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## “Georgia's Path to Euro-Integration: The Unnecessary Crisis”

On April 23, 2021, the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) held an online discussion on “Euro-Integration: The Unnecessary Crisis”. A panel of speakers was composed by: **Markéta Gregorová**, Member of the European Parliament, the Greens/European Free Alliance, Czech Republic; **Natalie Sabanadze**, Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium and Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Head of Georgian Mission to the EU, 2013-2021; **Steven Blockmans**, Research Director, CEPS; **Franziska Smolnik**, Deputy Head, Eastern Europe and Eurasia Division, German Institute for International and Security Affairs. The discussion was moderated by Ms. **Teona Lavrelashvili**, project manager of the European Party Monitor and a Doctoral Researcher at KU Leuven. The event was opened by the chairperson of GYLA – **Nika Simonishvili**.

The event hosted by GYLA was attended by representatives of civil society, diplomatic corps in Georgia, as well as international organizations. Attendees also had the opportunity to ask questions to the speakers.

Georgian political crisis that emerged after the 2020 parliamentary elections not only caused the polarization of the society but also created significant challenges in Georgia-EU relations. Despite the efforts of the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and his special envoy, Christian Danielsson, at the time being no agreement was reached between the parties to the crisis. Notably, in light of these developments, the MEPs addressed the matter of EU financial assistance to Georgia, including both a suspension of further disbursements of and an increase in conditionality linked to EU Macro-Financial Assistance and budget support programs.

# საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



The panelists discussed the Georgian-EU relations in the light of the current political crisis. They stressed that this process has significantly hampered Georgia's development and progress towards Europe. □

During her speech, **Markéta Gregorová**, MEP, noted that according to the document proposed by European Council President Michele personal envoy Christian Danielsson, reforms are significant to eliminate the current politicization of justice, corruption, electoral challenges, and, at the same time, improve the effective functioning of democratic institutions. **Natalie Sabanadze** singled out several problems that emerged as a result of the political crisis: the polarization of political forces, the lack of national pressure mechanism to reach an agreement, the advancement of the interests of specific parties over the interests of the state and its foreign policy. She welcomed the signatures of political parties on the mediated document and the involvement of the EU in resolving the crisis. Another panelist, **Steven Blockmans** outlined that Georgia's partnership with the European Union would significantly contribute to its economic progress. In addition, he noted that Georgia had the opportunity to effectively implement its commitments to the European Union and expressed hope that the planned reforms would be fulfilled soon, after which Georgia would return to the path of European integration. According to **Franziska Smolnik**, the reforms carried out in the country would be beneficial not only for Georgia and its citizens but also for the European Union. She also pointed out that it was important for the EU to clearly set out a strategic vision for the South Caucasus region so that the countries of that region would have proper expectations.

The participants also discussed the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement between the EU and Georgia. They discussed Georgia's progress with regards to these documents and assessed prospects of the country for EU membership.

To access the recording of the discussion, follow the link: <https://bit.ly/2Plx3lY>.