



GRASS Disinfo Brief

MONITORING PERIOD:

November 7-13

GRASS
REFORMANDA



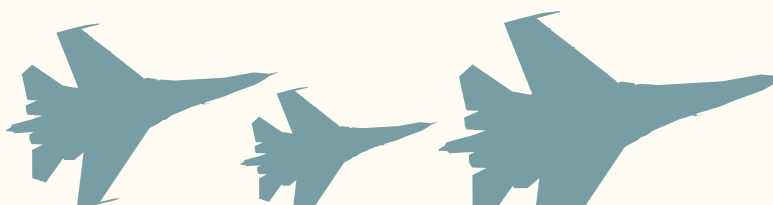


- **European Commission recommended that European Council grant Georgia candidate status**
- **Wave of anti-Western disinformation and propaganda targets EU candidate status**
- **As Prime Minister Gharibashvili and President Zourabichvili attend the Paris Peace Forum, GD continues attacks on the President**
- **Russian disinformation prompts a full-scale search for non-existent Georgian saboteurs in occupied Abkhazia**
- **After the murder of Tamaz Ginturi by Russian occupying forces, pro-Russian Propaganda underlines importance of aligning with Russia**

European Commission recommended that European Council grant Georgia candidate status

On November 8th, President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen and the European Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi, presented the report on EU enlargement, where they issued a recommendation to the European Council to grant Georgia candidate status. The European Council will announce its final decision in December.

“This is really a huge step for Georgia, and it also emphasizes the impressive and very unequivocal position of the majority of the population of Georgia to become members of the European Union”, Ursula von der Leyen [noted](#). While [underlining](#) that the Commission acknowledges a number of positive steps taken by the government, further progress is needed on the 12 priorities identified last year. “The list of tasks is clear. Your commitment and determination will help to fulfil the remaining steps”, Olivér Várhelyi [tweeted](#) after a telephone call with the Georgian Foreign Minister, Ilia Darchiashvili. “The Georgian people have shown their unshaken commitment to European values many times. The EU's door is open. We will continue supporting Georgia on its EU path”, Josep Borrell [tweeted](#). For his part, the EU



Ambassador to Georgia, Pawel Herczynski, congratulated Georgia and [stated](#) that action is needed on all the steps identified by the Commission. Additionally, the EU Ambassador highlighted that out of the nine steps issued by the Commission, the fight against disinformation is the first one. [According](#) to the Ambassador, while most disinformation and propaganda narratives are external, many unusual conspiracy theories and propaganda narratives are repeated and reinforced in Georgia.

- Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili congratulated the Georgian people, calling it a historic day for Georgia and the European Commission. [According](#) to the Prime Minister, the period leading up to the Commission's decision was quite difficult because the government, the Parliament and the ruling party put much effort into reaching this achievement. The Prime Minister also underscored the critical role that the US played in the Commission's decision and thanked the US National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, for his efforts. Additionally, Gharibashvili stated that the Commission's noble decision "belongs to the people, which our government represents". In a different statement, Gharibashvili [emphasised](#) that the "radical opposition" has done nothing to help Georgia on its path towards EU integration, and the Georgian Dream government is the only power that has made viable progress in this regard. Moreover, the candidate status was granted because of the government's efforts and results, which the Georgian people elected. Therefore, speculations that the candidate status was solely granted because of the Georgian people's will are exacerbated and incorrect.
- Chairperson of the Georgian Dream, Irakli Kobakhidze, [stated](#) that Georgia overcame many difficulties in the past 20 months, including attempts at sabotaging the process and inciting a revolution. According to him, the European Council's decision in December will de-radicalise political processes in Georgia. The Chairperson underlined that the European Commission's decision is the merit of the Georgian people, who demonstrated unprecedented wisdom and ensured peace and economic stability. Kobakhidze thanked all the politicians and public servants who contributed to securing the Commission's decision.
- [According](#) to the Secretary General of the Georgian Dream and Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze, the ruling party put massive effort on the path to EU integration, overcoming

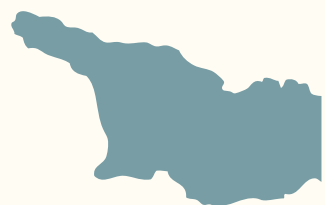
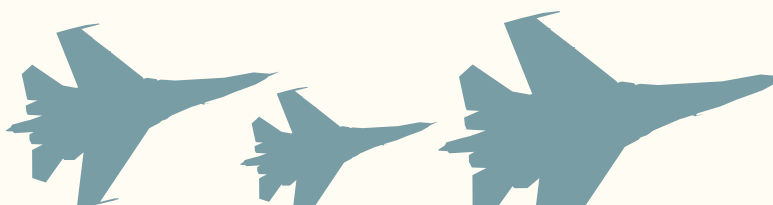


many difficulties in the process. Despite the opposition's constant obstruction, sabotage, refusal to participate in the processes, and attempts to deepen polarization, the Georgian Dream will never deviate from the will of the Georgian people – to become a part of the European family by protecting common values and preserving Georgian national values.

