental Rights Report 2018* includes a chapter titled “No progress in countering racism in the EU” and finds that “immigrants and minority ethnic groups continue to face widespread discrimination, harassment and discriminatory ethnic profiling across the EU”.¹³

These findings and developments pose immediate questions to the future of the European project itself. At the same time, they also pose enormous challenges, which so far have been largely overlooked, to the Union’s external action. For instance, can the EU push for the rule of law abroad while some of its Member States are curtailing the independence of the judiciary at home? In this situation, does the EU still have the power and legitimacy to demand democratic reforms from its international partners?

This paper takes a closer look at Georgia, a prime case of the EU’s normative power approach. Often considered a “front-runner” among the Eastern Partnership countries, Georgia’s

⁸ Francois Foret and Oriane Calligaro, “Conclusion. Resilience and Elusiveness of European Values”, *European Values. Challenges and Opportunities for EU Governance*, (Milton Park/New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 174-180; pp.175 f.

⁹ Article 7, Treaty on the European Union.

¹⁰ European Union Agency for Human Rights, “Fundamental Rights Report 2018”, (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018), p.203, http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-fundamental-rights-report-2018_en.pdf.

¹¹ “European Parliament resolution on a proposal calling on the Council to determine, pursuant to Article 7(1) of the Treaty on European Union, the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded (2017/2131(INL))”, 12 September 2018, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2018-0340+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

¹² Heather Grabbe, Stefan Lehne, “Could an Illiberal Europe Work?”, *Carnegie Europe*, October 11, 2018, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2018/10/11/could-illiberal-europe-work-pub-77463>.

¹³ European Union Agency for Human Rights, “Fundamental Rights Report 2018”, p.77.

"irreversible Europeanization"¹⁴ remains a model for other countries and a litmus test of the EU's normative power in its neighborhood. When Georgia joined the Council of Europe in 1999, the then Chairman of the Georgian Parliament, Zurab Zhvania, coined the famous phrase: "I am Georgian, and therefore I am European." Relations between Georgia and the EU have been framed by multiple agreements, and the recent Association Agreement (2014/2016) clearly aims at deepening Georgia's European choice by way of promoting the above-mentioned European values in Georgia.¹⁵

At the same time, despite great efforts since the 2003 Rose Revolution, Georgia's progress in moving towards liberal democracy has been limited.¹⁶ For instance, 69 percent of Georgians believe their courts favor some citizens over others. Only 23 percent of Georgians deem it important to protect sexual minorities.¹⁷ A recent study finds that citizens perceive freedom of speech and women and minority rights to have improved compared to 10 years ago, but corruption and the court system to have deteriorated.¹⁸ Just like in other parts of Europe, right-wing political forces are gaining strength.¹⁹ These developments take place in the context of strong ethnic nationalism – 85% of Georgians regard their culture as superior to others²⁰ – that at times conflicts with ideas of tolerance and minority rights. However, Georgia is not alone here: according to a recent study, Eastern Europeans are "less receptive to religious and cultural pluralism" than Western Europeans, which challenges "the notion of universal assent to a set of European values".²¹

This paper seeks to analyze the increasing challenges to European values in the EU and Georgia and their interplay, in order to shed light on possible future(s) of EU's normative power in times of democratic backlash. It also seeks to provide recommendations on how to create a new momentum for European values and normative power in the run-up to the European elections taking place in May 2019. To that end, the second section examines the enshrinement of European values as a domestic framework and as an instrument in EU external relations. The third section reviews the EU's democracy promotion agenda in Georgia and domestic as well as external challenge(r)s to European values in Georgia. Following this, the fourth section

¹⁴ Davit Zalkaliani. "Georgian Foreign Policy in a New Era".

¹⁵ Michael Emerson, Tamara Kavsiridze, "Deepening EU-Georgian Relations. What, Why and How?", *Center for European Policy Studies*, 2016, <https://www.ceps.eu/system/files/Georgia%20e-version%20with%20covers.pdf>

¹⁶ Since 2003, the Freedom House Nations in Transit Democracy Score for Georgia has navigated between 4,83 (2003), 4,96 (2005), 4,61 (2016/17) and 4,68 (2018). Freedom House, "Nations in Transit 2018: Confronting Illiberalism.", Georgia Country Report", <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2018/georgia>.

¹⁷ National Democratic Institute, Caucasus Research Resource Centers, "Public attitudes in Georgia. Results of June 2018 Survey", https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI_June_2018_Presentation_Public_ENG_vf.pdf

¹⁸ National Democratic Institute, Caucasus Research Resource Centers, "NDI Poll: Heading into the Presidential Election, Georgians Concerned about Country's Direction, Economy, and Environment; Dissatisfied with Political Options", August 1, 2018, <https://www.ndi.org/publications/ndi-poll-heading-presidential-election-georgians-concerned-about-country-s-direction>.

¹⁹ Adriana Stephan, "Defining the far right in Georgia: From neo-fascists to populist parties".

²⁰ Pew Research Center, "Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities, and Key Social Issues", October 29, 2018, http://www.pewforum.org/2018/10/29/eastern-and-western-europeans-differ-on-importance-of-religion-views-of-minorities-and-key-social-issues/?fbclid=IwAR30QQ2EsjMf9UtQ5A5y_9q8wSb0gvNYadd5KXAcHe7rSyMRcRfjFL4VKU.

²¹ Ibid.

analyzes challenges to European values within the EU, and takes a closer look at EU normative power in times of democratic backlash. Lastly, the conclusion provides recommendations for citizens and policy makers in the EU and neighboring countries on how to bolster European values in domestic and external affairs.

2. European Values: Guiding Light and Policy Instrument

2.1 Anchoring European Values in EU Treaties

The legal concept of European values was primarily developed by the decades-long jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice that had first defined the European Communities (EC) as “communities of law”. The first set of European values composed of the principle of democracy and respect for fundamental rights was anchored in European primary law by the Treaty on European Union (TEU; Maastricht Treaty; 1992/1993, Article F). Those fundamental rights were understood “as guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms” and resulting “from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States”.

The project of European Union enlargement posed new questions about European values when political conditionality became a key instrument of the enlargement process. The June 1993 European Council meeting in Copenhagen adopted, amongst others, a set of political criteria consisting of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the respect for and protection of minorities that was required to be fulfilled by all candidate countries prior to joining the European Union. As the Commission opened accession negotiations in 1997, the gap between strict accession conditionality and the lack of anchoring of European values in community law became increasingly evident. To close the gap between the obligations of Members and Candidates, EU Member States decided to alter and expand Article F TEU according to the logic of the Copenhagen Criteria with the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999.²²

According to the new Article F TEU introduced by the Treaty of Amsterdam, *the Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States*. Due to the opposition of several Member States, primary law did not refer to the protection of minorities among the founding principles of the European Union, but otherwise the Treaty of Amsterdam marked a significant step forward by not only broadening the set of European values, but also introducing a wording that refers to the Union as source of European values (“founded on”) instead of merely a taker of norms set in the Member States.

²² *Treaty of Amsterdam Amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties Establishing European Union and Certain Related Acts*, (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1997), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/treaty/pdf/amst-en.pdf>.

