

interview

Interview with H.E. Mrs. Tamar Beruchashvili, Ambassador of Georgia in Romania: "Romania is a staunch supporter of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration agenda that bears even greater significance in the current turbulent times"

The recent appointment of H.E. Mrs. Tamar Beruchashvili as Ambassador of Georgia to Romania comes at a time of intensified bilateral relations between our countries, especially in the context of the signing of the Joint Declaration for establishing a Strategic Partnership, in October 2022. Considering the vast experience of Her Excellency in working for the European integration of Georgia, the EIR Newsletter's team kindly asked her to share with our readers insights regarding Georgia's preparations on this matter and the potential support Romania can provide in fulfilling its European aspirations.

How do you assess Georgia - Romania relations considering the current regional evolutions? What to expect in the near future as the two countries have embarked on the road toward a Strategic Partnership?

I am deeply honoured to be the first Georgian woman Ambassador to Romania and delighted about the new opportunities created by the historic Declaration on Strategic Partnership, which will turn a new page in our bilateral relations. During my tenure, I aim to translate the opportunities highlighted in this Declaration into concrete measures for the benefit of our countries and people.

Georgia and Romania enjoy a centuries-old friendship and good-neighbourly relations based on common traditions, values, interest and aspirations. Romania is a staunch supporter of Georgia's sovereignty and... D. \supseteq



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opinion

Employment and social policy during the Swedish Presidency

The section on social issues of the <u>programme of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU</u> is structured on two main directions: employment and social policy, and health care.

The work programme of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union mentions the context within which it takes over the position: following a major global health crisis, during a war on the Eastern borders of the Union, and substantial increase in prices. These three elements have significant effects on the European societies, stressing once again that economic development requires new skills in the labour market and lifelong learning capacities. The ability to work is considered fundamental to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion, and an active population well-integrated on the labour market can support public spending to ensure the well-being for as many citizens as possible.

In regard to social policy and employment, the Swedish Presidency intends to propose amendments and revisions to several directives relating to the labour market, namely the safety and protection of workers. Thus, to improve working conditions, support will be given to the proposal of the Parliament and the Council to revise the Directive on the protection from ... D. 4

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Interview with H.E. Mrs. Tamar Beruchashvili, Ambassador of Georgia in Romania

[continued from page 1] territorial integrity, as well as of our Euro-Atlantic integration agenda that bears an even greater significance in the current turbulent times.

Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine has dramatically changed the security situation in the wider Black Sea region. Currently, the region has moved into the centre of the European and international focus, as the ongoing war threatens not only the European security architecture, but it also creates serious political and economic implications for the stability of the entire world.

It is also important to remember that the present developments represent a continuation of the well-known pattern. Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 was the first major military intervention against a sovereign and independent country since the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was followed by subsequent occupation of Georgian regions - Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia.

Since then, following the years of strategic ambiguity, the war in Ukraine led to a major shift in the perception of the Black Sea region and its role for the Euro-Atlantic security and stability of the energy and food supply.

In the new reality, the Strategic Partnership established by the Joint Declaration signed by the Georgian and Romanian Presidents in October 2022 laid a solid groundwork for the comprehensive expansion of our cooperation in all areas, opening new geopolitical and geoeconomic opportunities for connectivity, energy security and transportation networks.

Furthermore, the conclusion of the Agreement on a strategic partnership in the field of green energy development and transmission between the Governments of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania and Hungary in Bucharest, on 17 December 2022, is the first tangible and promising result of our bilateral Strategic Partnership. This project will connect both sides of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea region, focusing on digital communication and transport of energy. The implementation of this initiative will contribute to the EU's energy security and to the sustainable development of the countries in the region. Georgia and Romania, as strategic partners and neighbours on the Black Sea, have a special role to play in the successful implementation of this project.

In addition, our countries are leading partners for the development of the Black Sea-Caspian Sea freight corridor (the Middle corridor), as well as a regular ferry line on the Black Sea between the ports of Constanța and Batumi. These projects would not only connect our countries, but also improve connectivity between the EU and Central Asia for promoting trade, business relations and tourism. Georgia also relies on Romania, as the host country of this year's Three Seas Initiative (3SI) Summit, to seek ways of promoting Georgia's institutional engagement in this Initiative, which, on the one hand, reflects the increased importance of the Black Sea and, on the other, bears additional value for an enhanced connectivity with the EU.

On 23 June 2022, the European Council recognised the European Perspective for Georgia after its membership application. What is the status of Georgia's internal reform process of addressing the priorities mentioned in the European Commission's opinion on the membership application?

