

Foreign Policy Association together with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung offer you a newsletter on foreign policy and European integration issues of the Republic of Moldova. The newsletter is part of the "Foreign Policy Dialogue" joint Project.



# NEWSLETTER

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## Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates

The newsletter is developed by Mădălin Necșuțu, editor-coordinator

### TOPICS OF THE EDITION:

1. Daniela Morari, ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to the EU: "I don't know anyone in the EU who could have said that in three months Republic of Moldova would obtain the EU candidate status"
2. Editorial by Alexei Tulbure, political analyst and director of the Oral History Institute: "Leaving the ex-Soviet space by Moldova and entering the race for the EU accession"
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### News in Brief



The Minister of Infrastructure and Regional Development, Andrei Spinu, said in an interview with Deutsche Welle on June 30, that the Executive is prepared in case of negative energy scenarios in which Russia could cut the Republic of Moldova from gas supplies. "We already have a significant amount of natural gas stored in Romania - 25 million cubic meters. We also negotiated an advantageous financial instrument with the EBRD for the acquisition of natural gas. On 23 June 2022, we signed a loan agreement of Eur 300 million to avoid risks in the cold season of the year. The EUR 200 million emergency tranche will be used, if necessary, to increase the country's resilience in the event of possible limitations or interruptions in the supply of natural gas, and EUR 100 million will be used to create a strategic reserve for natural gas, which will be stored in Romania or Ukraine", said Spinu. He also specified that, since March 16, the Republic of Moldova is connected to the European energy system ENTSO-E and that the interconnection works with Romania also continue for the power line on the Vulcanesti-Chisinau segment.



The Republic of Moldova will receive Euro 40 million from the European Council for the modernization of the army, a measure of assistance that was taken under the European Instrument for Peace and which is equivalent to the one-year budget allocations of the army of the Republic of Moldova. "The latest assistance measures are proof of our commitment to strengthening the capacity of the Moldovan Armed Forces to increase national security, stability and resilience in the defense sector," the EU Council said in a June 30 statement. The assistance measure will strengthen the capabilities of the units of logistics, mobility, command and control, cyber defense, unmanned aerial reconnaissance and tactical communications of the Moldovan Armed Forces by providing non-lethal equipment, supplies and relevant services, including equipment-related training. The measure adopted by the European Council will complement the one worth seven million euros, adopted in December 2021, which strengthens the capabilities of the military medical service and the Engineering Battalion of the Armed Forces. The Secretary of State in the Ministry of Defense, Valeriu Mija, declared on June 29 on the TVR Moldova that the Republic of Moldova will move to a process of modernization.



Transnistrian companies, including those that do not consume natural gas, manage to survive only because of the Russian gas they receive from Tiraspoltransgaz Pridnestrovie and send it to the Moldovan Thermal Power Plant (Mgres) for conversion into electricity. A document obtained by reporters from the Center for Journalistic Investigations in Moldova and published in a recent investigation presents the banking operations of the Moldovan Thermal Power Plant from 2015-2017 and shows that this company provides monthly "gas processing services for electricity generation" to the Moldovan Metallurgical Plant from Răbnița. At first glance, some of these companies have nothing in common with gas consumption. Tiraspoltransgaz therefore supplies gas to those companies. In turn, they supply gas to Mldgres and pay this company only for its conversion into electricity. The money from the special gas account opened in this bank is then paid into the budget of the separatist regime in Tiraspol.

## Objective achieved: EU candidate status for Republic of Moldova. What's next?



The Republic of Moldova has taken another step on the European path after receiving the EU candidate country status on June 23. What should be noted is that the Republic of Moldova is moving from the EU's neighbourhood policy area to that of a candidate country for EU accession, which changes

completely Brussels' relationship towards Chisinau.

Following the decision of the European Council to grant the EU candidate status, the Republic of Moldova has received a 'blank check' from the EU in order to press the accelerator pedal

towards the EU as firmly as possible. The decision regarding Ukraine and Republic of Moldova was of a political nature, not a technical one, within the framework of a 'geopolitical summit' announced in Brussels.

To this end, both states have to meet a

► number of requirements set out by the European Commission in order to receive a decision by the European Council, following a favourable report by the European Commission, to start chapter negotiations with the European Union.