The Convention on the Future of Europe, established in 2001 to draft the Constitution of the European Union, witnessed intense debates about the values catalogue of the draft constitution and the desirability of incorporating an “*invocatio dei*”, a reference to God in the preamble. The diverging opinions in the Convention and later in the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) that drafted the Treaty of Lisbon made it clear that while the values catalogue of the EU as such might be seriously politically contested, the Union nevertheless increasingly appeared as a genuine inheritor and representative of European values on its own right. The muddled process of the failed European Constitution and the drafting of the Treaty of Lisbon resulted in the current Article 2 TEU stating that

*The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.*²³

Ultimately, it must be noted that the principles laid down in Article 2 TEU are first and foremost liberal political values, well-known from the tradition of Western liberal constitutionalism and as such are intended to safeguard the autonomy of European citizens from arbitrary political interferences. Article 2 TEU does not proclaim any cultural, traditional, or ethical norms that could be deducted from the cultural and religious traditions of Europe. Therefore, the values catalogue progressively enshrined into the Treaty on European Union could primarily be considered a set of liberal, and not necessarily distinctive European values. Nevertheless, the fact that European values emphasize individual instead of collective rights, e.g. of a dominant group to protect its alleged identity, is the reason why actors within the right-conservative and radical-right spectrum contest European values as they are enshrined in Article 2 TEU, and why these European values are hardly reconcilable with illiberal political projects.

2.2 European Values in EU External Action

European values have not only increasingly served as guiding lights for European integration, but also as principles for the Union’s external action. Already in 1992, when the Maastricht Treaty established the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP),²⁴ the EU created a link between domestic security and democracy and the rule of law in other countries. Amongst others, the objectives of the CSDP were defined as “to safeguard the common values, fundamental interests and independence of the Union” and “to develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”. The Lisbon Treaty (2007/2009) further codified the EU’s ambition to promote, amongst others, democracy abroad:

²³ Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the European Union.

²⁴ Council of the European Communities and Commission of the European Communities, eds., *Treaty on European Union*, (Luxembourg : Lanham, MD: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. 1992); UNIPUB [distributor]. Article J.1 of title V https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/europaeu/files/docs/body/treaty_on_european_union_en.pdf.

*The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.*²⁵

Two of the most relevant EU actors for putting these ambitions into practice are the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). Another important pillar to ensure the visibility of measures supporting democracy and human rights are increasing numbers of Election Observation Missions (EUEOMs) worldwide. Moreover, a total of 139 EU delegations to non-member countries and international organizations channel EU financial assistance, initiate and manage bilateral relations and cooperation projects focused on democracy, the rule of law and related issues. What is more, the EU's engagement is underpinned by significant financial commitment targeted exclusively on democracy promotion. For instance, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights supports non-governmental organizations (NGOs) promoting inter alia human rights and democracy with €1.3 billion allocated to be spent between 2014 and 2020.²⁶

The EU has moreover developed specific instruments for specific partners. Relations with the EU's neighborhood have primarily been shaped through the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), launched in 2003 and further developed in 2004. According to the European Commission, the ENP has the overall aim to strengthen "the prosperity, stability and security of all".²⁷ Allegedly, the EU's relations with neighboring countries within this framework are built on "a mutual commitment to common values". The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) provides funds for the ENP, geared towards the strengthening of democratic norms and engagement with non-members' civil society.²⁸ From 2014 to 2020, the ENI has a budget of €15.4 billion.

Yet, the ENP has often been criticized for copy-pasting instruments and strategies from the latest enlargement rounds as well as having a too simplistic, broad-brush view of the heterogeneous contexts in the neighborhood. In the beginning, the EU's approach towards the neighborhood comprised both Mediterranean and Eastern European countries, rather than

²⁵ Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union, Title V, Ch. 1, Art. 21.

²⁶ "Regulation (EU) No 235/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014, establishing a financing instrument for democracy and human rights worldwide", *Official Journal of the European Union* L77/85, March 15, 2014, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2014:077:0085:0094:EN:PDF>.

²⁷ European Commission, *Overview of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, November 18, 2015, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/overview_en

²⁸ DG NEAR, *The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)*. Accessed October 12, 2018. <https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/policy/european-neighbourhood-instrument-eni#new>.

specifically tailoring approaches to each case and context.²⁹ Trying to address some of these shortcomings, the ENP has been reviewed repeatedly. For instance, in an attempt to address regional concerns in the Eastern neighborhood, the EU launched the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in 2009. In 2017, the EaP was refocused on “tangible results for citizens” through the *20 Deliverables for 2020* work plan that includes values-based aims related to increasing civil society engagement, gender equality, strengthening media plurality and independence as well as strengthening the rule of law.³⁰ Whether these reforms resulted in fundamental changes in the EU’s practical approach to its neighborhood remains an empirical question. Even more fundamentally, it remains questionable whether the theorized and institutionalized externalization of EU values to non-Member States results in significant improvement of situations on the ground.

In parallel to the fine-tuning of the EU’s values-based external action, scholars began to analyze the distinctiveness of the Union’s external relations – and labeled the EU a “civilian”, “normative” or “transformative” power. One of the most influential academic concepts on the issue has been Ian Manners’ *Normative Power Europe*. According to Manners, a “combination of historical context, hybrid polity and legal constitution has, in the post-Cold War period, accelerated a commitment to placing universal norms and principles at the centre of its [the EU’s] relations with its Member States and the world”.³¹ In his 2002 article, Manners identifies five core norms of EU external action: democracy, peace, liberty, the rule of law, and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Additionally, he distinguishes four “minor” norms: good governance, anti-discrimination, social solidarity and sustainable development. Manners not only identifies the basket of norms allegedly diffused by the EU, but also asks *how* they are diffused. Amongst others, he proposes that ideas are diffused even without intentional action of the EU, arguing that the EU “leads by example” on specific issues. In addition, he describes processes of procedural diffusion through the institutionalization of a relationship such as the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and explains that norm diffusion occurs “when the EU exchanges goods, trade, aid or technical assistance with third parties through largely financial means”. Manners highlights that diffusion also occurs through the EU’s physical presence in non-Member States.

²⁹ Laure Delcour, “Meandering Europeanisation. EU policy instruments and policy convergence” in *Georgia under the Eastern Partnership. East European Politics*, 29(3), 2013, pp. 344–57.;

L. Delcour, L. and K. Wolczuk, “The EU’s Unexpected ‘Ideal Neighbour’? The Perplexing Case of Armenia’s Europeanisation”, in *Journal of European Integration*, 37(4), 2015, 491–507; D. Kochenov, “The ENP Conditionality: Pre-Accession Mistakes Repeated”, in L. Delcour and E. Tulmets, eds. *Pioneer Europe? Testing EU Foreign Policy in the Neighbourhood*, (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2008), pp. 105–20.

E.A. Korosteleva, M. Natonski, and L. Simão, “The eastern dimension of the European neighbourhood policy: practices, instruments and social structures”, in *East European Politics*, 29(3), 2013, pp. 257–72.

³⁰ European Commission, *Eastern Partnership - 20 Deliverables for 2020. Focusing on key priorities and tangible results*, June 9, 2017, https://cdn3-eas.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/cdn/farfuture/dLJ9RdBalFgQqx34lgPlwagsNluJB6cJzDeeiRR0RdQ/mtime:1497363650/sites/eeas/files/swd_2017_300_f1_joint_staff_working_paper_en_v5_p1_940530.pdf.

³¹ Ian Manners, “Normative power Europe: a contradiction in terms?”, in *JCMS: Journal of common market studies*, 40(2), 2002, pp. 235–258, p. 243.

Manner's idea of "normative power Europe" has been criticized by numerous scholars. For instance, Zielonka argues that Europe's external engagement could be more fittingly likened to the behavior of an empire instead of a force for good.³² Additionally, scholars have implicitly built on Manners' analysis, arguing that some diffusion of democratic norms proceeds through the implementation of EU sectoral rules, e.g. in environmental, competition or public procurement policy, by non-Member States' bureaucracies.³³ Crucially, since EU sectoral rules are developed by and for liberal democracies, principles such as participation, transparency, and accountability are diffused as part of the overall 'rule package' and thus consequently implemented and internalized by administrations.