Since regaining its independence, Georgia has sought to become a member of the European Union, a unique project of peace, stability, democracy and prosperity. The Georgian government and the people of Georgia are doing their best to achieve this goal. It is our civilizational choice that is supported by 83% of our population and the majority of the political parties. Full integration into the EU and NATO is the goal enshrined in the Constitution of Georgia. Current efforts are directed towards the day when Georgia will eventually secure its place in the European family.

In this regard, 2022 has been a breakthrough year. On 23 June 2022, the European Council made a truly historic decision by declaring that the future of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia and their citizens lies within the European Union. It also granted the candidate status to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova and reconfirmed a readiness to grant candidate status to Georgia.

The Georgian government is highly committed to the comprehensive reform agenda, including timely and effective implementation of the 12 priorities identified by the Council. The EU candidate status is our next milestone. Shortly after the Council's decision, a concrete Action Plan was elaborated with specific deadlines, and the Speaker of Parliament launched an inclusive process for bringing together members of different political groups, opposition parties, the Government and the civil society. However, regrettably, some opposition parties chose to not take part in it.

Despite all challenges, a significant progress has been made. Among others, the electoral reform was adopted with wide multi-party support (96 votes out of 150); legislative changes were agreed upon for establishment of the Anti-Corruption Bureau, which is scheduled to be fully operational in April; a package of draft laws was adopted to ensure that the Georgian courts proactively consider the ECHR judgments; the Public Defender was elected by almost two thirds of the members of the Parliament, including both representatives of 5 parties and 11 independent members; the Action Plan 2022-2024 for the fight against organised crime was adopted and is currently under implementation; the draft Law on de-oligarchisation was adopted on the second reading (the final adoption is planned once the legal opinions of Venice Commission and OSCE-ODIHR are rendered); a gender equality concept and women economic empowerment strategy were adopted, while gender quotas were extended until the 2032 parliamentary elections.

The European Commission reports published this February on the alignment of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and

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Georgia with the EU acquis clearly demonstrated that Georgia continues to be the front-runner in implementing reforms and is advancing in many priority areas. The progress achieved by Georgia is undeniable and the Georgian citizens expect that the EU will assess our efforts on a merit-based approach and grant candidate status to Georgia by the end of the 2023. It will be also a strategic decision for the EU, and a strong motivation for Georgia to speed up the reform agenda for further advancement on European integration path together with other candidate countries.

What are Georgia's expectations regarding Romania's assistance during the European negotiation process? What are the priorities already established by the two governments and how can the other societal actors get involved?

We are well aware that granting the candidate status to Georgia, despite its political importance, is only the beginning of an intensive, demanding, time-consuming and technically challenging accession process. European integration also implies various complex structural reforms, which are important for institutional modernisation and to strengthen democracy. We believe that "Romania is Georgia's reliable partner in this process", as President Klaus Iohannis recently said. Sharing lessons learned and best practices acquired during Romania's EU accession, including the adoption, implementation and enforcement of the EU acquis are important priorities of our bilateral cooperation agenda. This process will also include sharing the Romanian experience on improving the Parliamentary oversight and strengthening the cross-party consensus on key priorities of the European integration, as highlighted in the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Committee on European Affairs of the Senate of Romania and the EU Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia in Bucharest, on 27 February 2023.

In addition, it is very important to establish regular bilateral exchange formats at various levels of the foreign affairs and sectoral ministries to explore additional avenues for gradual political and economic integration into the EU Single Market, as well as to foster the legal and sectoral convergence with the EU acquis. The Georgian Embassy in Bucharest will facilitate collaborations between relevant think-tanks in Georgia and partners in Romania with expertise in the EU accession process. In this regard, we aim to bring together the European Institute of Romania (EIR) and the Information Centre on NATO and EU of Georgia for experience-sharing, particularly on issues of strategic communication during the EU accession process.

The Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Bogdan Aurescu, proposed to the other European ministers a reflection process regarding the future of the Eastern Partnership. What are your views on the future perspectives of this format and how can Romania better support this policy?

