

# **Knowledge of and Attitudes towards the EU in Georgia**

**2017 Survey Report**

Tbilisi  
2017



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## Introduction

A fifth wave survey was conducted by the Europe Foundation in Georgia to study the knowledge and attitudes of Georgian citizens towards the European Union. Four waves of similar surveys were conducted by the Foundation in 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015, thereby allowing us to observe changes in assessments, expectations and in the hopes of the population of Georgia towards the EU over the past nine years.

All five surveys suggest the population's enthusiasm towards the process of EU integration. However, the survey results revealed that this enthusiasm did not rest on a deep knowledge of the EU and its institutions but rather reflected the hopes and expectations of the population. The 2017 survey is significant, among other reasons, due to the fact that Georgia and the EU have moved up to a substantially new level in their relationship: on July 1, 2016, the Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU entered into force while in March 2017, Georgian citizens were granted the opportunity for short-term visa-free travel to the countries of the Schengen Area.<sup>1</sup> Along with visa liberalization, yet another successful example of the EU-Georgia relationship is the increasing level of EU support for the development of agriculture and entrepreneurship in Georgia.

The questionnaires used in all the five waves of surveys were as identical as possible to allow for the comparison of results.<sup>2</sup> The 2009 and 2011 surveys were conducted in Georgian. Therefore, representatives of ethnic minorities living in settlements where the majority of the population is not Georgian speaking were not sampled. To study the views of ethnic minorities, the so-called "minority stratum" was added to the sample of the Georgian-speaking population in 2013.<sup>3</sup>

The first chapter of this report, "**Georgia and the EU**," assesses the population's level of knowledge about the EU, its desire to enhance this knowledge and sources of information through which the population would like to obtain additional knowledge on this topic. It also discusses the population's opinions about the EU's support for Georgia, including their perception of the efficiency of this support. The second chapter, "**The Georgian Population's Political Views and Liberal Values**" examines the population's attitudes towards democratic values and antidiscrimination principles.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:2017:061:FULL&from=EN>

<sup>2</sup> The 2017 questionnaire is provided in Appendix 3. Questionnaires used for earlier waves of the survey are available at <http://www.caucasusbarometer.org/en/downloads/>, in the EU Survey section.

<sup>3</sup> Interviews with the representative of this stratum were conducted in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages. For detailed information, see Appendix 1 (Survey Methodology).

## 1. Georgia and the EU

### Knowledge about the EU

The results of the five survey waves conducted by the Europe Foundation over the past nine years show that the Georgian population's knowledge of the European integration process is changing rather slowly. The simplest question (“Is Georgia an EU member state?”) to assess the population of Georgia's awareness of the EU integration process was answered affirmatively by 16% of the population in 2017. During the period between 2009 and 2015, the share of incorrect answers to this question showed a stable downward trend with only 5% of 2015 respondents thinking that Georgia was an EU member state. The increase in incorrect answers seen in 2017 might be attributable to visa liberalization. Since March 2017, Georgian citizens are no longer required to attain visas for short-term travel to Schengen Area countries. A segment of Georgian citizens might have equated, or associated, this visa liberalization with accession to the EU. At the same time, while almost two thirds of Georgia's population knew in 2015 that Russia was not an EU member state, the 2017 results show an enhancement of this knowledge with 77% of the respondents saying that Russia is not an EU member state. As regards the knowledge about EU membership of other countries (namely, Norway, Moldova and Romania) the 2017 survey results are analogous to the corresponding results of previous years.

In contrast to previous years, the 2017 responses to the question about Georgia's EU membership show insignificant difference by types of settlement.<sup>4</sup> It was unexpected from the Tbilisi population, who is often more informed on many issues than the rest of Georgia's population, not to reveal that level of knowledge in 2017. At the same time, the gap between the Georgian-speaking population and the ethnic minorities with regard to this question is increasing. While, on average, 10% of the population countrywide chooses the response “Don't know,” a corresponding share among representatives of ethnic minorities stands at 39%, up by 12% compared to the 2015 survey indicator. In 2017, some 30% of Georgia's population answered correctly the question about the current number of EU member states as opposed to 44% who found it difficult to answer.<sup>5</sup> Considering the margin of error, these results are analogous to those of 2015, though a level of knowledge among ethnic minorities, as compared to that of the rest of population, is still strikingly lower: only 19% of ethnic minorities answered this question correctly as opposed to 60% who chose the answer “Don't know.”

Similar to previous years, only a small segment of the Georgian population has knowledge of EU institutions, agreements achieved with the EU and concrete projects implemented in Georgia. The segments of the population who have heard about the Association Agreement between the EU and Georgia and who have not is virtually equal (47% and 48%, respectively). Surprisingly, the share of those who are aware of this important agreement has decreased since 2015 when it

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<sup>4</sup> The correlation between the variables of all cross-tabulations presented in this report is statistically significant.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that during the interviews, a show card was used for the question, which contained options of answers (the question: “**How many member states are currently in the EU?**”; options of answers: “Up to 10”, “From 11 to 20”, “From 21 to 30”, “From 31 to 40”, and “More than 40.” Consequently, the question was extremely simplified. To answer the question correctly, a respondent had to merely choose the correct band (21-30); respondents were not required to specify the exact number of EU member states.

stood at 63%. As in other answers, the level of knowledge is lower among representatives of ethnic minorities. As many as 72% of representatives of this stratum have not heard of the Association Agreement as opposed to 13% who have (the corresponding indicators in 2015 were 64% and 24%, respectively). Among those who have heard of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, only 28% answered correctly that the Association Agreement fully entered into force, whereas 8% said that it did not either fully or partially. It is difficult to identify the reasons for such dynamics, but it is clear that the population needs to be provided with more information about the significance of the agreement between the EU and Georgia and about the concrete projects implemented within its framework.

