

expand the already existing EU support for youth, independent media, small and medium-sized enterprises in exile, and culture.

**5. Multilateral context:** The EU continued to raise the human rights violations in Belarus in international fora. In the UN Human Rights Council, the EU played a key role in the adoption of resolution 46/20 ensuring an examination of the situation in Belarus, including accountability for the perpetrators of the human rights violations. On 7 July 2021, the UN Human Rights Council at its 47th session approved a resolution, which extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus for one year.

Following up on the recommendations contained in the report presented under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism, 19 States issued a statement on 24 March 2021, supporting the launching of an international accountability platform for Belarus. The EU has strongly supported this initiative, both politically and financially. The EU also supported the launch of the Vienna Mechanism in connection with serious human rights violations in Belarus and a request to Belarus to provide answers to questions concerning torture, persecution of government critics or the usage of state controlled media or social media accounts to incite violence. The EU also made statements in the UN Security Council high-level Arria-formula on 22 January 2021 and 8 October 2021, addressing, *inter alia*, the human rights situation in the country. The Council of Europe and the EU made several statements expressing concern about the human right situation, notably on freedom of expression. At the Eastern Partnership Summit on 15 December 2021, there was an empty chair for Belarus, but in the margins of the Summit, President Charles Michel and HR/VP Josep Borrell met with representatives from the Belarus democratic opposition, underlining the EU's continued support for democratic Belarus and calling for the release of prisoners.

## Georgia

**1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation:** During 2021, Georgia continued to fulfil its obligations within the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, but the country experienced shortcomings on a number of commitments, particularly in relation to the rule of law and good governance. Democratic consolidation was challenged by a series of events. These include a boycott of the Parliament, local elections with several reported shortcomings, violence against journalists and the LGBTIQ community without ensuing effective investigations, highly questionable appointments and legal amendments in the field of the judiciary, the abolition of the independent State Inspector's Service in a hasty manner, and reports of widespread wiretapping of parts of Georgian society and the diplomatic community. The mobilisation of aggressive far-right forces (which have formed a new political party) is another issue of concern.

**2. EU action - key focus areas:** The EU in Georgia continued to provide support to the implementation of the Georgia National Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan. The EU also supported the elaboration of the new strategy 2021-2030, which should be adopted during 2022. Within the areas covered through the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law, EU action has focused on strengthening the independence and accountability of the judiciary, reducing inequalities, contributing to the fight against discrimination and empowering civil society to promote and defend their civic

rights. Information security was also high on the agenda, where the EU supported the Georgian government to align with the EU acquis, notably, the EU Network and Information Security Directive, in order to ensure a sound system for data protection and the respect for human rights.

**3. EU bilateral political engagement:** The EU engaged in regular political dialogue with Georgia throughout 2021. An Association Council took place in March 2021. The annual EU-Georgia Human rights dialogue took place in July 2021. The EU also engaged in mediating the political crisis stemming from the parliamentary elections in 2020, through high-level mediation led by President of the European Council Charles Michel. These efforts resulted in the so-called 19 April Agreement, containing a number of reform and other commitments by the signatories. In July, the ruling party withdrew from the agreement citing as a reason that the biggest opposition party had not signed it (which it only did later), and publicly stating its commitment to complete the reforms outlined in the agreement.

The EU and Member States in Georgia held regular consultations with Georgian authorities throughout 2021, including on the follow-up to the violent events that marked the Tbilisi Pride March in July. Attention was also paid to court hearings of particular political relevance. Human Rights Day and Human Rights Week were organised together with the UN, with a focus on violence against women. The EU delegation also ran various social and broadcast media campaigns, including an All Human All Equal, gender equality campaign, Stronger Women, and International Child Protection Day with a focus on foster care. Through the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia, including in his capacity as co-chair of the Geneva International Discussions, and through the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM), the EU continued to promote stability and human security in conflict-affected areas.

**4. EU financial engagement:** The EU delegation continued to implement the substantial human rights programme 'EU4Human Rights' (EUR 11 million). Its overall objective is to strengthen human rights protection, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups such as national minorities, persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons. The 'Human Rights for All' project, implemented with UNDP and OHCHR, focused on setting up effective systems for the protection of persons in vulnerable situations and groups belonging to minorities and the promotion of a culture of non-discrimination. Special focus was dedicated to supporting state institutions in their work on LGBTI communities and national and ethnic minorities, the Public Defender's Office and CSOs. Under this project, the EU also supported the State Inspector's Service and organisations collecting and processing personal data to ensure effective compliance with data protection provisions.

The EU delegation continued to work closely with CSOs, including umbrella organisations, at both national and regional levels. Through the EIDHR Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS) for Georgia, the EU supported several CSO projects.

In 2021, the EU continued its assistance to COVID-19 related developments, including by strengthening the country's healthcare system, while shifting increased focus to sustainable recovery actions. Eight substantial grants were awarded to CSOs in 2021, covering oversight, gender and capacity building, but also addressing indirectly the COVID-19 pandemic.

**5. Multilateral context:** In March 2021, at its 46th session, the UN Human Rights Council adopted by vote a recurrent resolution presented by Georgia under item 10 “Technical assistance and cooperation”. The resolution requested the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide technical assistance to Georgia and report to the HRC on its implementation. On 16 June 2021, the General Assembly adopted by vote the Georgian resolution “Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia”.

Georgia underwent examination in the framework of the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on 26 January 2021. There was general support for progress made by Georgia in promoting human rights. Identified challenges included violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, a lack of independence of the judiciary, human rights of persons belonging to minorities and the situation in the breakaway regions.

The investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the August 2008 war in Georgia, ordered by the International Criminal Court, is ongoing.

## Republic of Moldova

**1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation:** In 2021, the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter Moldova) continued implementing the EU-Moldova Association Agreement, including its commitments in the areas of human rights and democracy. Parliamentary elections were held in July and were positively assessed by the international elections observation missions as overall competitive and well managed, despite some shortcomings. The Party of Action and Solidarity gained an absolute majority, with a commitment to improve the rule of law, fight against corruption and poverty, confirming the interest of Moldovan citizens to pursue resolute policies in this direction. While progress in some areas was notable, further efforts are needed to strengthen the rule of law and the fight against corruption, thoroughly reform the media environment, and improve detention conditions. The human rights situation in the Transnistrian region, a region not under the control of the central government in Chisinau, remains concerning.

**2. EU action - key focus areas:** The EU continued to focus in 2021 on key areas such as promoting credible, transparent and inclusive elections; supporting anti-corruption efforts; strengthening rule of law, independent justice and democratic institutions; empowering civil society and supporting media freedom; promoting gender equality and child protection. The EU has supported these areas by providing significant assistance, as well as through policy dialogue and public diplomacy.

The EU continued promoting credible, transparent and inclusive elections, including by supporting international observation and civil society advocacy, as well as efforts aimed at a comprehensive review of the electoral legislative framework. It also reacted firmly to earlier attempts to undermine independent institutions such as the Constitutional Court, supported the adoption of constitutional amendments strengthening the independence of the justice sector and linked progress in the revision of the legislative framework on integrity to the disbursement of macro-financial assistance. Throughout the year, the EU actively supported