The Eastern Partnership has played a key role in bringing Georgia and other partners even closer to the EU, based on their individual aspirations and interests. While our bilateral track with the EU is now proceeding within the Enlargement policy, which has always been a priority for us, we remain committed to the Eastern Partnership initiative and its potential to serve the needs of our region based on an individual approach. The framework needs to be adapted to the new regional realities and based on the consensus among the EU member states and the Eastern partners, with the aim of maintaining and revitalising this key regional cooperation format. The principle of differentiation is acquiring a new significance and might serve as a main accelerator of this policy framework. In this regard, we have to make the best use of the Eastern Partnership by investing in tailor-made, practical cooperation in fields of mutual interest, including by enhancing connectivity and implementing the high-profile flagship projects to foster closer economic integration of committed and capable partners. A good example of this approach is the EU-backed Black Sea submarine electricity cable project, a partnership developed between Georgia, Romania, Azerbaijan and Hungary. From the Georgian perspective, investing in the Black Sea connectivity should be a priority to build the common resilience and enhance partnership with the EU within the framework of Global Gateway.

We believe that the future vision for the Eastern Partnership cannot be separated from the vision of the EU's future itself. The Russian occupation of 20% of Georgia's sovereign territory and the continued military build-up as a result of the 2008 invasion seriously undermines the wider Europe's security and requires serious attention of the international community. In addition, Russia's aggression against Ukraine made it clear once again that European security cannot be achieved without peace and security in its Eastern neighbourhood. Therefore, strengthened security cooperation in the Eastern Partnership region should be another key priority, whether by linking it with the European Peace Facility or strengthened cooperation within the CSDP, as well as elaborating new bilateral or sub-regional cooperation frameworks. With regards to the specific proposal of Minister Aurescu, we welcome Romania's efforts to revitalise the Eastern Partnership and to bring the issue of resolution of the so called "protracted conflicts" to the EU's active attention and engagement.

Biography:

H.E. Mrs. Tamar Beruchashvili, Ambassador of Georgia to Romania, has more than 25 years in public service on different positions, which gave her the unique opportunity to be part of the historic transformation of her country as well as building new relations of independent Georgia. All her career since the restoration of independence of Georgia has been dedicated to the development of international relations and advancement of the European integration agenda. She served in various high positions including Minister of Foreign Affairs (2014-2015), State Minister of European Integration (2004) and Minister of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations (1998-2000). Ambassador Beruchashvili also worked as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and was the first Deputy Minister of European and Euro-Atlantic Integration. She served as Ambassador to UK and Permanent Representative of Georgia to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) between 2016-2021. Currently, she is greatly honoured to be the first Georgian woman Ambassador to Romania. Ambassador Beruchashvili is a strong believer in leading by example and committed to women's leadership and empowerment in all domains. H.E. Mrs. Beruchashvili also has a prolific academic career, having lectured at several universities of Georgia since 2000.

Employment and social policy during the Swedish Presidency

[continued from page 1] the risks related to exposure to asbestos, to initiate the process of amending the Chemical Agents Directive, and to advance the proposal of the European Commission from December 2021 on improving working conditions in platform work.

Other initiatives in this area concern: the presentation of an update on "progress on the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021-2027", as well as a <u>Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on stepping up social dialogue</u>. Thus, the Presidency supports the strengthening of social dialogue between labour market participants, which can lead to its more efficient functioning.



Copyright: Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Increasing gender equality is another goal of the Presidency, in line with equality and non-discrimination, fundamental values of the EU, and in this respect the aim is to monitor <u>paragraph 202 of the Beijing Platform for Action</u> on the concept of "gender mainstreaming", whereby governments and other relevant actors aim to promote the gender perspective in all public policies, and analyse the effects of decisions taken in the public space on women and men.

The Presidency supports the advancement of the proposal for a <u>Directive on equality bodies</u>, as well as trilogues¹ on the proposal for <u>a directive on mandatory transparency measures regarding payment of work</u>, together with negotiations within the <u>Council on the proposal for an anti-discrimination directive</u>.

At the same time, the Presidency has proposed to modernise and revise the regulations on <u>the coordination of social security systems</u>. In view of the problems caused by the health crisis and the accelerated ageing of the population of the European Union², the Swedish Presidency aims to further develop <u>the strategy for health and social assistance</u> and highlight the problems of independent living for older people.

Another social dimension pursued by the Presidency is related to strengthening the rights of the child, persons with disabilities and the homeless. Initiatives and actions taken in this regard include: the EU Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities (2021-2030), as well as the initiative to organise a conference to exchange best practices between the European institutions, member states and civil society on social inclusion and access to adequate housing.

Regarding the medical field, the Swedish Presidency aims to engage in the negotiations on the Regulation for the European Health Data Space, the proposal for a regulation on quality and safety standards for substances of human origin intended for human application and repealing and the implementation of the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. Efforts are also being made to coordinate the EU's position within the World Health Organisation on an international treaty on pandemic prevention and preparedness, and further amendments to the International Health Regulations. In addition to these activities, Sweden also attaches particular importance to the risks to public health policy stemming from increasing loneliness, a phenomenon which has doubled in the EU since the outbreak of the pandemic.

