

SOUTH CAUCASUS IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

Audrius Poviliūnas*

Introduction

Before the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the area of South Caucasus has been in the shade of European Union interest, as the admittedly weak interest in the region was limited to the Tacis programme. Targeting a number of post-Soviet countries ranging from Ukraine to Uzbekistan, this framework focused on the transition aid and did not set major distinctions among the recipient countries.

The rise of the European Neighbourhood Policy, however, indicated the increase of the EU engagement in the area of its close neighbourhood. The decision also led to the differentiation of Tacis recipient countries, as only Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan were included into the policy zone.

The countries of South Caucasus were included in the European Neighbourhood Policy relatively late, in June 2004. One of the turning points in the EU approach towards the region was the Rose Revolution in Georgia, as the protests against electoral fraud contributed to the regime change and turned the country westwards, while the newly-elected President Mikheil Saakashvili outlined the importance of EU and NATO membership. Armenia has also indicated, even though in a significantly milder way, its will to follow the path of progressive integration into EU models and standards. Azerbaijan seems to be the most reluctant towards any EU conditionality in this context, yet it is also included into the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Bearing in mind different aspirations of three South Caucasian countries vis-à-vis the EU, it is important to investigate whether the EU responds to their diver-

Audrius Poviliūnas — Director of the Project Management Center at Mykolas Romeris University. Address: Ateities 20, 08303, Vilnius, Lithuania.

ging expectations or apply a uniform approach towards the entire region. Currently Action Plans for each one of three South Caucasian countries are being developed according to the recommendations set by the European Commission in March 2005. The question tackled in this paper is, to which extent do the recommendations for the Action Plans for Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan differentiate these countries according to the aspirations each of them links with the European integration? In order to provide an answer, the EU-related expectations of each country will be presented. Then, comparative analysis of European Commission recommendations for the Action Plans will be made. Once the degree of similarity is determined, the reasons leading to this outcome will be analysed from the supranational standpoint.

Georgian EU Perspective: Full Steam Ahead?

Out of the three South Caucasian countries, the Georgian case seems to be a breakthrough step in the development of the relations between the EU and the republics of South Caucasus. The events of November 2003 led to the mutual intensification of cooperation between Georgia and the European Union, as the latter one offered its political support to the new regime through declarations and visits (24). As a result of this closer cooperation and in an aim of strengthening the democratisation and economic liberalisation processes in the region, the countries of the South Caucasus were included into the European Neighbourhood Policy framework. It has to be outlined that during the conceptual stage, EU officials did not envision the three South Caucasus as falling under the initiative, but that thinking changed following the dramatic turn of events in Georgia (19). Thus the Rose Revolution not only portrayed Georgia as the key driver towards change in the region, but also contributed to the inclusion of the other two countries of South Caucasus into the European Neighbourhood Policy initiative.

Georgia has clearly demonstrated most enthusiasm in the European integration of the three countries of the region. The success of the Rose Revolution marked a historic shift in the geopolitical choices of the country, which started openly leaning westwards. The change in the Georgian foreign policy orientation includes its goals to enter the EU and NATO. In April 2004, a few months after the Rose Revolution, the newly-elected President Mikheil Saakashvili projected

that Georgia would need a maximum of three years before it could realistically consider joining the Union, but it was clearly in his sights (12). In order to match this policy shift with an organisational structure, the Government created a Minister of Integration in Europe.

Saakashvili has also outlined the "deeply European" nature of the Georgian culture and values (20) as well as the commitment of the country to follow the guidelines of the European integration. Most Georgians consider themselves Europeans by virtue of their history and lifestyle, and during the post-Soviet period there have been signs of the revival of the notion of Georgia's inherent Western orientation. These trends are firmly entrenched within the Saakashvili administration.

Government members have also been actively and continuously expressing their commitment for Georgia's long-term EU membership process. At the EU-hosted donor conference in June 2004, Zurab Zhvania, Georgian Prime Minister at the time, indicated that the Georgian government's determination to press ahead with economic and political changes was unwavering, adding that Georgia wants to become a full-fledged member of the European Union (19). Salome Zurbishvili, Georgian Foreign Minister, also demonstrated similar determination this year. She stated that despite the fact that the European Neighbourhood Policy was not designed for future EU membership, Georgia was maintaining its integration-driven perspective and using the current instruments to proceed with the reforms as a precondition of joining the EU (15).

