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Binding EU Studies in the Education Policy of Georgia

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ABSTRACT

EU Studies are importantly developed in Georgia. Almost all universities of Georgia include the teaching of EU law or EU-related other courses within different higher educational programs. But obligatory nature of EU studies is only inserted into specialized European Studies Programs and Master Law Programs in Georgia.

It could be stressed that enlargement, empowerment and making more and more binding EU studies should be the top agenda not only on higher education but also vocational and school levels. It is especially essential after the issuing of Enlargement Package 2023 from the EU side and granting the Candidacy to Georgia.

More and deeper Europeanisation leads the process to more internalization skills, competitiveness, knowledge of EU standards and policies, comparative studies, strategic communication and dissemination. Furthermore, the EU studies could play an important role in approaching the common understanding of Georgian European way. With this regard teaching empowerment in regions and among ethnic minorities is a particular issue.

Education and science are the instruments which should bring Georgia closer towards freedom, prosperity, better European perspective and membership in the EU.

Keywords: *EU Studies, education policy, Georgia, higher education program, MA law program, ethnic minorities.*

Introduction

European Integration process, Integration strategy, Integration methods and approaches have such a nature that they should be included in all areas/sectors and all policies of Georgia. It is not enough to see the progress of European integration only in the field of education. But the education has the special assignment and impacting power to largely influence on democratization and Europeanisation actions. Thus, strengthening of EU studies into the official education policy is the fundamental tool for the development of the country and the people of Georgia.

Georgia has already entered the EU enlargement space. This is a great responsibility and increased

commitment for Georgia. It automatically affects the life of HEIs and educational policy. Today, achievement of such valuable goals as human rights, human welfare, growth of trade and production, healthy lifestyle, youth empowerment, decent work, social justice, market socialization, freedom of civil society, personal dignity, security, safety, freedom - all are related and strongly connected to competitive educational programs and education quality, serving to reach abovementioned values and outcomes. In such an era, Georgian education policy and universities are obliged to strengthen their actions and work towards EU studies and research.

The article pays attention to and discusses the current general practice in Georgia, challenges in the field of EU studies and presents the recommendations for future development.

1. EU studies in MA Law Programs in Georgia

In 2020 the National Center of the Educational Quality Enhancement elaborated and approved the document establishing the standards/criteria of law programs in Georgia (for BA law and MA law programs). The document states that one of the **learning outcomes achieved at the MA Law Program** should be the following: “a student knows about the EU law influence on Georgian Law” (*National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement*¹). This was the first obligatory, mandatory and binding approach towards EU Studies in Georgia. So, from now on, EU studies is an Integral and uninterrupted part of education policy in MA law programs. This progress directly responds to the goal of the **Constitution of Georgia**, which states that “*The constitutional bodies shall take all measures within the scope of their competencies to ensure the full integration of Georgia into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*” (*Constitution of Georgia, 1995*²). Definitely, without an appropriately developed education policy, great goals could not be achieved. European studies were the subject of development at many universities in Georgia for ages, but it was not normatively established and it was not binding. Currently, envisaging obligatory teaching within MA LAW programs, is the first reformist approach and a very progressive step in the education policy of Georgia and deserves respect, appreciation and expansion.

Along with the aforementioned progress, there are certainly challenges that need to be identified and addressed:

¹ <https://old.eqe.ge/res/docs/-%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%9B%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%97%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1%E1%83%93%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%92%E1%83%9D%E1%83%91%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98%E1%83%95%E1%83%98%E1%83%9B%E1%83%90%E1%83%AE%E1%83%90%E1%83%A1%E1%83%98%E1%83%90%E1%83%97%E1%83%94%E1%83%91%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98.pdf>

² Consolidated version of 2020, <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/30346?publication=36>

The first question is: Is it enough (the abovementioned decision) for the real and deep development of EU Studies in Georgia? Bearing in mind the current progress of Georgia (based on the European Commission recommendations towards Georgia, 8 Nov, 2023), Georgia must qualitatively, quantitatively and comprehensively update and develop the integration tools in many fields. Such a commitment leads to the strengthening of education, the development of European education in various educational programs. Not only standard document for law programs should focus on EU studies, but also the rest of educational standards of other professions and education programs should include teaching about the EU and Europeanization.