A large segment of that 47% of respondents who have heard of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement think that this agreement may result in Georgia's closer political association and economic integration with the EU. This answer was most frequent in 2015 too. The second answer by frequency is again the membership of the EU (23 %). The expectation that the Association Agreement may lead to the restoration of territorial integrity (11%), integration into NATO (8%) or improvement of relations with Russia (5%) also remains unchanged.

The majority of that 47% of respondents who have heard of EU-Georgia Association Agreement think that the agreement will lead to the improvement of the existing situation in many spheres. Around 3/4 of this group believe that the Association Agreement will contribute to improvement in spheres such as: Georgia's security (76%), the quality of secondary and higher education (76% and 79%, respectively), freedom of the press (75%), the quality of Georgian agricultural produce (72%) and the working conditions in Georgian small and medium size enterprises (72%). Around 2/3 of this group also believe that the Association Agreement will contribute to a higher accountability of Georgia's public services to the population (69%), the efficient use of energy resources (68%), the independence of the courts (67%) and employment (63%). According to the obtained results, expectations are highest with regard to the improvement of Georgia's healthcare sector (80%) and the increase in possibilities of selling Georgian products on the EU market (82%).

The questionnaire contained a question designed to assess the population's level of knowledge about the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) which has operated in Georgia since September 2008 and has a budget of EUR 18,340,000 for the current year.<sup>6</sup> Despite the impressive amount of material and human resources allocated by the EU to fund the mission's operations, the 2017 survey results show that 41% of the population are ignorant of the mission; though compared to the corresponding 2015 result, this indicator is less by 12%. A question about the aim served by the EUMM was answered correctly by only 19% of the population. The level of knowledge in this regard is extremely low among the ethnic minorities – 71% of them are not aware of the activities of the EUMM as opposed to a mere 3% who are.

Much like in previous years, the level of Georgian citizens' knowledge about Georgia's membership in the Council of Europe remains limited in 2017. However, compared to 2015, the share of correct answers increased in 2017. While in 2015, only 32% of respondents correctly

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<sup>6</sup> [https://eumm.eu/data/image\\_db\\_innova/EUMM%20Factsheet%20ENG%202017%20APR.PDF](https://eumm.eu/data/image_db_innova/EUMM%20Factsheet%20ENG%202017%20APR.PDF)

answered the question of whether Georgia is currently a Council of Europe member, in 2017, the share of correct answers equals 43%.

## Sources of Information

According to the 2017 survey results, sources of information about the EU remain similar to those in previous years. In particular, television as a source of information is still in the lead in 2017. Some 34% of the population responded that they receive information about the EU from this source whereas 17% of the population and 33% of ethnic minorities say they do not receive any information about the EU from television. Presumably, this difference among settlement types may be explained by the fact that ethnic minorities mainly watch non-Georgian TV channels, which is also indicated by the survey data.

Three other sources of information that have been most frequently named by respondents are social networks, informal sources (friends, relatives, colleagues) and the websites of news media outlets. Although with regard to these three sources almost no difference is observed by settlement type, one should emphasize that representatives of ethnic minorities, as compared to Georgian speakers, say four times as often that they receive “very much information” about the EU from friends, relatives or colleagues (13% of ethnic minorities and 3% of the Georgian speaking population).

It is important to note that according to the survey results, a number of information sources, including the sources which dedicate substantial human and material resources for the operation, fail to fulfill their function. Namely, 4% or even less of Georgia’s population receives information about the EU from the following sources:

- Newspapers and magazines, save online outlets (4%);
- Delegation of the European Union to Georgia (2%);
- Educational institutions (2%);
- Information brochures produced by various organizations (2%);
- Webpages of Georgian government entities (1%);
- The Georgian Government (1%);
- Radio, save online outlets (1%);
- Embassies, international organizations (1%);
- Georgian nongovernmental organizations (including their webpages) (1%);
- The Information Center on NATO and EU (1%).

The share of those who would like to receive more information about the EU has increased insignificantly since 2015. In 2017, 56% of the population is willing to receive more information about the EU. However, this share is lower among representatives of ethnic minorities (44%). Moreover, 13% of ethnic minorities chose the answer “Don’t know” (whereas only 3% of the Georgian population answered in this way). While the share of ethnic minorities willing to learn

more about the EU showed a 20% increase between 2013 and 2015 (from 32% to 50%), this trend was not maintained over the period from 2015 to 2017 (44%).

71% of those who trust the EU would also like to learn more about the EU. Similar to 2015, those who would like to learn more about the EU want to receive information about the following areas:<sup>7</sup>

- Georgia-EU trade relations (42%);
- The EU's educational programs (29%);
- Social protection in the EU (28%);
- The EU's role in conflict resolution (27%);
- The EU's health care system (26).

Less frequently named areas include the rule of law in the EU (21%), salaries in the EU (21%), the EU's labor market (18%), ways to obtain a visa to EU member states<sup>8</sup> (12%), the EU's cultural programs (11%) and EU institutions and structures (5%).

Interest in trade relations is higher among men than women (50% and 34%, respectively) while interest in educational programs is higher among women. This issue is named by 34% of the women willing to learn more about the EU, as opposed to 24% of men. Unsurprisingly, interest towards social protection issues heightens along with an increase in age. While only 20% of people aged 18 to 30 show interest in this area, this share goes up to 42% among those aged 60 and over. It is interesting that a similar difference by age group is not observed among those who are interested in the EU's healthcare system. Respondents show almost equal interest in this area, though interest in the EU's healthcare system is higher among women than men (32% and 19%, respectively). It is worth noting that of the Georgian-speaking population who would like to learn more about the EU, 27% want to receive more information about the EU's healthcare system as compared to 8% of the corresponding share among the ethnic minorities.

As many as 80% of those who want to learn more about the EU would like to receive this information from television again. A corresponding share among ethnic minorities stands at 70%. Television is the preferred medium for the older population, aged 60 and above (93%), while this share stands at 62% among citizens belonging to the 18-30 age group.

