

Georgian Identity and Values in the Context of Europeanization

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Raising Awareness about Georgia's Europeanization in Academia
[RAGEA]

Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Activities

National Identity

- National identity is formed on the basis of one's identification with the nation. The nation-state creates the we-group (in-group) (Bauman 1998)
- Within the context of national identity "others" are typically other nations (Triandafyllidou, 2002)
- When determining the national "in-group" instead of "objective" differentiating factors major cultural elements – values, lifestyle, traditions, religion, language, etc. are brought forward. (Smith, 2009)
- Identity as "fluid" and changing (Giddens, 1991)

Banal Nationalism

- National identity is being “reminded” in everyday routines. As such reminders become indivisible part of the environment, reminding takes place unconsciously (Billig, 1995)

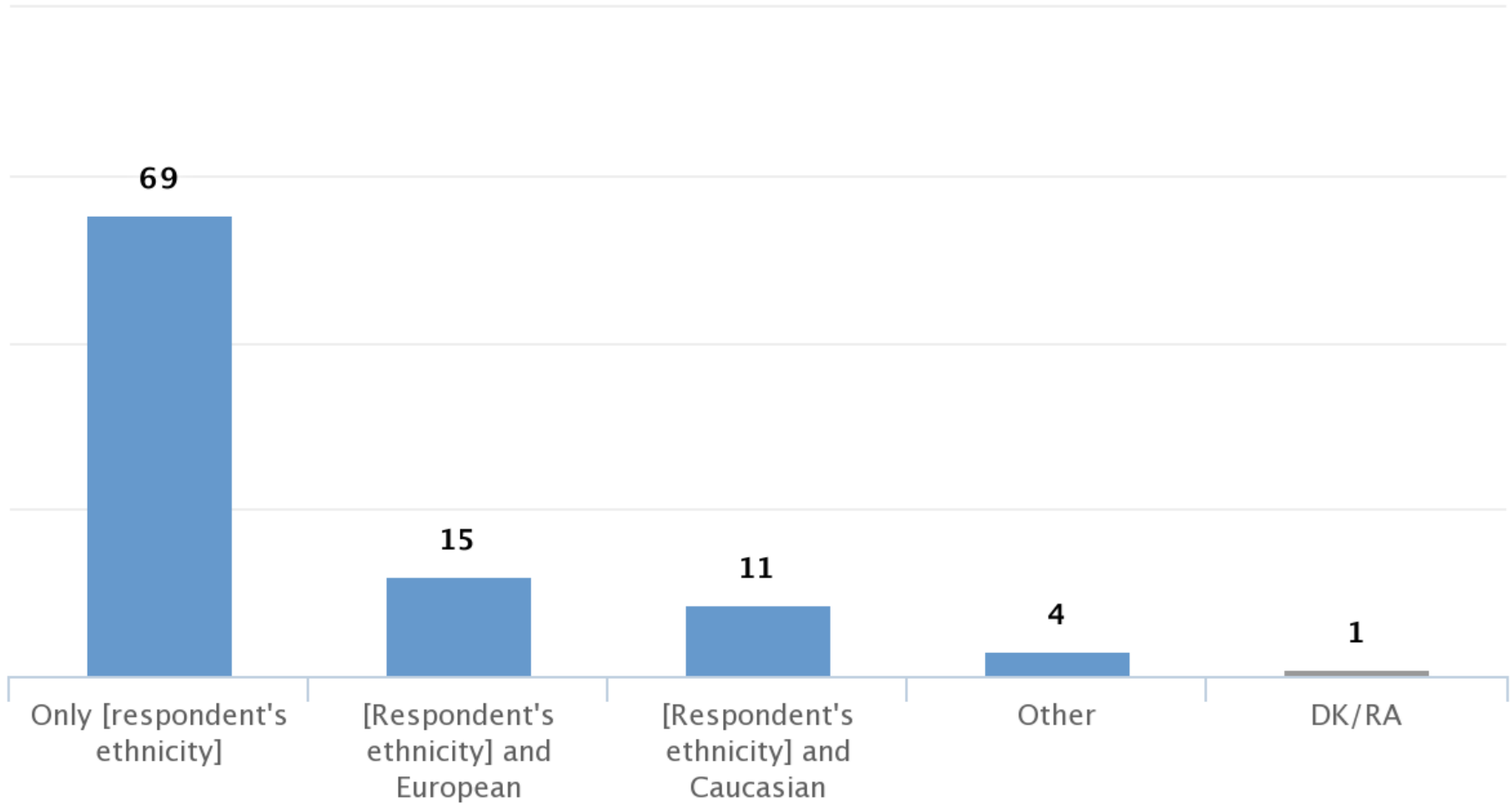
Banal Nationalism



How to define European identity?