3. Corroborated and Contested - European Values in Georgia

3.1 EU Values Promotion in Georgia

Given its close relations with the European Union, Georgia can be considered a prime example for EU's "normative power" approach towards neighboring countries. Nevertheless, it took some time until Georgia and the EU embarked on close cooperation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the first 15 years of Georgian independence, relations between Georgia and the EU were framed by the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (1996/1999) and the European Neighborhood Policy (2003). In 1999, Georgia became a member of the Council of Europe and ratified the European Convention on Human Rights. Nevertheless, it was not until the 2003/2004 Rose Revolution in Georgia that EU-Georgia relations deepened significantly. When the Revolution brought former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili to power, he claimed that Georgia "will steer a steady course towards European integration" and that "[the EU] flag is Georgia's flag as well, as far as it embodies our civilization, our culture, the essence of our history and perspective, and our vision for the future".³⁴ Thus, Euro-Atlantic integration became Georgia's first foreign policy objective, which opened up a window of opportunity for the European Union to move from words to deeds and to engage in values promotion in Georgia more actively.

And indeed, in 2003/2004, Georgia became part of the ENP. While EU assistance had previously been of more technical and humanitarian nature, the Union then started directly supporting the process of democratic institution building in Georgia.³⁵ On April 6, 2004, then external relations Commissioner Chris Patten stated that the EU "stands by Georgia in this

³² J. Zielonka, "Europe as a global actor: empire by example?", in *International Affairs*, 84(3), 2008, pp.471–84.

³³ T. Freyburg, S. Lavenex, F. Schimmelfennig, T. Skripka, and A. Wetzel, "EU promotion of democratic governance in the neighbourhood", in *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16(6), 2009, 916–34.; S. Lavenex, "The power of functionalist extension: how EU rules travel", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2014, 21(6), 885–903.

³⁴ Alex Petersen, "Georgia: Brussels on its Mind", *EUobserver*, May 1, 2007, <https://euobserver.com/opinion/23969>.

³⁵ Nicklas Norling and Svante Cornell, "The role of the European Union in democracy-building in Central Asia and the South Caucasus", *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*, 2016, <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/the-role-of-the-european-union-in-democracy-building-in-central-asia-and-the-south-caucasus.pdf>.

quest ... towards a bright and solid democratic future”.³⁶ When then Commission President Romano Prodi visited Georgia in September 2004, he declared that the EU is “fully committed” to supporting the South Caucasian countries in building “societies based on democratic values and to affording these countries real prospects of strong ties with the European Union that bind them into Europe”.³⁷ In the period of 2004-2006, monetary assistance doubled compared to the years from 2001 to 2003, equaling 137 million Euros (European Commission, 2004b). In 2004, the EU’s first rule of law mission, EUJUST THEMIS, was launched in Georgia, with the aim of providing legal support to the reform of the criminal justice system (European Union External Action, n.d.). In a 2005 communication, the Commission emphasized the importance of increasing “democratic checks and balances within Georgia” (European Commission, 2005a, p.5). The strengthening of “democratic institutions and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” also became a top priority in the EU-Georgia Action Plan, which was signed in 2006 (EU-Georgia Cooperation Council, 2006, p.4). Georgia and the EU began holding their Annual Human Rights Dialogue in 2008. In 2009, Georgia-EU relations were deepened with the launch of the Eastern Partnership.

In June 2014, EU-Georgia relations reached new heights through the signing of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), that entered into force in July 2016. While the DCFTA focuses on economic integration and reforms in trade-related areas, the Association Agreement clearly sets out to promote democracy and European values in Georgia. For instance, the preamble states that the “values on which the EU is built – democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law – lie also at the heart of political association and economic integration as envisaged in this Agreement” and that “Georgia, an Eastern European country, is committed to implementing and promoting these values”.³⁸ The EU regularly reviews Georgia’s progress with regard to the implementation of the Association Agreement. While the most recent assessment generally praised the implementation process, it also called on Georgia to ensure further democratic reforms.³⁹

The EU also makes use of carrots in order to promote European values in Georgia. For instance, in exchange for visa-free travel for Georgians to the EU, the EU insisted on the passing of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that included sexual minorities, a highly controversial issue in Georgia. Nevertheless, the law was passed and since March 2017,

³⁶ European Union External Action, “President Prodi and Commissioner Patten Meet President Saakashvili to Confirm EU Support for Georgia’s Reform Process”, July 26, 2011, http://www.europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article_3378_en.htm.

³⁷ European Commission. “President Prodi to Visit Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia from 16 to 19 September”, September 14, 2004, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/documents/eu_georgia/14september2004_en.pdf.

³⁸ Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 261, August 30, 2014, https://cdn1-eeas.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/cdn/farfuture/VjycjKJ-ii28659I8FYZ8Phir2Qqs0f2jZUoh4un5IE/mtime:1473773763/sites/eeas/files/association_agreement.pdf.

³⁹ European Parliament, “EU association efforts: MEPs praise Georgia and criticise Moldova”, press release, October 9, 2018, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20181009IPR15403/eu-association-efforts-meps-praise-georgia-and-criticise-moldova>.

Georgian citizens benefit from short-time visa-free travel within the Schengen Zone.⁴⁰ Moreover, the European Union supports Georgia's democratization process through different projects implemented by the EU Delegation in Georgia and the EEAS, for which it provides over €120 million to the country annually in grant assistance. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the EU has provided major support to Georgian civil society; amongst others, through the ENI, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), and the Civil Society Organizations and Local Authorities Program.⁴¹

Besides the *direct* promotion of European values in Georgia, the EU also provides *indirect* support through education and public diplomacy. For instance, since 1995, Georgia has been part of what is currently known as the EU's Erasmus Plus program which has, amongst others, provided exchange opportunities for students, university staff and others and thus greatly contributed to EU-Georgia people-to-people contacts. According to a number of studies, 83% of Erasmus higher education exchange participants indicate that they feel more European after their exchange, 94% of youth exchange participants say that they have become more tolerant and 85% of European Voluntary Service participants note that they are more aware of common European values.⁴² In addition to youth and student exchanges, Georgia is also involved in the EU's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program as well as in the Creative Europe program. In September 2018, as part of the Eastern Partnership's *20 Deliverables for 2020*, the first "Eastern Partnership European School" opened in Georgia. In the context of people-to-people contacts and European values, the EU's "Young European Ambassadors" initiative, which brings together young people from the European Union and the Eastern Partnership countries, is also worth mentioning.

Despite its direct democracy promotion in Georgia, many have argued that the EU could have done more: e.g. through stricter conditionality.⁴³ As Börzel and Lebanidze (2016) note, the reason behind this might have been the EU prioritizing stability in the region, rather than pushing for democratic change.⁴⁴ It has also been argued that the EU's carrots are not big enough (lack of a membership perspective), or are too complex (DCFTA) to further democratization in Georgia.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, although it is difficult to measure the exact impact

⁴⁰ DFWatch, "Georgia isn't implementing law it passed in return for visa-free travel to Europe" April 2, 2017, <https://dfwatch.net/anti-discrimination-georgia-visa-free-48181>.

⁴¹ Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, "EU announces funding for eight new civil society projects for 2018-2020", press release, March 16, 2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/41479/eu-announces-funding-eight-new-civil-society-projects-2018-2020_en.

⁴² European Commission, "In the spotlight: Erasmus+ brings people together", accessed November 19, 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/anniversary/spotlight-erasmus-brings-people-together_en.

⁴³ Doina Pinzari, "EU democratization policies in the Neighbourhood countries and Russia's reaction as a destabilizing factor - A comparative case study of Georgia and Moldova", in *Bruges Political Research Papers*, No.45, November 2015, <https://www.coleurope.eu/research-paper/eu-democratization-policies-neighbourhood-countries-and-russias-reaction>

⁴⁴ Tanja A. Borzel, Bidzina Lebanidze, "The transformative power of Europe" beyond enlargement: the EU's performance in promoting democracy in its neighbourhood", *East European Politics*, Volume 33, 2017 - Issue 1, pp. 17-35, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21599165.2017.1280473?src=recsys&journalCode=fjcs21>.

