

Stability and prosperity through EU-Georgia association: my vision for Georgia

As the European Union's Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy my main priorities towards Georgia are clear: to enhance EU-Georgia bilateral relations; to help consolidate the ongoing reform process in Georgia; and to bring this important partner country closer to the EU. Enhanced relations between the EU and Georgia are key to strengthening Georgia's democracy, securing its long term stability, building prosperity and eradicating poverty.

Georgia is an important partner country within the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), in addition to being an important energy transit country for the EU. It has made in recent years important efforts towards democratisation, combating corruption and economic development. Despite the conflict with Russia in August 2008, Georgia maintained its 'European Way' and its ambitions to create a politically and economically stable country. My aim is now to encourage the acceleration of the reform efforts in Georgia so that all citizens of Georgia draw concrete benefits from the process of getting closer to the EU, fully enjoying fundamental freedoms, human rights, economic growth and prosperity.

The Eastern Partnership offers the possibility for even further political association and economic integration between EU and Georgia. The first and most important pre-condition for Georgia is to make an irreversible leap towards consolidating its young democracy. This would allow us to conclude an Association Agreement, including the perspective of establishing a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) that would provide business with access to the over 500 million people single market of the EU.

The European Union has proved a reliable partner for neighbours in need. We had a swift response to the Georgian crisis in 2008, in particular by brokering the ceasefire agreements. The EU has been providing political, technical and also substantial financial assistance in the aftermath of the war in order to address the needs of the internally displaced people and to maintain macro-economic stability in Georgia. While bringing Georgia closer to the EU, we are continuing our efforts for confidence building and conflict resolution in this region.

The Europe I believe in is built on shared values: a robust democracy, where the rule of law prevails and people can freely enjoy their fundamental rights; and a free economy that provides opportunities for all. These are conditions that brought the EU lasting peace and stability; I believe these are conditions that could bring Georgia the same benefits. It is a win-win situation, in which stability in this part of the world is Europe's stability too.

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