What is remarkable is that the Republic of Moldova has managed a fantastic fast track of about three and a half months to submit the application for the EU membership on March 3 and receive the EU candidate status on June 23. Compared to the Western Balkans countries that received the European perspective in June 2003 at the Thessaloniki summit, that is 19 years ago, most have not received yet the candidate status for EU membership.

Therefore, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine are forced to show determination on the part, as well as a lot of political will, to align in all areas with European standards.

The Republic of Moldova received a chance it never dreamed of, but for that it will have to face new challenges. Being in a new position, the Chisinau authorities must move as quickly as they did in the case of filling in the questionnaires for the European Commission.

Financial help from the Western partners is needed here too in order to attract expertise from specialized NGOs in the Republic of Moldova or experts from abroad. Also, even if the Republic

of Moldova is already implementing projects with the EU, starting with 2014 when it signed the Association Agreement with the EU, there is a need to readjust the approaches for such projects on a larger scale.

We are talking here about new types of funds, pre-accession funds, which the Republic of Moldova will be able to access. We will see if Moldova has capacity to develop projects and absorb larger European funds. Moldova will also have to move very quickly to deliver results on the nine EU requirements by the end of the year in the field of justice, administrative reform and the fight against corruption.

**Madalin Necshutu**

## ***I don't know anyone in the EU who could have said that in three months Republic of Moldova would obtain the EU candidate status***

***Immediately after the Republic of Moldova was granted by the European Council the EU candidate status, the head of the Moldovan mission to the European Union, Daniela Morari, gave an interview to a group of journalists accredited to the event, including the coordinator of the foreign policy newsletter, Madalin Necshutu, who spoke with the diplomat Daniela Morari about what will happen next for the Republic of Moldova.***

***Thus, we have discussed about what the next steps are and what homework the Republic of Moldova must do by the end of this year in order to ensure a new favourable report on the Republic of Moldova by the European Commission. We have talked about the benefits for Moldova of the EU candidate status and the responsibilities of the Moldovan***



***authorities following the historic moment at the European Council on June 23-24 in Brussels. We are inviting you to read the interview with Daniela Morari below:***

■ **How were the negotiations between the Moldovan officials and the 27 member states of the European Union? Could you share with us from the talks behind the scenes?**

■ The decision of the European Council of granting Moldova the EU candidate status is a historic one. I think this is a very important moment. It was a team effort, even though the team was small. It was a joint effort of the MFAEI team working in the European capitals to reach out to each Member State, but also here in Brussels.

I have discussed with the European institutions, in particular the European Commission while drafting the opinion, which played an important role in the decision of the European Council. The latter confirmed the European Commission's recommendation.

The European institutions are already built in a rather complex form and it was an equally complex exercise to manage in a very short term to bring arguments in favour of Moldova for each component of this architecture of the European institutions we were talking about. Here the effort of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nicu Popescu, to talk to all his counterparts was very important. And also, the efforts of the President and the Prime Minister to speak with the members of the European Council (the EU Heads of State - ed.). I would also like to mention here the team of the European Integration Department of the Moldovan Foreign Office which worked hard to collect all the arguments and organise such a coordination, but also the colleagues who worked in all the capitals of the EU Member States.

■ **What are the next steps? What reforms should the Republic of Moldova focus on, but also what terms or conditions should it observe?**

Here it is very important to read and take into account each element mentioned in the European Commission's recommendation,

especially those nine steps referred to. The European Commission will report on the level of implementation of these steps in the European Commission's annual report package for acceding states.

That's why it's important to focus on delivery in the period before the next reports, some of which are usually published in the spring of each year. We will now take steps together with the institutions directly affected by these steps, as well as our EC colleagues, to identify indicators for each action in order to have a common understanding of the actions we need to take at national level. This would be the number one priority.

To give you a time frame or a prognosis on these issues it is now very difficult for me, taking into account the recent decision of the European Council. If we had spoken in February or March, when the Republic of Moldova applied for membership, I do not know if there was anyone in the EU who could have said precisely that in three months the Republic of Moldova will obtain the status of candidate country for EU membership.

If we draw a parallel with the Western Balkan states that received the European perspective in 2003 in Thessaloniki, there are still states waiting to obtain the candidate status and only two states in this region are in the process of obtaining the decision to open negotiations, while two states are in the process of negotiation. The whole process for them meant a period of 19 years, while in the case of Moldova that was three months.

