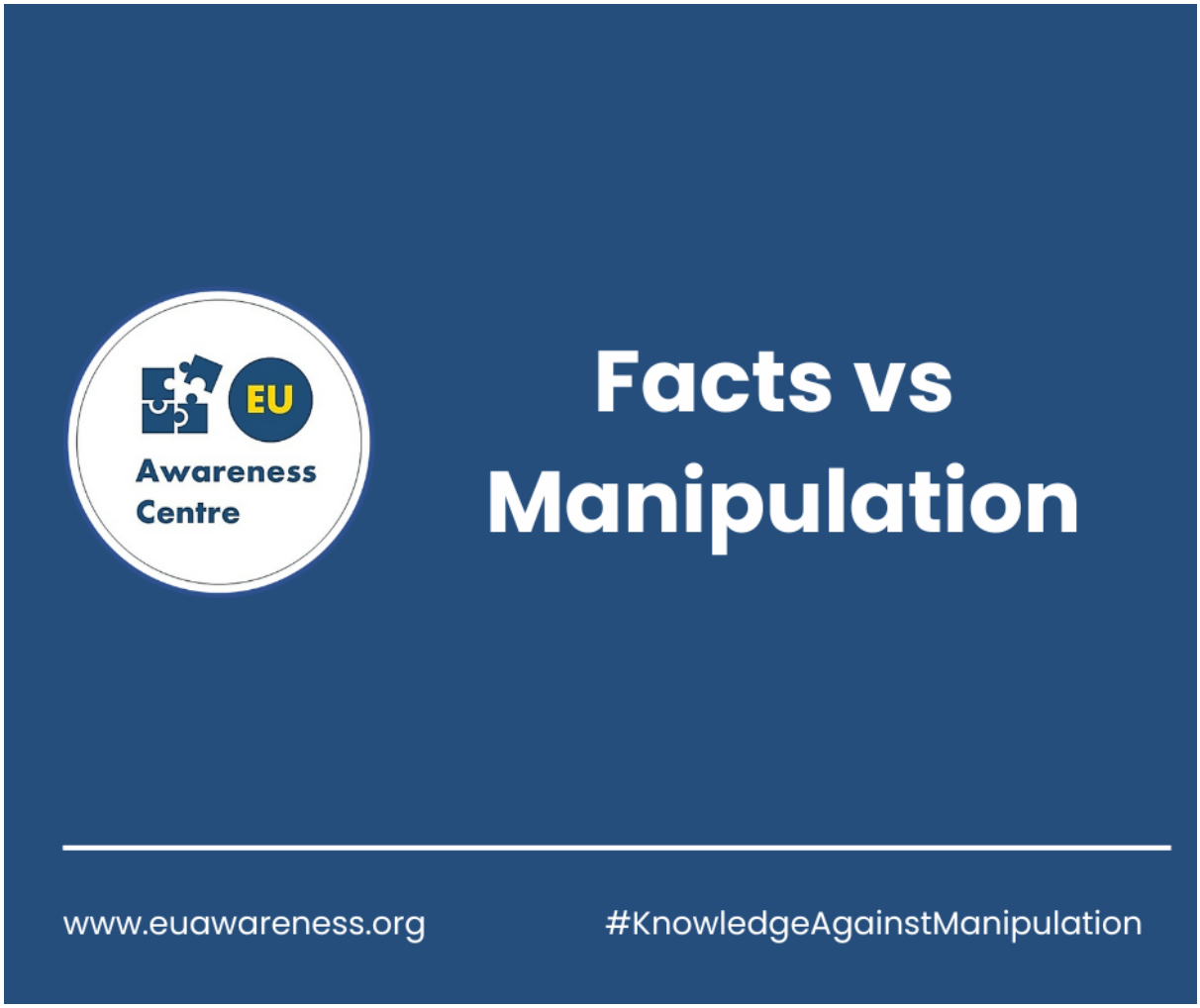

Manipulation # 2

July 21, 2025

The one downside of visa liberalisation is that it encourages migration... In the absence of visa liberalisation, many more of our citizens would have stayed in the country, which would have increased the labour force, and this would have directly contributed to an additional boost in the pace of economic growth." - Irakli Kobakhidze.

Facts:

Visa liberalisation enables Georgian citizens to travel legally and temporarily to the EU for tourism, business, or family visits — not for work or settlement. It's a step toward European integration and a sign of trust, not a threat.

Blaming it for migration is a cynical diversion from the real issue:

People aren't leaving because they *can*, they're leaving because they *must*.

- Georgians emigrate because they can't find decent jobs, livable wages, or basic protections at home.
- There is no functioning labour inspection, no powerful trade unions, and labour rights are routinely violated with no consequences.
- Salaries are not enough to live with dignity, and many citizens work without contracts or health insurance.
- Access to affordable healthcare is limited, and public services are underfunded or corrupt.
- Young people see no future in a system where advancement often depends on connections, not merit.
- In the absence of visa liberalisation, Georgians still migrated — but often permanently or through irregular means. With visa-free travel, many now opt for short-term, legal visits and returns, staying connected to their homeland and contributing through remittances, skills, and ideas.

Instead of dismantling visa liberalisation, the government should:

- Create decent jobs and fight nepotism;
- Guarantee political and media freedoms;
- Build a system where citizens see a future in their own country.

In short, Georgians are pushed out by hopelessness, not pulled by Europe.

Instead of scapegoating the EU, the government should ask:

- Why can't our citizens build a stable life here?
- Why is the state failing to offer social protection, economic opportunity, and justice?

Visa liberalisation is a reward for reforms. Undermining it only isolates Georgia and penalises ordinary citizens for the failures of those in power.

The solution isn't to close the borders — it's to open up fairness, opportunity, and dignity at home.

© [2025] EU Awareness Centre. All rights reserved.