- European identity or Europeanization of national identity (adaptation with the European practices)?
- Which one creates the we-group?- Attachment with Europe, European people or the EU?
- Which one is the other-group?
- Countries with different ethno-cultural characteristics – How strong is the identity based on human rights and freedom? “who would sacrifice themselves for Europe?”

IDENTITY: Respondent's self-identification (%)



ევროკავშირის მიმართ დამოკიდებულებისა და ცოდნის შეფასება საქართველოში, 2015
წყარო: <http://caucasusbarometer.org/>

Banal Europeanism

- Existence of the heroic forms similar to the national identity is not necessary. It is equally possible to have the banal form of European identity, practiced in Europeans' everyday life (Cram, 2009).

“I am Georgian,
therefore I am
European!”

„Georgia should return to its European family, from which it was cut off artificially and forcefully. ”

Tina Khidasheli, Former Minister of Defence, 05.04.2016

„In scope of the visa-free regime, we will represent ourselves very well. We will act according to the laws of those states, European values and share with them so that they knew about the following historical reality- Georgia’s natural place is and will be in Europe “

Tea Tsulukiani, Minister of Justice, 03.02. 2017

Georgia- part of
the European
family(?)

Q. Which arguments and examples can you remember proving that Georgia is/was part of Europe?

Inventing Traditions

- Even those traditions we believe to be ancient might in fact be invented a century ago.
- Inventing the invention is dependent on the needs of a particular time and situation and aims at reinforcing certain norms and values through repeated actions.
- Such practices are especially frequent at times of rapid social transformations that challenge the established social norms.
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(Hobsbawm, 1983)

Georgia- part of the European family

- “Darbazi” (in the XI-XII centuries, the feudals’deliberative court in Georgia) as a basis of the parliamentary system in the country.
- Georgia’s conversion to Christianity in the IV century,
- the epic poem, “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin,” written in the 12th century as symbolizing the Renaissance
- “Tergdaleulebi” in the XIX century and “Tsisperkantslebi” in the XX century as the disseminators of European ideas
- Zezva and Mzia – the first Europeans

(“Performing Europeanization – Political vis-à-vis Popular Discourses on Europeanization in Georgia, CSS, 2016)

Georgia- part of the European family (?)

- Culturally and historically Georgia belongs to Europe. The arguments for these opinions are: common history, Christianity and similar culture



