

## CHALLENGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S ENGAGEMENT IN STRATEGIC CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP REGION: THE CASES OF ARMENIA, GEORGIA AND UKRAINE

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### Abstract

This article analyses the EU's engagement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in its Eastern Neighbourhood, which is undergoing political transformation. The article highlights that, initially focusing on diplomatic efforts and development assistance, the EU has gradually deepened its engagement in response to the increasing complexity of regional conflicts. In the Eastern Partnership countries, the EU has deployed a range of instruments, from political dialogue and economic sanctions to financial assistance and civilian missions, aimed at stabilising the region and promoting long-term peace. The effectiveness of such EU strategies varies in a number of ways, reflecting the diverse political landscapes and challenges faced by each EaP country. This article analyses three separate case studies to examine the EU's conflict resolution and peacebuilding strategies. Each of these studies provides a nuanced understanding of EU conflict resolution and peacebuilding strategies in different geopolitical and conflict contexts. In this regard, Georgia's significant involvement in European integration processes is highlighted, which underscores Georgia's strategic importance for the EU in promoting democratic governance and regional stability. The article also examines the role of the EU in Georgia's political and security sector reforms and conflict prevention. The article also examines the geopolitical dimensions of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the context of Armenia's European integration processes and Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union. The article analyzes the role of the EU in Ukraine, in particular, after the annexation of Crimea and Russia's invasion in 2022, which shows a significant shift towards a more proactive and interventionist stance. A comparative analysis of the Ukrainian case provides an opportunity to gain insight into the EU's strategies to stabilize the Eastern Partnership region, support state-building, and overcome the broader geopolitical consequences of the conflict.

**Keywords:** *European Union, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, diplomatic efforts, growing complexity, EaP countries, political landscapes.*

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## Introduction

The EU's approach to the South Caucasus has long been characterized by a largely passive political stance, often limited to issuing declarations and communications. This region did not initially command significant attention from the EU, even after the republics gained independence in 1991. The enforcement of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) marked a shift toward more active engagement, but even then, the South Caucasus remained a lower priority compared to other regions (Jafarova 2011).

The EU began discussions on enhancing its involvement in the South Caucasus around 1999, and by 2001, various assistance programs were initiated, focusing on fostering democracy, civil society, and economic development. Despite these efforts, the EU's relationship with the South Caucasus countries was primarily defined by unilateral aid, including financial support, humanitarian assistance, food security initiatives, rehabilitation projects, and technical assistance (Jafarova 2011, 64-65; Aleksanyan 2020, 32-39).

When comparing the EU's engagement with Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine, it becomes evident that Ukraine was the first country where the EU began a more proactive and comprehensive approach. This is particularly clear when comparing the partnership and cooperation agreements signed with Armenia and Georgia to those with Ukraine. The agreements with Ukraine and Moldova were more comprehensive, including the objective of establishing a free-trade area with the EU, a goal notably absent from the agreements with the South Caucasus countries (Luciani 2025; Poz'arlik 2025). In the initial stage, the EU refrained from involving itself in the conflict resolution mechanisms for the secessionist movements in Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, highlighting the limited scope of its engagement in the region during the 1990s and early 2000s.

The first major signal for the EU in the South Caucasus came with the Rose Revolution in Georgia. This event marked a turning point, prompting the EU to take a more active role in the region, particularly in the areas of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The EU's direct involvement in conflict resolution in the South Caucasus began in 2003 with the appointment of a Special Representative. This role was established to aid in conflict prevention and resolution, foster dialogue with key regional actors, and support the development of a comprehensive EU policy toward the region (Sasse 2008; Vasilyan 2020).

A significant milestone followed in 2004 when Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia were formally included in the European Neighborhood Policy. With the region's growing strategic importance, particularly in terms of energy resources and transportation routes, the EU began to reassess and expand its engagement in the South Caucasus. The EU's decision to deepen its involvement was also influenced by the anticipated closer proximity of the South Caucasus to EU borders following the enlargement to include Romania, Bulgaria, and potentially other countries in the Balkans.

Similarly, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 was a crucial signal of the country's desire for democratic reforms and closer alignment with European values.

This pivotal event led the EU to increase its support and engagement with Ukraine. Additionally, Ukraine's strategic location made it a key player in the EU's interests, particularly in terms of energy transit routes and regional stability (Wolczuk, Puglisi and Wolowski 2008, 87).

Following the incorporation of Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine into the European Neighborhood Policy 2004, Action Plans (AP) were adopted in November 2006 to align these countries with European standards (European Union 2006). These Action Plans represented a pivotal moment in the EU's engagement with its eastern neighbors, outlining a framework for political and economic reforms. However, despite these ambitious goals, the ENP faced challenges in effectively addressing conflict resolution. The ENP Strategy Paper and the accompanying Action Plans did recognize the importance of conflict resolution, but their approach was criticized for being too abstract and lacking concrete measures. The strategy was more focused on general facilitation rather than offering specific, actionable steps to enhance the EU's role in resolving conflicts.

The analysis presents that for the EU, achieving security in these countries depended on the implementation of reforms in critical areas such as justice and security sector reform. The goal was to strengthen democratic institutions and create a more favorable environment for conflict settlement. Consequently, the EU prioritized supporting these reform processes as a foundational step in its broader strategy for enhancing regional security and stability. The EU's approach to conflict resolution in the South Caucasus through the European Neighborhood Policy Action Plans was inconsistent and lacked a clear, cohesive strategy. While the Action Plan with Azerbaijan emphasized sovereignty and territorial integrity, the one with Armenia highlighted the right to self-determination, reflecting a contradictory stance. This inconsistency suggests that, despite identifying conflict resolution as a priority, the EU was hesitant to directly engage in resolving conflicts in the region at that time (Delcour 2010, 548-549).

### **The Eastern Partnership as a key renewal of EU engagement with justified expectations**

When the EaP was launched in 2009, it was seen as a significant upgrade to the EU's engagement with Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine. However, this enhanced offer came with certain expectations: partner countries were anticipated to align closely with EU rules and standards. While the EaP aimed to facilitate legal approximation with EU regulations, it fell short in several key areas. The emphasis on legal alignment did not effectively bolster the EU's conflict resolution mechanisms or adequately address the need for political reform. Furthermore, the broad application of EU standards often clashed with the socio-economic realities of the post-Soviet region. This disconnect hindered the potential for meaningful transformation and left the partner countries grappling with the challenge of reconciling EU norms with their own complex domestic situations (Kardaś 2025).

Analysis shows that from 2000 to 2009, the EU's engagement in Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine was predominantly indirect, employing soft power techniques to influence post-Soviet states. The EU focused on promoting reforms in governance, economic

development, and legal systems through methods such as development aid, technical assistance, and diplomatic outreach (Liu 2025; Heinemann-Grüder 2025). This strategy aimed to align these countries with European standards and foster stability without direct intervention in conflicts. The approach sought to gradually induce transformation by supporting institutional modernization and encouraging democratic practices, leveraging indirect influence and strategic partnerships rather than direct conflict resolution (Burmester 2024).

The conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia are deeply rooted in the complex history of the Caucasus region, where ethnic, political, and territorial disputes have persisted for centuries. Both regions were part of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic during the Soviet era, but tensions over national identity and autonomy simmered beneath the surface. In Abkhazia, the relationship between the Abkhaz people and the Georgian government became increasingly strained during the Soviet Union's later years. Abkhazia was initially a separate Soviet Socialist Republic but was later merged into the Georgian SSR as an autonomous republic. Despite its autonomous status, Abkhaz identity and culture were often overshadowed by Georgian influence. This marginalization led to rising nationalist sentiments among the Abkhaz, who feared losing their cultural and political identity. The situation in South Ossetia was somewhat similar. South Ossetia, inhabited mainly by the Ossetian people who are ethnically distinct from Georgians, was also granted autonomy within the Georgian SSR. The Ossetians, like the Abkhaz, harbored concerns about the preservation of their identity and autonomy. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s exacerbated these tensions, as nationalist movements gained momentum across the former Soviet states. As Georgia moved towards independence in the early 1990s, the central government's efforts to assert control over its territories were met with resistance in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Bartuzi et al. 2008, 1-7). Tensions in Abkhazia escalated into a full-scale war in 1992-1993, during which Abkhazian forces were able to expel Georgian forces from their territory. The conflict resulted in significant loss of life, the displacement of ethnic Georgians from Abkhazia, and the region's *de facto* independence, although it remains internationally recognized as part of Georgia. In South Ossetia, a similar conflict erupted around the same time. South Ossetian forces, also with Russian backing, clashed with Georgian troops. The conflict led to the establishment of a fragile ceasefire in 1992, leaving South Ossetia with *de facto* independence but without international recognition. Tensions remained high, with occasional flare-ups of violence, particularly in 2004 and 2008 (Chankvetadze and Murusidze 2021).

