



# GRASS Disinfo Brief

**MONITORING PERIOD:**  
December 12 – December 18



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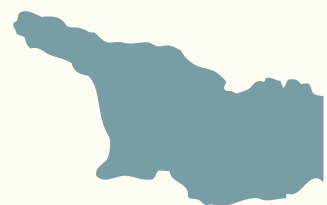
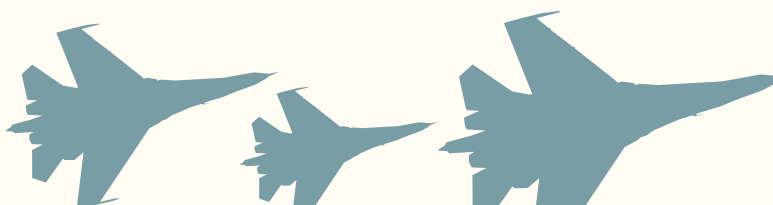
### **European Council grants Georgia EU membership candidate status**

The European Council decided to grant Georgia EU membership candidate status on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, marking a historic date for Georgia on its decades-long path towards Western integration. The European Council has also decided to open accession negotiations with Ukraine & Moldova, and will open negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina once the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria is reached. The President of the European Council [noted](#) that the decision comes as “a clear signal of hope for their people and for our continent.” The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen [assessed](#) the decision as “a strategic decision and a day that will remain engraved in the history of our Union” while the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell [stated](#) that the decision is a “testament to our partner’s commitment and dedication to our common values and EU reforms. This is a significant step towards a united, prosperous and stable Europe.”

### **“Towards Europe with Dignity!” - motto for the Georgian Dream**

The slogan “Towards Europe with Dignity!” is not new for the Georgian Dream. This catchphrase was used as a damage control measure following the endorsement of a Russian-inspired "Foreign Agents Law" in March, 2023, a decision that triggered widespread protests within Georgia and drew strong international criticism. While seeing the thousands of Georgians marching against the law under the pro-European and anti-Russian slogan, the ruling party then launched a social media campaign, with its leaders amplifying the slogan “To Europe with Dignity”. Georgian Dream’s message that they are “taking Georgia towards Europe with dignity, while standing firmly on two legs” has been reinvigorated in the last weeks.

- According to the Chairperson of the Georgian Dream, Irakli Kobakhidze, “Towards Europe with Dignity” has become a slogan for the ruling party. According to Chairperson of the ruling party, the former Deputy Ombudsman, Giorgi Burjanadze, “voiced the



message of the collective United National Movement and their patrons” when he stated, during the discussions about the Russian-styled draft law on foreign agents in March, 2023 that “if we applied to the EU, we have to do everything - if they tell us to stand on one leg for a week, we have to stand”. Kobakhidze underlined that the Georgian government refused to stand on one leg and be pushed over, instead it stood on two legs and got the candidate status, which is how they will continue to march towards the success of the country in the future.

- At the session of the City Council, where Tbilisi’s budget for the upcoming years was being discussed, Mayor of Tbilisi and the Secretary of the Georgian Dream, Kakha Kaladze [blamed](#) the opposition of trying to sabotage Georgia’s EU candidate status and stated that the ruling party wants Europe and a European future, but not in a way for “someone to push us over, hit us on the head, instruct us on what to do and to use our country for their own purposes. we want a European future, but with dignity and self-respect.” According to Kaladze, the people who want to “stand on one leg” can do that, but the ruling party plans to continue “standing on two legs” while it protects Georgia’s national interests.
- Executive Secretary of the Georgian Dream, Mamuka Mdinaradze [stated](#) that the candidate status is a merit of the Georgian people “who showed immense wisdom and did not fall for provocations, bad things”. Mdinaradze did not specify what he meant, but emphasized that all the steps that the Georgian people and their government took with pride and dignity achieved a result that many could not imagine.

The ruling party organised a public celebratory event on Freedom Square on December 15<sup>th</sup>, coinciding with the ceremonial lighting of Tbilisi’s main Christmas tree. Leaders of the Georgian Dream used the public celebration to address the gathered people.