- The Chairperson of the Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, [assessed](#) the Commission's decision as “proof that truth overcomes falsehood, and as a strong answer to Georgia's occupation”. Papuashvili says candidate status is a solid foundation for Georgia's better future. It belongs to the Abkhazian and Ossetian brothers, every citizen of our multinational country, and everyone who values Georgia's European future. The Chairperson of the Parliament also noted that the Commission's ambiguous decision last year allowed the ill-wishers of the Georgian people to speculate.
- Executive Secretary of the Georgian Dream, Mamuka Mdinardze, [thanked](#) the European Commission “for making a fair and objective decision”, the public servants, and the Georgian people for their efforts. According to Mdinardze, despite numerous harmful and damaging campaigns and direct sabotage attempts regarding the EU membership candidate status, the Georgian Dream managed to get a fair recommendation from the European Commission.

Wave of anti-Western disinformation and propaganda targets EU candidate status

- Leaders of Alt Info and the “anti-Maidan” movement reviewed the nine priorities set out by the European Commission for Georgia and [propagated their interpretations](#): The first priority that addressed the threat of disinformation in Georgia is a direct call to silence and shut down Alt Info; Second priority, improving Georgia's alignment with the EU common foreign and security policy means that Georgia should exacerbate its relations with Russia; Depolarisation priority demands that Georgia adopt laws that will strengthen liberal opposition parties in the Parliament; Surprisingly, the propagandists positively assessed the priority regarding electoral reforms, which according to them will



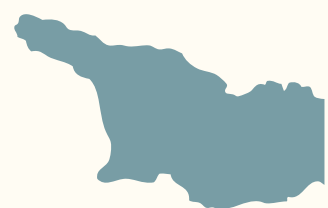
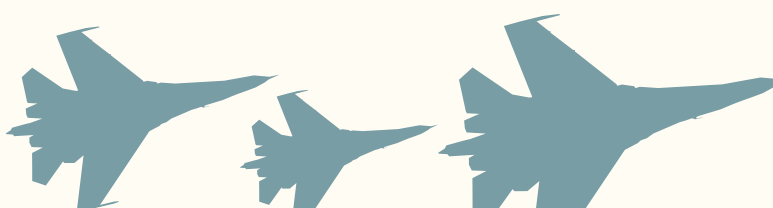
minimise the chances of election fraud; The priority calling for independent state institutions and the improvement of Parliamentary oversight means that the EU wants its “agents” in the Parliament, meaning the opposition MPs, to supervise and control institutions such as the State Security Service, National Bank and the Communications Commission; The call to complete a thorough reform of the judicial system shows the EU’s true intentions to integrate its “agents” in the Georgian judiciary system and completely control it; the EU demands that pro-Westerners and its “agents” are integrated within institutions related to anti-corruption and data protection; Deoligarchisation is an open call of the EU to the Georgian government to “get rid of Bidzina Ivanishvili”; The final priority addressing the protection of human rights, vulnerable groups and bringing perpetrators of violence to justice was seen by Alt Info leaders as a demand “to normalise LGBT prides in Georgia and arrest anyone who opposes them”.

- The pro-Russian Sezoni TV anchor Nikoloz Mzhavanadze [argued](#) that if Georgia fulfils the priorities set out by the European Commission, it will lose its identity. Thus, the Commission’s recommendation to grant Georgia candidate status should not be celebrated. Candidate status will not improve the lives of everyday Georgians because the EU does not fund anything meaningful in Georgia, except for Georgian NGOs, whose funding will be significantly increased. Mzhavanadze also claimed that the EU demands the arrest of people who protect the Georgian church and Christian Orthodox faith, meaning those who committed violence on July 5th, 2021. Referring to the EU priority stating that Georgia should “Fight disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference against the EU and its values”, the propagandist argues that it is aimed at silencing conservative people who openly fight against “sodomism”. According to Mzhavanadze, the EU's priority regarding the judicial system demands that the Georgian government give full control of the judicial system to the EU.
- The same propagandist, along with his recurring guest and fellow propagandist, Dito Chubinidze, [claimed](#) that if the European Commission did not recommend granting candidate status to Georgia, Western-backed groups would stir up the country. The plans to destabilise the country were postponed because of the “anti-Maidan” movement,



which showed the Europeans that the Georgian people would not allow them to cause chaos and destruction in the country, which is why the Commission ultimately decided to issue an appropriate recommendation.