The EU's involvement in Georgia's separatist conflicts began in the 1990s, initially concentrating on providing humanitarian aid. Between 1992 and 2006, the EU invested considerable resources in these regions, allocating €25 million to Abkhazia and €8 million to South Ossetia, with over €100 million dedicated to humanitarian efforts, including assistance for internally displaced persons (IDPs). After the 2008 war, the EU maintained its support, channeling €61 million through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and an additional €6 million for IDP projects following the end of the OSCE mission in Georgia (Popescu 2007, 28-30).

The situation changed significantly after the 2008 Russian-Georgian war. The EU's involvement in Georgia shifted from a predominantly indirect role to a more direct engagement in conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Under the French Presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy, the EU played a key role in brokering a six-point ceasefire agreement on August 12. Following this, the EU established a Special Representative for Georgia and launched the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) on October 1, 2008. The EUMM, staffed by over 200 monitors, was tasked with overseeing the ceasefire implementation and monitoring the withdrawal of Russian and Georgian forces. While the mission was mandated to cover all of Georgia, it faced limitations as it could only access areas under Georgian control due to restrictions imposed by Russia. Despite these constraints, the EUMM became an essential presence, stepping in after the cessation of OSCE and UN monitoring missions. One of the criticisms of the EU's response to this war was that Georgia exposed deep divisions within the EU regarding Russia and highlighted the need for a more proactive and coherent policy towards Eastern Europe (Akçakoca et al. 2009).

The EU's initial responses were fragmented, reflecting varying national perspectives on Russia's intentions and the EU's role. Despite successfully brokering a ceasefire through French mediation, the EU's neutral stance during the conflict limited its ability to effectively support Georgia or counter Russian actions. If the EU had responded more decisively and effectively to the conflict in Georgia, it might have influenced the dynamics in other neighboring regions experiencing frozen conflicts. A stronger EU stance could have demonstrated a clearer commitment to regional stability and conflict resolution, which might have impacted the behavior of other actors (Uchida 2022; Trunk 2025).

As was mentioned the key development in the EU-Georgia relationship was the signing of the Association Agreement (AA) in 2014, featuring the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA) (EUR-Lex 2014; EDIT 2014). This agreement, which provides Georgia with access to the EU's single market, aims to enhance trade by eliminating barriers and aligning Georgian trade practices with EU standards. While the DCFTA is expected to drive economic growth, boost exports, attract foreign investment, and strengthen Georgia's regulatory framework, its primary focus is on economic benefits rather than security. The AA promotes European standards in governance and human rights, but it does not directly ensure security or address regional conflicts.

In addition to its economic focus, the EU has supported Georgia through initiatives aimed at enhancing mobility, education, and research collaboration. The country participated in programs like Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020, which support educational reforms and research cooperation aligned with European standards. Financially, the EU has provided significant support to Georgia through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), the primary source for budget support and complementary measures. Additional targeted funding has come from thematic budget lines such as the Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities (CSO-LA), the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP). Georgia has also benefited from two Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) operations aimed at macroeconomic stability, with further aid during the

COVID-19 pandemic through the EU's Team Europe approach, which allocated EUR 150 million in emergency MFA for Georgia (European Commission 2022b, 5-7).

The situational relationship between the EU and Georgia remains complex and dynamic. Inter political turmoil in Georgia has significantly impacted its relationship with the EU, leading to the freezing of its candidacy status. The controversial Foreign Agents Law and other internal political challenges have strained the country's EU aspirations, culminating in a suspension of its membership process and associated aid (Civil Georgia 2024).

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia has deep historical roots that intensified after Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Ukraine remained divided between pro-Russian and pro-Western factions. This divide became pronounced in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea following the Euromaidan protests, which ousted pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich and led to the establishment of a pro-Western government in Kyiv. The annexation was followed by conflict in Eastern Ukraine, where Russian-backed separatists declared independence in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, resulting in a protracted war that continued until 2022. Tensions had been brewing since 2004, during the Orange Revolution, when protests over alleged electoral fraud led to the election of pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko. His presidency aimed to strengthen ties with the EU and NATO but faced resistance from Russia and internal divisions (Wilson Center 2005).

The political landscape in Ukraine experienced a profound shift in 2010 when Viktor Yanukovich, who had been elected President, chose to align Ukraine more closely with Russia rather than pursue an AA with the EU. This decision was met with widespread disapproval and criticism from many Ukrainians who saw the AA as a path towards greater integration with Europe and reform. In late 2013, the rejection of the EU AA led to mass protests in Ukraine, known as the Euromaidan movement. The movement, which began in Kyiv's Independence Square, quickly grew into a broad-based popular uprising against Yanukovich's government. Protesters demanded closer ties with the EU and greater political and economic reforms. The Euromaidan protests were characterized by their scale and intensity, drawing hundreds of thousands of people to the streets. The movement culminated in February 2014 with the ousting of Yanukovich and the establishment of a new interim government. The success of the Euromaidan Revolution marked a pivotal moment for Ukraine, signaling a decisive shift away from Russia's sphere of influence and towards a pro-European orientation. This transition set the stage for Ukraine's European integration efforts and significantly altered the country's geopolitical trajectory. The revolution also led to significant repercussions, including Russia's annexation of Crimea and the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine, further complicating the region's relations and security dynamics (Krapfl and Kühn Von Burgsdorff 2023).

In June 2014, the newly elected President Petro Poroshenko signed an EU-Ukraine AA, which came into effect in September 2017 (European Union 2014). This shift was met with immediate aggression, as Russia's occupation and annexation of Crimea in March 2014 set the stage for ongoing conflict. The EU's role in conflict resolution remained limited, with France and Germany assuming a more prominent role in mediating through the 'Normandy format', which included Ukraine and Russia. When

the Ukraine-Russia conflict began in the spring of 2014, the EU was hesitant to become directly involved and even avoided labeling the situation as a war. Instead, the EU focused on supporting Ukraine's internal reforms, while imposing sanctions on Russia for its illegal annexation of Crimea. However, the EU did not engage in conflict resolution, leaving this role to the Normandy format, where France and Germany acted as mediators alongside Ukraine and Russia. Although the EU acknowledged the risks of its energy dependence on Russia, as evidenced by the European Commission's 2014 report, actions to mitigate this dependence were minimal, with Germany proceeding with the Nord Stream 2 pipeline (Malyarenko and Wolff 2018; Åtland 2020). The EU's reluctance to confront multipolar competition until 2022 partly explains its failure to curb Russia's aggressive actions. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine might have been avoided if the EU had responded more decisively in 2014.

It's important to mention that the Normandy format was not an EU-driven initiative, and the involvement of France and Germany did not represent the EU as a whole. This format, including Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE, led to the Minsk Agreements aimed at establishing a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine, with provisions for local elections and a special status law for the conflict areas. The Minsk agreements, established in 2014 and 2015, aimed to cease hostilities in eastern Ukraine by implementing a ceasefire and outlining steps for political resolution, including local elections and special status for conflict areas (Wittke 2019). However, the agreements lacked effective enforcement, allowing Russia to continue exerting control and ultimately failing to achieve lasting peace (European Parliament 2020). The agreements, ultimately, were not implemented as intended, becoming a temporary measure that reduced conflict intensity but failed to resolve the underlying issues. This situation led to a prolonged standoff, effectively freezing the conflict until 2022.