Bearing these positions in mind, it can be assumed that the European Neighbourhood Policy keeps Georgian ambitions of joining the Union at a level, which the country perceives as the necessary preparatory stage before the full membership. The Georgian government reaches beyond the current EU provisions and is openly stating its long-term goals. In this context, the European Neighbourhood Policy plays an important role of the path towards the real accession despite the lack of the official approval from the EU.

Armenian EU Perspective: Forward, Cautiously but Surely?

In comparison to its northern neighbour, Armenia has demonstrated a significantly softer approach towards the European Union. The widespread opinion among the Armenian elite is that Georgia rushed into the European home too

fast, thus making many mistakes on the way (7; see Rusetski A., Iskandaryan A.). In contrast, Armenia takes a more incremental approach despite the general recognition of the EU roadmap in its strive towards reforms. Thus the country reiterated that its main target in foreign policy is "progressive integration into EU models and standards" (22). The issue of the European Union membership is being discussed as a possibility or even as a probability in Armenia. However, it has not been upgraded to the status of Armenian foreign policy target yet.

The official announcement that Armenia sees its future membership in the European Union as one of its crucial foreign policy goals might be on its way. In a recent interview, National Assembly speaker Artur Baghdasaryan stated that it should be one of the key priorities of the country's present and future foreign policy as the EU membership would open new avenues for Armenia to move to a new geopolitical milieu as well as a new economic environment and would enable Armenia to have access to a completely new security system (21). In his discourse, the Armenian EU membership strive is presented as a possibility to incorporate core values of the contemporary world and provide the country with more modernisation opportunities.

In spite of approving the EU-oriented Armenian foreign policy and encouraging its development, Artur Baghdasaryan admits it is yet too soon for Armenia to apply for initiating accession negotiations for joining the European Union, because the country is not prepared yet either politically or economically (21). The process should start by reforming legislation and upgrading the processes in Armenia to the European standards. It is rather perceived as a step-by-step process of getting ready to apply for the EU membership when substantial progress is achieved. Initiating accession process at the current stage is considered premature, elaborating on unsuccessful Ukrainian and Georgian intensions. Attention is also paid to the current developments in the EU itself, such as the failure of the Constitutional Treaty in two EU member states, which complicates further enlargement process. While concluding that rapid advance towards the EU membership is unlikely due to internal as well as external factors, the long-term perspective of EU accession is considered the best alternative, or sometimes the only choice, among Armenian foreign policy options due to democratisation, modernisation, conflict resolution and wealthy lifestyle prospects. However, from the Armenian point of view, neither the success of the European integration in South Caucasus nor the irreversibility of the process can be taken for granted (7).

Summing up the Armenian position towards European integration, it can be concluded that the European Neighbourhood Policy prospects match Armenian expectations well. While this policy makes no reference to any possibilities of the future EU accession, the reforms target countries are expected to make are in line with the general Europeanisation process. As the initiative does enhance cooperation between the EU and Armenia, any progress achieved as a result of the intensification of this relationship could be eventually elaborated upon in the context of Armenian long-term foreign policy goals including, when ready, EU accession prospects.

Azerbaijani EU Perspective: Forward, No Rush?

Out of the three South Caucasian countries, Azerbaijan has been the most reluctant towards its European integration. Its foreign policy targets show a considerably mild form of relationship with the EU: one of the foreign policy priorities of Azerbaijan is cooperation with the European Union (16). It is also stated that strategic location of this country at the crossroads of Europe and Asia explained strong interest of the European Union member states in developing political and economic relations with Azerbaijan (16). The focus on "cooperation" rather than "membership" (the Georgian case) or "progressive integration into EU models and standards" (the Armenian case) indicates lower expectations and weaker interest in relation to the European integration. Furthermore, according to these statements, the motivation to cooperate comes primarily from the EU side, not vice-versa. In addition, the emphasis put on the European Union member states rather than European Union as a whole leads to the assumption that the enhanced cooperation will rather flourish in the form of bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and individual EU member states than in the form of the links with the Union as a whole.