- Leaders of pro-Russian Alt Info and the “anti-Maidan” movement, Giorgi Kardava and Shota Martinenko, [stated](#) that the EU did not grant Georgia candidate status in 2022 to give the Western agents in Georgia time to prepare for a revolution, after which the EU would once again deny Georgia candidate status in 2023, resulting in a Maidan-style revolution. Despite these grandiose plans, according to the propagandists, the West saw that the “anti-Maidan” movement had enough support to thwart a Western-sponsored coup attempt, resulting in the Commission’s positive recommendation.
- According to Dito Chubinidze, fulfilling the EU’s priorities, [receiving](#) candidate status, and even EU membership is not worth it because it means that LGBT pride will be held in Georgia, destroying national sanctities and traditions. The propagandist also argued that the EU will collapse before Georgia becomes a member because it allows “sodomy”.
- A propagandist on pro-Russian Alt Info [assessed](#) the Commission’s decision as the EU’s imperial expansion. The West is trying to brainwash the Georgian people and plant anti-Georgian, anti-national ideas in their minds to control them more effectively, which is part of the globalist plans to control the entire world. Despite their tremendous efforts, the Georgian people and the “anti-Maidan” movement demonstrated that this plan would not work. The same propagandist suggested that the EU supports the UNM and former President Mikheil Saakashvili because he is experienced in colluding with the West, overthrowing the government and starting the war against Russia (referring to the Rose Revolution and the 2008 August war). Overall, according to him, EU candidate status is detrimental to Georgia because the EU will force the Georgian government to adopt laws contrary to its national interests.
- A guest on pro-Russian Alt Info was [adamant](#) that the EU is trying to make Georgia its vassal state and is putting pressure on the Georgian government to make it more



obedient. According to him, Ukraine's example shows how a country with massive human and natural resources can be destroyed by Western integration. The same will happen to Georgia if it continues its pro-Western foreign policy.

- A member of Alt Info/Conservative Movement, Giorgi Kiknadze, [claimed](#) that the EU will only grant Georgia candidate status after the 2024 elections. The propagandist claims that the EU is focusing on the elections because it wants to change the current ruling party and bring the UNM into power.
- Alt Info anchor also [disseminated](#) false information as if the EU demands that Georgia fulfil the nine priorities before December 15th. According to him, in one month, the EU will announce that Georgia failed to make progress on the new priorities and refuse to grant it candidate status, which will stir up the situation in the country and start a Maidan revolution in Georgia. Therefore, the propagandist continued fearmongering and called on the people to stay vigilant because the recommendation from the European Commission does not mean that the threat of a Western-planned revolution is neutralised.
- Another anchor on Alt Info assessed the priorities set by the EU for Georgia. According to her, by calling for depolarisation, the EU is demanding that the UNM come to power and conservative parties get shut down; the priority to align Georgia's foreign and security policy to the EU means that Georgia should start a war with Russia. One of the priorities also forces Georgia to disseminate LGBT propaganda in schools.
- Another propagandist on Alt Info [claimed](#) that the priorities set by the EU and the whole process regarding Georgia's candidate status is a circus because, ultimately, the geopolitical decisions are made in Washington.
- Propaganda also [suggested](#) that the EU's priority to fight disinformation about the EU is directed against the Georgian people's fight to preserve its identity, traditions, faith and morals. EU membership also means that Georgia will lose its sovereignty and independence.
- Social media profiles that mainly spread anti-Western and pro-Russian propaganda were especially active on November 8th, attempting to discredit the EU and the issue of Georgia's candidate status. The social media posts had the same messages as the Alt Info



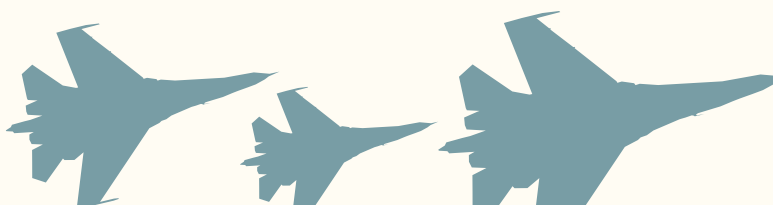
propagandists – the EU was discredited for protecting [LGBTQI+ rights](#); candidate status poses a threat to [Georgian identity and faith](#); Georgia is losing its sovereignty and [becoming a slave](#); the EU is demanding that the Georgian government arrest thousands of people who were present during the [July 5th, 2021](#) homophobic demonstrations; the “anti-Maidan” movement stopped the EU from [inciting a revolution](#) in the country which is why the Commission issued a recommendation to grant Georgia candidate status.