Association Agreement and DCFTA³ concluded between the EU and Georgia⁴ covers all spheres of private and public relations, among the biggest parts of the AA touch market functioning rules (DCFTA). Economic convergence and legal approximation obligations go to any field - energy, trade, safety, environment, standardization, metrology, consumer, business, transport, health-care etc. So, in all professions the context of EU, Europeanization and European standards are highly needed.

Besides the development of professional, competitive skills and knowledge, education policy has the mission to raise **state-minded and progressive young people with civic responsibility**. With this regard the youth should be well-aware of the future development path of Georgia. The formation of solid, stable national approaches to the country's foreign and domestic policies, should be founded on **values-based learning**.

Issuing from the above-mentioned the **first recommendation is**: to elaborate legal amendments to the law on General Education, Law on Vocational Education and Law on Higher Education and establish binding approaches towards EU Studies at all levels of education. This reform will lead Georgia towards:

- a) the formation of common ideas about the vision (of internal and external policies) equally in cities and regions of Georgia;
- b) the development of EU studies in all professions;
- c) the internalization of Georgian education system.
- d) Democratization of professions and educational programs.

It was stressed above that the obligatory learning outcome in MA law program is that – student knows about the EU law's influence on Georgian law. **The second legal question is: how this outcome could be reached in MA law programs?**

³ DCFTA – agreement on Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area; Title IV of the Association Agreement

⁴ Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part, Official Journal of the European Union, 2014, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0830\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0830(02))

As it is related to law programs, it means that law professors should develop a practice of implementation of this learning outcome. **There are many outstanding law professors in Georgia, but not many know EU law, legal approximation concepts, methods of law Europeanisation and Comparative practices with the EU law.** Can all law professors at the MA level deliver the knowledge in their law teaching courses in a form to achieve the obligatory learning outcome? Or there could be a single teaching course achieving this outcome?

There could be two scenarios: 1: introduction of different teaching courses in MA Law program which will develop comparative studies about EU law and Europeanisation of Georgian Law. 2: introduction of one special and binding teaching course giving deep and very specific knowledge to students about the EU law, legal approximation, instruments of Europeanisation of Georgian laws, approximation methods, among, compliance table (established at the organic law of Georgia “On Normative Acts”⁵), CJEU case law and their interpretation and application practices, Association Agreement/DCFTA and its principles of approximation. Both approaches are acceptable. For example, the practice of **the second approach is established via Jean Monnet Modules at the Gori State University⁶ and the Caucasus University⁷.** Here it is important to emphasize that the first book for university studies in Georgia has already been elaborated within the framework of the Jean Monnet module “*European Union, Association Agreement and Legal Approximation*” implemented by Gori State University⁸.

To develop the first approach, law professionals/law academia should be aware of the EU, EU law and Legal Approximation sense. After establishing the obligatory standard, HEIs of Georgia must invest in academia’s development and science-empowerment actions. Here it should be stressed that teaching EU is significantly different from teaching - the impact of EU law on Georgian law (to reach the learning outcome).

It is believed that Georgia's EU candidate status and the prospect of further membership necessitate the transformation of the country in many directions. **One of the main topics** of discussion goes to the training of qualified personnel. The solution to this problem during the transitional stage is not easy. Before the development of European integration processes, the teaching of Europe as a civilization was only relevant in the fields of history and European languages. Step-by-step it became necessary to introduce and develop a separate field of study - European studies (*Machitidze, Chelidze,*

⁵ Adopted 22.10.2009, consolidated version of 2021, <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/90052?publication=34>

⁶ Jean Monnet Module “EU Explored in Association Agreement”, Gori State University, <https://www.gu.edu.ge/en/international-relations1/jean-monnet-module/about-module>

⁷ Jean Monnet Module “Europeanisation of Law Programs in Georgia”, Caucasus University, <https://cu.edu.ge/en/grant-projects/ongoing-projects/zhan-mones-proekti/eu-lp-ge>

⁸ Kardava E., 2023, <https://gu.edu.ge/uploads/other/14/14341.pdf>

2019⁹]. Currently, the case is that all sectoral programs should include EU studies component.