- The Prime Minister once again congratulated the people and [underlined](#) how the government and the people deservedly gained the candidate status. "Yes, we did not stand on one leg and we did not stand on our knees, but we stood firmly and deservedly won this victory," said the Prime Minister. Additionally, [according](#) to Prime Minister Gharibashvili, the ruling party faced many challenges on this road, defeating both internal and external enemies of Georgia, who opposed granting candidate status to Georgia. Most importantly the ruling party avoided the biggest threat – war and calamity, and maintained peace, sovereignty and independence of Georgia.
- Irakli Kobakhidze also [reiterated](#) that the ruling party overcame many trials and tribulations to protect Georgia’s national interests, but the Georgian people’s wisdom allowed the government to prevail over these challenges. Georgia has shown dignity in the last two years and got a dignified answer. Some people wanted Georgia to stand on one leg, but it stood on two legs, maintaining peace as a result. Kobakhidze also underscored the role of Bidzina Ivanishvili, who, according to the Chairperson of the Georgian Dream, “laid the foundation for the historic victory of the Georgian people, replacing Soviet-style authoritarianism with European-style democratic and fair governance”.



- [According](#) to Kakha Kaladze, “with traditions in Europe, with dignity in Europe - this is the spirit with which each of us should continue moving towards a common European family”. Along with thanking the people, public officials and Western partners, Kaladze thanked Bidina Ivanishvili for “bringing groundbreaking democratic changes in 2012, without which, this success would not have been possible”.

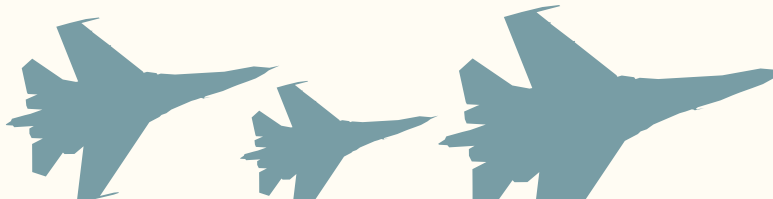
President Zourabichvili also [attended](#) the public celebration but was not allowed to get on stage and address the people.

- When asked why the President was denied to address the people from stage, Kobakhidze [stated](#) that Salome Zurbashvili was doing everything to prevent the country from receiving the status of a candidate - therefore, there was no place for her at the event.
- Mamuka Mdivaradze [stated](#) the woman who formally maintains the status of President of Georgia, said that neither last year nor this year did Georgia deserve candidate status. “I also congratulate Madam Salome, who does not deserve to be the President, but is a citizen of this country”. When asked whether he congratulates Mikheil Saakashvili as well, Mdivaradze replied – “He is not a citizen of this country, he is an enemy of Georgia”.

### Main points from the Prime Minister’s presentation of the governments annual report

On November 18<sup>th</sup>, the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili presented the governments annual report where he voiced several narratives.

- **The Georgian government averted war, maintained peace** – Prime Minister Gharibashvili [highlighted](#) the devastation, displacement of civilians and loss of territories caused by the war started by Russia in Ukraine. According to Gharibashvili, while it is still unknown how the war will end, the international structure and the European security architecture is changing. As he continued, the ongoing instability acts as a major challenge to Georgia, drawing parallels with the tragic events of the 2008 August war. Gharibashvili stressed that, had Bidzina Ivanishvili been in power at the time [in 2008], the war would have been averted, contrasting it with the alleged irresponsibility of the government in 2008. The Prime Minister emphasized that the threat of destabilizing the country facing the Georgian government is quite real. “Radical groups and hostile forces operating inside the country were directly interested in getting the country into this war situation”, but the Georgian government averted the war. The Prime Minister noted that this threat is not completely neutralised, and the government will continue to assess risks, identify threats, implement appropriate prevention measures and protect the population of Georgia.
- **Georgia “Europeanised, democratised” by Bidzina Ivanishvili and the Georgian Dream** – The Prime Minister [stated](#) that the real “Europeanisation and democratisation” of



Georgia started in 2012, when Bidzina Ivanishvili and the Georgian Dream came to government. If any government has achieved a very specific result on the path of European integration, it is the Georgian Dream.

- **Georgia's economic development merit of the Georgian Dream** – [According](#) to the Prime Minister, the Georgian Dream government inherited an economy based on racketeering businesses, with poverty and unemployment at 30%. An autocratic regime in the country oppressed the citizens who experienced a war that the government could not avoid, limiting economic activity. The Prime Minister presented several statistical data points and stated that the country's national economy and state budget tripled in the previous eleven years.

