

## **-PRESS RELEASE-**

Source: [ChildPact](#) (the Regional Coalition for Child Protection in the wider Black Sea Area) and Georgia's Coalition for Child and Youth Welfare.

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### **Why is child protection missing from the newly signed Association Agreement between the EU and Georgia?**

On December 2013, Georgia signed the [Association Agreement with the European Union during the Eastern Partnership summit held in Vilnius](#). The newly signed Association Agreement becomes thus the main treaty between Georgia and the EU and highlights key areas of cooperation.

The Agreement focuses on deepening political and economic relations with the EU and includes sections dedicated to cooperation with civil society organizations. Unfortunately, the document does not refer specifically to cooperation on the protection of the rights of the child.

This is regrettable. The Association Agreement signed by Moldova *does* include a whole chapter dedicated to child protection ([Title IV, Chapter 27](#)). Moreover, in a resolution approved by the European Parliament in November 2011 on the [negotiations of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement](#), the EP specifically recommended to “include in the Agreement a section on the protection of the rights of the child”.

We express our deep concern that child protection remains absent among the cooperation priorities between the EU and Georgia.

**ChildPact** - the Regional Coalition for Child Protection in the wider Black Sea Area and **Georgia's Coalition for Child and Youth Welfare** acknowledge the important progress achieved in Georgia, in particular the ongoing process of de-institutionalization and for the harmonization of domestic legislation with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

But positive results should lead to enhanced cooperation, not disengagement. Indeed, according to [the current European Neighbourhood Policy](#), “the more and the faster a country progresses in its internal reforms, the more support it will get from the EU.” The EU's ‘more for more’ policy is a further incentive for government action. Yet, under the new Association Agreement, child rights will not receive the benefit of this exciting policy.

There is still work to be done to secure child protection and rights for Georgia's most vulnerable class of citizens and we would welcome further reflection on EU-Georgia cooperation as it relates to child rights. For example, Georgia's wide-scale lack of family support services as a means to prevent further institutionalization and the presence of street children remain a key concern among civil society representatives.

Approximately 77,000 of Georgia's children live in extreme poverty and 186,000 live in comparative poverty. In total, only 28% of children living in poverty have access to social assistance (UNICEF, 2012).

In contrast, [Article 138 \(Title IV, Chapter 27\)](#) of the Agreement signed by Moldova in Vilnius mentions that cooperation with the EU shall include “the prevention and combating of all forms of exploitation (including child labor), abuse, negligence and violence against children, including by developing and strengthening the legal and institutional framework as well as awareness-raising campaigns in this domain”.

Furthermore, it encourages “the exchange of information and best practice on the alleviation of poverty among children, including on measures to focus social policies on children’s wellbeing, and to promote and facilitate children’s access to education”.

We regret that these elements, as well as all other points included in Chapter 27 of Title IV of the Association Agreement between the EU and Moldova (“Cooperation in the protection and promotion of the rights of the child”), were not included in the Association Agreement signed by Georgia.

We call on the government of Georgia and the EU surpass the Association Agreement’s standards and make increased cooperation for the protection and promotion of the rights of the child a priority. We invite both sides to a regular dialogue and tangible efforts aimed at enhancing the welfare of all of Georgia’s children, and in particular those that are most vulnerable.

**ChildPact** and **Georgia’s Coalition for Child and Youth Welfare** reaffirm their own commitment to prevent and address child vulnerability by promoting regional cooperation and strengthening civil society networks in the wider Black Sea area and look forward to enhanced cooperation in this field with EU institutions.

**Mirela Oprea**, ChildPact Secretary General

**Jaba Nachkebia**, Chair of the Georgia’s Coalition for Child and Youth Welfare

### **For further information**

Text of the agreement with Georgia: [http://eeas.europa.eu/georgia/assoagreement/assoagreement-2013\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/georgia/assoagreement/assoagreement-2013_en.htm)

For more information about ChildPact, please visit our website [www.childpact.org](http://www.childpact.org).

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