Despite differing views among EU member states on the geopolitical competition with Russia, there was a strong consensus on the need to support Ukraine's political and economic reforms since 2004. Between 2014 and 2022, while the EU refrained from direct involvement in the conflict, it significantly bolstered Ukraine's resilience through a variety of measures. The AA catalyzed reforms across multiple sectors, including decentralization and anti-corruption efforts, with the EU providing vital political, financial, and organizational support. However, the EU did not grant Ukraine a membership prospect during this period. The DCFTA within the AA helped align the Ukrainian economy with the EU's single market by integrating EU rules and regulations into various sectors (Raik, Blockmans, Osypchuk and Suslov 2024). Additionally, the EU-Ukraine cooperation extended to reforms in local governance, public administration, and justice (Samokhvalov and Strelkov 2021; Králiková 2022).

### **Supporting security sector reform with a focus on deepening integration**

In 2014, the EU took significant steps to assist Ukraine by deploying the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) tools, leading to the establishment of the EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) in Kyiv, with regional offices in Lviv, Kharkiv, and Odesa. The primary aim of EUAM Ukraine was to support the reform of Ukraine's security sector, focusing on the police, judiciary, and border guard services. Between 2014 and 2021, the EU also committed substantial financial resources to address the impact of

the ongoing war in Donbas. This support included funding for reconstruction efforts and assistance to internally displaced persons, reflecting the EU's broader commitment to stabilizing Ukraine amidst the conflict (EEAS 2020).

The EU's response to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has been one of the most decisive and comprehensive in its history, marked by swift and multifaceted actions. The EU imposed extensive sanctions on Russia, targeting key sectors like finance, energy, and defense, and placed travel bans and asset freezes on Russian officials and entities linked to the government.

In addition to sanctions, the EU has provided significant financial and military support to Ukraine. As of August 2024, the EU had disbursed €12.2 billion under the Ukraine Facility, with a total of over \$121 billion allocated for financial, military, humanitarian, and refugee assistance since the war began. European leaders committed an additional \$54 billion in February 2024 to support Ukraine's recovery and EU accession efforts, bringing total EU support to over \$162 billion. Of this, \$13.1 billion has already been disbursed, with further funds allocated to attract investment and support recovery. The EU has also provided over \$42 billion in military aid, including ammunition, air-defense systems, tanks, and fighter jets. This aid includes \$6.6 billion from the European Peace Facility and bilateral contributions from member states. In March 2024, a dedicated Ukraine Assistance Fund worth \$5.4 billion was established to further these efforts. The EU has also allocated \$2.2 billion for joint procurement of artillery ammunition and \$535 million to boost the EU defense industry. Additionally, the EU has become the largest military training provider for Ukrainian forces, with plans to train 60,000 personnel by the end of 2024 under the \$390 million Military Assistance Mission. Humanitarian efforts include \$27 million for de-mining liberated territories (EEAS 2024).

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 significantly impacted the EUAM, leading to an expanded mandate that included facilitating refugee flows and humanitarian aid, as well as supporting the investigation and prosecution of war crimes. As the conflict intensified, the EU launched the EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM Ukraine) in November 2022 to train 15,000 Ukrainian armed forces personnel, with the goal later increasing to 30,000 (Brzozowski 2023).

The situation changed dramatically after February 2022, with the European Peace Facility (EPF) becoming a crucial tool for financing the delivery of military equipment to Ukraine by EU member states. The EPF, originally designed as a common off-budget fund for the CSDP, was rapidly adapted to meet the needs of the Ukrainian military, alongside bilateral aid from individual member states (European Peace Facility 2024). In conclusion, it is evident that following the 2022 war in Ukraine, the EU significantly shifted its policy by providing military assistance, underscoring its role as a key player in conflict resolution.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict began to escalate in the late 1980s, as the Soviet Union entered a period of political and economic turmoil. The policies of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring) initiated by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev inadvertently allowed suppressed nationalist sentiments to resurface across the Soviet Union, including in Nagorno-Karabakh. The modern phase of the conflict began in February 1988, when the Nagorno-Karabakh regional legislature passed a resolution



requesting the transfer of the oblast from the Azerbaijani SSR to the Armenian SSR. As the Soviet Union weakened, the conflict escalated into full-scale war between 1991 and 1994. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, and Nagorno-Karabakh declared its independence as the Republic of Artsakh, though it was not internationally recognized (Avakian 2015).

Bishkek Protocol, brokered by Russia in 1994, established a ceasefire that granted Nagorno-Karabakh *de facto* independence with a self-declared government in Stepanakert. Despite this status, the region remained heavily dependent on Armenia for economic, political, and military support (OSCE Minsk Group 1994). This ceasefire remained in effect until September 2020.

The relative calm was shattered in April 2016, when intense fighting broke out along the Line of Contact. The four-day conflict often referred to as the April War or the Four-Day War, resulted in hundreds of casualties on both sides and some territorial changes, with Azerbaijani forces reclaiming several strategic positions. The April War underscored the fragility of the ceasefire and highlighted the risk of a renewed large-scale conflict (Broers 2016). During the Four-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh in April 2016, the EU played a relatively restrained role, reflecting its broader cautious approach to conflicts in the South Caucasus region. The EU's response to the escalation was primarily diplomatic, urging both sides to adhere to the ceasefire and engage in renewed negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group. The EU expressed concern over the outbreak of violence and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, emphasizing the need for a peaceful resolution to the conflict (OSCE 2016). However, the EU's involvement was largely limited to issuing statements and supporting the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group, which is co-chaired by France, Russia, and the United States. The EU did not take a leading role in mediating the conflict or in proposing new initiatives to resolve the long-standing dispute, reflecting its cautious approach and its reliance on the established international framework for conflict resolution in Nagorno-Karabakh. The 2016 conflict underscored the EU's limitations in addressing the complex and deeply entrenched conflicts in its Eastern neighborhood, particularly in regions where its influence is constrained by other major powers, such as Russia.

The EU's restrained role during the Nagorno-Karabakh Four-Day War in 2016 can be understood within the broader context of Armenia's geopolitical choices, particularly its decision not to sign the AA with the EU in 2013 and instead join the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) under Russia's influence. This pivotal decision had far-reaching implications for Armenia's foreign policy and its relations with the EU, effectively limiting the EU's leverage and influence in the country, particularly in the security sector (Ter-Matevosyan et al. 2017; Aleksanyan 2020). Armenia's alignment with the EAEU, a bloc dominated by Russia, placed the country firmly within Russia's sphere of influence. This geopolitical alignment had significant consequences for the scope of EU-Armenia relations, especially in the security sector, where Russia's dominance was—and remains—pronounced. As a result, the EU found its ability to engage with Armenia on security matters severely constrained, as Russia held the primary influence over Armenia's defense and security policies.

In contrast, the EU's actions in Georgia, where it played a more proactive role, highlight the difference that political orientation can make. Georgia's political majority firmly aligned the country's future with the EU, allowing the EU to engage more deeply and assertively in conflict resolution efforts. This was evident in the EU's involvement during the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and its subsequent diplomatic initiatives. The Georgian government's commitment to European integration provided the EU with a platform to exert greater influence in the region, particularly in the security domain.

The most dramatic escalation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict occurred in September 2020, when Azerbaijan launched a full-scale offensive, employing advanced military technology, including drones and missile systems. The conflict, marked by heavy casualties and widespread destruction, saw Azerbaijan, with significant backing from Türkiye, secure substantial military gains. The war continued until November 10, 2020, when a statement was signed between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia, which established a ceasefire. It included provisions for the deployment of Russian peacekeepers to oversee the implementation of the ceasefire and the return of refugees (Office of the Prime Minister of the RA 2020).