### **Georgian Dream slams CSO's, says EU's Directive on Transparency of Interest Representation is same as its Russian-styled foreign agents law**

- Chairperson of the Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili [stated](#) that the European Commission initiated a draft law which is exactly the same as the draft law initiated in Georgia in March, 2023. According to Papuashvili, unfortunately some organisations, political groups and countries are adopting the same law that was condemned as a “Russian law” in Georgia. It will be ironic when the EU issues a directive towards Georgia to adopt such a law in the future. Papuashvili noted that since March the Georgian population has clearly seen how Georgia's internal and external friends propagated an absolute lie, framing the “American Law” (referring to the Foreign Agents Registry Act) as a “Russian Law”. Additionally, Papuashvili stated that there are several foreign-funded multi-millionaire CSOs which do not act in the interest of Georgia, but in the interest of their donors.
- [According](#) to Irakli Kobakhidze, the law initiated by the Georgian ruling party was called “Russian” while the same type of law is being discussed by the European Commission. This shows how fake the campaign was, which sought to prevent the financing of CSOs from becoming transparent because most of these finances were directed towards “revolutionary processes and extremism”. Nonetheless, Kobakhidze noted that the ruling party sees no need to reintroduce a “Law on Foreign Agents”.
- Mamuka Mdinardze [assessed](#) that the “American Law” was labeled as a “Russian Law” because of Georgia's internal enemies. These internal enemies urged the Georgian government to "hop on one leg," but the ruling party remained steadfast on both legs. Despite facing pressure, a stressful environment, and sabotage attempts, the party successfully enacted numerous laws that contributed to the European integration process and the fulfillment of the twelve priorities. “Georgia will never stand on one leg to please someone. We will return to our place, the European family, with dignity”.
- Commenting on the fact that Nika Melia and several other left the United National Movement, Irakli Kobakhidze [stated](#) that Davit Kezerashvili is financing the party, thus he controls the processes, but the real question is who is controlling Kezerashvili himself. Kobakhidze suggested that “some foreign forces”, who allow Kezerashvili to move freely



in Europe, are making him finance Georgian political parties. Ultimately, everything is coordinated by these unspecified foreign forces.

### **Georgian Dream continues to slam President Zourabichvili**

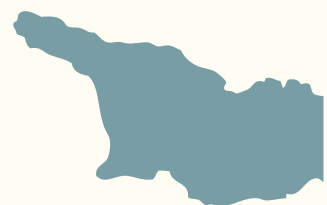
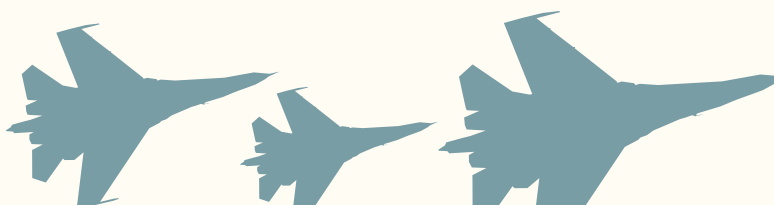
Despite [stating](#) in November 2021 that her position on pardoning former president Mikheil Saakashvili is firm and unchanging – “no and never!”, on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 President Zourabichvili [asserted](#) that she has not refused to pardon Mikheil Saakashvili after all. “I do not comment on the pardons unless I say that I am pardoning someone”, stated the President. Zourabichvili’s statements once again elicited reactions from the members of the ruling party.

- When asked whether or not President Zourabichvili’s statement means that she is considering pardoning former president Saakashvili, Kakha Kaladze [stated](#) that “nothing should be excluded and everything is possible”. According to Kaladze, Salome Zourabichvili represents the radical wing, who can be directly assessed as the enemy of Georgia because she opposes the country's future, development, and peace.
- [According](#) to the Georgian Dream MP, Mikheil Sarjveladze, when a person says “no and never!”, it means that they do not plan on revisiting their decision. Recent comments from the President suggest that “she either has amnesia, hopes that society has amnesia, or only cares about what foreigners think about her”. Sarjveladze noted that Zourabichvili’s recent statements act as a testament that Salome Zourabichvili is not only formally unsuitable for the position of president, but she has also become completely unacceptable in terms of her close relations with the opposition.
- Georgian Dream MP Irakli Zarkua [called on](#) the president not to test the Georgian people’s wrath because Saakashvili and the United National Movement have caused many people pain. According to Zarkua, Zourabichvili did not start her foreign visits in 2022, when Georgia was denied candidate status in 2022, but when it was evident that Georgia would receive candidate status “with dignity and without standing on one leg”, she started conducting foreign visits without permission to sabotage Georgia’s candidate status and incite a revolution in Georgia.

