

## Olivér Várhelyi Says Georgia Needs to Carry Out Reforms, Meet EU Standards

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi stated at the debate on the issue of Georgia held in the European Parliament that the country must meet certain standards, for which it is necessary to carry out relevant reforms.

As Várhelyi said, the desire of the majority of the Georgian people is to become a member of the European Union, and it is important for the government to take effective steps on this path.

"All over the country, women and men took to the streets and waved the EU flag to show Georgia's aspiration to join the EU. After these demonstrations, the ruling party announced that it would withdraw the law, which was being voted on the next day. This is a really positive sign, and I want to tell you, dear members, that Georgians have a future in the European Union.

The European perspective given to the country determines the relationship between the European Union and Georgia, and within the framework of the Association Agreement, the cooperation is becoming closer.

Georgia must meet specific standards, for which it is necessary to carry out relevant re-



forms. It is necessary to take concrete steps with the help of the European Union. The majority of the population of Georgia expresses their desire to become a member of the European Union, and now is the time to take effective steps.

A number of important steps have been taken in the reform process, and now it is necessary to work on them, which will

strengthen state institutions, bring them closer to the EU standards, which is the main priority in the direction of human rights," Várhelyi said.

He also spoke about Mikheil Saakashvili's health condition and noted that it is the obligation of the Georgian government to fully guarantee Saakashvili's rights as a prisoner and former president of the country.

"Last year, the Parliament passed a resolution on the health of Mikheil Saakashvili. We had a meeting with the Minister of Justice and our message was clear - the Georgian government is obliged to fully guarantee the protection of Saakashvili's rights as a person in prison, as well as the former president, and the European Union is ready to engage in various efforts to en-

sure the health of the former president. The European Union, of course, is closely cooperating throughout this process with Georgians, the Georgian people, and this is an important point for the whole country to unite around a common goal, which means becoming a member of the European Union, European values," said Várhelyi.

## Mikheil Saakashvili's Case Discussed at Debate Held in EU Parliament Dedicated to Political Prisoners

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

A discussion was held in the European Parliament under the title "Political prisoners whose death was ordered: Kara-Murza, Gorinov and Mikheil Saakashvili". Mikheil Saakashvili's family members and representatives of the National Movement took part in the discussion together with MEPs.

Together with Mikheil Saakashvili, the cases of Russian Kremlin critic Vladimir Kara-Murza and a deputy at Moscow's Krasnoselsky district council and trained lawyer Alexei Gorinov were discussed.

Member of the European Parliament Petras Auštrevičius stated that the health condition of the third president of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, is directly related to the 12 recommendations of the European Union. He encouraged the ruling Georgian Dream party to look at it from a broader perspective.

According to Auštrevičius, Saakashvili is an enemy of Putin's Russia, therefore Putin is doing everything to put pressure on him.

"Any good initiative, any reform and change in Georgia, according to Putin, is a threat to autocratic Russia. European integration, of course, means change, political pluralism, economic development and raising the standard of living, which is unacceptable for Putin. He wants pressure, influence and control in Georgia. Saakashvili is an enemy of Putin's Russia, so Putin is doing everything possible to put pressure on him, both directly and indirectly.

It is a very serious situation and we cannot remain indifferent. We cannot forget that Mikheil Saakashvili is in prison in such a bad situation, which is getting worse. Mikheil Saakashvili's health and his life are an integral

CONTINUED FROM Page 2





Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.5851; Euro - 2.7697; GBP - 3.1401; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.4311; Swiss Franc - 2.8389

# Mikheil Saakashvili's Case Discussed at Debate Held in EU Parliament Dedicated to Political Prisoners

CONTINUED FROM Page 1  
part of the EU recommendations. I can't imagine that the EU institutions would want to listen

to some formalities when we get worse and worse news from the hospital where he is. The Georgian authorities should look at this in a broader perspective and

forget about political revenge," stated Auštrevičius.

European Parliamentarian Sergey Lagodinsky also stated that without the life, health and

freedom of Saakashvili, there will be no progress regarding Georgia's membership in the European Union.

According to the Member of

the European Parliament, if the country wants EU membership or candidate status, it should at least show a 'minimum standard' in the judicial system.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Public Defender Says Pro-Russian 'Alt-Info' burning EU Flag Disrespectful Toward Georgia's Pro-Western Course

Members of the violent, pro-Russian party Alt-Info tore down and burned the EU flag in front of the parliament on March 14. Public defender responded with a statement.

According to the evaluation of the Public Defender of Georgia, Levan Ioseliani, in front of the highest legislative body of Geor-

gia, pulling down, burning, and similar insulting actions of the European Union flag expressing the pro-Western course of the country, are not only an obstacle for Georgia on the way to European integration, but also insult the historical choice of the Georgian people regarding the country's foreign course.

According to him, any gathering should be peaceful, should not lead to violence and should not contradict the constitutional principles of the country.

"I would like to respond to the events that took place in front of the Parliament today.

We must not forget that according to the Constitution of Georgia, all constitutional bodies within their powers must take all measures to ensure the full integration of Georgia into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

In front of the highest legislative body of Georgia, pulling down and burning the flag of the European Union erected to express the pro-Western course and similar insulting actions are not only an obstacle for Georgia on the way to European integration, but also insult the histori-

cal choice of the Georgian people regarding the foreign course of the country, which is supported by the constitutional record," Ioseliani said.

### Venice Commission Concludes Main Recommendations not Completed

The Venice Commission published a conclusion which was sent to the European Union within the framework of completion of 12 Recommendations is-

yet been taken into account. Among them, the resolution of issues of personal interests in the Supreme Council of Justice is highlighted.

The conclusion of the Venice Commission stated that the acts adopted by the Parliament without consulting the opposition and civil society do not comply with democratic standards.

"The commission reiterates that it is important for the parliament to adopt acts that regulate important aspects of the legal order without real consultations with the opposition, experts

საქართველოს სახალხო დამცველი Public Defender of Georgia

Levan Ioseliani

მინდა გამოვხატო დღეს პარლამენტის წინ განვითარებულ მოვლენებს, არ უნდა დაგვავიწყდეს, რომ საქართველოს კონსტიტუციის მიხედვით,



sued by EU for Georgia's candidacy status.

The conclusion reads that the main recommendations that the commission gave before have not

and civil society, does not comply with the standards of democratic law-making," the conclusion reads.

## Ambassador Fischer: "Georgia can continue to count on Germany's support for the training of skilled workers"



The German Embassy, together with representatives of GIZ and KfW, met the Minister of Education Chkhenkeli and the Skills Agency represented by Tamar Kitiashvili to discuss the status and future of vocational training in Georgia. Vocational Education and Training is one of the core areas of German-Georgian development cooperation. Germany supports through KfW the construction of three Centers of Excellence in the fields of construction and logistics as well as wine and tourism and provides through GIZ a systemic support to vocational education with a focus on the integration of the private sector, the support of the Skills Agency and of the establishment of the Sector Skills Organizations.

### Weather

Wednesday, March 15  
Day Mostly Cloudy High: 16°C  
Night Clear Low: 7°C

Thursday, March 16  
Day Partly Cloudy High: 19°C  
Night Cloudy Low: 11°C

published by  
**The Messenger**  
43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia  
Founded by Prof. Zaza Gachechiladze  
Tamar Gachechiladze  
Publisher  
Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000  
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge  
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli  
Commercial Director  
Mariam Mchedlidze  
Editor-in-Chief  
Khatuna Gogichaishvili  
Layout Designer, Photographer

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact. All contributions should be submitted by e-mail. The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements. The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.