That is why it is important to learn from the experience of other states that have gone through similar processes. At the same time, it is also important to do our homework and identify new elements specific to our accession path. The latter will determine the speed, the timing and other elements in this course.

## Team effort

■ **In the discussions of President Maia Sandu and foreign minister Nicu Popescu with the members of the European Council, which in fact lasted until the eve of the Council, were there countries that imposed certain requirements or surprised you in manner you did not expect?**

■ It is true that the Republic of Moldova has made efforts to reach out to every European leader of each member state until the last moment. It is important not to exclude anyone and to hear the concerns or particularities of each EU Member State. We have had many supporters to whom we are very grateful, and the complicated part was that this decision was taken in a context with many more interdependent elements.

The discussion was related to the larger functional context of the European Union, the future of Europe and, also, the context of the Western Balkan states. We understood the interdependence between all these elements, but considering that the European Council had a meeting that morning with the leaders of the Western Balkans, we sensed that there would be more excitement and discussions about the Western Balkans, but personally I did not expect the attention to be so absorbed by that region.

■ **What does the EU candidate status offer to the Republic of Moldova? Can Europe offer more security guarantees to the Republic of Moldova, especially in the context of the war in Ukraine?**

■ First of all, it is very important to be aware of the added value of the recent European Council decision. We are talking here about the transfer of Moldova from the area of the EU's neighbourhood policy to the area of the accession policy.



This is not just a change of optics or words, but an existentialist transfer of structure, format, substance and tools. We are going to talk a lot with colleagues from the European institutions to agree on how this transfer will be made, because we already have to move on to another process and other tools that we will work with.

After obtaining the status of a candidate country for EU accession, the Republic of Moldova can in principle get access to pre-accession funds, which will make a big difference. We need to see how this works and what we can do with the money, but also with the potential of this openness.

In addition to our commitment and the EU receiving Moldova as part of the European Union in the future, new platforms for functionality and cooperation will gradually open up. That is why it is important under this commitment to realize this potential. This is the biggest achievement of the recent EU decision. The process could help our line institutions deliver and carry out the reforms we have committed to.

The European Union is a community aligning around values, based on the principles of economic cooperation and this is the first factor of interest and importance for the Republic of Moldova. We also explore more in the current format of cooperation, having a potential on the security dimension, but the EU, as a structure, cannot offer security guarantees in the strictly military sense.

However, by carrying out reforms, strengthening resilience and meeting all the Copenhagen criteria, including the fact that we are a democracy that respects human rights and the rule of law, these elements contribute to the security guarantees in a broader sense.

### **More money and their proper management**

■ **What funds will come to the Republic of Moldova in the future? Does Moldova have the capacity to absorb these pre-accession funds and to considerably develop its economy, as Romania did before its accession to the EU in 2007?**

■ Yes, of course we are interested in this. We are interested in gradually exploring how we can build capacity to capitalize on these tools. Without the skills and teams to handle this at home, it will be difficult to write such complex, fundraising projects. We are interested in learning from other Member States how we can go this way more efficiently and quickly, and without missing opportunities.

It is a process that will not happen overnight. It is also important for us to understand how these new tools work, but also for the EU to adjust them to the new reality. However, I would like to remind you, however, that in the Republic of Moldova, by implementing the Association Agreement with the EU, we have achieved many of the EU legislation standards and implemented similar projects.

Therefore, we cannot say that we are beginners. We have already institutional memory and work capacity that we just need to readjust. We need to use them fully and we will have more opportunities to carry out projects with greater impact for citizens and society.

■ **In what time horizon could the Republic of Moldova join the EU?**

■ I don't think there's anyone who could say an exact date. There are many unknown factors to be able to formulate a correct answer. I believe that what is now important as a timetable is to focus and deliver on the steps included in the opinion of the European Commission, which will

give us enough arguments, enough credibility, which will reconfirm to the Commission that it took the right decision recommending the granting of the EU candidate status to the Republic of Moldova, but also sufficient reasons to the European Council for a decision on the next step which would be the opening of negotiations.

There are a few other small steps between these two stages, but I would not like to go into details now, because we are going to coordinate them. Everything is too fresh to have precise answers. However, the next big step would be to open accession negotiations, and this will be possible if we read carefully the decision of the European Council of 23 June, after the Commission comes with a report on the implementation of the steps included in the European Commission's opinion. This could be the most realistic time frame at the moment. We will coordinate with the Commission until the publication of this report (next spring) and until we have clarity of guidelines that will provide us with more accurate data.