The factors behind its more distant approach towards the EU include energy resources, which provide Azerbaijan with more space for manoeuvre, thus placing the country in a more privileged situation than its two South Caucasian neighbours. Hugues Mingarelli, Director at the European Commission for Central Asia and the South Caucasus, outlined that in their relationship with the EU, Azeris were far more relaxed than the representatives of the other two target coun-

tries and less dependent on European largesse than Georgia and Armenia (17). Azerbaijan's geopolitical situation and energy resources locate it at the crossroad of Russian and American interests, while the traditionally strong links with Turkey also play an important role. In this context, one could assume that European integration may seem of secondary importance.

Nevertheless, Azerbaijan firmly expressed its commitment to the European Neighbourhood Policy, which it sees as a platform for improvement through political, social, and economic reforms. In May 2004, after meeting Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission at that time, President Ilham Aliyev welcomed the extension of the EU's neighbourhood program to Azerbaijan and the rest of the Southern Caucasus, adding that Azerbaijan's strategic policy towards integration into European structures continued, and Azerbaijan was moving very actively and quickly into the more active integration with Europe (14).

Since the country's inclusion into the European Neighbourhood Policy framework, developments in EU-Azerbaijan relations show the increased awareness of the progress needed in order to facilitate cooperation. There are, however, signs that Azerbaijan treats the policy less seriously than its South Caucasian neighbours. For instance, the European Union has recently warned Azerbaijan it may fall behind in its New Neighbourhood Policy after it opened direct flights with Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Commenting on the case, Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov noted that the difference of opinions was a "temporary political difficulty" and that the EU should also be interested in eliminating it (5). He also added that EU may apply differential approach to regional states, this is outside its interests, considering Azerbaijan's role and capabilities (5). This position illustrates certain reluctance in the Azerbaijani attitude towards European integration combined with an inward-looking approach, thus marking a significant difference in comparison to Georgia and Armenia.

To conclude the analysis of aspirations of each South Caucasian country related to the European Union, it could be assumed that while the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy was welcomed in all these countries, their attitudes towards future EU-related scenarios differ to a large extent. Georgia proves to be the most active and the most straightforward of the three, outlining its EU membership goals. Armenia also has membership-related expectations, but is more cautious in evaluating internal and external factors before

upgrading official foreign policy targets. Azerbaijan is the least interested in European integration out of the three countries and, while it is generally welcoming and approving the enhanced cooperation process, retains signs of an inward-looking attitude. Taking these differences into consideration, it is important to assess the recommendations for the development of the Action Plans for each country and to analyse to which extent they reflect aspirations each country links with the European integration.

Recommendations for the Development of Action Plans: Individual or Collective Perspectives?

On 2 March 2005, the European Commission announced its recommendation to intensify the relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia significantly (6). This recommendation was based on the Commission's Country Report, which provided a comprehensive overview of the political and economic situation in the countries of South Caucasus as well as the state of their relations with the EU. By developing an Action Plan under the European Neighbourhood Policy, the parties aim at shifting their relationship to a higher gear in terms of economic and political cooperation.

The declarations related to the future development of relations between the EU, on one hand, and Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, on the other, fit the general concept of the European Neighbourhood Policy and do not provide any differentiation between the three countries. The recommendations for the development of the Action Plan for each country individually do, however, include several differences as to where most effort in reforms must be put. Despite the fact that general indications are the same for the entire region, it is worth taking differences into account in order to determine the extent of their dependency on the EU integration-related aspirations of the target countries.

Having these conditions in mind, a comparative table illustrating main indications set in the recommendations for the development (8, 9, 10) of the Action Plans is presented. Key indicators show the general guidelines for progress, while recommendation related to each particular indicator are specified for each country individually.