Thus the second recommendation is: to elaborate the methodical document/book for lecturers - how to teach the EU law and EU law influence on Georgian legislation within their teaching curriculums¹⁰; as well as broadly support and ensure the process of training of academia in the field of EU, European Integration, EU law and Europeanisation.

There is another challenge, a very crucial thing: supporting and financing the scientific actions, research activities, training of academia, - in short, funding of science and academia. **The legitimate question is: how HEIs empower the scientific and research personnel in Georgia?** The policy of improper/excessive workload of scientists and research professors (exploitative contracts), fatigue conditions, non-motivation circumstances, low-paid wages are dominating in Georgia (It is a well-known practice in Georgia when one professor could be the academic staff of different/many universities in parallel because, a low salary, instability, payment only for teaching hours forces the professor to work in many different universities and earn a living). **Development of science Generally and in the field of EU studies cannot take place without appropriate policy and worth-based labour conditions towards professors.** When discussing the abovementioned outcome at Law Master programs (related to EU studies), the professors, should have decent conditions (closer European practices) and motivation for conducting research and new knowledge to develop their teaching courses with regard to EU law and Europeanisation of Georgian law. Nothing develops in democracy without the existence of decent terms and human labour respect. **Thus the third recommendation is:** the education policy should regulate the reasonable and humane approach to the workload of the professors/scientists (teach, research, administrative obligations); Under labor policy it should be regulated the concept of minimum decent salary; Universities should create the practice of classified approaches towards the working time; Labour relations between professors and HEIs should be stable.

2. Specialized European Studies Programs at HEIs

Before (and today) EU studies became mandatory in MA law programs, special programs in various universities were successfully operating in Georgia, namely - **European studies programs**. In these programs, the study of Europe is carried out in a broad sense and goes beyond the study of the European Union, but with the unification/harmonisation of the laws of European countries, the convergence of values, the intensification of trade relations and the significant increase in the role of the EU in world politics, the European studies programs have become more and more concentrated on

⁹ <https://jlaw.tsu.ge/index.php/ijml/article/view/6601> (access 2.04.2024).

¹⁰ Currently, this approach is included in Jean Monnet Module "Europeanisation of Law Programs in Georgia" at the Caucasus University.

the European Union. As an example there could be mentioned the European Studies Bachelor Program of the Caucasus University. Since 2008, the CU has been one of the first universities to offer the degree in European Studies. Now, the program covers and follows Europe's rapid processes of political, economic, social and cultural development, which have played a fundamental role in shaping the new-type world we live in today (Chelidze, Machitidze, Shengelia, 2019).

The European Studies educational programs use an interdisciplinary approach. The content of the program is concentrated on learning key figures, features, principles, and values of the European Union, as well as on the processes of European integration (history, enlargement, EU development programs), among, European integration processes occurring in Georgia and their synergy with the EU and the rest of the world. The interdisciplinary teaching approach provides a good opportunity to learn about Europe/EU in Georgia from different perspectives - economy, history, culture, budget support tools, political institutions, decision-making methods, actions in the neighborhood, security, energy, etc. To ensure the program's success, experiences of leading universities in EU countries are taken into account and adapted to align with current processes and changes in Europe.¹¹ Besides, against the backdrop of current political processes and the developments in the EU, the interest towards European Studies Program has increased, at the same time, the teaching of regions and teaching of regionalism has become in demand within the framework of this program (Machitidze, Chelidze, 2019).

When considering the strengthening of European studies at the university level, it is of the utmost importance that such programs are popular in society. Especially this questions should become sensitive at schools. Therefore, one of the obligations of universities within the framework of European Studies Programs is to fulfil the third mission - to export and share the knowledge with the broad society outside the university, especially with pupils at school. Moreover, the mission of these programs is to spread knowledge in the regions of Georgia, among ethnic minorities, and where there is little knowledge about Europe, EU and European integration. As a good example and practice could be nominated the Jean Monnet project “Triangle Effect of European Studies at Schools” (TEESS)¹², which strengthened the awareness-rising and knowledge export processes in regions of Georgia and among ethnic minorities (implemented by the Caucasus School of Humanities via the program of European Studies). It could be stressed that within this project, together with professors, students participated in knowledge-sharing actions. In this way, young people tested theoretical knowledge in practice, communicated with the public, developed skills and learnt how to talk about the EU in

