

Support for Ukraine must be the cornerstone of this joint strategy. Beyond immediate humanitarian and economic assistance, the already established early reconstruction fund must be further strengthened to address Ukraine's long-term needs. Equally crucial is Germany's enhanced military support. Delivering long-range weapons systems such as the Taurus cruise missile would provide Ukraine with a decisive strategic advantage, weakening Russia's operational capabilities and demonstrating the reliability of Germany and Poland as leading partners in the region.

Should a ceasefire materialise, Germany and Poland must step up to secure Ukraine's territorial integrity and long-term stability. With

France likely constrained by domestic political challenges, the Weimar Triangle will – if at all – depend heavily on decisive leadership from Berlin and Warsaw.

To meet these challenges, Germany must act promptly and decisively. Together with Poland and the other so-called Big Five members of the EU, Berlin could develop concrete measures to stabilise Eastern Europe, accelerate the integration of Eastern partner states into European frameworks, and strengthen Europe's energy sovereignty. Only through a coordinated strategy combining economic recovery, military assistance, and political integration can the EU effectively reduce Russia's geopolitical leverage and secure long-term stability in the region.

GEORGIA

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As we look ahead to 2025, it seems to be another challenging year for the EU Eastern policy, much like 2024. The current geopolitical climate offers little hope for transformative positive changes in the short term period. At the heart of these challenges lies Russia's increasingly aggressive policies, particularly in its immediate neighborhood.

The foreign policy priorities of the new US administration and the unity within the EU will play critical roles in shaping the coming year's contours. A persistent obstacle for the EU Eastern policy will remain its lack of internal unity. Over the past three years, there have been numerous instances where one or several member states have blocked or delayed joint decisions. Notable examples include delays in providing military aid to Ukraine and imposing sanctions on Russia. Furthermore, skepticism around the EU enlargement continues to hinder progress. Despite the urgent need to strengthen ties with aspiring member states like Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, enlargement fatigue persists, fueled by the reluctance of certain member states. The EU's refusal to grant Georgia candidate status in 2022 is a clear example of this hesitation.

While the war in Ukraine has catalyzed greater consensus on many issues, significant disagreements remain on topics such as energy security, defense spending, military industry investments, and arms supplies to Ukraine. Resolving these divisions will be crucial for the EU to maintain its credibility and effectiveness on the global stage. Equally concerning are Russia's disinformation campaigns and influence operations targeting both the EU member states and EaP countries. These efforts aim to weaken democratic institutions and sow skepticism about European unity. The Kremlin's activities were particularly evident during elections in Romania and Moldova, where attempts to interfere were not as effective as was expected by Moscow. Moreover, Russian propaganda continues to bolster pro-Russian populist and far-right parties across Europe, threatening stability and unity within the EU. These destabilizing tactics highlight the urgent need for robust measures to counter disinformation and strengthen democratic resilience.

A notable weakness in the EU's Eastern Policy is the lack of a long-term strategic vision for Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Without a comprehensive and inclusive integration strategy, these countries face an uncertain path, which discourages bold political decisions and undermines their commitment to the European project.

For Georgia, 2025 is expected to bring a host of significant challenges. The ongoing Russian occupation of Georgian territories and hybrid warfare tactics exacerbate the threats facing the country. Georgia's future is closely tied to Ukraine's victory in its war with Russia, as regional dynamics remain interconnected. Despite Georgia's past role as a reform leader within the EaP and its achievement of the EU candidate status in 2023, recent legislative changes and some decisions have played a negative role on its integration process. Actions such as the adoption of a controversial Law on Transparency of foreign influence and the

government's decision to delay the EU accession negotiations until 2028 have weakened political support from the EU member states and eroded trust in Georgia's government. These setbacks have also triggered public protests, reflecting the discontent within Georgian society. To overcome these challenges, Georgia must prioritize restoring trust with the EU and advancing its integration process. Key actions include repealing the Law on Transparency of foreign influence, implementing the EU's nine recommendations, and resuming active negotiations with the EU.

Accelerating the implementation of the Association Agreement, harmonization of the Georgian legislation with the EU standards, and utilizing initiatives like the Roadmap2EU will be essential steps. Georgia's geographical location also poses challenges, as it lacks a direct land border with the EU member states, complicating economic and transport integration. To address this, both Georgia and the EU must invest in connectivity projects, particularly in the energy and transport sectors, to strengthen physical and economic ties. Additionally, Georgia must develop a comprehensive action plan to counter Russian disinformation and propaganda, which remain significant obstacles to its EU aspirations.

The year ahead holds immense significance for both Europe and the Eastern Partnership countries. Much will depend on the foreign policy direction of the new US administration and Europe's ability to present a united front. At the same time, Russia's actions remain the greatest challenge to stability in the region. Ultimately, the US stance on Russia and Eastern Europe will play a decisive role in shaping the geopolitical landscape. However, given the uncertainties surrounding US foreign policy priorities, the path forward remains unclear. In this context, Georgia and its Eastern European neighbors must continue to demonstrate their commitment to democratic values and European integration while navigating the challenges ahead.