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# NEWSLETTER

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## Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates

The materials are realized by Lina Grau, foreign policy expert and programme coordinator with APE.

### TOPICS OF THE EDITION:

1. Roundtable in Chisinau dedicated to the Moldovan-Ukrainian relationship. Opinions of Ukrainian and Moldovan diplomats.
2. **Serghei Gherasimciuk:** At the high level, there is a lack of confidence between Chisinau and Kiev
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4. **Natalia Stercul:** Moldovan-Ukrainian relationship - getting closer to the EU opens up new perspectives

#### The last period was marked by a series of important events for the Republic of Moldova.



The Ukrainian Prime Minister, Volodimir Groisman, and his Moldovan counterpart, Pavel Filip, have signed in Chisinau a joint agreement on the opening of common border check points, including on the Transnistrian segment. The Kiev Head of Government visited Moldova on Friday, October 7th. At the joint press conference of the two prime ministers, Pavel Filip reminded that Moldova and Ukraine have already opened in July this year the first joint check point - Pervomaisk-Cuciurgan. Pavel Filip said that he also discussed with his counterpart about the mutual recognition of properties, the finalization of the border demarcation process and the operation of the Novodnestrovsk hydroelectric complex.



The Moldovan Ministry of Finance has announced that Romania had transferred the last instalment of 40 million euros from the 150 million saviour loan granted to Moldova last year when other foreign aid was blocked as a result of the billion theft. The reimbursable financial assistance will be used to cover the Moldovan budget expenditures for the current year.



On October 3rd, the European Parliament had a debate on the developments in Moldova and on the motions of the EPP and European and Social Democrats groups on the situation in Moldova and the fulfilment of the commitments made by Moldova under the Association Agreement with the EU. Victor Bostinaru, Vice-President of the European Parliament and member of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, said the EU should provide strong support to the government in Chisinau and that the motion signed by 19 MEPs to suspend Moldova's funding would be to the advantage of Moscow.



Prime Minister Pavel Filip assured the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement, Johannes Hahn, that the government will meet "all conditionalities" for the EU's €100 million macro-financial assistance "according to the agreed timetable." Filip met with Hahn on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York on September 22. In a broadcast on the public television station, Prime Minister Pavel Filip admitted that the macro-financial assistance may not be received by the Republic of Moldova this year, but it will surely be allocated next year, without making any reference to actual fulfilment of conditions.



During a meeting with Peter Michalko, the new head of the European Union Delegation to Chisinau, President Igor Dodon announced about his "plans to visit Brussels in the coming months, where he will discuss the agenda of relations between the EU and the Republic of Moldova with several officials". On the other hand, Igor Dodon had a new meeting with the Russian President Vladimir Putin on October 10th, in Sochi, on the sidelines of the CIS Summit, announced the presidential advisor Iuri Ushakov in Moscow.



The EU assistance to the Republic of Moldova will continue, but not without conditions linked to the reform process, and these reforms will be assessed based on clear criteria, said the new Head of the EU Delegation to Chisinau, Peter Michalko, in Chisinau, at his first meeting with the mass media. Referring to the EU-promised assistance of 100 million euros, the diplomat stressed that the money would be conditional on democracy-related criteria and that the political criteria would be very important in releasing each tranche. "We will follow closely the democratic situation in the Republic of Moldova, including the electoral legislation, the situation in the media and civil society," said Peter Michalko.

## Chisinau and Kiev relationship - between cooperation and competition



A roundtable on the Moldovan-Ukrainian relations was recently held in Chisinau. The roundtable "Moldova-Ukraine: Cooperation, Competition, Interdependence" was organized by the Kiev office of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation together with the Ukrainian Foreign Policy Council "Prisma". A similar event was earlier held in Kiev. The purpose of these roundtables was to study the most sensitive issues in the bilateral relations, the successful experience and the possibilities for developing mutually beneficial cooperation strategies for the two countries.

The participants in the meetings have discussed issues related to border demarcation and management, modernization of border crossing points, land exchange between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, development of infrastructure projects and their impact on the environment, especially of the hydroelectric power plants project, Moldovan experience in the Transnistrian settlement, the situation of ethnic minorities and others.

## Ivan Hnatyshyn: I'm sure we will become together part of a united Europe

**S**peaking at the opening of the roundtable in Chisinau, the Ukrainian Ambassador, Ivan Hnatyshyn, said that he cannot imagine other high-level contacts at the moment than those with the representatives of the executive power in Chisinau. Referring to a possible meeting at the level of heads of state, the ambassador said that "if the elected President of the Republic of Moldova does not respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine and says that there is a civil war in Ukraine, what kind of contacts or agreements can we talk about?" *The Ambassador referred to the statements made by Igor Dodon during the last year presidential election campaign when he said that the Crimea annexed by Russia in 2014 de facto belongs to Russia.*

■ **Ivan Hnatyshyn:** We have the same foreign policy priorities and common interests in the area of regional security and the Republic of Moldova is an important international partner for Ukraine. European integration has become the civilizational strategic choice of both states. Our countries have shown attachment to the European model of development.