It is especially important to note that the second source by frequency, social networks, is named by only 26% of those who would like to receive information. As expected, a large difference is observed by age group: this source is named by 50% of the population aged between 18 and 30 as opposed to 7% of the population aged 60 and over. On the other hand, the difference is insignificant between the Georgian-speaking population and the representatives of ethnic minorities – 27% and 20%, respectively. Around 10% of those who would like to learn more about the EU, additionally name three sources from which they would be willing to receive

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<sup>7</sup> This question was only for those who in response to the previous question said that they would like to receive more information about the EU. Consequently, this question was answered by 56% of the total number of respondents.

<sup>8</sup> Irrespective of the enforcement of the visa free travel regime between Georgia and the Schengen Area, this option was left among the answers on the show card because the visa liberalization does not apply to all types of travel.



information: webpages of news media outlets (11%), the EU Delegation to Georgia (10%) and newspapers and magazines, save online editions (9%). All other sources are named by less than 4%.

A mere 5% of Georgia's population has lived, since 1993, in any of the EU member states for at least three months. However, answers to follow-up questions revealed that at least half of these respondents, while responding affirmatively to this question, considered Turkey (16 instances), Russia (13 instances) or other post-Soviet countries (Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Belarus) as being EU member states.

Since there is no increase observed in the efficiency of means of information, one may conclude that there is a need to enhance the information campaign about the EU. Bearing in mind that the share of the population willing to learn more about the EU has increased, **it is necessary to develop new, more effective means of informing the population.**

### Perceptions of the EU

In the perception of Georgian population, the EU, first and foremost, is an international organization and a political union (30% and 27%, respectively). This is followed by the view that the EU, first and foremost, represents an economic union (21%).<sup>9</sup> These answers are similar to the results of previous years. It is interesting that the portion of the population that found it difficult to answer the question has decreased in all segments of the population except for ethnic minorities.

Only 10% of Georgia's population reports having negative perceptions of the EU, including 3% with "Very negative" and 7% with "Rather negative than positive" perceptions. The share of the population with a positive perception of the EU is significantly larger (11% "Very positive" and 34% "Rather positive than negative"). The largest segment of the population (40%) evaluates its perception of the EU as "Neutral."

Similarly to previous survey waves, the 2017 wave also studied the population's views on what the EU particularly stands for.<sup>10</sup> As in previous years, the overwhelming majority of the population agrees with the statements that: the EU is a source of peace and security in Europe (74%); that it is a democratic union (73%); that it supports the development of democracy in non-member countries (69%) and; that it supports economic development in non-member countries (66%). Hence, the conclusion that **the majority of the Georgian population associates the EU with peace, security and democracy** remains valid.

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<sup>9</sup> The aim of this question was not to assess the level of knowledge and therefore, the question did not have "Correct" and "Incorrect" answers; the aim of the question was to identify the Georgian population's perception of this union, how was this union seen by the population.

<sup>10</sup> The statements offered were: (1) The EU supports the development of democracy in non-member countries; (2) The EU is a source for peace and security in Europe; (3) The EU threatens Georgian traditions; (4) The EU is a democratic union; (5) The EU is a new form of empire; (6) The EU supports the economic development of non-member countries; (7) The EU is ready to accept any European state as its next member. Using a 4-point scale, respondents evaluated their level of agreement or disagreement with each of the above statements.

At the same time, 41% of the population agrees with the statement that “the EU threatens Georgian traditions,” although the share of those who disagree with this statement is higher (49%). It is important to stress that the corresponding ratio in 2015 comprised 45% and 34%, respectively; this means that **the perception of the EU as a threat to Georgian traditions has decreased (by 15%)**. It is no less important that the share of those who found it difficult to answer this question also dropped - from 20% in 2015 to 10% in 2017.

Thus, according to the survey results, the trend of previous years has continued and **general perceptions of the EU in Georgia remain mainly positive**.

### **EU Support for Georgia**

The support provided by the EU to Georgia is increasing and diversifying. Currently, more than 100 EU projects are being implemented in Georgia. Over the past few years, the basic EU assistance amounted to around 100 million euro a year,<sup>11</sup> which is complemented by the funding of a whole set of sectorial projects in the areas of, for example, microfinance or energy.<sup>12</sup> The assistance allocated by the EU for Georgia targets fields such as public finance management, justice, agriculture and reforms for implementing the Association Agreement to ensure the country’s democratic and sustainable development.

Hence, it is important that 2% of Georgia’s population states that EU support is absolutely unimportant and for 8%, this support is less important. EU support for Georgia is important for the absolute majority of the population – 84%, including 38% evaluating it as “Very important.” Ethnic minorities are more moderate in their evaluations, though the share of positive assessments in this group is still high (60%).

It is worth noting that the population views the EU as the union that can currently best support Georgia. In particular, in response to the question “Who can currently best support Georgia?” 35% of the population names the EU, which is the most frequent response. At the same time, almost one fourth of the population names Russia and the USA (24% and 23%, respectively). The distribution of answers to this question has remained stable since 2013 when this question was first included in the questionnaire. Also, much like previous years, a significant gap is observed between the responses of the Georgian-speaking population and of ethnic minorities. Namely, 54% of ethnic minorities think that Russia can best support Georgia. Representatives of ethnic minorities name the EU twice as less as Georgian speakers (15% and 35%) and the USA four times as less as the Georgian speakers (5% and 23%).

Moreover, Georgian society has diverse opinions about the purpose of the EU’s support for Georgia. The most widespread opinion is that the EU wants stability in its neighborhood (76%). Around half of the population also agree with the statements that “The EU is interested in the

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<sup>11</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage\\_en/23634/EU-Georgia%20relations.%20factsheet](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/23634/EU-Georgia%20relations.%20factsheet)

<sup>12</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-15-4812\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4812_en.htm)

stability of Georgia in order to use the territory to transport oil and gas to Europe” (58%); that “The EU wants to reduce the flow of migrants to its own territory” (51%) and that “The EU supports developing countries, including Georgia” (52%). The Georgian population agrees the least with the statements that the EU supports Georgia because: “The EU wants to influence Georgia” (39%) and “Georgia is an exemplary new democracy in the world. This is why the EU wants its further development” (39%).