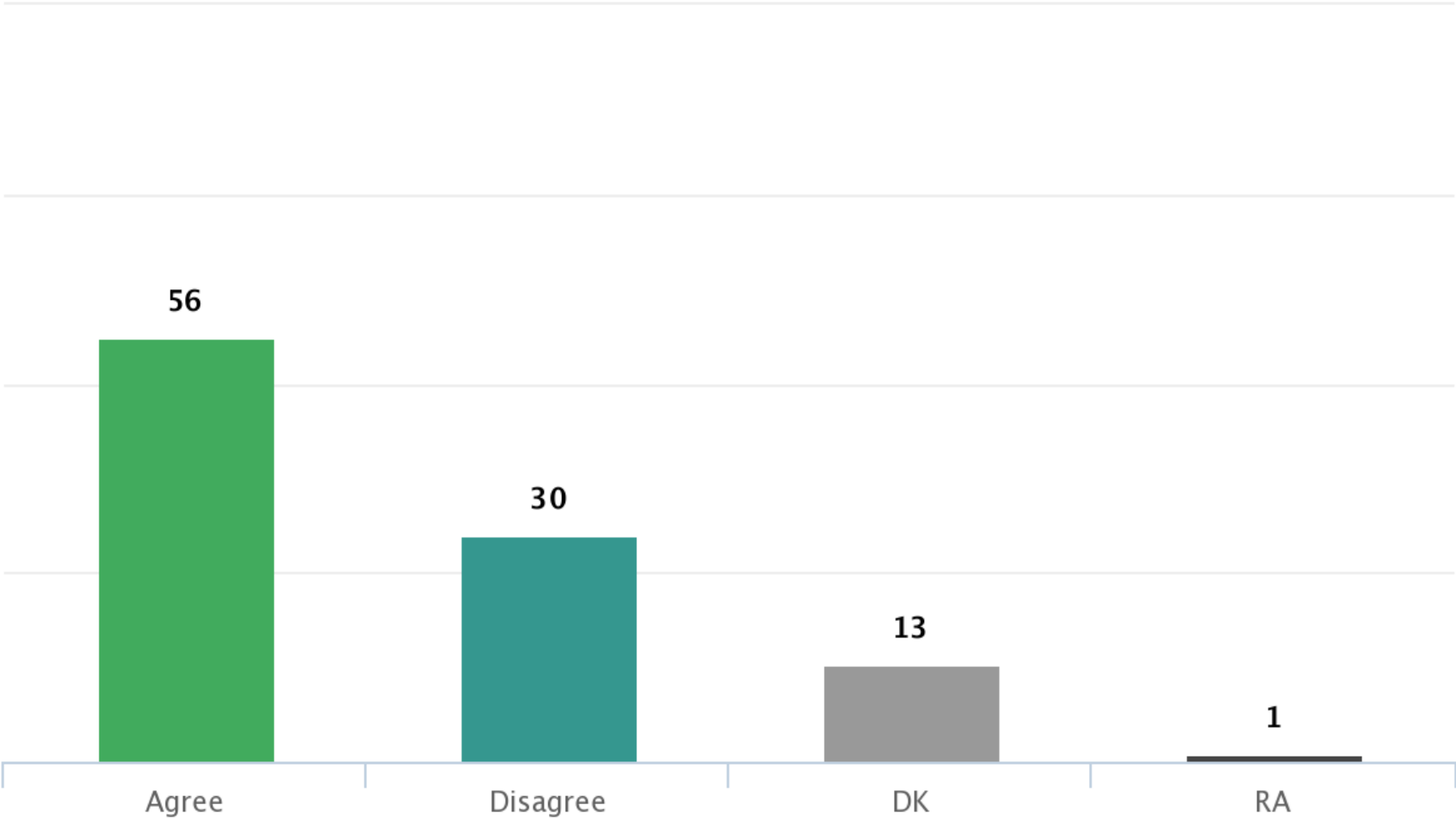
- Despite the European influence of Georgia's culture (art and architecture), Georgians' mentality and values are more Asian
- Georgian identity is a specific hybrid of the European and Asian influences.

(“Performing Europeanization – Political vis-à-vis Popular Discourses on Europeanization in Georgia, CSS, 2016)

Ambivalent Identities (Nanz, 2010)

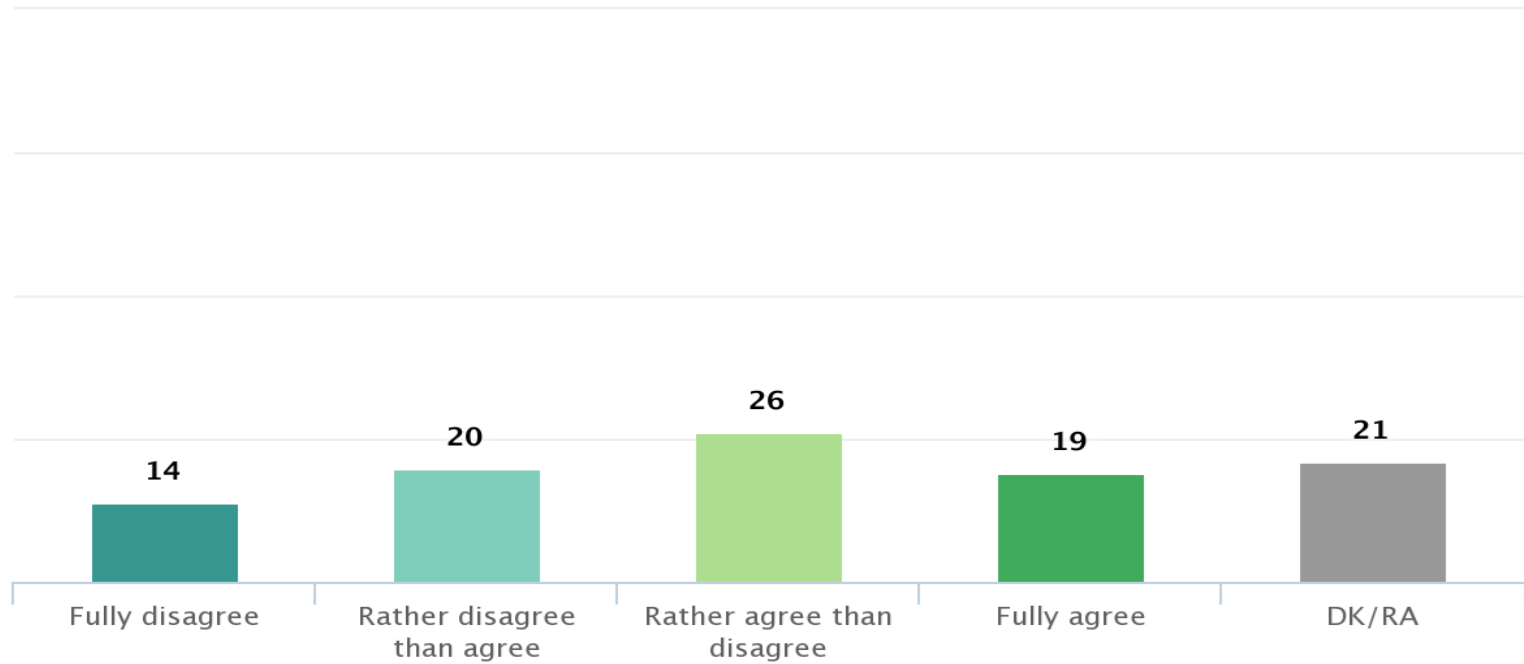
- Although European identity is offered by elites, it is constantly transformed in everyday life of ordinary people.
- People receive and change suggested traditions. Other variable influences identity: age, lifestyle.
- Culture as ongoing dialogue – people internalize some elements of the discourse while rejecting others.