⁴⁵ Tamar Khuntsaria, "External Democracy Promotion In Georgia: The Role Of The European Union", PhD diss., Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, December 2014, http://press.tsu.ge/data/image_db_innova/socialur_politikuri/tamar_xunwaria.pdf.

of the EU's policy towards Georgia, its many initiatives and funds have certainly played an important role on Georgia's path towards liberal democracy.

3.2 Societal Contestation of European Values in Georgia

Despite political and societal elites' many efforts to promote a European identity in Georgia that is close to the above-mentioned European values, the latter remain a matter of contestation. The following section will thus review how European values are understood in Georgia as well as describe their domestic challenge(r)s. Given its importance as a key European value and its promotion by the EU in Georgia, democracy deserves special attention in any study of European values in Georgia. Recent surveys have shown that Georgians do not universally support all democratic values. On the one hand, there are signs of pro-democratic trends on certain values such as responsible and active citizenship. On the other hand, when it comes to gender equality and the rights of sexual minorities, Georgia remains a "deeply conservative" country.⁴⁶ In general, the majority of Georgian citizens prefer democracy over any other kind of government – a trend which, however, significantly declined after 2013, reaching its lowest (47% support) in 2015.

Waning support for democracy does not necessarily imply weakening democratic values among the population.⁴⁷ In fact, over the past years, support for certain democratic values has been rising. For instance, in the 2017 Caucasus Barometer, a larger share of Georgians (76%) said that people have the right to openly say what they think (the response in 2008 was 51%); also, more respondents in 2017 (62%) thought that people should participate in protest actions (compared to 44% in 2008) and that being critical towards the government is an important part of being a good citizen (58%, compared to 44% in 2011).⁴⁸ In fact, declining support for democracy compared to other forms of governance might be related to the lack of a clear understanding of what democracy entails. For instance, when asked an open-ended question, only 8% of respondents named free and fair elections as a feature of democracy; when presented with a list of features to choose from, free and fair elections were mentioned by 97% of respondents.⁴⁹ Moreover, citizens' understanding of democracy might be different from the common Western conception of liberal democracy, which is centered on fundamental freedoms.⁵⁰ In Georgia, democracy seems to be associated with the effective functioning and organization of government and political institutions. This is suggested by the fact that declining support for democracy in Georgia is happening in parallel to increasing support for

⁴⁶ M. Mestvirishvili, and N. Mestvirishvili. "I Am Georgian and Therefore, I am European: Re-searching the Europeanness of Georgia", *CEJISS* 8(1), 2014.

⁴⁷ Caucasus Research Resource Centers, "Trends in the data: public support for democracy is slowly waning in Georgia", Social Science in the Caucasus (blog), May 9, 2016, <http://crrc-caucasus.blogspot.com/2016/05/trends-in-data-public-support-for.html>

⁴⁸ Caucasus Research Resource Centers, "Caucasus Barometer, data series, 2008-2017", <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/>.

⁴⁹ Levan Kakhishvili, "Democratic consolidation in Georgia: why does consensus matter?", Georgian Institute of Politics, Policy Brief April 2018 (12), <http://gip.ge/8399/>.

⁵⁰ Caucasus Research Resource Centers. "Trends in the data: public support for democracy is slowly waning in Georgia (part 2)", Social Science in the Caucasus (blog), May 9, 2016, <http://crrc-caucasus.blogspot.com/2016/08/trends-in-data-public-support-for.html>

democratic values but declining satisfaction with the performance of the government and trust in political institutions.⁵¹

Even though, overall, democratic values find wide support among Georgians, this support is not unconditional — when democratic values are perceived to clash with traditions, the latter seem to win. For example, respondents of public opinion polls expect the government to sacrifice freedom for the sake of traditions when the two contradict each other. This extends to favoring censorship for the sake of protecting traditions: more respondents believe that the government should restrict the publication of information that contradicts traditions, compared to those who believe that the government cannot interfere in publisher's affairs.⁵² In 2011 and 2013, massive demonstrations against equal rights for religious and sexual minorities took place. Ninety percent of Georgians consider homosexuality "never justifiable". Gender equality is another issue: for instance, about 70% of the population considered women having sex before marriage never justified, vs. 38% for men.⁵³ These clashes of supposedly traditional and European values reflect the contestation in society over whether Georgian national identity and the civic dimension of European values are compatible.

3.3 Georgian Governments and European Values

Despite their pro-European orientation, the policies and practices of Georgian governments have also contested European values at times. On the one hand, the Rose Revolution was named a "democratic breakthrough"⁵⁴ and its driving force, the United National Movement (UNM), reclaimed Georgia's place in Europe in terms of foreign policy. On the other hand, however, the quality of Georgia's democracy has been fluctuating since then, marking improvement in some areas but demonstrating contradictions with regard to European values in others. Former President Saakashvili's government achieved impressive results in anti-corruption measures and good governance by building institutions from scratch. He also gained credit in the West for pushing through unpopular legislation in the field of minority rights: for instance, a law that allowed religious groups to be registered as legal entities of public law, which provided long-sought legal status for various religious groups besides the Georgian Orthodox Church. The adoption took place despite tense debates against the amendment and resistance particularly by the Georgian Orthodox Church, the most powerful institution in Georgia.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Caucasus Research resources Centers. "Nine things politicians should know about Georgian voters", Social Science in the Caucasus (blog), November 2, 2015, <http://crrc-caucasus.blogspot.com/2015/11/nine-things-politicians-should-know.html>

⁵³ M. Mestvirishvili, T. Zurabishvili, T. Iakobidze and N. Mestvirishvili, "Exploring homophobia in Tbilisi, Georgia", *Journal of Homosexuality*, 64(9), 2016, pp. 1253-1282.

⁵⁴ M. McFaul, "Transitions from postcommunism", *Journal of Democracy*, 16(3), 2005, pp. 5-19.

⁵⁵ Salome Minesashvili, Levan Kakhishvili, "Georgia: foreign policy identity in the domestic arena as a subject of contestation", *Caucasus Analytical Digest*, 77, 2015, <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-security-studies/pdfs/CaucasusAnalyticalDigest77.pdf>.

At the same time, the UNM government has often been often criticized for favoring effective governance at the expense of democratization, transparency, judicial independence and media freedom.⁵⁶ Saakashvili turned the Georgian political system towards super-presidentialism and consolidated power through constitutional changes and the weakening of parliament.⁵⁷ The UNM lost power largely due to a scandal that revealed systematic torture and ill-treatment in Georgian prisons and put the government's dedication to human rights and European values into question. As a result, the UNM was voted out of office in the parliamentary elections in 2012 and was replaced by the Georgian Dream (GD) Coalition. These elections marked the first democratic transfer of power through free and fair elections since independence. Initially, the Georgian Dream government improved Georgian democracy in a number of areas, including media freedom and pluralism.⁵⁸ The new government also followed the pro-European foreign policy orientation of its predecessor. Given Georgia's fulfillment of specific EU's demands, including the passing of the above-mentioned unpopular anti-discrimination law, the EU and Georgia signed the Association Agreement and DCFTA in June 2014 and visa liberalization entered into effect in March 2017.