Indicator	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Georgia
Rule of law	Strengthening the rule of law, of democratic structures and pluralism (e.g. the reform of electoral legislation in line with Council of Europe (CoE) and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) recommendations and the holding of democratic elections; constitutional reform taking into account CoE recommendations; reform of local self-government)	Strengthening respect for the rule of law (reform of judiciary, law enforcement agencies, penitentiary) and enhanced human rights protection; Strengthening of democratic structures and pluralism (reform of parliament, strengthening independence of media, reform of local self government, electoral reform)	Strengthening the rule of law, democratic structures and pluralism (improved institutional division of powers, reform of local self government) and strengthening of electoral legislation and processes so as to enhance democratic election standards; Implementation of effective reform in field of rule of law (judiciary, law enforcement agencies)
Human rights and fundamental freedoms	Strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, especially regarding freedom of expression and freedom of assembly	Enhanced protection of human rights and of freedom and independence of the media	Enhanced human rights protection; Strengthening independence of media
Business climate and modernisation of public sector	Improvements in the business climate as well as public sector modernisation	Improvements in the business climate as well as public sector modernisation	Improvements in the business climate as well as public sector modernisation
Corruption and fraud	Further efforts to tackle corruption and fraud	Effective combating of corruption and fraud	Strengthening the fight against corruption and fraud
Transparency	No direct indication	Increased transparency in the management of oil revenues and in the privatisation process	A transparent privatisation process
Sustainable development	Progress in poverty reduction; progress on sustainable development and environmental protection	Progress in poverty reduction, sustainable development and environmental protection	Progress in poverty reduction, sustainable development and environmental protection
Conflict resolution	Progress towards conflict resolution and enhanced regional cooperation	Progress in the resolution of conflicts and enhanced regional cooperation	No direct indication
Tax and customs	Reform of tax and customs administrations and legislation	Reform of tax and customs administrations and legislation	Reform of tax and customs administrations and legislation
Specific indicators	The decommissioning of the Medzamor Nuclear Power Plant	Increased efforts towards a balanced development of the overall economic system; Progress in WTO accession	The decommissioning of the Medzamor Nuclear Power Plant

Comparing the main recommendations for the South Caucasian countries, it can be noticed that guidelines in many areas are of similar nature or even exactly the same. Recommendations in the areas of business climate and modernisation of public sector, tax and customs, conflict resolution, sustainable development indicate the same lines for reform for all the three countries. Guidelines in the field of human right and fundamental freedoms also focus on the same remarks. Recommendations regarding corruption and fraud differ in their wording: Georgia is asked to "strengthen the fight against corruption and fraud", Armenia should demonstrate "further efforts to tackle corruption and fraud", while "effective combating of corruption and fraud" is expected from Azerbaijan. The latter country also received stricter recommendations in the area of transparency: while indication for Georgia was "a transparent privatisation process", Azerbaijan received more detailed recommendations of showing "increased transparency in the management of oil revenues and in the privatisation process".

As regards the most detailed sector - the rule of law - another difference in wording can be noticed. Armenia and Azerbaijan are expected to "strengthen the rule of law"; Georgia, interestingly, should "strengthen respect for the rule of law". This formulation evokes the assumption of the current differences in this field among the three countries and could distinguish Georgia, as the most advanced one in the context of the rule of law entrenchment. However, recommendations in this sector outline many similarities between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Common issues include reforming local self-government and improving the electoral system. Both Azerbaijan and Georgia are called to reform judiciary and law enforcement agencies. Certain degree of differentiation can be observed in the area of democratic institution reforms: Georgia is expected to reform the Parliament, Armenian constitutional reforms should follow the recommendations of the Council of Europe, while Azerbaijan should improve institutional division of powers.

The recommendations also draw attention to a set of country-specific problems. The progress programme for Azerbaijan addresses increasing efforts towards a balanced development of the overall economic system as well as progress in World Trade Organisation accession. In the region, Azerbaijan remains the only country, which has not yet joined this organisation, as Georgia entered WTO in 2000, followed by Armenia in 2003. Country-specific recommendations for

Armenia focus on the decommissioning of the Medzamor Nuclear Power Plant, which the EU considers dangerous due to its first-generation Soviet-built status and its risky location in a seismically active zone. The EU and Armenia have not yet reached the agreement on a closure date for Medzamor, as Armenia has pointed out that energy capacities must take account of future expected energy needs of Armenia, the need to strengthen energy security and the need to offset the impact of the closure of the power plant on electricity tariffs (2). The EU indicated that the Armenian position in relation to the closure of Medzamor Nuclear Power Plant would affect the country's access to the benefits offered by its inclusion in the framework of European Neighbourhood Policy.