EUROPEAN: I am Georgian, and therefore I am European (%)



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EUTHREAT: Agree/Disagree: The EU threatens Georgian traditions (%)



Knowledge and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, 2015
Retrieved from <http://caucasusbarometer.org/>

Georgian an European values

European values are superior compared to the Georgian values: Democracy, freedom of choice, good education, performing civic duties, obeying laws. →

Civic Values

Georgian values are superior compared to the European values: better and ancient culture/heritage; being family-oriented, warmth, humility, honesty →

Ethno-cultural values

(“Performing Europeanization – Political vis-à-vis Popular Discourses on Europeanization in Georgia, CSS, 2016)

Difference between Georgian and European values

„ Respect for the law is what I appreciate most in Europe. We do not have it but gradually it also comes to us. Taking an example of Germany, I can say that no matter whether a person holds a high rank or is a common citizen, he/she respects the laws; not because of fear, but because of mentality” (Female, 26-40, Telavi)”

“Europe lacks family warmth, adult-aged children leave their parents’ homes, the institution of virginity is not appreciated and same-sex marriages are accepted. We are traditional people and have warm family relations with relatives, respect for elderly people and our parents. In Europe, they even do not bother inquiring about their parents after the age of 18” (Female, 41-65, Batumi).

(“Performing Europeanization – Political vis-à-vis Popular Discourses on Europeanization in Georgia, CSS, 2016)