However, like the previous government, the GD Coalition also demonstrated limited commitment with regard to European values. In its first years of rule, the government soon came to be criticized for its "restoration of justice" towards former officials. Arrests continued even despite criticism from the EU over politically motivated persecution and "selective justice".⁵⁹ Moreover, despite the initial improvements, the Rustavi 2 case threatened media pluralism through a monopolization attempt.⁶⁰ The ownership of the TV channel, critical towards the government and supportive of the UNM opposition, has been the subject of controversies for years. Eventually, a Georgian court decided to return the channel to previous owners, which raised questions about media freedom and judicial independence.⁶¹ The case was then brought before the European Court of the Human Rights (ECHR), which suspended the decision of the Georgian court.

Another controversy relates to the constitutional reform process in Autumn 2017. In September 2017, constitutional amendments marked Georgia's full transition to a parliamentary system of governance. While the changes were generally praised as democratic, they were criticized for being adopted without broad public consensus. Moreover, the government was blamed for delaying the implementation the changes until 2024, in order to

⁵⁶ Bidzina Lebanidze, "Making Georgia's democracy work: western political conditionality and domestic agendas of Georgian political parties" Georgian Institute of Politics, January 2018, <http://gip.ge/making-georgias-democracy-work-western-political-conditionality-domestic-agendas-georgian-political-parties/>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ A. Puddington, "Freedom in the World 2013: Democratic Breakthroughs in the Balance", Freedom House, 2013, https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FIW%202013%20Overview%20Essay%20for%20Web_0.pdf.

⁵⁹ B. Lebanidze, 2018.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Cory Welt, "The curious case of Rustavi-2: Protecting Media Freedom and the Rule of Law in Georgia", PONARS Eurasia, Policy Memo, 2015, <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/curious-case-rustavi-2-georgia>.

take advantage of the current mixed electoral system in upcoming elections.⁶² The constitutional amendments also included a provision on defining marriage as “a union between a man and a woman for the purpose of creating a family”. With this definition, the government gave in to illiberal groups who had proposed the constitutional change and had been mobilizing against sexual minority rights since 2014.⁶³ While the constitutional amendments further alienated democracy and human rights activists, the ruling party gained support from the predominantly conservative population. Moreover, GD officials have lashed out at critics repeatedly within the last months,⁶⁴ which has only increased the concerns of civil society.

Overall, since the Rose Revolution, Georgian governments have demonstrated mixed commitment to European values. Despite lofty rhetoric, both the UNM- and the GD-led governments occasionally demonstrated a lack of respect towards European values. Societal resistance to European values has also remained a challenge; at times Georgian governments overruled local illiberal forces, but on other occasions they gave in to the latter or took illiberal agency themselves.

3.4 External Challenge(r)s to European Values in Georgia

European values are not only challenged by domestic players; a number of international actors are also seeking to pursue their interests in Georgia, particularly Turkey, Azerbaijan and Russia. Georgia has strong stakes in fostering close strategic ties with Turkey and Azerbaijan, its two most important partners in the region. The two countries are major trade partners and investors for Georgia as well as defence partners.⁶⁵ These relationships are vital for Georgia in its quest for greater autonomy *vis-à-vis* Russia. Furthermore, Georgia aims to play the role of an intercontinental bridge between Asia and Europe – and the success of that policy also depends on the quality of its relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan.

At the same time, the development of diplomatic ties with authoritarian neighbors has had direct negative consequences on the respect for European values in Georgia. In May 2017, Turkish teacher Mustafa Emre Chabuk was arrested in Georgia a few days after the government of Turkey accused him of being linked to the Gülen movement. Praising the quality of Turkish prisons,⁶⁶ Sozar Subari, the then Georgian Minister of Refugees, refused to grant Chabuk refugee status – a decision upheld by the Tbilisi Court of Appeal, despite the potential

⁶² Human Rights Watch, “Georgia: country summary”, report, 2018, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/georgia_3.pdf.

⁶³ Salome Minesashvili, “The Georgian Orthodox Church as a civil actor: Challenges and Capabilities”, Georgian Institute of Politics, policy brief, May 2017, <http://gip.ge/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Policy-brief-8-Salome-Minesashvili.pdf>.

⁶⁴ “PM says Freedom House report on Georgia is ‘extremely biased’”, Agenda.ge, April 12, 2018, <http://agenda.ge/en/news/2018/802>; “Speaker: Rustavi 2 TV Director’s Remarks on Zurabishvili ‘Hysterical, Fascist’”, Civil.ge, October 8, 2018, <https://civil.ge/archives/257321>; “Georgian Dream Tries to Steamroll CSOs, Retreats”, Civil.ge, October 4, 2018, <https://civil.ge/archives/256551>.

⁶⁵ Bidzina Lebanidze, Mariam Grigalashvili, ‘Not EU’s World? Putting Georgia’s European Integration in Context’, Report, Georgian Institute of Politics, 2018, p. 11.; “Azerbaijani, Georgian, Turkish Defence Ministers Sign Cooperation Memorandum”, Civil Georgia, April 2, 2018, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30996>.

⁶⁶ “Georgia’s refugee minister says Turkey’s prisons of ‘European standard’ after concern over extradition”, Open Caucasus Media, July 17, 2017, <http://oc-media.org/georgias-refugee-minister-says-turkeys-prisons-of-european-standard-after-concern-over-extradition/>.

risk that he could face torture and ill-treatment if extradited to Turkey.⁶⁷ Pressured by the Turkish government, Georgia has continued to contribute to Erdogan's 'global purge'⁶⁸ against Gülen-connected entities by closing several schools in Tbilisi and Batumi and banning the local Black Sea University from enrolling new students. In all these cases, the entities were accused by the Turkish government of being close to the Gülen movement shortly before the Georgian government took actions against them.⁶⁹ Azerbaijani activities have posed similar challenges to the rule of law in Georgia. In May 2017, Azerbaijani dissident journalist Afgan Mukhtarli, who had chosen to live and work in Georgia, was abducted in Tbilisi and reappeared in a detention facility in Baku a few days later. This event casted a shadow on the integrity of Georgia's State Security Service, which either failed to prevent the border-crossing of a man without a passport or participated in the operation. An official investigation was quickly opened by the Ministry of Interior, but to this day has failed to provide an answer.⁷⁰

These incidents did not go unnoticed in Europe. Denouncing Turkish pressure, German MEP Rebecca Harms has been calling on the Georgian government not to extradite Chabuk and visited him in prison twice in 2017 and 2018. Regarding Mukhtarli, the European Parliament passed a resolution in June 2017 condemning the abduction and urging the Georgian government to undertake a transparent investigation.⁷¹ While good relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey are important for the Georgian economy and regional stability, these incidents displayed the challenges posed by close relations with such regimes. The projection of Turkey's and Azerbaijan's authoritarian policies onto Georgia has threatened European values in Georgia and has had negative consequences on the image of Georgia as a European country.

The Kremlin poses an entirely different challenge to European values in Georgia. Despite Moscow's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, its backing of the de facto regimes, as well as its military buildup in the regions, it appears that the Kremlin still manages to convey anti-Western and often illiberal messages to the population in Georgia. For instance, certain attitudes, as well as the lower degree of support for joining the EU in the mainly Armenian- and Azerbaijani-populated minority settlements in Georgia,⁷² have been connected to the higher share of Russian TV, the primary source of information in those regions.⁷³ Moreover, new alt-right and neo-Nazi movements are the main opponents of European and

⁶⁷ "Georgia: Teacher at Risk if Extradited to Turkey: Mustafa Çabuk", Amnesty International, news release, July 26, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur56/6372/2017/en/>.

⁶⁸ Nate Schenkkan, "The Remarkable Scale of Turkey's 'Global Purge'", *Foreign Affairs*, January 29, 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2018-01-29/remarkable-scale-turkeys-global-purge>.