27% of the population found it difficult to name what kind of support the EU provides to Georgia. From responses to this question, two kinds of EU support to Georgia may be outlined: 25% of the population thinks it is humanitarian aid while 23% thinks it is investment in Georgia’s economy. The population also names support to solve social problems (14%), restore territorial integrity (14%), build public institutions (12%), develop civil society (12%), equip armed forces (9%), solve relations with Russia (9%) and develop the media (1%). Some 11% of the population, however, declares that the EU does not currently provide any kind of support to Georgia. Interestingly, the latter opinion is seen in almost equal amounts in groups of various age, gender and settlement type.

The areas the population thinks Georgia needs EU assistance in differ from those areas in which this assistance is believed to be provided. The only exception is investment in Georgia’s economy, with 28% of the population believing that this kind of EU assistance would be the best support for Georgia. Second to this is the restoration of territorial integrity (19%), followed by solving social problems (12%). Other areas are named less frequently. It is striking that humanitarian aid is named by only 7% when 25% of population believe that the EU provides this very kind of assistance to Georgia. Assistance in reforming the justice system and developing media was hardly named.

As much as 62% of the population responded to two questions concerning the spending of EU aid in Georgia. Almost half of them (55%) think that the spending of EU aid is pointless in Georgia. Only 23% think that the spending is purposeful and among them only 2% chose an answer “fully purposeful”. It is interesting that compared to other regions, the Tbilisi population answers more frequently that the spending of EU support is purposeful – 32% of the Tbilisi population responds so, whereas only 14% of the Georgian speaking rural population shares this view.

The opinion that EU support benefits Georgian politicians and officials the most (39%) remains the most widespread. Businessmen (27%) and students (20%) are also named in this context.

It should be noted that the ethnic minorities are again very restrained in their opinions about the support provided by the EU to Georgia. The majority of them think that Georgia can be best supported by Russia.

Thus, as in previous years, **Georgia’s population believes that the country needs the assistance provided by the EU**, although they do not commonly think that “the entire population of Georgia” benefits from this assistance.

## European Integration

In 2015, the share of Georgia's population responding affirmatively to the question **“If there were to be a referendum tomorrow on the question of Georgia's membership of the EU, would you personally vote for or against it?”** decreased to 61%. The results of the 2017 survey suggest a reversal of this trend with the share of those supporting Georgia's membership in the EU reaching 71%. The share of those who oppose Georgia's membership in the EU remains around 10% of the population.

The distribution of responses to this question remains stable among ethnic minorities - 35% of ethnic minorities said they would support Georgia's membership in the EU. The share of those who would not support the membership is similar both for the Georgian-speaking population and the ethnic minorities. 19% of ethnic minorities as compared to 7% of Georgian speakers say that they would not take part in the referendum. Respectively, 35% and 8% found it difficult to answer the question.

Since 2015, a notable increase has been observed in the share of supporters of Georgia's membership in the EU in Georgian-speaking villages (from 57% to 76%). Of those 58% who agree with the statement “I am Georgian, and therefore I am European”, 89% say they would support Georgia's membership in the EU. It is worth noting that 90% of those who trust the EU support Georgia's membership in the EU. On the other hand, only 36% of those who do not trust the EU would not support Georgia's membership in the EU as opposed to 41% who would.

52% of those who say they would support Georgia's accession to the EU name the improvement of their economic condition as the reason for this support. Among other important reasons for support are the better protection of Georgia against foreign threats (20%) and a better chance of restoring territorial integrity (12%).

Some 10% of Georgia's population would not vote for Georgia's accession to the EU were a referendum held on this topic. They also named reasons for making such a decision. The most frequently named reason is that EU membership would hinder the establishment of good neighborly relations with Russia (43%). Around one third of this group thinks that membership in the EU would harm Georgian culture and traditions, 29% believes that it would restrict Georgia's independence while in the opinion of 27% EU membership would lessen the chances of restoring Georgia's territorial integrity.<sup>13</sup>

In 2017, responses of Georgia's population to the question of whether they would support the country's accession to the Eurasian Union if there were to be a referendum were distributed as follows: 31% of the population would vote for Georgia's membership in the Eurasian Union, 47% would vote against and 12% would not participate in the referendum. This distribution is largely similar to that of the 2015 survey; however, two significant trends have emerged: the

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<sup>13</sup> Since the distribution of answers rests on only respondents' 1/10 answers, the margin of error is higher and obtained results are less representative.

share of those who oppose Georgia's membership in the Eurasian Union increased from 38% to 47% and the share of those who found it difficult to answer this question decreased from 21% to 12%. As regards the data of ethnic minorities alone, 41% of these respondents support the accession to the Eurasian Union against 10% of those who do not; 16% would not participate in the referendum and 32% found it difficult to answer this question.

It is worth noting that a segment of those who would vote for Georgia's accession to the EU would also vote for Georgia's accession to the Eurasian Union (26%), which means that around one fourth of Georgia's population lack a firm position on this issue. The situation has not changed in this regard over the past two years as the 2015 survey showed an analogous finding.

The share of those who think that the majority of Georgia's population supports the country's accession to the EU has increased by 11% since 2015 (67%). This share equals 70% in the Georgian-speaking strata, but is notably lower in the ethnic minority stratum (40%), suggesting yet again that support for EU integration is low in the settlements densely populated by ethnic minorities.

All those respondents who correctly answered the question of whether Georgia was an EU member state or not, were asked to say when, in their opinion, Georgia will join the EU. The distribution of 2017 survey answers is virtually similar to that of the 2015 survey answers. Around one third of the population were unable to answer the question; 19% think it would happen within five years or an even shorter period while around 10% say this would never happen. The share of the latter group is especially small among the youth.