After the decline in foreign trade registered in 2014, the positive dynamics has been reestablished this year - in the first six months of the year, the bilateral trade increased by 35%. In the near future, the demarcation process of the common border is expected to be finalised.



Ukraine continues to take active steps in the Transnistrian settlement. Ukraine respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova and supports the Chisinau initiative regarding the complete withdrawal of foreign military troops from its territory- a matter included on the UN agenda- as well as the issue of the need to transform the peacekeeping mission into an international civil mission. Ukraine insists on moving as quickly as possible towards discussing political issues in the 5 + 2 format. We consider as unacceptable the federalization of the Republic of Moldova based on the 2003 model imposed from the outside.

In order to strengthen security at its borders and sovereignty, Ukraine is interested in introducing joint control on the Moldovan-Ukrainian border, including on the Transnistrian segment. On July 17<sup>th</sup>, the joint

control on the Pervomaisk-Cuciurgan crossing point began to work. In the near future, the Bronița-Unguri Bridge will be opened for the car and passenger traffic. Other things on the agenda is the construction of a new bridge over the Nistru river, in the area of Iampoli-Sorooca, and the restoration of the Berezino-Basarabeasca railway segment.

The ratification by Ukraine of the Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Nistru River Basin creates a platform for complex settlement of common ecological issues.

Ukraine, like no one else, is interested in a stable, developed and prosperous Moldova. But the strong Russian propaganda system in the Moldovan information space has a negative influence not only on the good neighbourly relations and cooperation with Ukraine, but it is one of the biggest challenges for the leadership and diplomacy of the two countries.

It is undisputable that the situation in Ukraine influences the Moldovan society and the development of the country. In the years of independence, both countries suffered from attacks on their territorial sovereignty and integrity. The Republic of Moldova - in 1992, and Ukraine - in 2014, when it was forced to oppose a large-scale hybrid aggression of the Russian Federation - economic, informational, political and

financial. Today Ukraine is a barrier from imperial expansion, including towards Moldova, whose aim is to restore the USSR and destabilize the Western democracies.

The international community, particularly the USA and the EU, is aware of and openly speaking that Russia has become the main threat to

the global security and order and that it goes against the civilized world. We are preparing for the worse, but we are hoping for the best - to be able to resolve the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by peaceful means.

Our shared response to the hybrid aggression has to be an active bilateral cooperation both in the

field of European integration, economic area, and in the regional security policy. Our common task is to neutralize Russia's influence, and first of all, the informational one. I am sure we will keep the good understanding, we will continue to support each other and together we will become part of the united Europe.

## ***Ion Stăvilă: I don't remember any other time when the political dialogue between Chisinau and Kiev was as good as now***

***Ion Stăvilă, former Moldovan Ambassador to Ukraine, says the relationship between Chisinau and Kiev has become a strategic one.***

■ **Ion Stăvilă:** Today, like never before, the relations between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine have acquired a strategic character. The two countries have at least two strategic goals that coincide - the common choice of the European model as a society development principle and the European integration as the final goal of their foreign policy.

The third element is the close bilateral co-operation in achieving these goals. I don't remember any other times in our relations when the political dialogue, the direct contacts and the high-level meetings were as intense as today. There have been many such meetings over the past two years during which very consistent decisions have been made.



This high frequency of meetings can be explained by the developments in the geopolitical situation, in the international relations and by the realities within our countries. Also the subjective factors play a role in this- I refer to the personal role of President Petro Poroshenko, who is interested in developing relations with the Republic of Moldova. I think it is of a particular importance the fact that he lived once in Moldova, he graduated from the school here and that he knows our country and had also certain business interests here.

This intense political dialogue has brought concrete results - cooperation in securing the common border, Ukraine's support for our efforts to restore control over the Transnistrian segment of the border. Ukraine's support in solving the Transnistrian problem is very important.

Solidarity in promoting the common goals of European integration and strengthening regional security, the close cooperation within GUAM and other regional and international initiatives are also very important.

Obviously, there are certain issues that we have inherited from the past, from the Soviet period- these have to do with the mutual recognition of property rights, border demarcation and ecological problems of the Nistru river, as well as the mutual support of our national minorities with a view to preserving and developing their culture and integrating them into the society.