⁶⁹ Joseph Larsen, "Good Fences Make Good Neighbors: How Georgia Can Resist Authoritarian Pressure", Policy Brief No. 11, Georgian Institute of Politics, February 2018, p. 4. Available at: <http://gip.ge/good-fences-make-good-neighbors-georgia-can-resist-authoritarian-pressure/>.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ European Parliament resolution of 15 June 2017 on the case of Azerbaijani journalist Afgan Mukhtarli, 2017/2722(RSP), para 1-2.

⁷² The Caucasus Research Resource Centers, "Caucasus Barometer", 2018, retrieved through ODA - <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/nj2018ge/JOINEU-by-ETHNOCODE/>.

⁷³ The Caucasus Research Resource Centers, "Caucasus Barometer", 2017, retrieved through ODA - <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/eu2017ge/FRQRUS-by-SETTYPE/>.

Western values in Georgia and are reportedly closely associated to their Russian counterparts. While there is no concrete proof that they receive Russian funding at this time, there are regular meetings between Russian governmental actors and politicians, the Georgian party *Alliance of Patriots*, and affiliated actors with questionable commitment to European values.⁷⁴ These so-called traditional/conservative/right-wing actors have consistently presented themselves as xenophobic and homophobic and at the same time advocated for closer ties with Russia.

In conclusion, the European Union has arguably played a major role in promoting further democratization in Georgia – be it through diplomatic efforts or through “leading by example”. In some cases, Georgian governments have clearly taken EU criticism into account or even adhered to EU political conditionality. Despite lofty rhetoric and many commitments, however, European values remain challenged in Georgia – domestically and through external actors. The next section will discuss to what extent the EU will be able to make use of its normative power in the future.

4. European Values and EU Normative Power in Times of Democratic Backlash

4.1 European Values and their Challenge(r)s in the EU

Over the years, the social and political model associated with European values has come to serve as an inseparable part of European normative power, inspiring profound structural changes in many candidate and neighborhood countries. However, the recurring political crises that have shaken the European Union since 2008 not only undermined certain Member States’ appetite for deepening and widening EU integration, but also broke the discursive and political consensus around European values as anchored in Article 2 TEU as its foundation.⁷⁵ European values have come under enormous – if dissimilar – stress in both the “old” and “new” Member States of the Union, which has the potential of stripping EU foreign policy of its normative power toolkit and thus razing the normative power of EU enlargement and neighborhood policy to the ground.

The phenomenon that EU Member States might violate some principles of the value catalogue is not necessarily new. Several examples could be mentioned, like the famous Austrian case in 2000 when the radical-right Austrian Freedom Party of Jörg Haider, which was characterized

⁷⁴ Khatia Khasaia, Diana Shanava, “Российские друзья грузинских ультраправых”, Sova News, October 20, 2018, <https://sova.news/2018/10/10/rossijskie-druzya-gruzinskih-ultrapravyyh/>; “Anatomy of Georgian Neo-Nazism”, Transparency International Georgia, report, May 18, 2018, <https://www.transparency.ge/en/blog/anatomy-georgian-neo-nazism>.

⁷⁵ Arne Muis & Lars van Troost (eds.), “Will human rights survive illiberal democracy?” Amnesty International, 2018, <https://www.amnesty.nl/content/uploads/2015/10/illiberal-democracy-PDF-20mrt.pdf?x68103>; Dmitry Kochenov, “Europe’s Crisis of Value”, University of Groningen Faculty of Law Research Paper Series No. 15/2014, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/148300984.pdf>.

by strong xenophobic rhetoric,⁷⁶ entered the ruling coalition, or the situation in Slovakia during the first Fico-government between 2006 and 2010, when the government followed strong ethno-nationalist temptations and hollowed out the country's system of minority protection. However, since 2015, troubles intensified. First, compared to the rather isolated and individual cases of Austria and Slovakia, the contestation of European values became mainstream as populist radical-right parties gained ground throughout the whole continent.⁷⁷ The electoral successes of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), Germany's AfD, France's Rassemblement National, Italy's Lega Nord, The Netherlands' Freedom Party (PVV), the Danish People's Party, the True Finns or the Sweden Democrats – this list is far from being exhaustive – demonstrate the mainstreaming of the contestation of European values in a striking way.

Considering the profile of these Western and Central European parties, not only the cultivation of xenophobic rhetoric, but also their rejection of liberalism put significant pressure on human rights and the rule of law within the European Union. By shifting the political landscape in the Member States, and ultimately in the EU, towards increasingly restrictive asylum policy practices, the rising populist radical-right also questions legal instruments of human rights. The burqa and niqab bans in France, Belgium, Austria and Denmark moreover demonstrate their readiness to constrain their own citizens' freedom of religion and expression.⁷⁸

In spite of the above contestation of human rights, the rule of law and liberal values, illiberal trends in Western Europe are significantly different from the rising authoritarianism in Central and Eastern European Member States. Over the past ten years, Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, and Slovakia have all "lost their status as liberal democracies and transitioned downward to be electoral democracies."⁷⁹ What is at stake in Eastern Europe are fundamental aspects of democracy such as media freedom, the rule of law and freedom of expression. Populist radical-right parties in Western Europe might be xenophobic and pursue politics to redraft the boundaries of the political community by preferring a nativist understanding of citizenship over the civic one. But, at least for now, they have refrained from overtly authoritarian moves against the institutional dimension of the liberal democratic political system, which have occurred in EU Member States like Hungary or Poland. Hence the contestation of European values by populist radical-right forces in "old" and "new" Member States share important commonalities, but actually also exhibit significant structural differences.

⁷⁶ Wojciech Sadurski, "Adding a Bite to a Bark? A Story of Article 7, the EU Enlargement, and Jörg Haider", Sydney Law School Legal Studies Research Paper No. 10/01, 2010, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1531393

⁷⁷ "The State of Populism in Europe", FEPS, Policy Solutions and FES Budapest, December 2017, <https://euagenda.eu/publications/the-state-of-populism-in-europe-2017>

⁷⁸ It is important to note that the above mentioned burqa and niqab bans do not constitute a violation of human rights according to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), as Member States have a "wide margin of appreciation" to "guarantee the conditions of [social] living together", and the restrictive measures have therefore legitimate aim (see the cases *S.A.S. v. France* and *Belcemi and Oussar v. Belgium*). The bans nevertheless clearly demonstrate the soaring political claims to restrict individual freedoms and subordinate them to the alleged "public interest".

⁷⁹ Staffan I. Lindberg, "The Nature of Democratic Backsliding in Europe", Carnegie Europe, July 24, 2018, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2018/07/24/nature-of-democratic-backsliding-in-europe-pub-76868>.

The Article 7 procedures launched by the European Commission in December 2017 against Poland⁸⁰ and by the European Parliament in September 2018 against Hungary⁸¹ underlines the systemic threat that is faced by liberal democracy, and hence by European values, in two EU Member States. Moreover, they demonstrate the breach of consensus over the EU's founding values and the main political principles that may serve as the foundation for the organization of governance and politics in the European Union. While the operationalization of certain liberal values is a vague exercise offering a broad space of deliberation, the ongoing autocratization of Hungary and Poland is something that all democracy monitoring projects, such as V-Dem,⁸² Freedom House's *Nations in Transit*,⁸³ or the Bertelsmann Transformation Index,⁸⁴ agree on. With constitutional checks and balances neutralized, and the independence of the judiciary, media pluralism and independent civil society under serious attacks, neither Poland nor Hungary could join the EU today, or would qualify as full-fledged consolidated liberal democracies. Despite the obvious violations, it may well happen that the Council of the European Union will not find the risk or existence of a serious breach of EU values in Poland or Hungary, either due to the lack of support for the motions among the Member States, or due to the fact that the voting will not be itemized at all on the Council's agenda. That may alter the EU institutions' approach to the issue, but will definitely not change the facts on ground.

