

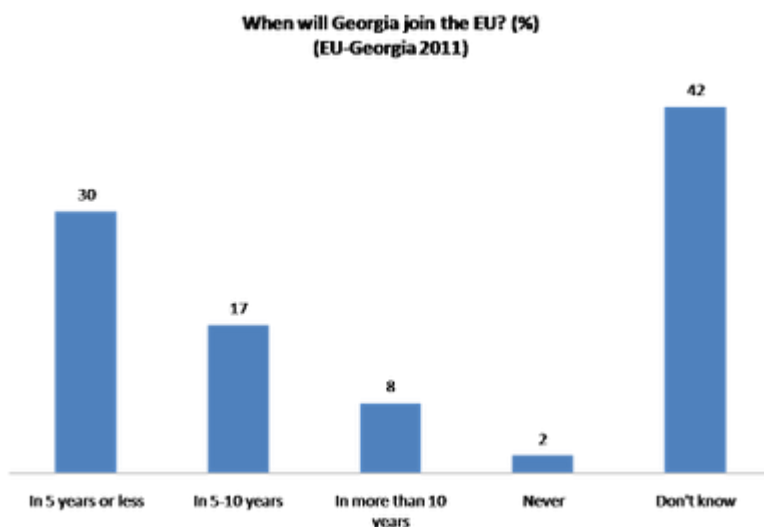
## Georgia's EU aspirations

CRRC has just completed a second wave of the survey entitled “Knowledge and Attitudes toward the European Union (EU) in Georgia” (2011). Just over half of the Georgian population thinks that Georgia will actually join the EU at some point in the future and they have high expectations from EU membership. Many Georgians also support membership in the European Union (EU) despite uncertainty over whether or not European citizens share the same views about Georgian accession. This new survey also lets us compare data with the first survey conducted in 2009.

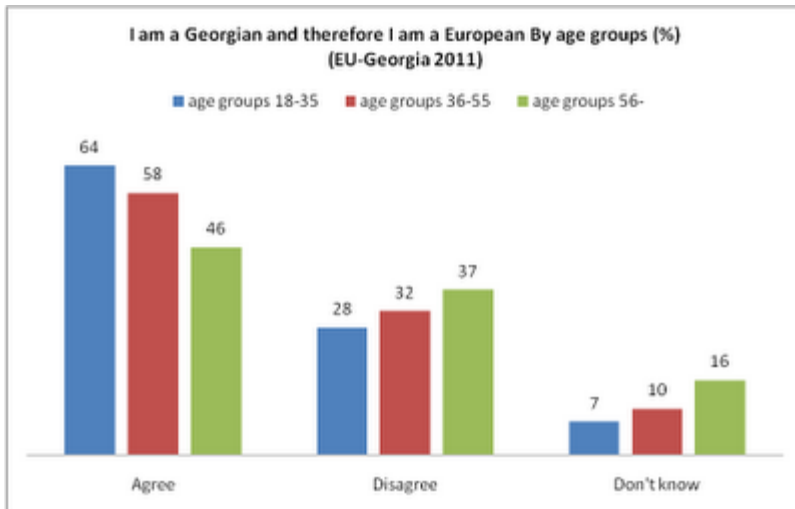
A large percentage of Georgians (69%) support the idea of potential EU membership despite the economic and debt crisis across the EU. Moreover, they are keener on EU membership than citizens of [Croatia \(52%\)](#) and [Turkey \(38%\)](#) even though the latter two states are more likely candidates for EU membership. In addition, according to EU attitudes survey, 53% of Georgians trust the EU, while data from the [2010 Eurobarometer](#) shows that only 37% of Croatians express trust towards the EU.

Georgians also stay optimistic about the timeline for EU accession. According to CRRC’s 2011 survey of attitudes towards the EU in Georgia, 35% of Georgians believe that the country will be ready for EU membership in five years or less, compared to 32% of Georgians who said the same in 2009. Nearly one fifth of the population (19%) thinks that the country will be ready to join in five to ten years, compared to 21% of Georgians who said the same in 2009.

Opinions on when Georgia will actually join the EU are slightly different. In 2011 30% of Georgians believe the country will join in five years or less, while 17% think Georgia will become a member in five to ten years. In 2009 results were almost the same. 31% of Georgians said Georgia would become an EU member in five years or less and 20% claimed the country would join between five and ten years. However, quite a large proportion of Georgians (42%) answered “don’t know” on the same question in 2011 (38% said “don’t know” in 2009).



Support for the idea that Georgia will become an EU member may lie in the fact that just over half (55%) of people in Georgia agree with the statement: “I am a Georgian and therefore I am a European”. Younger Georgians are more likely to agree with this statement. 64% of those between the ages of 18 to 35 agreed, followed by 58% of Georgians between 36 and 55 years old. This figure is 46% for the older generation (age 56+).



However, a majority of Georgians are not sure whether or not European citizens share the same attitude towards possible Georgian accession. 35% of the Georgians think the majority of European citizens would like to see Georgia as a new member state, while 57% answered “don’t know”.

High expectations about EU accession may partially explain why Georgians are so supportive towards EU membership. The majority of people in Georgia think that the EU membership may improve the general political, economic and social situation in the country. For instance, 46% say that the EU membership might decrease poverty. 52% think that EU membership may increase the number of available jobs, and 64% of Georgians believe that EU membership can increase the possibility of restoring territorial integrity.

Thus, the data shows that despite the economic and debt crisis in the EU, Georgians are overwhelmingly supportive towards EU integration and have high expectations from possible membership. Are these expectations justifiable? Share your opinion with us.