Identity- related Threats

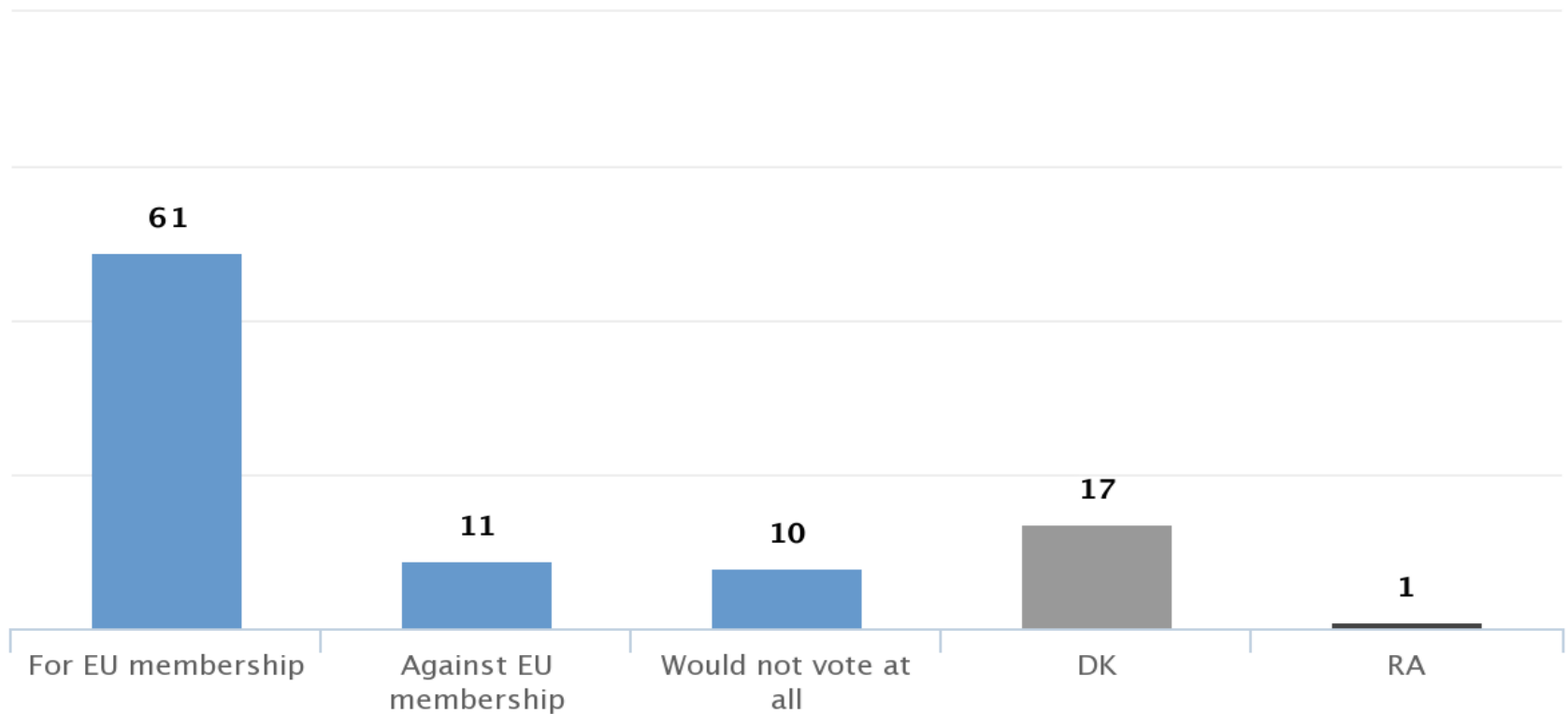
- Forgetting Georgian traditions/norms: (hospitality, being family-oriented, respecting elderly, etc.)
- Increasing sexual freedom, normalization of homosexuality



Values incompatible with religious dogma

We still want in the EU

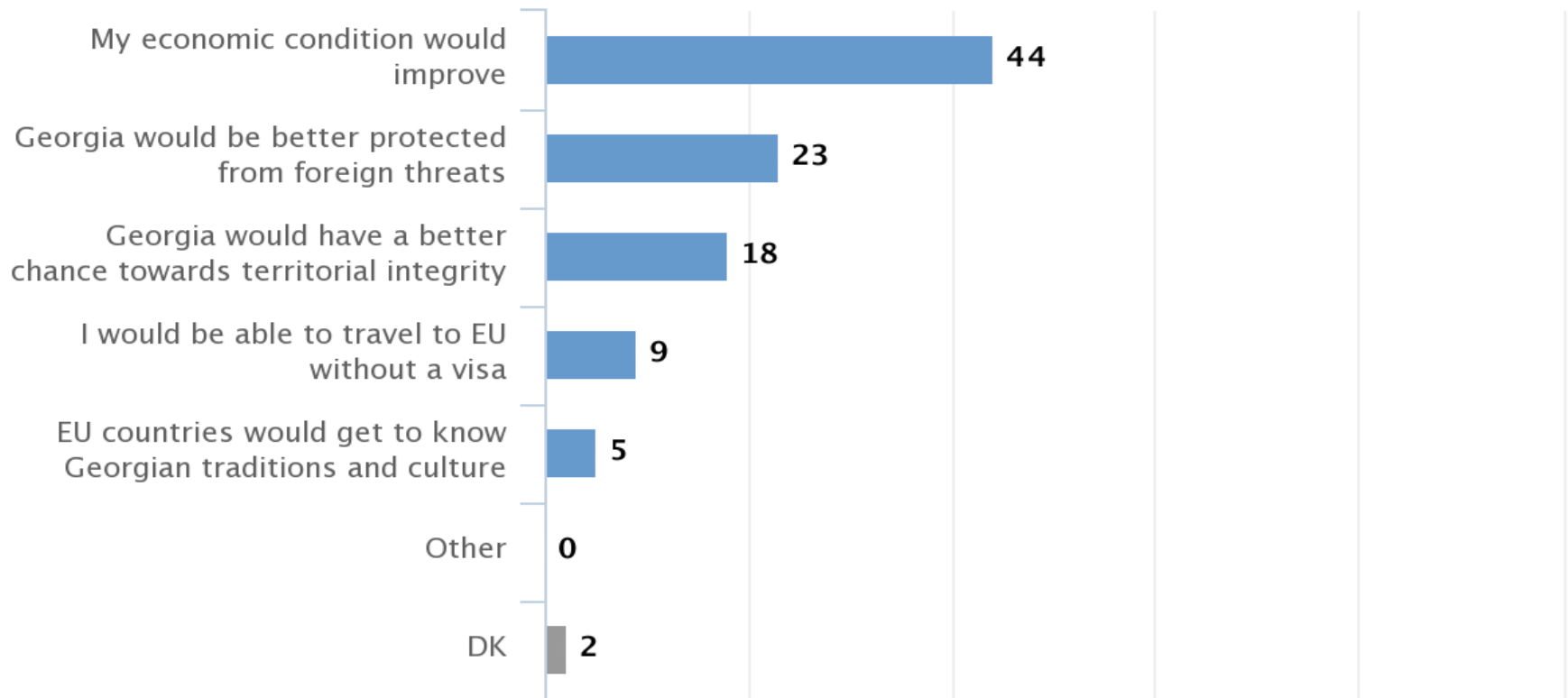
EUMEMVOT: If there were a referendum tomorrow would vote for or against EU membership? (%)