¹¹ <https://cu.edu.ge/schoolss/csh/programs-csh/undergraduate-csh/csh-bach>

¹² <https://cu.edu.ge/en/grant-projects/implemented-projects/jean-monnet-projects-cu/tess-grant-project>

different target groups. Additionally, students had an opportunity to improve their professional knowledge and skills in various areas of European studies, becoming stronger and competitive specialists in the field. One of the fundamental and most important results within the framework of the project was the elaboration/publication of a school manual for teachers of history and civic education "European Association Process in Georgia"¹³, based on which the European Union should be taught in schools. Probably, for the first time in Georgia, the manual was translated into Armenian and Azerbaijani languages, not into Russian. The Russian language is spoken by ethnic minorities and it is often in Georgia when translation is done in Russian (Chelidze, Kardava, Bragvadze, 2020). In addition, the competition announced within the framework of the project for school pupils including ethnic minorities - How I See Europe in Georgia (written essay), was announced only in Georgian. In this way, the project not only contributed to teaching about the European Union, but also to the teaching of the state language.

In order to develop specialized European Studies Programs, some important recommendations should be met:

1. It is necessary to constantly improve and modify programs taking into account all modern innovations and changes in Europe, especially in the EU.
2. Involvement of students and graduates of programs in different actions;
3. The current practice and experience in terms of developing European studies in Georgia is highly supported by the possibilities of Erasmus+ Jean Monnet actions. It is essential to intensively use this tool. As well as expansion of students and academia participation in Erasmus+ mobility programs.
4. Enlarge the scope of teaching levels of European studies towards MA and Doctoral Levels.
5. Broaden the disciplines (teaching courses) in the program (for example towards the EU Geography, regional security etc).

Conclusions

Today, in Georgia (a candidate country for EU membership), EU studies (teaching and research on the EU and Europeanisation) should find an important and sustainable place in all qualifications and educational programs. The precedent of compulsory teaching integrated into the MA Law programs should become a good example for other university programs. It is important to note as well that EU studies should be established in Vocational and school educational programs.

Specialized European Studies programs should be strengthened and developed in Georgia. It is

¹³ [https://cu.edu.ge/files/gallery/Grant%20Projects/2020/broshura-Eng-bolo%20\(1\).pdf](https://cu.edu.ge/files/gallery/Grant%20Projects/2020/broshura-Eng-bolo%20(1).pdf)

highly needed not only in Georgia as European Studies professionals/specialists are internationalized and are in demand at the EU and international levels. European Studies programs should respond to the changed circumstances, current EU policies and global requirements both in terms of employment and new knowledge-generation as well. Such specialized programs should become more interdisciplinary and expanded via different curriculums so that students learn Europe in almost all contexts (political, economic, geographical, cultural and others). It is highly recommended to develop European Studies programs at all levels of higher education as well (MA and Doctoral).

Development of European studies (in specialized or in non-directly related programs, among law programs) requires appropriate staff/professors. This gives rise to the necessity of the training of academia and scientists so that everyone (lecturers of all professions) knows the European Union and the aspects of the impact of EU law and policies on Georgian law and politics. It is advisable to encourage each teaching course with comparative studies with the EU. To approach this, it is necessary research actions' promotion by professors. It should be emphasized and stressed that universities should establish such a policy/management that scientists and academic staff are stable, relevantly remunerated and workloaded by rationally/reasonably normalized working hours, so that they have the motivation and time to explore the European Union in their disciplinary areas. This issue should become the subject of regulation under Education and Labor policies as well.

The issue of how to make binding and mandatory European Studies at all levels of education (secondary schools, vocational level and university level) should be raised as a top agenda to the level of Education Policy discussion.

Finally, with such an approach in the field of education, consolidation of generations, unity, progressive thinking, good and healthy practices of Europeanization and fixing ties between regions and the centre, between universities and schools will be formed in Georgia. In this way, the universal will of the nation - the path towards the European choice - will unite and win.

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