According to the Council's Legal Service, issues regarding the violation of Article 2 TEU values can exclusively be addressed by the Article 7 procedure within the framework of the treaties. If this interpretation of the Legal Service remains dominant, it will further hamper the safeguarding of European values in autocratizing Member States, and will render it impossible to address the issue in an effective way, not to mention the sanctioning of the non-complying Member States. However, the fact that EU institutions are not able to properly address the violation of European values, does not mean unfortunately that the threat to EU values – and liberal democracy – is not genuine.

Hungary and Poland are far from being isolated cases. Their governments, especially the Hungarian governing party Fidesz of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, seek alliances with all kinds of illiberal radical-right actors in Europe and pursue political cooperation with a view to the

⁸⁰ Dimitry Kochenov, Laurent Pech & Kim Lane Scheppele, "The European Commission's Activation of Article 7: Better Late than Never", *Verfassungsblog* December 23, 2017, <https://verfassungsblog.de/the-european-commissions-activation-of-article-7-better-late-than-never/>

⁸¹ Sergio Carrera, Petra Bard, "The European Parliament vote on Article 7 TEU against the Hungarian government: Too late, too little, too political?", *CEPS Commentaries* September 14, 2018, <https://www.ceps.eu/publications/european-parliament-vote-article-7-teu-against-hungarian-government-too-late-too-little>.

⁸² Anna Lührmann and Staffan I. Lindberg, "Keeping the Democratic Facade: Contemporary Autocratization as a Game of Deception", *V-Dem Working Paper Series* 2018:75, 2018, https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/9c/6f/9c6fe0b9-7f78-4aac-8775-c1cccdbd43df2/v-dem_working_paper_2018_75.pdf.

⁸³ "The False Promise of Populism", *Freedom House Nations in Transit* 2017, report, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/nations-transit-2017>, and "Confronting Illiberalism" *Freedom House Nations in Transit* 2018, report, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/nations-transit-2018>.

⁸⁴ Von Martin Bräus, "Illiberale Drift und Proliferation, Regionalbericht Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa", *Bertelsmann Transformation Index* 2018, https://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2018/pdf_regional/BTI_2018_Regionalartikel_ECSE_Web.pdf.

upcoming EP elections and beyond.⁸⁵ These illiberal networks are going to become more entrenched after the European Parliament elections in May 2019, resulting in increased resilience by populist radical-right players against any discipline attempts. The developments in Western Europe show that even consolidated democracies can fall back and potentially autocratize. Hence the restoration of the former political consensus over European values in the Western part of the EU and the genuine prioritizing of the issue on the political agenda is essential to effectively address the issue in the cases of Hungary and Poland.

4.2 Quo Vadis Normative Power Europe?

As the preceding sections demonstrated, European values are seriously challenged – in Eastern Europe, in Western Europe as well as in the European neighborhood. The following section will investigate to what extent these developments within the EU and in wider Europe are linked. It is arguably the EU's utmost strategic interest to be anchored in a rules-based global environment and surrounded by neighboring regions characterized by peace and long-term, democratic stability. Human rights and democratic conditionality have been key items of the EU external governance toolkit to foster advancement toward this goal. However, external conditionality only works as long as it is credible. Thus, the contestation of European values does not only undermine the internal cohesion of the European integration, but has the potential to deprive the European Union of one of its most important foreign policy instruments. Ultimately, the crises of democracy in EU Member States based on the contestation of European values can seriously hamper EU efforts to effectively address global challenges like migration, which fuel the populist radical-right in the national electorates. But the problem goes beyond questions of the effectiveness of EU foreign policy actorness: Some scholars have argued that it is an imperative of international justice for democratic states to further democratic processes in other countries – despite the occasional criticism of democracy promotion as liberal paternalism and neo-imperialism.⁸⁶

In the case of Georgia, the contestation of European values in the domestic arena and within the EU indeed appear to be linked. While it is always difficult to trace the origins of discourses, it is evident that the rhetoric of Georgian populist and far-right groups often resembles far-right rhetoric in the West. For instance, Georgian discourses on migrants and refugees as a threat to the nation resemble the discourses in the EU and the US.⁸⁷ In July 2017 the far-right movement “Georgian March” held protests against “illegal migrants” with slogans such as “Georgia for Georgians”, “go back to where you belong”, and “we’ll clear our streets from foreign criminals”.⁸⁸ The Georgian March has also repeatedly protested against George Soros’ Open

⁸⁵ Jacopo Barigazzi, “Orbán and Salvini team up to attack Macron”, Politico, August 28, 2018,

<https://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-matteo-salvini-team-up-to-attack-emmanuel-macron/>.

⁸⁶ Daniel Jacob, “Externe Demokratieförderung in Räumen begrenzter Staatlichkeit”, in *Normative Fragen von Governance in Räumen begrenzter Staatlichkeit*, Daniel Jacob, Bernd Ladwig, Cord Schmelzle (Ed.). (Nomos: Baden-Baden, 2017).

⁸⁷ A. Stephan, 2018.

⁸⁸ Ibid., “Georgians march against “uncontrolled migration” in Tbilisi – a photo story”, Jam News, July 15, 2017, <https://jam-news.net/?p=49294>.

Society Foundation and demanded that it be banned from Georgia.⁸⁹ Thereby, Georgian far-right actors have not tried to hide their admiration for EU politicians with similar agendas. For instance, they organized a rally in support of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán during his visit to Georgia in April 2017, where a Georgian neo-Nazi group announced: “We support Hungary’s nationalist policy, primarily anti-liberalism and anti-Islamism, which limits gay propaganda, closes borders for Muslim refugees, and promotes Hungarian culture and traditions”.⁹⁰ In a different case, former Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili sought to legitimize his 2014 proposal of defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman with the existence of similar legislation in EU states like Croatia and Latvia.⁹¹

Next to the resembling far-right discourses in Georgia and the EU, it is important to note that the Georgian far right uses the difficulties the EU is currently facing in order to delegitimize European integration as a whole and, in turn, legitimize their own anti-European stance. For instance, they have referred to Brexit as an attempt by Great Britain to save its national identity, which is allegedly threatened within the European Union. This provides support for the argument often used by the Georgian far right that European integration and values threaten Georgian national identity. Another example is the troubles with the refugee policy in the European Union, which have also been widely instrumentalized by the Georgian far-right to discredit the European project. Moreover, an alleged “migrant threat” in Georgia has been used to portray visa liberalisation with the EU as dangerous.⁹² This discourse pictured the EU as imposing an open-door migration policy on Georgia in exchange for visa-free travel and leading to the flooding of Georgia with refugees from Africa, Arab countries and Asia.⁹³ All in all, the Georgian far right has portrayed modern Europe as having destroyed its Christian past by allegedly now being dominated by Muslim migrants, which makes European integration undesirable for Georgia.⁹⁴

Despite the undoubtable reflection of the contestation of European values by right-wing actors in Georgia, those actors do not receive widespread support. Actually, their increased prominence could even result from enhanced freedom of speech, political and media pluralism.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the Georgian far right’s potential of gaining momentum should not be ignored. As developments within the EU are increasingly used by the Georgian far-right to legitimize their own politics, they are becoming a challenge for the pro-European majority that

⁸⁹ Thea Morrison, “Ultrnationalist Georgian March Holds Anti-Soros Protest Rally”, Georgia Today, February 23, 2018, <http://georgiatoday.ge/news/9232/Ultrnationalist-Georgian-March-Holds-Anti-Soros-Protest-Rally>

⁹⁰ “Anti-Orbán demonstrators face off with far-right in Tbilisi”, OC Media, April 21, 2017, <http://oc-media.org/anti-orban-demonstrators-face-off-with-far-right-in-tbilisi/> .