Following this ceasefire, the EU increased its engagement in the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, working more proactively to facilitate dialogue and support long-term stability in the region. In a significant move that highlighted the EU's ambitions and marked a robust response to regional instability, the EU launched a two-month observer mission to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border in the fall of 2022. This mission, developed almost on an ad hoc basis, was modeled after the EUMM mission in Georgia, which had been in place since the 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict (EU Mission in Armenia 2024). This mission was unprecedented as it was the first of its kind conducted on the territory of a member state of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). It was criticized by Russia, which argued that the EU presence could exacerbate regional tensions, and by Azerbaijan, which argued that it had forced Armenia to adopt a more hardline stance. The short-term mission was followed by a two-year deployment, starting in February 2023, with the possibility of extension. Around 100 observers from various EU member states were sent to help stabilize Armenia's border areas, build confidence and strengthen security in conflict-affected regions, and support efforts to peacefully normalize relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan (Sahakian 2023). Despite Azerbaijan's reservations, this move has contributed to reducing tensions and increasing the political cost of potential Azerbaijani aggression against Armenia.

The EU's involvement also included the initiation of the Brussels format talks in late 2021 and early 2022, which quickly positioned the EU as a key mediator in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. This marked a shift from the OSCE Minsk Group, which had previously led peace efforts but saw its influence wane due to Russia's preoccupation with the Ukraine conflict. Under the guidance of European Council President Charles Michel, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev engaged in multiple meetings in Brussels, with additional discussions in Prague and Chişinău (Górecki 2024). These talks, also attended by leaders such as French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf

Scholz, underscored the EU's growing role in facilitating peace. One of the key recent developments was the meeting on April 5, 2024, in Brussels, where President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, EU High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, USAID Administrator Samantha Power, and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan gathered to reaffirm their support for Armenia's sovereignty, democracy, territorial integrity, and socio-economic resilience. The EU will launch a EUR 270 million Resilience and Growth Plan for Armenia for 2024-2027. This plan aims to bolster Armenia's socio-economic resilience, support trade diversification, and address the long-term needs of displaced individuals. It will enhance sectoral cooperation, promote regulatory alignment with the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), and support key areas like trade, infrastructure, energy, and aviation safety. The plan builds on the Economic and Investment Plan launched in 2021, which mobilized over EUR 550 million for strategic investments in connectivity, digital and energy infrastructure, and business development. The EU has mobilized EUR 38.4 million in humanitarian aid and budget support since 2020, focusing on housing, training, employment, and psycho-social support (Office of the Prime Minister of the RA 2024). The consideration of transferring non-lethal military equipment to Armenia under the European Peace Facility (EPF) highlights the evolving security dynamics in the region. Armenia's increasing alignment with Western interests and the heightened tensions with Russia are reflective of these shifts. Despite criticism from Russia and Azerbaijan, the EU's efforts, including the EUMA, have played a role in reducing tensions and deterring further aggression, signaling the EU's commitment to promoting stability and peace in the South Caucasus (Bunatian 2024b).

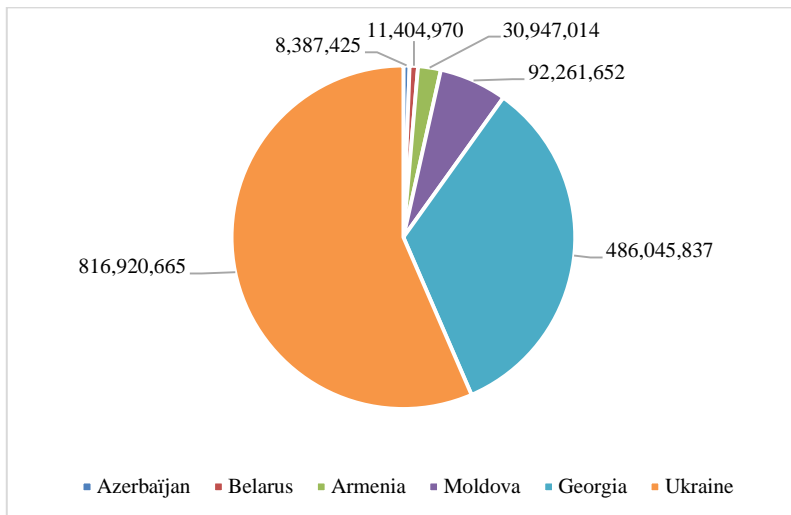
In conclusion, the EU's engagement with the South Caucasus has evolved significantly over the years, reflecting shifts in geopolitical priorities and strategic interests. Initially characterized by a passive stance and limited involvement, the EU's approach began to change in the early 2000s, marked by increased support and a more active role in regional affairs. However, the effectiveness of these frameworks in conflict resolution and peacebuilding has been mixed. The EU's initial reluctance to directly address conflicts in the South Caucasus, such as those in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh, limited its impact in these areas.

### **Financial overview of EU support for conflict resolution and peacebuilding**

Understanding the EU's approach to conflict resolution and peacekeeping requires a detailed analysis of its financial interventions and strategic priorities. The EU employs both security and non-security mechanisms to address conflicts, with funding allocated to various areas. Examining these funding allocations is crucial for grasping how the EU balances its efforts between immediate security needs and long-term developmental goals. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the EU's conflict resolution and peacekeeping strategies in Armenia, Ukraine, and Georgia, it's crucial to explore the financial support provided through various EU initiatives. For this purpose, within the thesis, I apply Official Development Assistance (ODA) data to operationalize EU Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Strategies through the EU's financial support

under the Conflict, Peace, and Security category, which is divided into five main subcategories (OECD 2019).

**Figure 1. Total EU Disbursements to EaP Countries in the Conflict, Peace, and Security Sector (2009-2024) (in EUR)**

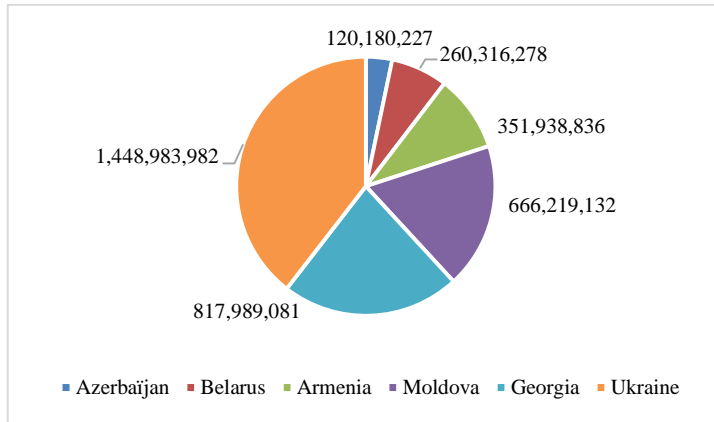


*Own presentation based on EU Aid Explorer data (European Commission 2024d)*

The total disbursements allocated by the European Union to various countries under the Conflict, Peace, and Security sector. According to the data, Ukraine received the highest EU assistance, totaling €816.9 million. This is because of the EU's prioritization of Ukraine's security and stability, especially in light of the ongoing conflict and the country's strategic significance in Eastern Europe. Georgia, with €486 million, follows as the second-largest recipient. This is because Georgia plays a crucial role in the South Caucasus, where the EU aims to foster stability and security through reforms and international peacekeeping support.

Moldova faces challenges related to unresolved territorial disputes and regional tensions, particularly with the Transnistrian region. The EU's financial support aims to address these conflicts and promote stability, reflecting a strong commitment to enhancing security and managing conflict in a region with significant internal and external challenges. Armenia received €30.9 million, which is lower compared to Georgia and Ukraine. This is because the EU's involvement in Armenia is more focused on specific areas, such as targeted security reforms and civilian peace-building, reflecting Armenia's unique regional challenges. Also research revealed that EU began its proactive assistance in Armenia after the 2020 war, addressing immediate needs and long-term stability requirements. Belarus and Azerbaijan, with €11.4 million and €8.4 million respectively, received the least amount of assistance. This is due to their more limited cooperation with the EU, as well as concerns over their lower levels of democracy and governance, which have affected the extent of EU support and engagement.