## Serghei Gherasimciuk: At the high level, there is a lack of confidence between Chisinau and Kiev

**The deputy head of “Prisma” Foreign Policy Council, Sergei Gherasimciuk, says the potential of the Moldovan-Ukrainian bilateral relations has not been capitalized, and that their future depends also on the political situation in the Republic of Moldova and on the results of the 2018 parliamentary elections.**

■ **Lina Grâu:** How do you explain the increased frequency of the meetings between the Chisinau and Kiev decision-makers over the last year?

■ **Serghei Gherasimciuk:** There are several reasons for that. The first is rather banal - this increased frequency can be explained by the fact that these meetings were very rare before, and now things need to be improved.

Secondly, despite the ambiguous statements of the Moldovan President Igor Dodon, we have a perfect mutual understanding of security issues at the Government level, which allows for common positions on border control issues and speaking on the same platform at the international organizations, particularly OSCE and UN.

Undoubtedly, human-to-human contacts between ordinary people remain very important and in this regard the development potential is immense. These relationships need to be strengthened so that they can later be “exported” to a higher level, where there is lack of confidence.

The problem of mistrust was discussed among other issues at the roundtable in Kiev and in Chisinau.

**Lina Grâu:** But where did this lack of trust between Chisinau and Kiev come from?

■ **Serghei Gherasimciuk:** I think it stems



from the times when the political elites in our countries were created. After the collapse of the USSR, things started from scratch against the background of what we refer to as turbulent years of the early 1990s, when in order to survive politically, the political actors needed competitors and enemies. It’s an inheritance that we haven’t entirely got rid of yet.

The second aspect is that, for example, the constructive positions of President Yushchenko were not very well received in Chisinau, and later, when the political elites in the Republic of Moldova changed, Yanukovich and his Party of Regions were in power in Ukraine. The latter had little interest in Moldova and the relations with the West in general. Also today we are having a situation when the contacts at the presidential level are not possible, though there exist pretty good contacts at the government level.

Moreover, neither Moldova nor Ukraine can boast of consistency in their foreign policy. And there is always the risk that the politicians can reach an agreement that could be compromised later if there is a

change of power. At least, this is now the perception of the Ukrainians in relation to the Republic of Moldova - we can reach certain agreements, but a change in the composition of the Parliament could lead to their abolition.

■ **Lina Grâu:** Are their concerns in Kiev about the Party of Socialists that might take control of the government after the 2018 parliamentary elections?

■ **Serghei Gherasimciuk:** On the one hand, the electoral process within the country is undoubtedly the sovereign affair of the Republic of Moldova. On the other hand, it is clear that as Ukraine must refrain from influencing the choice of Moldovan voters, so must other countries do. Unfortunately, we see that this is not exactly the case. We see that the Russian Federation is actively promoting, at different levels, certain political forces. Russia is doing this both in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. And this generates an imbalance in the voters’ perceptions as well as in the media. And yes, the above is of very big concern to Kiev.

Problems exist not only in relation to the Republic of Moldova. We are concerned about Moscow’s interventions in the USA, France, the Netherlands, and other European countries. So things are more global and the idea is that the politicians should be guided by the interests of their states and not by the interests of the Russian Federation.

■ **Lina Grâu:** To what extent can Chisinau rely on the support of Ukraine in the Transnistrian settlement, especially after the events in Donbas?

■ **Serghei Gherasimciuk:** Chisinau has all chances of receiving full support from Ukraine. We’ve made some institutional progress – Ukraine has a new special

representative on the Transnistrian region - Mr Krijanovski. The latter knows the issue very well as he has previously held this post.

I believe that on the side of Ukraine, Chisinau will see only good intentions and desire to cooperate. So it is now a very good situation for the Republic of Moldova, when most of the mediators and observers support reintegration while respecting the sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova.

Ukraine, the EU and the USA are now playing as part of one team and only Transnistria and the Russian Federation are on the other side. The situation was different before, because Ukraine and the OSCE were trying to hold a neutral position. At present, there is a window of opportunity for the Republic of Moldova.

It is important to work more closely with the Transnistrian side and to use the incentives that both Chisinau and Kiev have, given that Transnistria, on the one hand, is moving towards the Russian Federation, and on the other hand, it has to understand it depends on Ukraine, the EU and the Republic of Moldova.

**Lina Grău:** Is Ukraine interested in strengthening the border control on the Transnistrian segment?

**Serghei Gherasimciuk:** Yes, it is. Because we understand that despite the official statements in Transnistria, which often repeats that 90,000 Ukrainian citizens live in the region and that the Ukrainian language is officially supported, we see the Transnistrians participating in the military applications of the Russian troops in Transnistria. We also see how the Russian flag is raised high next to the Transnistrian symbols. And this clearly shows that the main orientation of Tiraspol is Moscow. And given that Kiev is in a de facto state of war with Moscow, it is obvious that the Transnistrians cannot longer get dividends from ethnic sentiments. Because the feelings and the war are just different things.