■ **Do you expect more money from the EU for the Republic of Moldova? How might citizens feel the benefits of this EU candidate status?**

■ Through the recent decision, the Republic of Moldova will make a transition process from the instruments of the neighbourhood policy to those referring to a future member state. But gradually we need to transform ourselves to reach the level of the Member States so that we can more easily integrate into existing processes and mechanisms for the EU to function.

A final sentence from the recent European Council decision is a clear reference that the EU will make progress in the enlargement process only by taking into account its absorption capacity. That is why it is very important that through our level of

preparedness and reform we guarantee and ensure that the EU will not encounter difficulties in its operation, because a dysfunctional European Union does not serve anyone - neither them nor us now in the process of approaching the EU membership.

The European Union will gradually begin to open up instruments to which we did not have access until now. These will offer new types of opportunities. For example, we could not implement large infrastructure projects. Now, this will be possible. I can't tell you if such projects could be included in the budget, because the EU budget has already been approved for the next seven years (2021-2027). If we succeed in transferring such projects to the current budget, we will discuss all these things.

We could not have this discussion internally until we learned of the recent European Council decision. I would also like to tell you that there will be direct opportunities for citizens, just as the Western Balkan states now have. Some of the countries in the area are already a few steps ahead of the Republic of Moldova.

■ **How do you see the statement of Minister Lavrov who said that the Republic of Moldova wants to destroy everything that is Russian in this country? Do you think Russia will threaten us with the energy security again?**

■ President Sandu has already answered this question and I cannot say more than she did. But I want to reiterate that the European integration has been a goal of the Republic of Moldova for quite some time. It is not a new one and it is not a surprise for the Russian Federation. The recent decision of the European Council has brought us one step closer to the path we have been working on for a long time.

In the context of the Republic of Moldova having a war on its

border, the measures ensuring the correct information, the fight against disinformation and all other risks or hybrid threats that the Republic of Moldova is facing are very important. I suspect that this reference refers to the information security law that was recently enacted by President Maia Sandu, which is meant to limit the disinformation in our media space.

### ***The EU's amazing working speed***

■ **How do you comment on the speed with which Moldova's request to join the EU was resolved?**

■ I think the speed with which many decisions have been made, which was catalyzed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, is admirable. I think it is important to capitalize on this openness of the institutions so that, when necessary, they move with such speed.

The European perspective on the Western Balkans also came in a post-war context. Things happened at a slower pace. We are talking about offering the European perspective in 2003 and there are still states waiting to be granted candidate status.

I do not want to draw parallels, because the Western Balkans region is a special one, with its realities, challenges, and strengths. But it is very important to learn when a decision is needed for the EU to have the capacity to act quickly in line with reality and take into account the seriousness of the need for such a decision. And we already have many examples of EU managing to mobilize quickly. In the case of the Republic of Moldova, for me, the Frontex agreement was the first example that speaks for itself about the EU's rapid capabilities.

The Frontex agreement has been signed by the EU with any other state for at least two years. In the case of Moldova, the whole process took only two weeks so that our Border Police

teams and those from the Migration and Asylum Office could be helped in the context in which we received such a large number of people fleeing from the war.

The help of the Frontex officers who work hand in hand with our teams to manage other security elements is also important. For example, how to deal with contingency plans or how to build capacity to be a state on the EU border and at the same time one that has a war on its borders.

■ **What is Ukraine's position vis-à-vis the Republic of Moldova joining the EU together? We know that in the past there were reluctances. Kiev said that "it would not be good for the Republic of Moldova to board the high-speed train of Ukraine to Brussels." How is the situation now?**

■ At present, there is a lot of cooperation with Ukraine. The last discussion took place at the level of presidents during which President Sandu speaking on the telephone with President Zelenski touched upon the recent favourable decision of the European Council for Moldova and Ukraine.

I think it is important to cooperate in the current context and to find solutions to certain challenges and crises in order to help with the transit and find solutions to better integrate Ukrainian families in the Republic of Moldova. I am referring to those now hosted by families from Moldova. It is also important to go together on the path of European integration.

I believe that it is to the advantage of the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the EU to make this joint effort and to work together within the pro-European commitment to make reforms and to see exactly where we can make this joint effort.