### **Fanning Anti-EU Sentiment: Pro-Kremlin and Anti-Western Groups Leverage Identity Issues in Georgia**

Last week, before the European Council announced its decision on Thursday to grant Georgia candidate status, pro-Russian and anti-Western propagandists intensified their efforts to portray Georgia’s incompatibility to Europe identity-wise.

- A propagandist on Alt Info’s broadcast [claimed](#) that the EU is establishing principles around the world that are hostile to “thousand-year-old traditions of family relations.” While another argued that the West is “exclusively lobbying for minority rights,”



meaning that it is demanding the Georgian government put the LGBTQI+ community in an advantageous position.

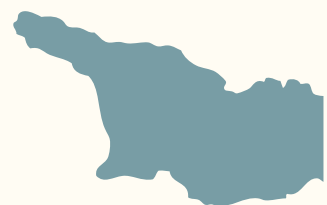
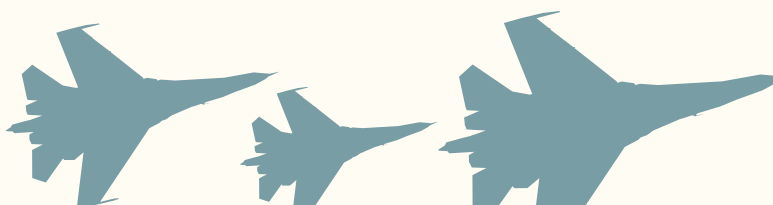
- On a separate occasion on Alt Info's broadcast, one of the speakers [alleged](#) that Western-funded Georgian CSOs are "perverting women" by making them believe that they should not get married or respect their spouses. The idea of gender equality will ultimately undermine the Georgian identity, Alt-Info guest claims.
- An anchor on Alt Info's broadcast, Aleksandre Palavandishvili, who was also one of the organisers of the July 5th, 2021, attacks on journalists and activists, [stated](#) that the nine priorities set out by the EU for Georgia include a provision requiring the arrest of those who organise protests against "sodomy parades." Additionally, he asserted that these priorities aim to guarantee that LGBTQI+ pride events take place in Georgia in the future, effectively "sodomising the country."
- A propagandist on Sezoni TV [argued](#) that Georgia is not genetically or geographically connected to Europe. Georgia is geographically separated from Europe by a natural border – the Black Sea, while genetically, it is more connected to Kurds than Europeans. Therefore, Georgian and European values and identities are incompatible.

After the European Council announced its decision to grant Georgia candidate status, propaganda sources claimed that it was meaningless and that Georgia would never become a member of the EU.

- One of the leaders of Alt Info and pro-Russian businessman, Konstantine Morgoshia, addressed the European Council's decision with a [post](#) on social media. Morgoshia argues that the Georgian Dream, which positioned itself with "conservative" messages after July 5th, 2021, has fully pledged its allegiance to Europe, a continent that declared war on Orthodoxy and legalised "sodomy, immorality, and same-sex marriage."
- The same propagandist claimed that in spring 2024, "a broken Ukraine" will be forced to sign a truce with Russia, after which Moscow will present the Georgian government with an ultimatum to either side with Russia or the West. Since a pro-Western foreign policy, in this case, will lead to Georgia's destruction, it will ultimately be forced to align with Russia. Therefore, the EU membership candidate status has no meaning.
- Another prominent leader of Alt Info, Shota Martinenko, [argued](#) that Turkey, North Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, and Montenegro have been aspiring to become EU members for decades but to no avail. The narrative suggests these countries are geographically much closer to EU countries, and Russia does not block their accessions. However, they were still unable to become EU members, highlighting Georgia's low chances of eventual membership. The propagandist argued that Georgia's EU membership candidate status is "an illusion thrown by the West at a vassal to retain its political levers."
- Sezoni TV propagandist Nikoloz Mzhavanadze [stated](#) that pro-Westerners will portray the situation as if Georgia became a member of the EU when, in reality, it is a much longer process. The candidate status will not bring benefits to the Georgian people; it will only increase funding for CSOs, the LGBTQI+ community, and the radical opposition parties.