**Figure 2. Total EU Disbursements to EaP Countries in the Government and Civil Society Sector (2009-2024) (in EUR)**



*Own presentation based on EU Aid Explorer data (European Commission 2024d)*

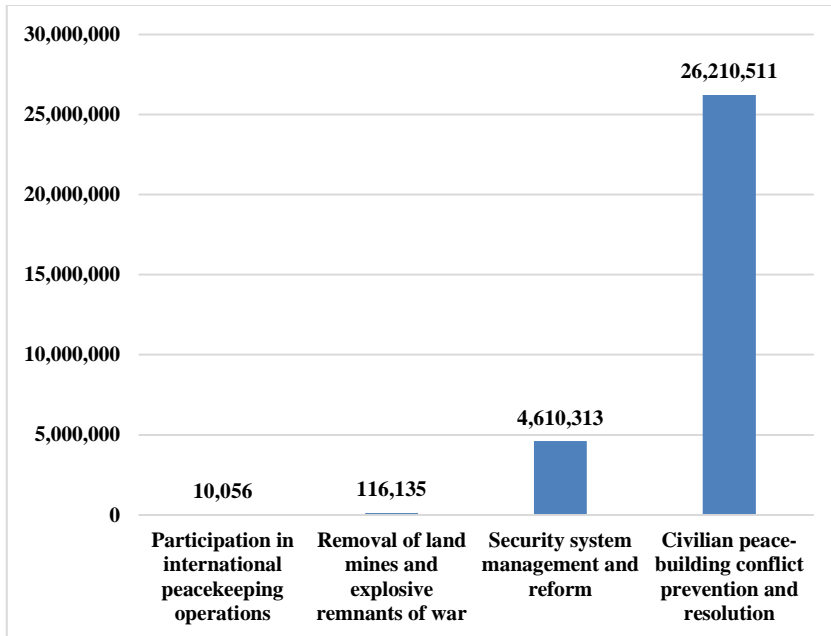
As discussed in the first chapter, the EU employs both security and non-security mechanisms for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. To substantiate this, it is important to examine the EU's funding in the 'Government and Civil Society' category, which complements its security initiatives. This funding covers a broad range of areas, including public sector policy and administrative management, public finance management, and decentralization with support for subnational governments. It also includes funding for anti-corruption organizations, domestic revenue mobilization, and public procurement. Additionally, it supports legal and judicial development, macroeconomic policy, and enhances democratic participation and civil society. The funding addresses elections, legislatures and political parties, media and the free flow of information, human rights, and women's rights organizations. It also works to end violence against women and girls and facilitates orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility (OECD 2019). This comprehensive approach underscores the EU's commitment to strengthening governance and societal development, complementing its security mechanisms to effectively address and resolve conflicts. Figure 2 shows a significant increase in financial assistance as a non-security instrument compared to the support provided for security-related sectors (see Figure 1). Ukraine received the highest disbursement, totaling €1.45 billion, followed by Georgia with €818 million. This is substantially higher than the security assistance, indicating that the EU places a strong emphasis on strengthening state governance, the rule of law, and internal affairs in these countries. Moldova, with €666.2 million, Armenia with €351.8 million, Belarus with €260.3 million, and Azerbaijan with €120.2 million, also received considerable amounts, reinforcing this pattern (see Figure 2).

The analysis of the funding distribution across the two sectors, Conflict, Peace, and Security, and Government and Civil Society, reveals a clear prioritization of governance and civil society by the EU. The total disbursement for the Conflict, Peace, and Security sector in these six countries amounts to €1.446 billion, whereas the allocation for the Government and Civil Society sector is significantly higher, reaching

€3.669 billion. This substantial disparity underscores the EU's strategic emphasis on strengthening governance structures and supporting civil society as fundamental components in addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting long-term stability in the region.

In both the Conflict, Peace, and Security sector and the Government and Civil Society sector, the distribution of financial assistance follows a consistent pattern. Ukraine consistently receives the highest level of support, followed by Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, Belarus, and Azerbaijan. This ordering reflects the EU's recognition of the varying levels of governance and civil society development in each country, as well as the strategic importance of addressing these issues in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The EU's focus on governance and civil society as integral elements of its conflict resolution strategy indicates a fundamental shift in its approach. By prioritizing the enhancement of governance structures and the support of civil society, the EU aims to tackle the underlying causes of instability, particularly through the strengthening of state institutions. This approach demonstrates the EU's conviction that sustainable peace and long-term stability are dependent on the effective functioning of state institutions and the empowerment of civil society. Additionally, as our research reveals, the EU has been cautious in its direct involvement in conflicts, preferring to support structural and institutional improvements as a means to promote stability and peace.

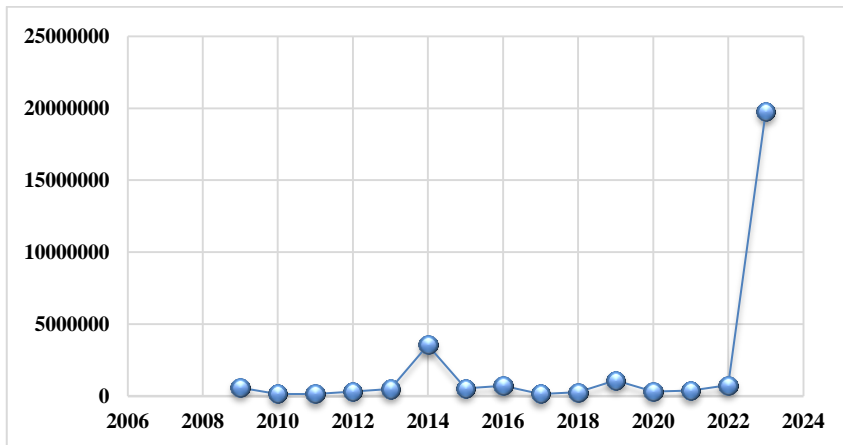
**Figure 3. Sectoral Disbursements for Armenia (2009-2024) (in EUR)**



*Own presentation based on EU Aid Explorer data (European Commission 2024d)*

Examining the sectoral disbursements in Armenia, Ukraine, and Georgia will be effective for understanding the EU's priorities and strategies in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. According to the dataset, from 2009 to 2024, the EU has allocated the most funds to civilian peace-building, conflict prevention, and resolution in Armenia, with a substantial amount of 26.2 million euros. This is followed by 4.6 million euros dedicated to security system management and reform. In contrast, participation in international peacekeeping operations and the removal of land mines and explosive remnants of war received considerably lower funding, at 10,056 euros and 116,135 euros, respectively (see Figure 3). This distribution reflects the EU's emphasis on supporting civilian-led peace efforts in Armenia. While other areas are also important, the EU's focus on civilian peace-building in Armenia aligns with its broader goal of facilitating deep-rooted, systemic changes that address the causes of conflict and promote enduring stability. The data on Reintegration and Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) were missing.