■ **Thank you!**

## Editorial

# Leaving the ex-Soviet space by Moldova and entering the race for the EU accession

*Alexei Tulbure,  
political analyst and director  
of the Oral History Institute*

The Republic of Moldova has received the candidate status for accession to the European Union. We must be clearly aware that this is a truly historic turn for our country. Finally, we are coming out of the so-called 'post-Soviet space', which the former imperial centre - Moscow, or Russia - has always considered an area of its natural interests.

There is no doubt that Moldova received this status in the context of the war unleashed by Russia against Ukraine. However, we cannot agree with those who claim that Ukraine and Moldova have received this status in an undeserved way. By the way, this would be one of the attack lines of Moldova's opponents of European integration.

Today, Ukraine is defending itself on the battlefields. And not only itself, it is defending the entire free world, including the countries of the European Union, from the invasion of a state that promotes unacceptable values for democratic societies. Ukraine has earned this status with the blood of its soldiers and civilians.

Moldova, perhaps for the first time in its 30-year history of independence, has gained high acclaim in front of the world, with its merits in managing



the Ukrainian refugee crisis being recognized by the entire international community.

Indeed, we have received the biggest number of refugees per capita, we are helping Ukraine in every possible way, including with the export of grain and other products that Ukraine cannot export by sea due to the blockade of its ports by Russia. The international community, including the European Union, cannot fail to take into account this extraordinary effort of our country, as well as the fact that Moldova is considered the next target

of the Russian aggression. In this respect, obtaining the status of the candidate country is well deserved.

### **Challenges for new beginnings**

The critics of the decision regarding the new quality of our country claim that Moldova does not meet the criteria in terms of justice, functioning of democratic institutions, economy, etc. Yes, it would be ridiculous to deny these claims. However, it should be mentioned that obtaining the EU

candidate status does not require full compliance with the EU standards or the well-known Copenhagen criteria for accession.

It is only the beginning of this journey, the beginning of the most serious work of transforming the Moldovan society and aligning it with the standards of the European community.

Moldova has tried to implement these reforms in previous periods; however, we are starting for the first time to work on reforming the country in the context of a clear prospect of EU membership. This perspective inspired the Baltic countries, the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe 20 years ago and will change the attitude towards European integration in our country as well.

The opponents of the European integration say that Moldova could remain a candidate country for decades, and accession is a very distant prospect, if it ever happens in general. They specifically cite the example of Turkey. Although it seems plausible, this case is not very relevant to Moldova. Turkey is a large country that has not decided clearly yet whether or not it wants to become part of the European Union. However, there are influential forces and voices even in the EU, which for various reasons - the functioning of democracy, size of population, geography, religion, etc. - oppose Turkey's admission to the EU.

Decisions regarding the Republic of Moldova are taken in conditions of war, in conditions of real military threat to the entire continent.

This is also true for Ukraine, which opposes and discourages the Russian aggressor by force of arms. These circumstances, and I am sure of this, can decisively influence the timing of the admission of our countries as full members of the European Union. That is, we can speak not of decades or even a decade, but of much shorter periods. I do not rule out the fact that the criteria will change, for the time being, for our countries.

### ***At the forefront of defending democracy***

Ukraine and Moldova are today at the forefront of defending a free, democratic world - isn't that an indisputable merit?! And the compliance of our countries with economic, social and other criteria will be achieved within the European Community. Moreover, the EU has working mechanisms with countries that have been admitted to the Union with incompletely done 'homework'. We are talking in this context about Romania and Bulgaria.

In other words, we note that integration into the European Union is an impossible task for the government or for a single ruling party. This goal must be achieved

by the society as a whole, including the government, the opposition, non-governmental organizations and other state and public institutions.

First of all, it is the ruling party that should be aware of this, which today is simply obliged (let's put the jokes aside) to create conditions for the inclusion of all the social forces mentioned above in the work of preparing the country for the EU accession.

And one last remark: Our parliamentary opposition is taking a strange position today on the issue of the war in Ukraine and Moldova's accession to the European Union. Statements regarding the war in the neighbouring country of the leaders of the so-called left-wing parliamentary parties - Dodon, Voronin and Shor - pour water on the aggressor's mill.

None of these parties condemned the Russian invasion in Ukraine. Obtaining the status of a EU candidate country was met with hostility by the parliamentary opposition. I am sure that such behaviour will bring this opposition in the next elections not to power, but to the political cemetery. The time has come for new political forces that understand their responsibility for the fate of Moldova and the region in the current international context.