A large segment of the population thinks that Georgia is unprepared for EU membership. Namely, 59%<sup>14</sup> think that Georgia is not ready for membership due to the current state of its market economy. Additionally, in the opinion of more than half of the Georgian population, the factors impeding Georgia's EU membership are problems in: the development of a market economy (59%);<sup>15</sup> the rule of law (56%); the approximation of Georgian legislation to EU legislation (54%); the protection of human rights (52%); the development of democratic institutions (50%), and; the protection of minority rights (46%). Only 2% of the population believes that nothing impedes Georgia from joining the EU. Other answers about impeding factors to EU membership include territorial conflicts (40%), political instability (27%), Russia (21%) and an underdeveloped economy (19%).

According to the 2017 survey, although support for Georgia's European integration has increased, around half of the population does not believe Georgia is ready for EU membership. Also, the **differences between the levels of knowledge and attitudes of the Georgian speaking population and ethnic minorities** remain similar to previous years' survey results, indicating the need for more targeted work in this direction.

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<sup>14</sup> Since the distribution of answers rests on only respondents' 1/10 answers, the margin of error is higher and obtained results are less representative.

<sup>15</sup> The sum of answers "Definitely not" and "Rather No than Yes."

## Expectations Related to Georgia becoming an EU Member State

The accession to the EU is seen by a large segment of the population as a means of overcoming many problems in Georgia. At the same time, the population thinks that EU membership will increase not only their revenues but their costs as well. In particular, 59% expect an increase in pensions as well as new jobs if Georgia becomes an EU member state. 58% of the population expects an increase in revenues and the better availability of medical services, while 57% expect the reduction of poverty regardless of the fact that 43% think that EU membership will lead to a rise in prices on main consumer goods.

As regards expectations concerning the functioning of democratic institutions, the majority of respondents (63%) expect a greater level of freedom of speech in Georgia (63%), a better possibility of free elections (57%), better protection of minority rights (57%), a greater degree of independence of the judiciary (54%), better security in the country (62%) and a better quality of education (71%). The share of those who expect an increased possibility of the restoration of territorial integrity is lower (46% as opposed to 31% who think that it will remain unchanged).

As many as 56% of respondents expect an increase in the number of people willing to leave Georgia, whereas 20% think that this number will decrease. The public opinion about the issue of Georgian traditions is least established: some 26% of the population think that with the accession of Georgia to the EU the respect for these traditions will decrease, whereas 25% expect the opposite (i.e. an increase in respect). It is worth noting that, compared to the 2015 results, the latter position was expressed more frequently.<sup>16</sup> As many as 68% of Georgia's population thinks that closer relations between Georgia and the EU would negatively affect Georgia-Russia relations. However, this expectation is higher among the Georgian-speaking population than among the ethnic minorities – at 71% and 41%, respectively.

The USA, the EU and Russia are named among those countries with which, in the population's view, Georgia should have its closest political and economic cooperation. Considering the margin of error of results, it is difficult to clearly identify which of these three is the most desirable partner for the population. With regard to political partnership, 54% of the population name the USA, 53% name the EU and 50% - Russia. As regards economic partnership, 54% name Russia, 48% - the EU and 46% - the USA. Turkey lags far behind these three with 29% of Georgia's population willing to have a very close economic partnership and 21% to have a very close political partnership with this country. It is important to note that the Eurasian Union was named by a mere 3% of the population in both cases.

It is utterly important that according to the 2017 survey, **the fear that the EU threatens Georgian traditions has subsided in society**. The population's expectations of Georgia becoming an EU member state are mostly positive and relate to the hopes of improving Georgia's own economic conditions and on the other hand, the development of democratic institutions in Georgia.

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<sup>16</sup> In 2015, 16% of the population thought that, with the accession of Georgia to the EU, respect for these traditions would increase.

## Visa Liberalization

Since 28 March 2017, Georgian citizens have been able to travel to countries in the EU/Schengen Area without visas for a short stay. To study the population's attitudes towards this novelty, the 2017 questionnaire of the Europe Foundation was extended to include several new questions, inter alia, to evaluate the effectiveness of a wide-scale information campaign about the visa liberalization.

It must be largely owing to the effectiveness of the campaign that only 1% of the population has not heard of the possibility to travel without visa to Schengen Area countries. It is striking that the corresponding share increases to 11% when it comes to ethnic minorities; this suggests that the information campaign was less effective with representatives of this group of the population. 64% of Georgia's population is happy about this novelty; 29% do not experience any extraordinary emotion in this regard and 4% are unhappy. Unsurprisingly, the latter two groups mainly belong to the category of opponents of European integration, whose age is 60 and over.

To better study knowledge about visa liberalization, respondents were asked to name the documents which they are required to have for a travel to the Schengen Area.<sup>17</sup> While 17% were not able to answer this question country-wide, a corresponding indicator among the ethnic minorities was at 42% including 26% of those aged 60 and over. As regards the answers, the majority (78%) of respondents named a biometric passport. The second answer by frequency was a financial statement evidencing the affordability of trip (45%), followed by a return ticket (40%), an address of the place of residence while abroad (34) and travel insurance (24%).

59% of the population is well aware that the visa-free regime does not allow citizens of Georgia to work in countries of the Schengen Area. However, 25% think that the visa-free regime also gives citizens of Georgia the right to work in countries of the Schengen Area while 16% of respondents found it difficult to answer this question; corresponding shares among ethnic minorities are 45% and 29%, respectively.

It is interesting that 16% of Georgia's population are confident that they will enjoy the visa-free regime within the next 12 months as compared to 72% who think the opposite; 12% of respondents found it difficult to answer this question. It is worth noting that the frequency of affirmative responses is similar among the Georgian-speaking population and the representatives of ethnic minorities, though the frequency of the answer "Don't know" is three times higher among ethnic minorities.