**Figure 4. Trendline of Sectoral Disbursements in Armenia (2009-2023) (in EUR)**

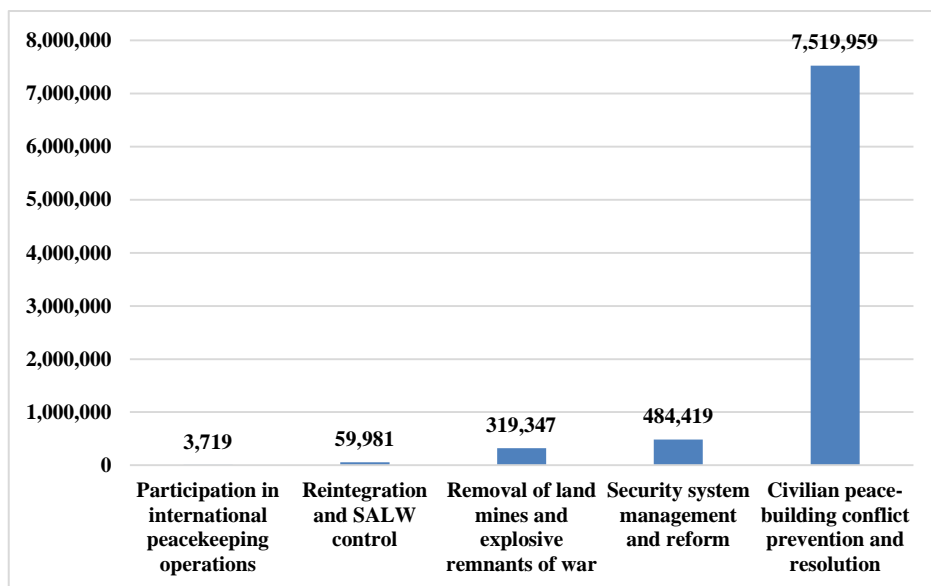


*Own presentation based on EU Aid Explorer data. (European Commission 2024d)*

The chart illustrates the fluctuation in EU disbursements to Armenia across different years from 2009 to 2023. The most noticeable peak occurred in 2023, where disbursements sharply increased to nearly 19.77 million euros. Prior to this, the disbursement levels remained relatively stable, with minor fluctuations, indicating consistent but lower levels of funding. Another noticeable peak is in 2014, though it is considerably smaller compared to 2023. The fluctuation in EU disbursements to Armenia in 2014 can be linked to several key developments. Following Armenia's decision in 2013 not to sign the AA with the EU and instead join the EAEU under Russian influence, the dynamics of EU-Armenia relations changed significantly (Stepanian 2013). In response, the EU likely increased its funding in 2014 to maintain engagement with Armenia, supporting democratic reforms, civil society, and conflict prevention efforts despite the geopolitical shift. Additionally, although the CEPA was officially signed in 2017, preparatory activities and negotiations were ongoing in the

years prior. The sharp increase in EU disbursements in 2023 is related to the aftermath of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The war had severe consequences for Armenia, leading to a humanitarian crisis, significant territorial losses, and ongoing security concerns. As was mentioned above the substantial funding increase in 2023 likely reflects the EU's response to Armenia's heightened need for humanitarian aid, conflict prevention, and peace-building efforts. This surge in funding may also indicate the EU's broader strategic interest in the South Caucasus region, where it sought to reinforce its role as a mediator and peacebuilder amid the continuing tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan (Landgraf and Seferian 2024). Also, it's important to note that The EU Monitoring Capacity in Armenia began operations on October 20, 2022, after the EU decided to deploy monitoring experts along Armenia's side of the international border with Azerbaijan. This deployment likely played a role in the substantial increase in EU disbursements in 2023 aimed at bolstering Armenia's security and stability in a challenging regional context (EEAS 2022).

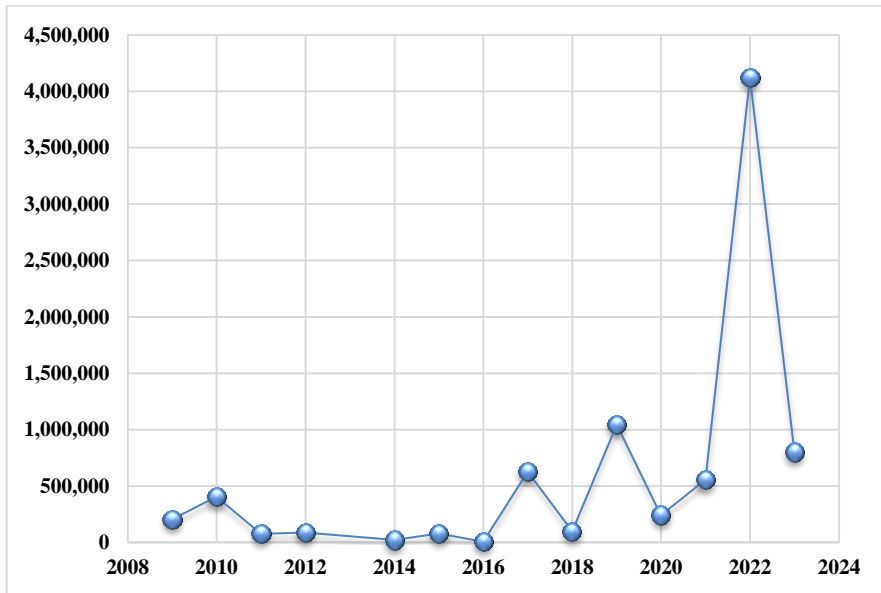
**Figure 5. Sectoral Disbursements for Azerbaijan (2009-2024) (in EUR)**



*Own presentation based on EU Aid Explorer data (European Commission 2024d)*

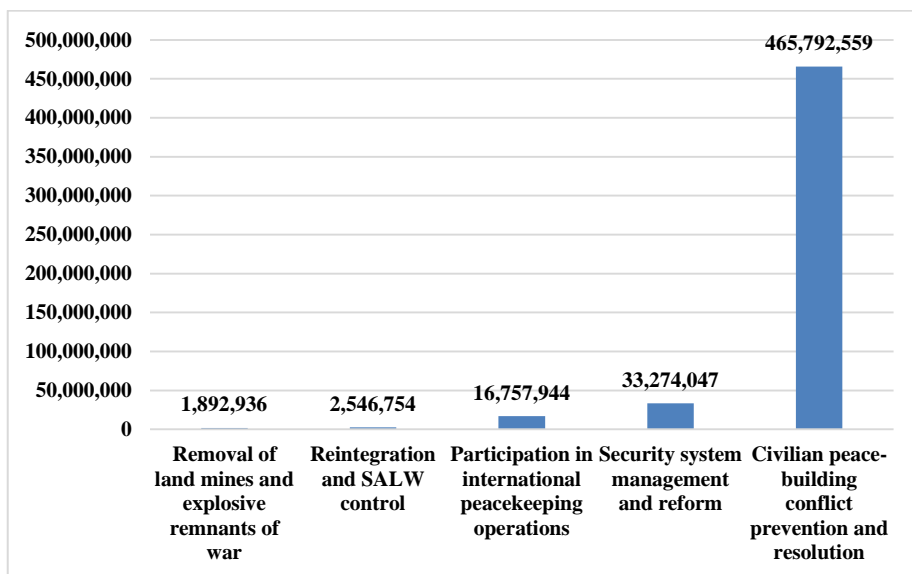
Figure 5 shows that in Azerbaijan, the largest disbursement was for civilian peace-building, conflict prevention, and resolution, amounting to approximately €7.5 million, while security system management and reform received about €484,419. Comparatively, in Armenia, the EU allocated a much higher sum of €26.2 million for civilian peace-building efforts and €4.6 million for security system management and reform. Overall, Armenia received a much higher total disbursement from the EU compared to Azerbaijan.



**Figure 6. Trendline of Sectoral Disbursements in Azerbaijan (2009-2023) (in EUR)**

*Own presentation based on EU Aid Explorer data. (European Commission 2024d)*

The Figure 6 shows a notable rise in disbursements starting from 2017, which is closely related to the 2016 conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. This increase reflects the EU's intensified efforts to support peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Azerbaijan. The trend continues into 2019 with a significant surge in funding, likely tied to the initiatives aimed at stabilizing the region after the war and preventing further escalations. Additionally, the significant increase in disbursements in 2022, reaching 4,122,028, is related to post-war efforts. As was mentioned in previous chapters following the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the EU heightened financial commitments to support recovery and reconstruction efforts. This substantial peak in disbursements reflects investments in rebuilding infrastructure, providing humanitarian aid, and supporting economic and social recovery in the aftermath of the conflict.