# European standards mean transparency, fairness, rule of law, and financial predictability

**M**ember of the European Parliament Eugen Tomac spoke in an interview for the foreign policy newsletter about the significance of the historic moment of June 23 when the Republic of Moldova was granted by Brussels the EU candidate status. He explained that the EU's commitment to the two neighbouring states is firm and that from now on it depends only on Chisinau's determination to move forward with reforms on the European path.

Last but not least, the Romanian MEP spoke about how, in his vision, the Republic of Moldova should strengthen its cooperation with Romania, the only EU member state in its neighbourhood. We are inviting you to read the interview following the recent decision of the European Council of 23 June:

■ I would like to ask you first about this historic moment of receiving the status of a EU candidate country?

■ It is true, we are living historical moments. No one expected such developments in 2022, however, the conflict in the East, more precisely the Russian invasion of Ukraine has confronted Europe with a new challenge.

The EU has always responded to all crises since its establishment through greater integration or enlargement. This is what happened after 1989, when the communist regime fell in Eastern Europe - all the states in the former pro-Soviet bloc joined the EU and today the EU is made up of 27 states.

There are also states in the Western Balkans that want to join, but because



Ukraine wanted very much through its decision-makers to approach the EU in a resolute way, it paid a very expensive price. First, when it signed the Association Agreement with the EU, it lost Crimea as a punishment by Russia. Now that it wants a close rapprochement with the EU and NATO, Russia has decided to invade it. The Republic of Moldova has lived through this unfortunate scenario for three decades, as the conflict in the Transnistrian region has never allowed it to look beyond a distant perspective of European integration.

However, the decision-makers in Brussels, heads of state and government, the European Commission, and most importantly, the European Parliament, which represents the will of all European citizens, said a resounding 'yes' to the integration of Moldova and Ukraine as soon as possible.

The fact that the Republic of Moldova, in this context, receives this

extraordinary and unprecedented opening is an exceptional thing, because the Romanians across the Prut need such an impetus.

## Common future in the EU

■ What message did the European Union want to send to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova in this turbulent regional context marked by the Russian invasion of Ukraine?

■ The situation is so murky, so complicated, that this message comes as a confirmation that we are one and the same. That we have the same past and that we have to work hard to shape our future. And the future is created by such decisions taken today by the EU, which gives a clear perspective of European integration for the Republic of Moldova.

Only now does a new stage begin, but it is one that will be successful. On



the one hand, the EU provides money to the Republic of Moldova to carry out important reforms and to help it strengthen its infrastructure, which is extremely affected by these corruption-related things that have crushed the Republic of Moldova for the last 30 years. In conclusion, it is a historical event, in the true sense of the word.

■ **What follows as procedural steps for the Republic of Moldova? What to expect? Some are talking about the fact that the hardship is just beginning, with regard to reforms, especially in the area of justice. How do you see further this European path of the Republic of Moldova?**

■ Here we need some important elements. First of all, ambition, determination and political will to implement Moldova's commitments as a candidate state.

The EU will open several chapters in all areas to negotiate the alignment of Moldovan legislation with European standards. European standards mean transparency, justice, and rule of law. It means financial predictability and rules that are the foundation for everything that means values and the European world we know today.

That is why I believe that the Republic of Moldova, through its decision makers and citizens, demonstrated a year ago that it wants European integration. This expectation was crowned by a first great success through the status of the EU candidate country that Moldova was granted.

**What can be done better**

■ **If the Republic of Moldova fulfils the tasks set by the European Commission by the end of the year, can we expect it to start the negotiations on chapters with the EU next year?**

■ Indeed, from now on, the negotiations will begin on each chapter.

They will be opened gradually, as has happened in relations with all other states, from agriculture to domestic affairs or foreign policy.

Of course, all areas of government will be closely monitored by the EU. Let's not forget a very important thing, that you can learn a lot from the example of Romania. Romania has been a member of the European Union for over 15 years, but it has three large arrears. It is still not in the Schengen area, its justice is being monitored through the cooperation and verification mechanism, and we have obviously not joined the euro area.

So the Republic of Moldova also has the chance of learning from the Romanian government what to do in order not to repeat the mistakes we made. And from this point of view, I am absolutely convinced that Romania will provide all the necessary assistance with the reforms as soon as possible.