⁹¹ “Georgian rights groups back civil partnerships for same-sex couples” OC Media, April 10, 2017, <http://oc-media.org/georgian-rights-groups-back-civil-partnerships-for-same-sex-couples/> .

⁹² Irakli Jgharkava, “Anti-migrant rhetoric in Georgia: Do far-right groups threaten Georgia’s pro-European discourse?” GIP Commentary, issue 16., August 2017, <http://gip.ge/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Commentary-16.pdf>.

⁹³ “My Europe, the Europe of Dante, Beethoven and Mann, no longer exists. Europe will be soon have a Muslim majority” [translated from Georgian], Asaval-Dasavali, April 2 2017, 13(1167).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ A. Stephan, 2018.

now has to counter phobias and myths about European values, European disintegration and crisis. Moreover, the growth of intolerant and generally illiberal movements threatens the implementation of human rights and anti-discrimination laws, which is part and parcel of EU-Georgia relations.

In conclusion, illiberal tendencies in the European neighborhood overlap with and are influenced by similar developments taking place within the European Union. Eventually, an EU dominated by forces opposed to human rights and tolerance will no longer “lead by example”, and will not be able to (credibly) use conditionality as an instrument in its policy towards enlargement and neighboring countries. That means that the upcoming European elections not only increasingly put to test the future trajectory of European integration based on shared norms and values, but also the EU’s normative power and with it, one of its most valuable foreign policy instruments.

5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

European values are under attack. In the European Union, consensus has eroded on democracy, the rule of law and other values defined in Art. 2, Treaty on European Union – European integration based on shared values and norms has turned out to be a struggle rather than a matter of course. At the same time, the EU has increasingly build on European values in its external relations, and has come to employ its normative power towards enlargement and neighboring countries particularly since the end of the Cold War. Thus, the question arises to what extent the increasing challenges to European values *within* the EU affect neighboring states directly, and affect the EU’s ability to pursue its values-oriented policy towards them.

Aiming at providing answers to this question, this paper has reviewed the challenges to European values in the European Union and its neighborhood, and investigated the nexus between the increased questioning of European values and the ability of the EU to act as normative power in its external relations. Focusing on Georgia as a prime case of the EU’s normative power approach, this paper reviewed the EU’s numerous policies to support, amongst others, democratization, human rights and civil society and thus European values in the Eastern Partnership country. Often considered a “front-runner” among the Eastern Partnership countries, Georgia’s “irreversible Europeanization”⁹⁶ remains a model for other countries and a litmus test of the EU’s normative power in its neighborhood. Nevertheless, as the international political environment becomes more hostile to value-based policy, and societies throughout Europe fall prey to far-right dissent, Georgia is also witnessing gains in its own domestic, far-right movement.⁹⁷ Strikingly, the increasing contestation of European values

⁹⁶ Davit Zalkaliani, “Georgian Foreign Policy in a New Era”.

⁹⁷ A. Stephan, 2018.

and the decline of democracy in the EU are in turn used by the Georgian far-right to legitimize their own anti-liberal politics.

Finally, the arguments presented in this paper demonstrate that due to the contestation of European values within the EU, the EU might soon lose one of its most important foreign policy tools. EU institutions dominated by anti-democratic, anti-human rights forces will certainly neither “lead by example”, nor invoke democratic conditionality. This raises questions about the EU’s future foreign policy actorness as well as the political trajectory of EU enlargement and neighboring states as a whole.

Where does this lead us? As French President Emmanuel Macron argued in his address to the US Congress in April 2018, feelings of anger and fear “do not build anything” but only “freeze and weaken us”.⁹⁸ Instead of burying their heads in the sand, the liberal, pro-European majority in the EU and neighboring states must act to reclaim political discourses in favor of human rights and democracy. This paper has demonstrated that the challenges in the EU and neighboring states are similar, even though they play out differently. Liberal civil society representatives, journalists, public intellectuals, politicians in the EU and neighboring states should all be aware of their responsibility and work more actively to defend the system of norms and values that has served or *should serve* to protect each individual’s fundamental rights towards the state. Political parties should cooperate across party lines and cleavages, making clear that liberal democracy is not a particular interest; it is the foundation of our societies supported by a broad coalition of political actors.

EU institutions and Member State governments have tasks to complete as well. As long as illiberal actors have not overwhelmingly captured EU institutions, the latter should work on strengthening European values domestically. For instance, they should certainly launch Article 7 procedures where appropriate – even if the Council will not approve them, they have a huge symbolic meaning and support the causes of liberal democratic actors in the respective Member States, and they might even strengthen support for EU institutions on the part of the pro-European majority. Moreover, EU institutions and Member States should provide strong support to the foreseen European Values Instrument that was “designed to provide financial support for civil society on the local and national level to counter the backlash against democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights in the EU”.⁹⁹ While MEPs have suggested to double its budget, the European Commission has proposed an instrument that falls short of demands from civil society and parliamentarians.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Kevin Cottrell, Filip Vojvodac-Medic, “Democracy en Marche! – From Macron to Kyiv”, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, blog post, May 9, 2018, <http://www.gmfus.org/blog/2018/05/09/democracy-en-marche-macron-kyiv>

⁹⁹ European Parliament, Draft Report on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Rights and Values programme (COM(2018)0383 – C8-0234/2018 – 2018/0207(COD)), 2018, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/LIBE/DV/2018/10-10/Draft_Report_Rights_and_Values_v2_EN.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Civil Liberties Union for Europe, Open letter to President Tusk, President Juncker and First Vice-President Timmermans, October 1, 2018, https://dq4n3btxm8c9.cloudfront.net/files/oASTYc/EVL_Open_letter-3.pdf

At the same time, it is crucial not to play out support for civil society and democracy within the EU against support for civil society and democracy abroad. As this paper has shown, the challenges we observe within and outside of the EU are closely related, and the idea that the EU can solve its domestic problems first and then “re-launch” its normative power falls short of the dangers a possible re-autocratization of the European neighborhood could pose to the EU. Instead, the EU should apply conditionality more strictly. The EU’s ‘more for more’ approach was the first step in that direction.¹⁰¹ At the same time, the EU should be much more critical about violations of European norms and values that have been jointly agreed upon with enlargement and neighboring states, for instance in Association Agreements. Not voicing criticism might make relations between the EU and less liberal democratic governments smoother, but it will lead to the disillusionment of all those who believed that the EU would support them in pushing for the democratization of their countries. The EU and its Member States should also support even more people-to-people exchange between its own citizens and citizens of neighboring states – that will enable both sides to develop more realistic understandings of the challenges our respective neighbors are facing.

Lastly, governments of enlargement and neighboring states should aim at deepening their own and their societies’ level of knowledge about EU institutions, processes and current affairs. While idealist perspectives are welcome, realistic understandings of the various limitations of the European project as it stands today are also crucial, in order to decrease the potential of disillusionment with the EU’s policies. Moreover, it needs to be understood that there is no “right to accession” – for any accession, the Copenhagen Criteria need to be fulfilled just like the EU needs to have sufficient capacity to absorb a new member.¹⁰² Enlargement and neighboring states thus need to ask not only what the EU can do for them, but also what they can offer the European Union. Georgia’s approach of confidently promoting its cultural heritage and contemporary culture in the EU can be considered a best practice that has great potential to be developed further, not only in Tbilisi but in all states with European ambitions. EU neighbors have the opportunity to breathe new life into the European Union and to enrich it – currently from the outside, and some day possibly from the inside as well.

¹⁰¹ European Parliament, “Fact Sheets on the European Union: The European Neighbourhood Policy”, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/170/the-european-neighbourhood-policy>.

¹⁰² European Commission, Enlargement - Accession criteria, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/accession-criteria_en.

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