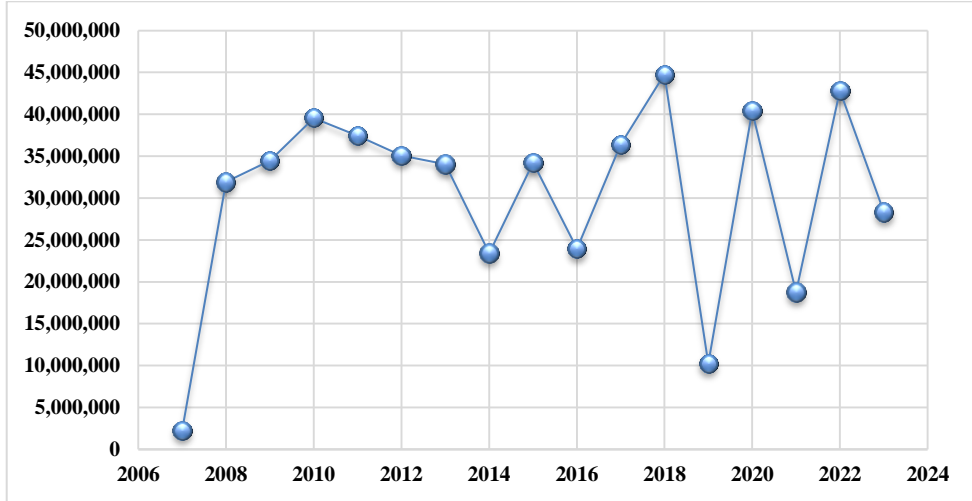
**Figure 7. Sectoral Disbursements for Georgia (2007-2024) (in EUR)**

*Own presentation based on EU Aid Explorer data (European Commission 2024d)*

To examine the EU's funding for Georgia, I analyzed data from 2007 to 2024, as research revealed a significant increase in allocations starting in 2008. This substantial rise reflects the EU's heightened engagement in response to the 2008 Russia-Georgian War and its ongoing impact on Georgia's stability. The data for Georgia indicates that from 2007 to 2024, the European Union has prioritized funding civilian peace-building, conflict prevention, and resolution, with a significant allocation of approximately 465.8 million euros. This substantial investment highlights the EU's focus on promoting long-term peace and stability in Georgia, likely in response to the country's ongoing conflicts and post-war recovery efforts, particularly after the 2008 Russo-Georgian War. The EU has also allocated around 33.3 million euros to security system management and reform, which underscores its commitment to enhancing Georgia's security infrastructure and governance. Participation in international peacekeeping operations received notable funding of approximately 16.7 million euros, reflecting Georgia's role in contributing to global peace efforts. In comparison, funds allocated for the Removal of Land Mines and explosive remnants of war and for reintegration and Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) control are lower, at approximately 1.9 million euros and 2.54 million euros respectively. These areas received less attention, possibly due to the EU's greater emphasis on broader security reforms and conflict prevention strategies rather than specific post-conflict clean-up operations. Overall, the EU's funding strategy in Georgia highlights a comprehensive approach to supporting peace, security, and governance in the region. In contrast to Armenia, Georgia received a much larger total allocation, particularly in the area of civilian peace-building, conflict prevention, and resolution, which amounted to approximately 433.7 million euros (see Figure 3). This reflects the EU's extensive involvement in Georgia's peace

efforts, especially after the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, which left lasting impacts on the country's stability.

**Figure 8. Trendline of Sectoral Disbursements in Georgia (2007-2023)**



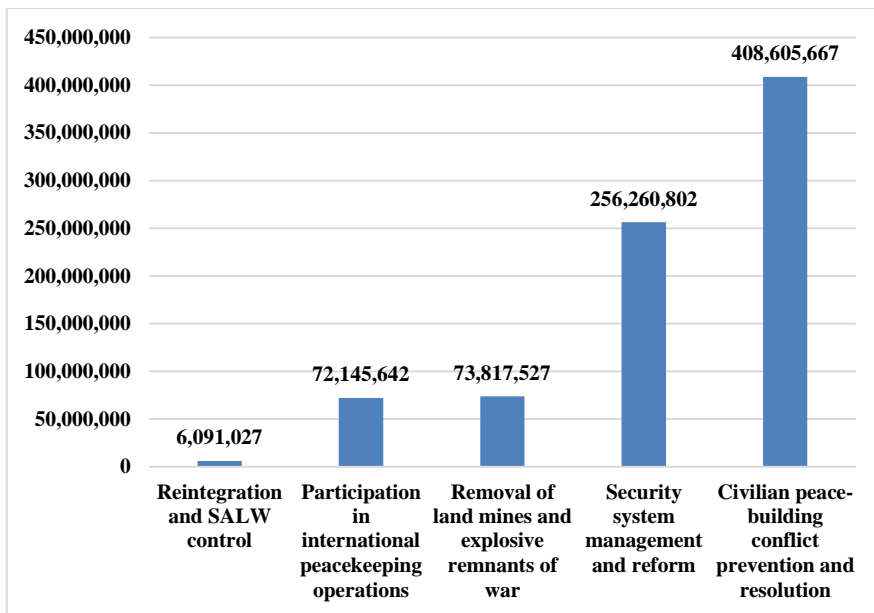
*Own presentation based on EU Aid Explorer data (European Commission 2024d)*

The disbursement data for Georgia shows several peaks and fluctuations over the years, reflecting both external and internal political dynamics. The early years, particularly 2008 and 2009, show substantial disbursements, which align with the EU's immediate response to the 2008 Georgia-Russia conflict and the subsequent efforts to stabilize the region amidst tense relations with Russia. These high levels of financial support also underscore the EU's commitment to strengthening Georgia's governance structures and addressing internal political challenges that emerged from the conflict. During this period, the EU's involvement was crucial not only in managing the external threat posed by strained relations with Russia but also in navigating internal political changes within Georgia, such as shifts in government and efforts to consolidate democratic governance. The disbursement amount remained relatively high through 2010 and 2013, but there was a noticeable decline in 2014 and 2016, reflecting evolving geopolitical strategies and internal adjustments within Georgia's political landscape. From 2010 to 2015, the disbursements from the EU to Georgia reflect a period of intense engagement, particularly following the 2008 Georgia-Russia conflict. The signing of the AA and the DCFTA in 2014 was a pivotal moment, as it significantly deepened Georgia's integration with the EU. These agreements not only enhanced economic ties but also underscored the EU's commitment to supporting Georgia's security system. The increase in disbursements from 2016 to 2018 can be linked to the full entry into force of the AA on July 1, 2016. This agreement was a landmark development in EU-Georgia relations and had several significant implications.

In 2019, the sharp decline in disbursements can be linked to a year of significant change and political crisis in Georgia, which set the stage for the 2020 parliamentary elections. This period was characterized by widespread public dissatisfaction and political unrest as various factions within Georgia grappled with the direction of the country's future.

In 2020, the situation improved, and disbursements increased, reflecting the EU's response to regional security dynamics, including the impact of the Nagorno-Karabakh war. However, in 2021, disbursements decreased again, which can be attributed to the aftermath of the conflict. Substantial financial resources were allocated to Armenia and Azerbaijan to address immediate humanitarian and reconstruction needs, affecting the level of support for Georgia (see Figure 4 and Figure 6). As a result, while Georgia did receive assistance, the overall disbursements were lower compared to previous years due to the prioritization of urgent needs in the conflict-affected regions. In 2022 and 2023, the disbursements decline slightly but remain substantial, indicating continued EU support in the face of ongoing regional tensions and internal challenges in Georgia.

**Figure 9. Sectoral Disbursements for Ukraine (2009-2024) (in EUR)**

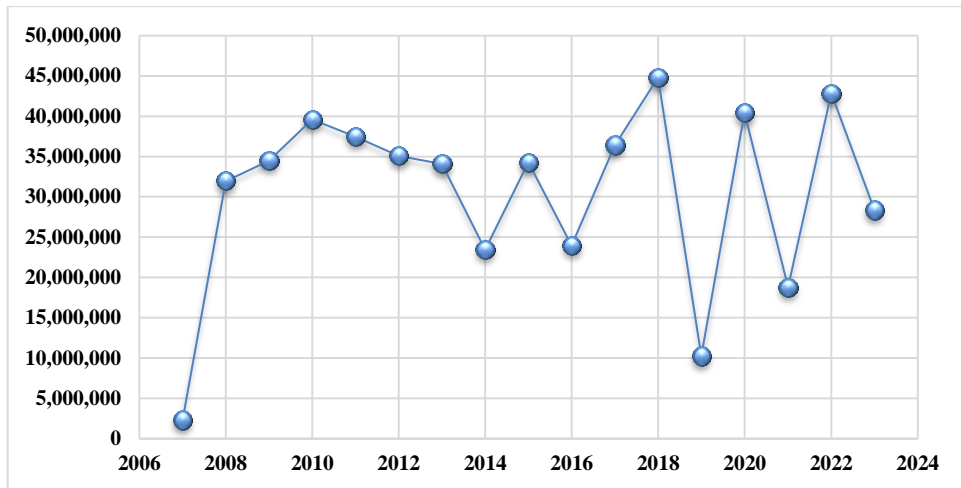


*Own presentation based on EU Aid Explorer data (European Commission 2024d)*

The EU's financial disbursements to Ukraine across Security sectors highlight the strategic importance of stabilizing and rebuilding the country amidst ongoing conflict. The largest allocation, 408.4 million euros, was directed towards civilian peace-building, conflict prevention, and resolution, reflecting the EU's commitment to fostering long-term peace and addressing the root causes of conflict in Ukraine. Significant funding of 256.3 million euros was also allocated to security system management and reform, underscoring the need to modernize Ukraine's defense and