All these initiatives and actions supported in the context of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU reinforce the innovative and extremely important role of the European Union globally regarding the labour market, social protection and the health sector.

Mihaela-Adriana Pădureanu European Studies Unit

¹ "In the context of the European Union's ordinary legislative procedure, a trilogue is an informal interinstitutional negotiation bringing together representatives of the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission. The aim of a trilogue is to reach a provisional agreement on a legislative proposal that is acceptable to both the Parliament and the Council, the co-legislators. This provisional agreement must then be adopted by each of those institutions' formal procedures." Eur-Lex, Trilogue, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/trilogue.html (27.03.2023).

² For example, in 1960, EU residents made up 13.5% of the world's population, while in 2018 they accounted for 6.9% and are expected to reach around 4% by 2070. See: European Parliament, 7 July 2021 - Strasbourg, "Resolution on an old continent growing older - possibilities and challenges related to ageing policy post-2020" (P9_TA(2021)0347), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0347_EN.html; European Commission, "Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the impact of demographic change" (COM/2020/241 final), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0241 (27.03.2023).

AFTIPA: Anti-Fraud Training Initiative for Public Administration

As part of its mission to provide expertise in the European affairs, the European Institute of Romania (EIR) has been organising, for over 15 years, training programmes for the public administration, the business environment, social partners and civil society.

The most recent analysis of public administration training needs, conducted by EIR, indicated the growing demand for training programs



Funded by the European Union

in the field of preventing and combating fraud and corruption (83% of respondents) and public acquisition (78% of respondents), especially among the institutions that manage European funds.

Given the fact that the transparency of public spending has been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and considering that the post-pandemic recovery fund, which is part of the EU's largest budget to date, will be even more susceptible to fraud and corruption, there is a need for constant involvement of all the society representatives, each with its clear role and responsibilities in the fight against these phenomena.

In this context, the project AFTIPA: Anti-Fraud Training Initiative for Public Administration was initiated by the EIR and financed by the European Commission, through the Union Anti-Fraud Programme (EUAF), the call dedicated to trainings, conferences, staff exchanges and studies (TRAI).

The project aims to develop a package of 3 anti-fraud courses, targeting topics related to preventing and combating fraud and corruption; public procurement; whistleblowing in the public institutions, seeking to answer the most important questions related to EU funds: the types of purchases allowed from these funds, individual actions to prevent or combat fraudulent acts, respectively reporting acts already committed and protective measures for those who draw attention to report these actions.

The training program will be available in the second semester of 2023, free of charge. Courses will be conducted on two dimensions: in physical format, in Bucharest, intended for professionals from the central public administration, as well as in the form of e-learning courses, held on a dynamic learning platform and completed at each participant's pace, for the local public administration personnel.

Until September 2024, the project aims to train at least 675 professionals working in public procurement departments or control bodies within ministries and other public administration institutions, both at central and local levels, as well as other categories of staff involved in attracting and managing non-reimbursable European funds.

These are the structures with the ability to identify the fraud intention, as well as responsibilities in verifying the legality, the completeness of the provisions and the correct use of financial and material resources related to the activities carried out within projects and investments. For these reasons, we think it is essential that the working personnel of these structures benefits from quality training opportunities developed by the EIR through the AFTIPA project.

Raluca Popescu Training and Projects Unit

translations ____

ECHR case-law in Romanian

We have the pleasure and honour to inform you that, in March 2023, the European Institute of Romania (EIR) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR/The Court) signed a Memorandum of agreement on the development of a Romanian HUDOC user interface.

The <u>HUDOC database</u> contains the case-law of the ECHR and it is one of the main instruments that facilitate the general public's access to the ECHR case-law (judgements, decisions, advisory opinions, summaries etc.). In addition to the official languages of the Court (English and French), translations into the languages of the Member States are also published in this database. Moreover, the HUDOC interface, apart from English and French, is currently also available in Bulgarian, Georgian, Russian, Spanish, Turkish and Ukrainian.

The Translation Coordination Unit of the EIR has started the translation into Romanian of certain files needed to develop the HUDOC interface. Furthermore, all judgements and verdicts that are already translated by the EIR into Romanian will later be uploaded to HUDOC, which will lead to a better knowledge of ECHR case-law. Moreover, in 2023 we plan to translate the judgements selected by the Court as relevant for 2022 (see https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Cases_list_2022_ENG.pdf).