The comparison of recommendations for the Action Plans of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia shows that in most sectors the policy lines towards reform are very similar. Differences are frequently narrowed down to the choice of wording, which indicates a relative weight of each particular problem in comparison to its importance in neighbouring countries. Important divergences arise in the context of country-specific criteria, which outline the topicality of the Medzamor Nuclear Power Plant closure in Armenia and WTO membership for Azerbaijan. Other than a few country-specific issues, the comparative table of recommendations for Action Plans show the common platform for regional development, as most observations about the need of reform are applied to all the three countries. Thus it can be concluded that different aspirations each South Caucasian country links with European integration have a limited impact on the recommendations for future development of each respective country.

The EU Approach:

"South Caucasus" or "Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia"?

The realisation that EU aspirations of target countries did not have a spill-over effect on guidelines for development leads to the assumption that up to the point of drawing recommendations for the Action Plans Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have been treated as integral parts of the South Caucasus region rather than according to their individual merits. It is important, however, to discuss the validity of this assumption from the EU standpoint.

Talking about the inclusion of the South Caucasian countries into the European Neighbourhood Policy in July 2004, Janez Potoènik, European Commissioner who was then working in close cooperation with Gunther Verheugen, Commissioner for Enlargement, claimed that Brussels did not look at the South Caucasus region as a single unit, and that the prospects of the three countries must be considered separately (13). He added that Brussels would judge Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia according to their individual capabilities, encouraging cooperation in the region simultaneously. Potoènik admitted that it was important to give the countries a chance to move according to their internal readiness in terms of how far and how deep they would like to go in the cooperation and economic integration with the European Union (13). This position presents a different perspective: the one of differentiation according to the merits and to the expected degree of integration.

This position is also supported by the idea of the future action plans: it is claimed that each country will be treated on its own merits, by "rewarding" those that progress the most rapidly (17). The signs of this differentiation perspective can be noticed in Brussels discourse. They are, however, mostly mentioned as a warning in relation to certain EU-negative developments, such as Armenian refuse to agree on the closing date of the Medzamor Nuclear Power Plant or Azerbaijani flight connections with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

The individualised approach towards the countries of South Caucasus could follow, when the actual Action Plans for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are completed later this year. The country-specific focus would most likely foster a certain degree of competition among the countries, which could function as a stimulus for their further progress [1]. At the same time, some issues, such as the question of the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh area, require broader regional consensus.

Even though there is a possibility of applying individualised approach once the Action Plans are launched, recent EU policy-related developments showed little differentiation among the three South Caucasian countries in spite of the diverging visions Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan have about their future relationship with the EU. The Georgian Rose Revolution of 2003 found its echo in Ukraine one year later rather than in its near neighbourhood. Nevertheless, Armenia and Azerbaijan have also been included into the European Neighbourhood Poli-

cy along with Georgia. Armenia and Azerbaijan became directly involved into the process, which would hardly have started in the South Caucasus if the Rose Revolution had not happened in Tbilisi, thus drawing European and global attention to the democratisation prospects in the region.

In spite of its unofficial "clear frontrunner" (13) status, Georgia achieved only slight preferential treatment in the recommendations for developing the Action Plans in comparison to the other two countries. The analysis of main indicators showed that in most fields all the South Caucasian states received the same guidelines. Georgia, like other countries of the region, has to enhance protection of human rights, strengthen democratic structures, facilitate pluralism, intensify the fight against corruption and fraud, increase transparency in privatisation process, modernise public sector, improve the business climate, reduce poverty etc. This shows that an important set of problems has to be addressed region-wide, and the EU-oriented expectations of the country do not necessarily reduce the number of problems which have to be dealt with. A difference worth noting in the case of Georgia is, however, the lack of its country-specific indicators.

These trends show that by including Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU took a regional rather than individualised approach. By doing so, the EU sent an important message that it was committed to support the Southern Caucasian countries on their route towards building stable societies based on democratic values (1) and therefore to contribute to the peaceful and prosperous development of the region.