Knowledge and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, 2015
Retrieved from <http://caucasusbarometer.org/>

EUVOTECC: Why would you support Georgia's accession to the EU? (%)

The question was asked to the respondents, who would vote for the EU membership



Knowledge and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, 2015
Retrieved from <http://caucasusbarometer.org/>

Why do we want in the EU?

Profit from the EU→

“one big family” – membership as a security guarantee

- **Economic prosperity**
- **Visa-liberalisation and free movement on European territory**
- **European quality education**
- **Developed democratic institutions (free media and court)**
- **Prioritizing human freedoms and rights (labour rights, free speech freedom of choice, protection of private property)**
- **Defeating gender stereotypes**
- **Increasing civic culture**
- **The EU/Europe facilitating the protection and maintainance of Georgian values/traditions**

• (“Performing Europeanization – Political vis-à-vis Popular Discourses on Europeanization in Georgia, CSS, 2016)

**Material and
spiritual
dimensions of
culture
(Chattarjee,
1989)**

- European “civilizational superiority” vs Georgian “spiritual superiority”
- Western culture enjoys material superiority, developing countries – spiritual superiority
- Ideological principle of selection → getting Western material benefits, but maintaining national identity
- In order to preserve national identity, one has to become economically stronger and get closer to the West →
- Utilitarian approach (!)

“Teaching”

“Performing Europeanization
- Political vis-a-vis Popular
Discourses on
Europeanization in Georgia”,
CSS, 2016)

- **Reaction to the asymmetry** - As a normative hegemon, the EU teaches the partner states its norms and values, assuring them into their superiority. This kind of “teaching process” also causes the irritation, more precisely, exaggeration of one’s own cultural identity and bringing forth the defense reactions against the EU (Schimmelfenning, 2012)

“We are characterized by excessive loyalism or tolerance towards others. What a shame that some TV stations teach us, Georgians, how to be tolerant! What a shame to teach hospitality, friendship and benevolence to Georgians! Quite contrary, we can teach and share all of this to cold Europe” (Female, 26-40, Kutaisi).

- *“On the way to development, everyone needs someone to learn from. We need others to learn from and also to give away the good we have. It is wrong to think that only ours is the best. It is elementary but we have to learn from Europeans not to discard garbage in the street” (Male, 26-40, Zugdidi).*

Defensive “localism”

- **Reaction to the post-national/international character of European identity**→ strengthening nationalist identity, “backdoor nationalism”, defensive “localism” (Nanz , 2010)
- 2013 - 30% believe that the EU threatens Georgian traditions
- 2015 - 45 % believe that the EU threatens Georgian traditions

**“Fear of
indefinable”**

- **Anxiety, following the globalization** - arises on the basis of increasing feelings of uncertainty and insecurity (Delanty, 2008)

In countries where Europeanization is occurring, Europeanization and globalization are perceived as associated processes, causing the fear of losing national identity.

- In national society, there is fear of National identity not handling different migrant or ethnic identities and losing function of social indicator.

Thank you for your
attention!