- One of the prominent propagandists, Demur Giorkhelidze, who often appears on Alt Info's broadcasts, [argued](#) that the EU does not care about Georgia's development and well-being. The only reason the EU granted Georgia candidate status is to use it to start a war against Russia when necessary.
- Arno Khidirbegishvili, editor of the pro-Russian website "Saqinform" published an article where he [alleged](#) that if Georgia were to become a member of the EU, it would have to give up its occupied territories and recognise the so-called independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.
- One of the anchors on Alt Info [asserted](#) that Georgia will never become a member of the EU. The candidate status, along with the free trade agreement and visa liberalisation, will be used as a political tool to control Georgia. Pro-Western propaganda deceitfully suggests that the candidate status will positively affect the Georgian people's welfare and financial situation.
- An article published on pro-Russian "GeWorld" [highlighted](#) a statement from the President of Moldova, Maya Sandu, who said that "we wouldn't be here today (meaning EU expansion) without Ukraine's brave resistance against Russia's brutal invasion." According to the article, this is a testimony to the fact that the EU only considered Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova as potential members after a war started in Ukraine. Therefore, the author concludes that countries have to sacrifice their citizens and engage in wars to prove they are worthy of EU membership.
- A propagandist on Alt Info [stated](#) that the current Georgian education system was built by the EU, which is why Georgian school children rank 67th out of 81 countries in reading comprehension. According to the narrative, Georgians should not celebrate becoming a candidate for an organization that undermined Georgian education and targets the younger generation.
- [According](#) to a propagandist, those who celebrate the EU membership candidate status are fools because it is meaningless. The propagandist claims that Georgia is viewed as a geopolitical tool in Europe and it will never become a member of either EU or NATO.
- [A social media profile that frequently spreads propaganda and disinformation underlined that by receiving the candidate status Georgia has officially chosen "the side of sodomy" and directly confronted "traditional states" such as Turkey, Azerbaijan, China, etc.](#)
- [Another social media post suggested that candidate status means that migrants entering EU countries will be diverted to Georgia. The EU countries will force Georgia to accept migrants.](#)
- [Another social media profile argued that Georgia is celebrating the beginning of the end of Georgian statehood.](#)
- ["God protect Georgia and the Georgian nation from the membership of Euro-sodomy!" reads a social media post with a high interaction rate.](#)





## Russian Propaganda portrays Russia as a reliable partner, key to restoring territorial integrity

- Sergey Naryshkin, head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service recently [said](#) that the United States and its satellites, along with provoking other conflicts, are trying to open a second front in Abkhazia and South Ossetia to sow instability in the South Caucasus.
- One of the leaders of Alt Info, Konstantine Morgoshia, went on Facebook [Live](#) to talk about a strategy to deoccupy Georgia. According to the propagandist, relations with Russia have improved with visa liberalisation and the reopening of direct flights in the last period. Russia is interested in having friendly relations with Georgia because of its shared orthodox faith and strategic geopolitical location, which serves as a good chance to start negotiations with Russia to reintegrate Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region.
- Sezoni TV propagandist Nikoloz Mzhavanadze [argued](#) that Tbilisi should be the capital of the 3+3 platform because it has always been the center of the South Caucasus. As stated by the propagandist, by offering Georgia a seat at the 3+3 platform table, Russia has indirectly recognized Georgia's territorial integrity, or else it would also invite the so-called Abkhazian and South Ossetian authorities to participate.
- Mzhavanadze also [argued](#) that visa liberalisation and direct flights with Russia allowed for the construction business and tourism sector to flourish in Georgia. In contrast, if Georgia becomes a member of the EU, Georgian people will have to pay high prices for gas and bread because Russia exports these products at a much higher price in EU countries.
- Mzhavanadze also [claimed](#) that Russia protects its partners while the West abandons them. The Propagandist asserted that if not for Russia, Aleksandr Lukashenko, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan would share Muammar Gaddafi's faith and be violently overthrown. In contrast, Georgia was abandoned by its Western partners in 1921 and 2008.
- A propagandist on Alt Info [argued](#) that Georgia has artificial economic and political relations with the EU. Despite Georgia having no diplomatic relations with Russia while signing a free trade agreement with the EU, it still has a higher trade turnover with Russia. This is because Georgia and Russia have a natural political-economic bond.
- A propagandist on Alt Info [stated](#) that Georgian citizens were much more free during the Soviet Union than they are now – under Western influence.