As Prime Minister Gharibashvili and President Zourabichvili attend Paris Peace Forum, GD continues attacks on the President

Prime Minister Gharibashvili and President Zourabichvili departed for France on November 9th to hold separate meetings with the French President, Emmanuel Macron, and to speak at the Paris Peace Forum. "Bravo to the Georgian people, whose commitment to democracy and Europe no longer needs to be proven - unite efforts to move forward. France stands by you," Macron [wrote](#) on Facebook after meeting with the Georgian Prime Minister.

On November 8th, President Zourabichvili organised a gathering in front of the Orbeliani Presidential Palace to celebrate the European Commission’s decision, where she [stated](#) that she would attend the Paris Peace Forum with Prime Minister Gharibashvili and hopefully set an example of depolarisation. Despite her hopes, President Zourabichvili was attacked by Georgian Dream members because of her different statements.

- President Zourabichvili became a target of the Georgian Dream members because of a statement she made during an interview with a French news channel. Answering the question of whether she hopes that Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping will ever face an international court, Zourabichvili [stated](#) that “it would be a historic result, which would put certain issues in their place”. On November 13th, the Georgian Prime Minister held



a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador, Zhou Qian, and [rebuked](#) the statement made by the President about Chinese leader Xi Jinping. According to the Prime Minister, this is not the first time the Georgian President violated the constitution and damaged Georgia's national interests. The Prime Minister expressed his regret for Zourabichvili's statement and expressed hope that it would not affect or damage the extremely positive relations between Georgia and China.

- Giorgi Amilakhvari, Minister of Education and Science, also criticised President Zourabichvili, [arguing](#) that her statement is unacceptable. Georgia is a parliamentary republic, and foreign policy is carried out by the government of Georgia, which the Prime Minister represents. Therefore, this statement or phrase about the People's Republic of China's leader does not have any political significance. Despite that, the statement was contrary to the policy that the majority of the population of Georgia demanded from the Georgian government and undermined Georgia's national interests. According to Amilakhvari, unethical, undiplomatic and excessive statements are expected from a President who violated the Constitution.
- Georgian Dream MP Irakli Chikovani [emphasised](#) that Georgia is a Parliamentary republic and the President does not represent its foreign policy. Georgia greatly values its strategic partnership with the People's Republic of China, through which Georgia can become an important trade route connecting the East and the West. Generally, President Zourabichvili's statements are contrary to the Georgian people's interests, which is why the Constitutional Court concluded that she violated the Constitution. Since then, she has lost legitimacy and relevancy.
- [According](#) to the Chairperson of the Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, the only reason Salome Zourabichvili maintains her Presidency is the United National Movement's support. On October 18th, the Parliamentary majority, in the name of the Georgian people, concluded that she violated the Constitution. The fact that she continues to hold foreign visits underlines that she has no emotional bond or respect for the foundation of the Georgian state – its Constitution, established by the Georgian people.
- In a different interview with France 24, President Zourabichvili stated that If democratic elections are held in Georgia, this will allow for a coalition government to form, which



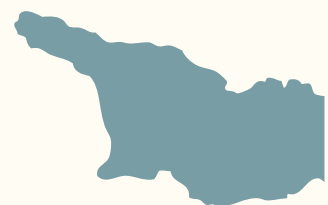
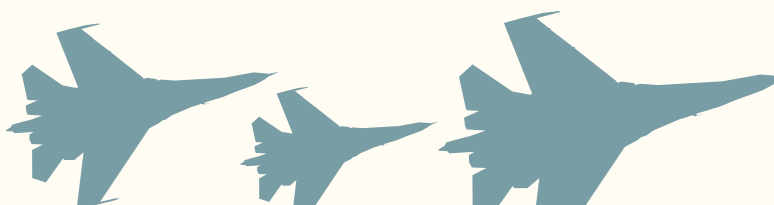
will fulfil all priorities to start negotiations about EU accession”. Georgian Dream MP Aluda Ghudushauri [called](#) Zourabichvili a charlatan who artificially escaped impeachment because of UNM mandates. According to Ghudushauri, Zourabichvili should not speak about what the Georgian people will decide in the elections; that is up to the wise Georgian people. A President who violated the Constitution cannot dictate what the Georgian people’s decision will be, he said.