In the first quarter of this year, the Romanian translation of two guides was published: <u>EU law in the Court's case-law</u> and the <u>rights of LGBTI persons</u>. This year we plan to finalise the Romanian language version of two more guides: the one on the prohibition of torture and the one about the social rights. Thus, all 36 guides published on the <u>ECHR-KS platform</u> will also be available in Romanian.

Likewise, in the first quarter of this year, two more factsheets were translated into Romanian, so that over 70 factsheets are currently available in Romanian on the <u>EIR website</u>.

Additionally to the materials of the Court, the Translation Coordination Unit of EIR has published two Bulletins of the

translations

Court's case-law at http://ier.gov.ro/publication-category/coordonare-traduceri/.

In the <u>Bulletin of the Court's case-law - Judgments delivered against Romania between 1 October - 31 December 2022</u>, 23 judgments and 76 decisions declared inadmissible or struck out by the Court in the last quarter of 2022 are presented, the most important of them being analysed in detail.

The <u>Bulletin of the Court's case-law - Judgments and decisions delivered against Romania in 2022</u> presents, in the first part, the statistics on the applications pending before the Court on 31 December 2022, the judgements delivered against Romania between 1994 and 2022, as well as details of the 81 judgements delivered in 2022. The second part presents the 33 most important judgements and inadmissibility verdicts delivered in 2022.

For a better understanding of the Bulletins of the ECHR case-law, the Court's conclusions, article or articles violated are mentioned for each case. It also includes references to the full French or English text published on the Court's website, as well as to the Romanian translation, where available, published on the website of the EIR.

In order to be up to date with the translations of the Court's case-law, we invite you to visit the <u>Human rights</u> section on the EIR site.

Laura Mihăilescu Translation Coordination Unit

events

Communication activities in the field of European Affairs

In the first quarter of 2023, the European Institute of Romania (EIR) organised five events aimed at promoting the research results of the <u>Strategy and Policy Studies SPOS 2022</u>, as well as of other projects, and also to continue the series *European News in the Spotlight*.

The first event of the *Dialogues@EIR* series concerned youth's attitudes and opinions regarding climate changes, as well as public policies and specific recommendations. The debate showed that, at a personal level, for the young people in Romania, climate change is less important than for the EU average, considering that they prioritise other subjects, such as the economic situation. To increase the youth's resilience regarding climate change it is essential to create public participation frameworks, which meet the needs and aspirations of young people coming from various environments.





The <u>second event</u> highlighted potential solutions to <u>ensure food security in Romania</u>, as well as to stimulate the quality of production, in the context of the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the remaining period from the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027. The discussions showed that food security requires that CAP should capitalise on the national elements, because fractures may arise when external factors interfere. The states need to adopt specific measures in their trade policy to maintain their populations' access to food. From Romania's perspective, it is necessary to ensure sustainability in relation to European policy, while also focusing on adopting balanced decisions in economic policy when supporting farms.

The <u>third event</u> from this series focused on the <u>interconnectivity in the European Union</u> (EU), aiming towards identifying the opportunities and challenges for the future of Romania's transport policies in the context of the EU twin transition (digital and green). The main recommendation of the debate was to align the national objectives to the main EU goal, specifically the transition from the vehicles with internal combustion engines to less/zero polluting vehicles (through electrification, alternative fuels - gas, hydrogen) and preparing their supply infrastructure.





At the end of 2022, EIR launched a <u>collective report on consolidating the EU - African Union partnership</u>. With the aim of facilitating the exchange of opinions between the African and Romanian experts who contributed to the report, EIR organised a <u>roundtable</u> which underscored the need to understand the differences of development, culture, infrastructure, education and literacy from Africa for designing long-term collaboration strategies. The participants expressed their availability to support mutually beneficial academic activities and also to collaborate in common projects in order to bring the regional cooperation closer to its potential.

Within the series *European News in the Spotlight*, the <u>event</u> marking the Swedish Presidency of the EU Council, organised by EIR in partnership with the Romanian Embassy in Sweden, addressed competitiveness in the context of the twin digital and green transition, as well as the 30 year anniversary since the creation of the Single Market. The European guest speakers presented recommendations on increasing the EU international competitiveness in terms of goods and services in key fields as the energy and digital transformation, such as: deepening the integration process, horizontal approaches, increasing technology productivity. In addition, supply chains are important on the short and medium term in the process of increasing productivity.



Information on future events, which will be organised by EIR and its partners, will be available on <u>the dedicated section</u> <u>of the official website</u>, as well as on our social media channels (<u>Facebook</u> and <u>LinkedIn</u>).

Irina Grosu European Studies Unit

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