

GEORGIA REALITY CHECK

5 November 2013

Venue: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania

Vilnius, Lithuania

A year ago, Georgian Dream coalition won the parliamentary elections and formed the government, ending the almost decade-long rule of the United National Movement led by President Mikheil Saakashvili. His departure from the presidential palace this November might put an end to the year-long – and often tense – cohabitation between the Georgian Dream and the UNM, but it is unlikely to provide quick fixes for the challenges the country faces. Will the Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili's announced departure from politics rock the ruling coalition's boat at the time when the country's economy remains fragile? How will Georgia and the EU respond to Russia's mounting pressure in the run-up to the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius? How can Brussels and the member states help Tbilisi make good on its commitments to a deeper European integration post-Vilnius? What do Georgians think one year since the landmark change of Georgia's political landscape and can the government maintain its broad public support in the months ahead?

The second edition of Georgia Reality Check will follow on the heels of the country's presidential elections at the end of October. The "Reality Check" is a policy review process aiming to gather insights from top domestic and international analysts, practitioners, diplomats and policy-makers working in and on the Eastern Partnership countries, with the ambition to discuss these behind closed doors. The first such review was the Belarus Reality Check enacted in Vilnius in October 2012 and followed by similar Reality Checks on Moldova and Georgia (Bratislava, April 2013) and Ukraine (Kyiv, June 2013).

AGENDA

**all sessions are off-the-record*

09:00 – 09:15 OFFICIAL WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

**Joint session with Moldova Reality Check*

09:15 – 10:45 FIRST PANEL: POLITICAL UPDATE

Key topics and questions:

- From October 2012 to October 2013: what has changed in Georgia's politics? Actors, motivations and objectives



- The politics of the ruling coalition: what would Bidzina Ivanishvili's abdication as a PM mean for coalition's internal coherence and government's stability?
- UNM after the presidential election: wither UNM?
- What do Georgians think? Public expectations, support for political parties and assessment of their country's situation in October 2012 vs. October 2013 and trends for 2014

10:45 – 11:00 COFFEE BREAK

11:00 – 12:30 SECOND PANEL: EXTERNAL (F)ACTOR

Key topics and questions:

- Armenia, Moldova, Ukraine... Georgia? Moscow's domino play in the Eastern Partnership region? Russia's leverage in Georgia: trade, politics, security (incl. borderisation)
- Georgia-Russian bilateral relations: outcomes since the 're-start' and outlook for the period after the Vilnius summit.
- Relations between Tbilisi, Sukhumi, Tskhinvali and Moscow: expectations and reality

12:30 – 13:45 BUFFET LUNCH

13:45 – 15:15 THIRD PANEL: ECONOMY

Key topics and questions:

- Georgia's economic outlook: current state of economy, perspective developments and challenges
- Key stakeholders in Georgia's economy: who are they and how the EU should engage them?
- Costs and benefits of the DCFTA for Georgia and how to make it work: implications for key economic sectors in the next 12 months to 5 years. Impact on unemployment, GDP, economic development and Georgia's trade with Russia.
- Is the Customs Union a real economic alternative for Georgia?

15:15 – 15:30 COFFEE BREAK

15:30 – 17:00 FOURTH PANEL: GEORGIA AND THE EU

Key topics and questions:

- How does the EU fit into Georgia's domestic political context and Tbilisi's foreign policy? Achievements and pitfalls so far and how to avoid them in the future?
- How do Georgians see the EU and what they expect from closer integration? Perceptions among political and economic elites, civil society and the general public.
- What should the EU's strategy for Georgia be after Vilnius? What key areas should the EU assistance concentrate on? How to help Georgia implement the Association Agreement and the DCFTA? Is visa liberalisation a real prospect for Georgia and if so, what is the time horizon?

17:00 – 17:30 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