Of those who intend to enjoy the visa-free regime within the next 12 months, only 19% chose the correct answer concerning the maximum length of stay without visa – 90 days within 180 days; 5% chose the answer "Don't know;" 14% opted for "180 days a year" (which may be considered the correct answer) and 59% chose "90 days a year." Given that only 16% of respondents intend

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<sup>17</sup> A show card was not used for this question; respondents were to recall themselves which documents are required. The number of answers was not limited. This question was omitted for those respondents who had not heard of visa-free regime.

to enjoy the visa-free regime within the next 12 months, the margin of error of the above answers is rather high.

Thus, based on these results, **the level of knowledge of the population about specific details of visa liberalization is, at this stage, satisfactory though it is necessary to carry on the information campaign about the visa liberalization countrywide and focus it on raising awareness of representatives of ethnic minorities.**

## 2. Political Views and Values of the Georgian Population

### Political Views

The interest in Georgia's domestic and foreign policies has virtually remained the same since 2015. It is noteworthy that after 2009, the population expressed less interest in the domestic and foreign policies of Georgia. While in 2009, 58% of population said they were "very" or "quite" interested in Georgia's domestic policy, in 2017 this share stands at 45%. A significant difference is seen between the Georgian-speaking population and the ethnic minorities. The results of the survey show that 47% of Georgian speakers are interested in Georgia's domestic policy as compared to 34% of ethnic minorities. Similar results are seen in regard with the interest in Georgia's foreign policy, which, compared with 2009, dropped by 13% to 44%.

The 2017 survey shows some changes in citizens' trust towards several social institutions and political associations.<sup>18</sup> For example, although religious institutions remain in the lead (80%, the sum of the responses "fully trust" and "trust"), there is a notable change in the redistribution between the answers "fully trust" and "trust." While in previous survey waves, religious institutions were fully trusted by more than 40% of the population and this indicator even reached 69% in 2009, only 28% of the population fully trusts religious institutions in 2017.

As in 2015, a vast majority of the population trusts the Georgian army in 2017 as well (75%).<sup>19</sup> More than half of the population trust the police (53%) and the healthcare system (51%); however, since 2015, trust towards the healthcare system saw a 9% drop. According to the 2017 survey results, more than one third of Georgia's population trusts the President and the Prime Minister (39% and 35%, respectively). In case of the Prime Minister, trust has increased since 2015 when it stood at 26%. Trust towards local government has also increased since 2015 (29% in 2015 and 35% in 2017). It is interesting that the trust towards local government showed an increase among ethnic minorities too. In 2017, 62% of this stratum trusts local government while the corresponding 2015 indicator stood at 54%.

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<sup>18</sup> The respondents assessed their trust towards 16 social institutions and political associations. They were: Georgia's healthcare system, banks, the army, courts, NGOs, parliament, the prime minister, political parties, the president, police, media, local government, religious institutions, the ombudsman, the EU, and the UN.

<sup>19</sup> The sum of responses "fully trust" and "trust."



In 2017, some 44% of the population stated that they trust the EU (including only 3% who fully trust the EU), showing an increase compared with 2015.<sup>20</sup> However, this increase is observed among the Georgian-speaking population alone. The trust towards the EU has not changed among ethnic minorities since 2015. It should also be noted that in 2017, around a quarter of ethnic minorities (26%) were not able to answer this question (“Don’t know” answers), which is five times as high as the Georgian-speaking population (5%).

Other public institutions and political associations are trusted by a third of the population or less, thereby showing no notable change. Consequently, a lack of trust by society towards public institutions and political associations is observed in 2017 too, especially towards institutions such as: parliament, political parties, courts, NGOs, and the media. Trust in law enforcement bodies (army, police) and religious institutions remains relatively stable.

The expectations of the majority of the Georgian population towards the political system still cannot be considered democratic. As in 2015, in 2017 almost half of the population (52%) think that “People are like children; the government should take care of them like a parent.” 36% of the population strongly agrees and 16% agree with this statement. 43% of the population agrees with the opposite statement that “The government is like an employee; the people should be the bosses who control the government” among them 28% fully agree with this statement. In 2011 and 2013, a larger share of population agreed with the statement that the government is an employee, but since 2015, the share of those who agree with the opposite statement has increased. It is interesting to look at the opinions of the Georgian-speaking population and ethnic minorities on this issue. In 2017, some 74% of ethnic minorities agreed with the statement that the government is a parent. This result is close to that of the 2013 survey. 2015 saw some change in the opinion of ethnic minorities towards more democratic opinion. In 2017, however, this trend reversed.

Much like in previous years, in 2017, being a “good citizen” for the Georgian population means, first and foremost, supporting people who are worse off than themselves (97%), keeping traditions (95%) and volunteering to do a job beneficial for society (90%).<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, while in 2009, only 48% of the population thought volunteering to be an important activity, in 2015 this indicator increased to 86% and again to 90% in 2017. The importance of volunteering for a “good citizen” is more clearly outlined among the Georgian-speaking population, though a corresponding share among ethnic minorities also shows an increase. While in 2013, 67% of ethnic minorities considered volunteering to be important for a good citizen, in 2017, this indicator reached 75%.

A large segment of the population believes that good citizens should be critical towards the government, participate in protest rallies and also be critical of the opposition. In 2017, 72% of the Georgian population believed that good citizen should be critical towards the government, compared to around one third of population (66%-68%) in 2011, 2013 and 2015. A positive change in this regard is observed only among the Georgian-speaking population. Around half of

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<sup>20</sup> However, in previous waves of survey (2009, 2011 and 2013) more than half of the population expressed trust towards the EU.

<sup>21</sup> The sum of “very important” and “more important than unimportant.”

ethnic minorities (52%) do not think it important for a good citizen to be critical of the government. While in 2009, around a third of the population (30%) thought that participation in protest rallies was an important trait of a good citizen, in 2017, more than half of the population (52%) thinks so. Such an upward trend is also seen among ethnic minorities – from 26% in 2013 to 41% in 2017. However, the share of those who do not consider participation in protest rallies an important trait of a good citizen is still larger among ethnic minorities (46%).