The unwillingness of the EU to launch sharp differentiation at the stage of recommendations for the development of Action Plans could be explained by the careful avoidance of membership claim-oriented shifts. The EU is experiencing the period of so-called "enlargement fatigue", and encouragement of aspirations related to entering the EU could cause unnecessary buzz. Last year's EU enlargement raised a number of important issues related to the model of the Union itself. There are warnings that the "institutional overstretch", which is related to the readiness of the Union itself to accept new members, might set the limits of the EU enlargement (11). In addition to the structural and functional changes, there are uncertainties about public support to further enlargement. European citizens need a time perspective to evaluate the effects of the 2004 enlargement properly before making up their minds about the next wave of applicants to come. The failure of the Constitu-

tional Treaty at the French and the Dutch referenda showed that this process takes more time than expected. As Wallace suggests, for the EU to continue to enlarge across the Mediterranean and the steppes of Eurasia would threaten its cohesion, and might not win acceptance from the EU's current citizens (25). In addition, the enlargement proves to be costly. If Western Newly Independent States or the countries of South Caucasus became EU member states, they would find themselves in the position of net-recipients of the EU budget. Finally, the EU has already been bound by many further enlargement indications. Romania and Bulgaria are expected to join in 2007. Croatia is the next candidate country in line. Despite the turmoil related to its candidacy, Turkey overcame objections to start the EU-entry talks this year. Apart from these states, it has been made clear that the Western Balkan countries also were on the political agenda for further EU enlargements. Bearing these factors in mind, taking over a definitive agenda for future enlargement waves seems risky. Therefore the European Neighbourhood Policy is not only an opportunity, but also a necessary limitation: it offers enhanced cooperation but intends to stay away from the enlargement perspective.

If these explanatory factors are taken into consideration, it is clear that in the short (or even medium) run the EU is not ready to accept other membership applications. In this case, the lack of differentiation among the South Caucasian countries at the stage of drawing recommendations for the development of the Action Plans could be treated as a prudent position of the EU. On the contrary, mirroring expectations of each particular country in the recommendations for the Action Plans could have led to a more straightforward drive towards membership application in certain South Caucasian countries.

In the meantime, the European Neighbourhood Policy is a step forward, which brings cooperation between the Union and its neighbours to another level. For Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia participation in this framework means a substantial intensification of the South Caucasian-EU relationship, while a more differentiated approach is likely to start with the launch of individual Action Plans.

Conclusions

The European Neighbourhood Policy contributed to the significant upgrading of the relations between the European Union and the South Caucasian coun-

tries. While this step is perceived as a beneficiary outcome for all the countries of the region, the EU-related aspirations of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan differ to a considerable extent. Georgia has outlined its EU membership goals. Armenia shares these membership-related expectations, but is more careful at evaluating a variety of factors connected to this step. Azerbaijan is generally welcoming the enhanced cooperation process, but attaches lower importance to it than its South Caucasian neighbours.

The aim of this paper was determining to which extent the recommendations for the Action Plans for Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan differentiate these countries according to the aspirations each of them links with the European integration. The comparative analysis of key indicators showed that in most sectors the policy lines towards reform are very similar for each of these countries. Differences are frequently narrowed down to the choice of wording, while important divergences arise in the context of country-specific criteria. Other than a few country-specific issues, the recommendations for Action Plans show the common platform for regional development. Thus it can be concluded that different aspirations each South Caucasian country links with European integration have little impact on the recommendations for future development of each respective country.

Describing its activities in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU claims that it assesses each country individually. Even though there is a real possibility of applying individualised approach once the Action Plans are launched, recent EU policy-related developments, such as the inclusion of all South Caucasian countries into the European Neighbourhood Policy and preparation of recommendations for the Action Plans, showed little differentiation among the three countries despite their diverging visions about their future relationship with the EU. The focus was rather placed on solving existing region-wide problems as well as on avoiding EU membership-related references. Thus the country-specific approach is yet to gain importance vis-à-vis the EU general commitment of contributing to peaceful and prosperous development of the South Caucasian region.

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