These reforms require time and a thorough foundation so that they do not affect society more than necessary. But I am convinced that if there is what I said earlier, ambition, determination and political will to carry out all these reforms, obviously this path of EU integration is on an irreversible course and obviously Romania wants this to happen. It happens because our goal is to be together in the EU.

**Between credibility and hope**

■ **In Chisinau, as we well know, there is a pro-European power vertical. If you had to give the leaders in Chisinau some advice, what would that be?**

■ I would urge the Moldovan authorities to keep up the pace with what they have started. I think the politicians from the Republic of Moldova are experienced enough. President Maia Sandu enjoys unprecedented credibility as the leader of the Republic of Moldova throughout the European Union.

The relations between Romania and the Republic of Moldova have reached an unprecedented level and from this point of view it is obvious that it is good we can unite our efforts to help the Republic of Moldova. Obviously, the main interest must be the people. People need this hope because they want to build a future at home. And this future can be built with a lot of responsibility, a lot of effort and with the necessary explanations. Because when you don't communicate, but you feel like you're doing everything right, it's wrong. Sometimes people want explanations for everything is happening around them. From this point of view, I think we should take into account all the expectations of the Moldovan citizens.

And there is another aspect I would like to emphasize - the need to join the ranks with the Romanian state. Romania has resources and willingness to get more involved with the Republic of Moldova. And here I am not just referring to the state level, it is important to support the local communities in both states. They need to communicate locally. For example, for librarians in the Republic of Moldova to communicate more with those in Romania. For teachers to have that exchange of experience that existed and which, unfortunately, has weakened in recent years.

I believe that we need a new impetus because everything that the European Union means, in fact, means Romania, which I see in Europe today. I mean the good things we have in Romania that we did not always manage to transfer to the Republic of Moldova.

And that will mean more money for agriculture, more money for rural development, more money for health, more money for education. This is what the EU resources will offer and that means in the end prosperity, a better life and obviously the future the Moldovan people want at home.

■ **Thank you!**

## Expert Opinion

# European Council decision: From symbolism to responsibility

**Angela Gramada, director of the  
"Experts for security and world affairs" Association**

Beyond the symbolism and appreciation of this decision as a historical one, the event comes with a great responsibility. This responsibility should not be entirely attributed to the governmental authorities, but also to the citizens of the Republic of Moldova. The status of candidate country must hold accountable the political actors, the representatives of the public institutions, but also the people who offered part of their sovereignty in order for their interests to be represented. So this status will be profitable if the action is doubled by a lot of work and internal cohesion.

The European integration should not be and is not the ultimate goal of the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova. De facto, European integration is a process that allows states with such aspirations to align certain realities, public policy approaches, the economic development model with certain standards - standards that are appreciated for the content and quality of change they can produce following their implementation.

Therefore, these standards come with improvements in living standards and generate socio-economic benefits for citizens, contributing to raising

living standards. Why? Because the Republic of Moldova will continue to remain in the sight of its partners and will be supported to implement those internal adjustments necessary for structural transformation, but also because the European community is seen as bringing peace, sustainable economic transformation. and stability.

### **Transformation stage**

There are a few things we need to understand and explain to our society. Without it, it will be quite complicated to be able to move from aspirations to achievements. Obtaining candidate status is just one step on the way to our transformation.

There follows a complicated period not only of the current geopolitical context, but also a period in which we will have to dose our efforts and adjust them to our real needs for economic and social development. Obviously, many things have already been decided, and then implemented for the signing of the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). But this was only an intermediate step in getting closer



to what it means to be the European integration procedure and the start of the negotiation process.

Going back to the things that need to be done, I think we should start by communicating strategically. When we talk about communication, things are not so simple. We have learned the communication with foreign partners, which is relevant for the image of foreign policy, but also for any type of regional integration.

We are going now to translate and communicate correctly and coherently messages about European integration for Moldovan citizens. The ordinary people should know their share of responsibility for the process of European integration, know their status and role and understand that they cannot exclude themselves from this process because they are the final beneficiaries of this process. Many of the measures to be

implemented will be accompanied by tough transformations, sometimes accompanied by the need to streamline available resources.

We will have to do more with less. If we also take into account the new global economic challenges, then we must be prepared for an extremely complicated period. But in order to overcome this challenge more easily, we must return to the need to communicate strategically and effectively. Otherwise, the partnership between the decision-makers and the citizens could suffer.