## Values

The European Union rests on the founding principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. The EU condemns all forms of racism and xenophobia. Much like the results of previous surveys, the results of the 2017 survey show that so far the Georgian population does not fully share these values.

In 2017, around half of the population (51%) fully agree<sup>22</sup> with the statement that human rights are a supreme value and should always be protected. A larger share of ethnic minorities (43%) also fully agrees with this statement, however, it has to be noted that this indicator was much higher in 2015 (54%).

The most stable and positive indicator is the attitude of the population towards giving bribes. Since 2011, an absolute majority of Georgia's population (over 80%) have said that giving a bribe is never justified. This indicator stood at 84% in 2015, while in 2017 it reached 90%. The Georgian-speaking population and the ethnic minorities significantly differ in this regard. In 2017, as many as 77% of ethnic minorities consider giving a bribe unjustified, which is almost identical to the 2013 indicator and is higher than the 2015 indicator (63%).

Another example of positive change is the position of the Georgian population on giving testimony to the police voluntarily if you are a witness to a crime. In 2017, almost half of the population (48%) says that it is always justified to give testimony to the police voluntarily while an additional 38% say that sometimes it is justified and sometimes it is not. In 2015, 42% of the population thought that it always justified to give testimony to the police voluntarily,<sup>23</sup> while in 2009, 2011 and 2013, around one third of the population thought the same (32%, 31% and 30%, respectively). Here too, the views of ethnic minorities are different. Similar to 2015, in 2017, 41% of ethnic minorities think that it is justified to give testimony to the police voluntarily if you are a witness to a crime, which, compared to the 2013 indicator (27%), is a notable increase.

The results of the 2017 survey show a drastic change in the position of the Georgian population as to who should own land in Georgia. Around half of the Georgian population fully agree with the opinion<sup>24</sup> that land in Georgia should be possessed only by Georgian citizens, despite how

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<sup>22</sup> Code 10, an extreme end of the 11-point scale. Another statement: "The state's interests should prevail over human rights" was on the opposite end of the scale.

<sup>23</sup> 35% thought it was not always justified.

<sup>24</sup> Code 1 of the 11-point scale.

they will use it.<sup>25</sup> This indicator has increased by almost 20% compared to 2015 (33%). A similar change is observed among the responses of ethnic minorities too: in 2015, 32% of ethnic minorities thought that land in Georgia should be possessed by Georgian citizens alone while in 2017, this indicator increased to 43%. Clearly, xenophobic views are widely spread among ethnic minorities too and seemingly, they do not want foreigners to possess “their” land. However, collection answers of two codes of the answer scale used in this question (code ‘0’ – full agreement and code ‘1’ very strong agreement) shows that a similar view is shared by 66% of the Georgian speaking population and 49% of ethnic minorities.

By settlement type, a difference in attitudes is seen between the population of the capital, urban and rural settlements. The majority of the rural population (66%) believes that land in Georgia should be possessed by Georgian citizens alone. This view is fully shared by 41% of the population of the capital and half of the population of other urban settlements.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, the population still perceives the possession of land by foreign citizens as a threat.

Much like in previous years, attitudes toward statements on the sexual behavior and liberty of women are overly conservative in 2017. A vast majority of the population (71%) thinks it is never justified for a woman to have a sexual relationship before marriage. This position is tougher among the ethnic minorities (81%). More than half of the population (56%) thinks it is never justified for a woman to give birth to a child without being married. The corresponding share among the ethnic minorities is 83%. It is worth noting that there is no notable difference in positions of women and men about a woman having a sexual relationship before marriage or giving birth to a child without being married. Attitudes traditionally differ when it comes to men. The share of those who think it is never justified for a man to have a sexual relationship before marriage ranges between 33% and 39% since 2011. In 2017, this indicator is at 38% as compared to 20% who think that it is always justified for a man to have a sexual relationship before marriage. Representatives of ethnic minorities are more conservative in the case of men too. The majority (59%) says that it is never justified for a man to have a sexual relationship before marriage. At the same time, there is a clear cut trend that the younger a person the more liberal his/her attitude will be towards these issues. For example, 80% of elderly people (56+) think it is never justified for a woman to have a sexual relationship before marriage while a corresponding share among younger persons (aged between 18 and 35) is 63%. A similar trend is observed in regard with justification of birth out of wedlock and a man’s sexual relationship before marriage.

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<sup>25</sup> The opposite statement was: “In Georgia the land should be possessed by those who will use it better despite their citizenships.”

<sup>26</sup> Here as well an extreme end of 11-point scale is used - code 0.

## Appendix 1. Survey Methodology

This survey of the Georgian population's knowledge of and attitudes towards the European Union was conducted within the framework of the European Integration program of the Europe Foundation between 9 and 31 May, 2017. Similar surveys were conducted in 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015;<sup>27</sup> all five survey waves were conducted by CRRC-Georgia.

The sample design of the 2017 survey was similar to that used in the 2013 and 2015 surveys. Primary sampling units were voting precincts. Voting precincts in the Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kakheti regions with at least 40% of registered voters being ethnic minorities<sup>28</sup> were considered as precincts compactly populated by ethnic minorities.<sup>29</sup> A total of 969 respondents<sup>30</sup> were interviewed in those precincts, and the interviews were conducted in the native languages of the respondents.<sup>31</sup>

A total of 2,258 respondents were interviewed countrywide in 2017, in four strata:<sup>32</sup> the above described ethnic minority stratum and three strata of the Georgian-speaking population: the capital, other urban settlements, and rural settlements.<sup>33</sup> Primary sampling units were randomly selected in each stratum, proportional to the population size. Households were selected using random route sampling, while the respondents in each sampled household were selected using the Kish Table.<sup>34</sup> If the first interview attempt was not successful, the interviewers would return for a second, and, if necessary, for a third time before recording a non-response. The repeated visits were necessary to minimize sampling bias and avoid interviewing representatives of the demographic groups that spend more time at home (pensioners, the unemployed and so on).