security institutions in response to the challenges posed by internal unrest and external threats. The EU's focus on removing land mines and explosive remnants of war, with 73.8 million euros, further illustrates the urgency of clearing large areas of Ukraine contaminated by ongoing military activities. Participation in international peacekeeping operations received 72.1 million euros, highlighting the EU's support for Ukraine's active role in global security, even as it faces significant internal challenges.

**Figure 10. Trendline of Sectoral Disbursements in Ukraine (2009-2023) (in EUR)**



*Own presentation based on EU Aid Explorer data (European Commission 2024d)*

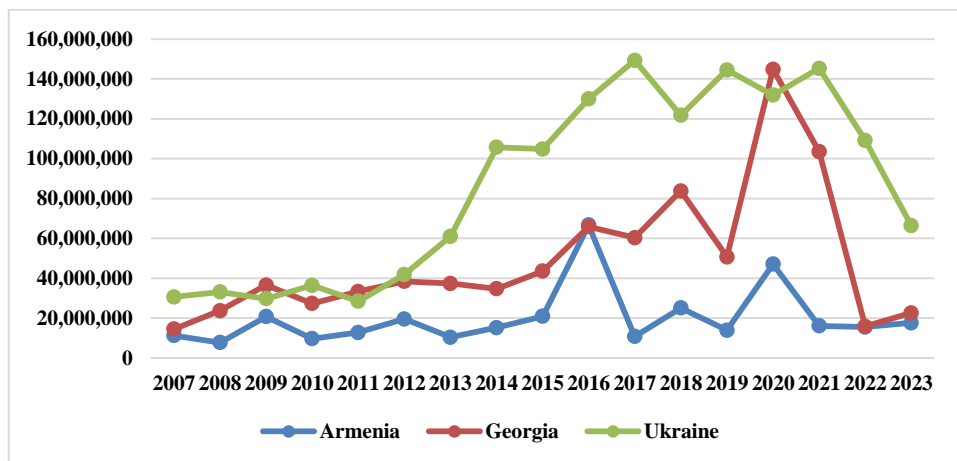
The disbursement figures from 2009 to 2023 for conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts in Ukraine reveal a trend that corresponds with the country's geopolitical situation and the escalation of conflict. The data shows a significant increase in funding beginning in 2014, which can be linked to both the onset of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea by Russia, as well as the signing of the AA between the EU and Ukraine on June 27, 2014. The years 2015 through 2019 saw substantial disbursements, reflecting intensified international efforts to stabilize the situation and support Ukraine's security and governance reforms. The peak disbursement in 2017, with €114,747,402, corresponds to the implementation of major reforms and increased international aid to address the ongoing conflict and its humanitarian consequences. Additionally, the AA between the EU and Ukraine fully came into force on September 1, 2017, after which the EU significantly increased its support to Ukraine, further enhancing funding and resources for conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts.

This high level of funding continued through 2019, with another peak at €111,211,547, before starting to decline in 2020. The significant decline in 2022 and 2023 suggests a possible conclusion of specific projects, reallocation of funds, or a shift in international priorities, possibly influenced by the evolving situation on the ground or changes in the geopolitical landscape. The steep decline in disbursements for 2023, might be explained by the EU's reallocation of funds towards immediate

humanitarian aid and crisis management. Additionally, the decline could reflect a strategic decision to encourage Ukrainian self-reliance in certain areas, with the EU stepping back from direct financial involvement as local institutions and governance structures are strengthened (see Figure 10). It is important to emphasize that this does not mean the EU decreased its overall assistance; rather, it signifies a change in the EU's approach, allocating substantial resources to other critical areas. The EU and its Member States have provided €39 billion in military aid to Ukraine, including €6.1 billion through the European Peace Facility for military equipment delivery. In March 2024, the Council established a specific Ukraine Assistance Fund of €5 billion, raising the total European Peace Facility support to €11.1 billion. Additionally, the EU Military Assistance Mission for Ukraine, with a budget of €362 million, is addressing the training requirements of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and has already trained 52,000 Ukrainian soldiers (European Commission 2024e).

Furthermore, the data provided under the conflict, peace, and security do not reflect allocations during active military actions. Instead, this data illustrates the EU's assistance focused on preventive measures, including civilian oversight, transparency in the security system, capacity building, monitoring, and dialogue aimed at preventing conflicts and promoting peace.

**Figure 11. Trendline of disbursements by EU in government and civil society sector in Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine (2007-2023)**



*Own presentation based on EU Aid Explorer data (European Commission 2024d)*

After analyzing in detail, the EU disbursements in the conflict, peace, and security for each country, it is essential to provide an overall assessment of the funding trends in the Government and Civil Society sectors in Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine. The analysis of these disbursements reveals a clear correlation between EU funding patterns and the geopolitical dynamics of the region.

From 2011 to 2016, a significant increase in investments was observed across all three countries, coinciding with the signing of AAs. During this period, the EU substantially increased funding in areas such as democracy, human rights, and

governance, aiming to strengthen democratic institutions and improve governance structures. This strategy was viewed as a crucial means to promote long-term stability and development in the region.

However, after 2020, the trend shifted, with noticeable declines in investment. In Georgia, this decline can be attributed to internal political developments, particularly the passage of the controversial Foreign Agents law in 2023, which strained relations with the EU and led to a suspension of financial support. In Ukraine, the decrease in funding resulted primarily from the EU's reallocation of resources towards military assistance in response to the ongoing conflict with Russia, prioritizing defense and reconstruction efforts. In Armenia, the decline in investment is linked to the aftermath of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, which prompted a reassessment of EU priorities and a more targeted approach to conflict management and stabilization (Aleksanyan 2025).

### **Conclusion and discussion**

The shifts in EU funding patterns reflect the evolving geopolitical landscape and the EU's recalibration of its strategies in response to changing security concerns. Initially, the EU prioritized non-security mechanisms to achieve peace, focusing on governance, human rights, and democracy. However, as the region faced escalating security challenges—particularly the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh and Ukraine—the EU adjusted its approach, placing greater emphasis on military sector funding, with Ukraine serving as a prominent example of this shift.

In conclusion, it is evident that in Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine, the majority of the EU's financial allocations have been directed towards Civilian Peace-Building, Conflict Prevention, and Resolution. This emphasis on civilian-led activities, such as capacity building, monitoring, and dialogue initiatives, reflects the EU's commitment to long-term strategies for preventing conflicts and fostering sustainable peace. By investing in these areas, the EU aims to enhance the capacity of local communities and institutions to manage and resolve conflicts internally, thereby promoting stability and resilience in the region.

The substantial increase in financial support during periods of heightened conflict—such as the escalation in Ukraine starting in 2014, the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, and the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War—demonstrates the EU's strategic approach to addressing regional instability. The focus on civilian peace-building and governance reforms highlights the EU's commitment to addressing the underlying causes of conflict and promoting stability through a combination of security and non-security mechanisms.

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*Strategies. CES - Master's Degree Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus, Yerevan State University: Global Campus of Human Rights).*

This article is part of my master's thesis, but it has been edited and supplemented to become a scholarly article.

### Conflict of interests

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

### Ethical standards

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

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