Russian disinformation prompts a full scale search for non-existent Georgian saboteurs in occupied Abkhazia

On November 8th, on the day the European Commission announced its recommendation to the European Council to grant Georgia candidate status, Abkhazian social media was [in the grip of panic](#) after Kremlin propagandist Vladimir Solovyov spread disinformation on his Telegram channel, according to which a Georgian sabotage group of 50 people snuck into Abkhazia with military equipment in order to blow up the airport in Sokhumi, which is not even operational. The propagandist cited the so-called “Ministry of Defence of Abkhazia” as his source. Solovyov deleted his post soon, but the confusion was already exacerbated by Abkhazia’s so-called “Interior Minister”, who stated that hunters in the mountains near the village of Azanta detected seven men armed with “foreign weapons, presumably M-4 automatic rifles, in black uniforms, wearing masks, helmets, well equipped, and they had a copter that was flying over the area.”

Abkhazian social media users were confused as to why a sabotage group would target an airport that is not operational, how they could cross the so-called “border” with Abkhazian and Russian border guards in place, and why the group was not discovered by security forces, but rather by local hunters.

The confusion and fear were strong enough to launch a full-scale air and land search operation, with the so-called “Abkhazian government representatives” visiting the search site. Finally, the presence of a sabotage group was not confirmed, and it is unclear why such disinformation was disseminated in the first place.



After the murder of Tamaz Ginturi by Russian occupying forces, pro-Russian Propaganda underlines importance of aligning with Russia

- Pro-Russian propagandist and Sezoni TV anchor Nikoloz Mzhavanadze [argued](#) that the West does not care about the murders of Georgian citizens at the occupation line because they do not care about Georgia's well-being as a whole. The propagandist suggested that the tragic killing of Tamaz Ginturi is not a clear demonstration of Russian aggression towards Georgia but rather a problem that could have been avoided if Georgia had negotiated with Russia and established friendly, neighbourly relations.
- Pro-Russian propagandist and frequent guest on Sezoni TV broadcasts, Dito Chubinidze [suspected](#) that Tamaz Ginturi's murder was a provocation incited by the UNM since he was a brother of the Gori municipality council member from the UNM party. The propagandist also recalled the case of Georgian citizen Dr Vazha Gaprindashvili, who was detained by occupying forces for almost 90 days in 2019. According to the propagandist, his detainment was not a coincidence and was also possibly a provocation. Dito Chubinidze, much like Nikoloz Mzhavanadze, disregards Russia's aggressive actions towards Georgia and shifts the blame on Georgian citizens for such cases.
- Tristan Tsitelashvili, a former Georgian high-ranking officer who was previously imprisoned for spying in favour of Russia during the 2008 war and later released as a political prisoner by the Georgian Dream government, also appeared on Sezoni TV and [propagated](#) that the UNM tried to use the murder of Tamaz Ginturi and start a protest against the government. The UNM was also backed by Georgian soldiers fighting in Ukraine, who, according to the propagandist, called on the people to start a revolution in Georgia.
- Pro-Russian clergyman who called for violence against LGBT activists and journalists on July 5th, 2021, [stated](#) that cases of murder of Georgian citizens by the occupation line will continue in the future if Georgia does not hold a dialogue with Russia.
- One of the leaders of Alt Info and the Conservative Movement, Shota Martinenko, also adamantly [argued](#) it is in the interests of the separatists to start another conflict, which



is why Georgia should tread lightly and start negotiating with the only power that can establish peace and stability in the region – Russia.

- [According](#) to another propagandist, for the past months, Alt Info has been saying that a Maidan-like revolution was being prepared in Georgia, which was confirmed by the State Security Service (SSSG) as well. The SSSG did indeed announce that a saboteur group was planning a provocation to incite a revolution, including by causing civilian deaths. The propagandist on Alt Info claimed that Tamaz Ginturi's murder is such a case and that his death was caused by a provocation incited by the UNM to start a revolution.
- A social media profile [spread disinformation](#) that the church that Tamaz Ginturi entered, after which he was shot and killed by occupational forces, was given up by former President Mikheil Saakashvili in 2008 through an official document. In reality, the church was under Georgian control until the Russian forces illegally occupied it in 2018.
- Numerous social media profiles spread the same narratives as if a provocation planned by the UNM caused Tamaz Ginturi's murder, and the only way to prevent such tragedies is to [negotiate](#) with Russia and restore relations. Some profiles went as far as saying that the Russian occupational forces [“acted to protect the law.”](#)