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<sup>27</sup> For the information about the methodology of previous waves of surveys, see 2013 and 2015 reports at: [http://www.epfound.ge/files/eu\\_survey\\_report\\_2013\\_final\\_geo.pdf](http://www.epfound.ge/files/eu_survey_report_2013_final_geo.pdf) and [http://www.epfound.ge/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/eu\\_attitudes\\_survey\\_ge\\_nov\\_24\\_1.pdf](http://www.epfound.ge/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/eu_attitudes_survey_ge_nov_24_1.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Mainly ethnic Azerbaijanis and ethnic Armenians.

<sup>29</sup> Precincts of Azerbaijani speakers and Armenian speakers, depending on representatives of which ethnic groups prevailed in a precinct.

<sup>30</sup> Of these, 515 Azerbaijani-speaking precincts and 454 – Armenian-speaking precincts.

<sup>31</sup> 508 interviews were conducted in Azerbaijani, 423 in Armenian and 38 in Georgian (24 respondents interviewed in this stratum happened to be ethnic Georgians). In the beginning of the interviews, each respondent chose its language.

<sup>32</sup> The surveys conducted in 2013 and 2015 among ethnic minorities did not classify them further by their ethnic belonging. In 2017, the number of interviews in this stratum increased to allow for the study of attitudes of Azerbaijanis and Armenians. To maintain comparability, this report presents opinions of ethnic minorities in a combined form.

<sup>33</sup> In these three strata (capital, other urban settlements and rural settlements), all interviews were conducted in Georgian. It should be noted that not all respondents interviewed in these three strata were ethnic Georgians: apart from ethnic Georgians, 21 ethnic Armenians, four Azerbaijanis, three Russians and four respondents of other ethnicities were interviewed in the capital; three Armenians, three Russians and five representatives of other ethnicities were interviewed in other urban settlements; one Azerbaijani, four Russians and six representatives of other ethnicities were interviewed in rural settlements. Through the report, these groups are referred to as “Georgian-speaking” strata, since all people in these strata chose to be interviewed in Georgian

<sup>34</sup> Kish, Leslie (1949), "A Procedure for Objective Respondent Selection within the Household," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 44 (247): 380–387.

Face-to-face computer assisted interviews (CATI) were conducted using tablet computers. The average non-response was 39%: 66% in Tbilisi, 34% in the other urban settlements, 26% in the rural settlements, 18% in the Azerbaijani stratum and 27% in the Armenian stratum.

Similarly to the previous waves of the survey, the results of the survey are representative for adults (18 years old and older) living in Georgia, excluding the population living in occupied territories and on military bases. The results presented in this report are based on weighted data. The average margin of error is +/-2.7%.

## Appendix 2. Ethnic Minorities

Similar to the 2013 and 2015 surveys, the 2017 survey specifically studied the views of representatives of Georgia's ethnic minorities about the EU. Based on the weighted data, the share of ethnic minorities was 10% in 2013, 9% in 2015 and 10% in 2017. In 2017, this stratum was composed of 71% of ethnic Azerbaijanis living in Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions and 25% of ethnic Armenians living in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions.<sup>35</sup> Azerbaijanis and Armenians are the largest ethnic minority groups in Georgia, often residing compactly.<sup>36</sup>

Representatives of these ethnic minority groups are either poorly or not at all integrated into Georgian society. One of main reasons for this is a lack of knowledge of the Georgian language: according to their own assessments, 38% of ethnic minorities report having no basic knowledge of Georgian, while just 6% report speaking Georgian well. As regards the knowledge of Russian, 10% of ethnic minorities think that they speak Russian well (the respective share of Georgian-speakers is 23%). 86% of ethnic minorities report not knowing English, compared to 39% of Georgians who have at least some knowledge of English. This language barrier naturally makes communication between minority and majority communities difficult as well as the receipt of information from Georgian-language media outlets by ethnic minorities.

Apart from linguistic differences, another important difference between minority and majority communities is that of religious faith. The overwhelming majority of Georgian speakers (89%) are Orthodox Christian, while 20% of minorities follow the Armenian Apostolic Church and 70% are Muslim.

Compared to Georgian speakers, the share of ethnic minorities with higher education is much lower. 12% of Georgian speakers have a bachelor's degree and 22% have a master's degree. Corresponding figures are 170% and 1% for minorities. 14% of minorities did not complete secondary education, compared to 4% of Georgians.

27% of Georgian speakers report having full-time or part-time jobs (including seasonal employment) and an additional 12% are self-employed. Corresponding figures are 14% and 18% for ethnic minorities. There are more housewives among ethnic minorities (27%, compared to 12% among Georgian speakers) while the share of pensioners is virtually equal (20% in case of Georgian speakers and 18% in case of ethnic minorities).

According to 56% of ethnic minorities, selling agricultural produce is one of the sources of income for their families. The respective share is only 24% in case of Georgian speakers. Only 23% of ethnic minorities report a salary of a family member being one of the sources of their family income, compared to 55% of Georgian speakers.

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<sup>35</sup> The remaining 4% of this group were representatives of other ethnicities.

<sup>36</sup> Representatives of other ethnic minorities living in Georgia (for example, Russians, Ossetians, Jews) mainly reside among Georgians and are relatively better integrated. Their views were not studied specifically within this survey.

In spite of these differences, representatives of these two groups evaluate the economic situation of their families in very similar ways. 44% of Georgian speakers and 45% of minorities say their income is hardly sufficient for their families. At the same time, 67% of Georgian speakers and 70% of minorities evaluate the economic statuses of their families as being in the middle. Using a hypothetical 10-step “ladder” reflecting the economic situation of Georgia’s families, with 1<sup>st</sup> step corresponding to the lowest economic status and 10<sup>th</sup> – to the highest, Georgian speakers and minorities similarly rate the current economic situation of their families – respectively, 4.07 and 4.33.