### **Preparing for reforms**

Secondly, it is very important to prepare the institutional actors, ie representatives of public institutions, to be able to implement reforms and public policies, to accept that they are part of a complex mechanism of transformation and adjustment of the system to performance standards that they could not access previously either due to lack of political will, or lack of knowledge or poor assessment, or lack of financial or human resources.

The training of institutional actors should not be limited to the central government authorities. The modelling of public institutions must also take place at the local level, because they are closer to the final consumers of public policies, ie citizens and economic agents.

Here comes the need to train professional managers, able to implement projects and manage human and financial resources, who will follow carefully in order to avoid discrepancies between defined objectives and results achieved. It is one of the biggest challenges and the

quality of the absorption of European funds will depend on the preparation of human resources. At the beginning it is about pre-accession funds, and later about structural funds to which the Republic of Moldova will have access.

Another important aspect is to identify the areas where urgent legislative interventions are needed, in order to adjust the legislative framework to the European realities. It's just that this process should be accompanied by an extremely thorough assessment of our own needs and in which to explain that change will produce positive effects, even if sometimes painful, and not just an excessive bureaucratization of the decision-making process.

No space needs to be created to speculate on the European Union's 'bureaucratic machinery' as a matter of additional problems for the proper functioning of public institutions. It is rather an encouragement for decision-makers to explain to the public what improvements a rule or a draft law comes with. But for this to be possible, there is a need for transparency, public debate and constant consultation of the citizens by encouraging participatory democracy.

Here, too, we could continue to prepare the legal framework to encourage foreign investment, to discuss with the business community, analysing at the same time the regional context and accepting that things will be influenced for a long time by the war in Ukraine.

In this case, the solution could be in-house, ie to encourage the domestic business environment and local farmers to adjust their production of goods and services to international

standards in order to become competitive and able to occupy free niches.

### ***The cohesion of domestic political actors is a necessity, not a whim***

On 1 July 2022, in Kyiv, an important document was signed that we overlooked. Volodymyr Zelensky, the country's president, Ruslan Stefanchuk, the speaker of parliament, and Denis Smigal, the country's prime minister, signed a pact for European integration. At first glance, the act can be interpreted as an action of political PR, but it is more than that. It is a public record of not at all easy commitments in times of war.

I will not go into too much detail about this act of the representatives of the central power in Ukraine, but I will insist on explaining why a cohesion around an idea, a process, a vision of the country's development, among political actors, is important for such states as the Republic of Moldova or the neighbouring country.

We know very well that although there is a pro-European parliamentary and governmental majority in the Republic of Moldova, supported by the presidential institution, the political scene is quite fragmented and sufficiently exposed to the risk of external destabilization.

Certain political parties not only do not hesitate to speak out against European integration, but also promote discourses in support of military aggression against the neighbouring state. This is how their political leaders understand to confirm their loyalty to outside supporters, turning into internal saboteurs who, at the same time, disregard the national interests.



I believe this to be one of the most difficult missions of the political class in Chisinau: to find sources of cohesion around the idea of European integration, even if sometimes it contradicts their mercantilist interests and the form of government they were used to.

If certain political forces continue to sabotage measures and decisions aimed at strengthening governance (in a good sense), if they continue to mobilize local internal resources to generate

dissension between the majority of the population and certain ethnic minorities, if they discursively explore military aggression and to generate fear, without any moral responsibility, then things could degenerate into socio-political instability.

The European partners are waiting for an act of political maturity from the political forces. That is, translated for the parties, this would primarily mean understanding the content of national interests, but also the logic of not

imposing these procedures. European integration as a goal was defined by the Chisinau authorities, not by Brussels.

What the Community can offer is a procedure, a legal framework and technical or financial assistance, but without punitive measures such as those coming from the east. The choice is voluntary and is accompanied by monitoring mechanisms because any assistance can also be interpreted as an investment in security, stability and development.

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**Foreign Policy Association (APE)** is a non-governmental organization committed to supporting the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European Union and facilitating the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict in the context of the country Europeanization. APE was established in fall 2003 by a group of well-known experts, public personalities and former senior officials and diplomats, all of them reunited by their commitment to contribute with their expertise and experience to formulating and promoting by the Republic of Moldova of a coherent, credible and efficient foreign policy.



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