**Lina Grău:** Also, in connection with the Transnistrian region, I would like to ask about the Kiev reaction when the Republic of Moldova first signed the electricity procurement contract with Ukraine and then cancelled it and returned to the power supply from the Transnistrian region?

**Serghei Gherasimciuk:** The situation was perceived very badly in Kiev. Many were of the opinion that Moldova used simply Ukraine in order to get a lower price. And this is obviously another blow to mutual trust. Regarding the resumption of these deliveries, it could surely be done, if the economic interests prevailed over the political ones.

**Lina Grău:** The participants in the roundtable discussed both about the problems in the bilateral relations and issues of co-operation, the main one being the European integration. What are the other existent areas of positive cooperation between Kiev and Chisinau?

**Serghei Gherasimciuk:** In a month we are going to present a study in Chisinau that we have done together with experts from Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. The study contains recommendations for moving towards European standards. All three countries have unique experience and we will try to involve the authorities of the three countries into developing common methodical guidelines for business. We want to explain why the transition to European standards is needed. Even if these things involve some financial costs in the first stage, these standards are going to open to us not only European markets but also Asian markets, because European standards are a serious brand for these markets as well.

Obviously there can be many areas of cooperation - in the field of infrastructure and transport, small and medium business in cross-border areas and even ecological tourism, where we can organize tourist routes together with Romania.

**Lina Grău:** What does it mean for Chisinau, Kiev and Tbilisi the prospect of the EU offering a new Eastern Partnership cooperation format that is being discussed now and which could be proposed at the next Eastern Partnership Summit in November?

**Serghei Gherasimciuk:** It seems to me that the Eastern Partnership countries that have signed the Association Agreement have the right to claim a different attitude from the EU compared to Belarus, which is part of a "union state" with the Russian Federation, to Armenia, which has joined the Customs Union and the Eurasian Union, or compare to Azerbaijan, where the standards of democracy leave much to be desired

Can the EU offer us something to match our ambitions? At this stage, it seems that it cannot, because at the moment, the EU is having its own problems and has focused more on internal issues than on the relations with partners. But it is also clear that, despite these issues, the EU needs success stories at its borders. Because if such success stories don't exist, the attractiveness of the EU as a development model will be questioned.

That is why there is need for a compromise now - we want a lot, the EU can offer us much less, but it should give us a certain prospect of getting closer to the EU, otherwise it will lose its face.

**Lina Grău:** How do you assess the relations between Chisinau and Kiev at the moment?

**Serghei Gherasimciuk:** Metaphorically speaking, our relationship is now approaching the top of the launch pad. This year and the next year, which is an election year in the Republic of Moldova, will show whether we will move further in our relationship or our cooperation will collapse.

## **Angela Grămadă: European integration opens new possibilities for political cooperation between Chisinau and Kiev**

**A**ngela Gramada, a researcher and the director of the Association for Security and Global Affairs from Bucharest, is also signaling several issues in the relationship between Chisinau and Kiev, while stressing that the solution to these problems can be found in the European integration process of the two countries.

■ **Angela Grămadă:** One of Kiev's main concerns at present is to establish a dialogue with the Chisinau authorities in such a way that they can rely on a certain predictability on the part of its neighbouring Republic of Moldova. This is necessary given the big problems faced by Ukraine in the East and on the Transnistrian segment.

It is difficult for Kiev to follow carefully the things on several "fronts" at the same time - what is happening in Chisinau and how Tiraspol is building its relations with Russia. The Ukrainian authorities understand very well that if there is instability in Chisinau, it will be much harder for them to monitor the border on the Transnistrian segment. Stability in the Republic of Moldova is very important for Kiev. It is also important that the protests in Chisinau do not become violent.

Another issue in the relationship with Ukraine is the discussion around the minorities, and namely, how Ukrainians perceive the Romanian minority in Ukraine, if they distinguish between the Romanian and Moldovan minority. It is much easier for them to manage by separating them.



Another issue that has been discussed lately is related to the Nistru river and the way Ukraine is managing the water flow. There have been many voices in the Republic of Moldova drawing the public attention to this problem in the last five years, but they haven't been heard. And only when the mass media spoke about the fact that Chisinau could remain without drinking water, did the Ukrainian side address the issue. I understand the business behind these planned hydropower plants, in the sense that they are going to produce electricity which will bring money into the budget, but beyond that we are talking about civil security and about the danger that we are exposing the people in the Dniester basin to.

Another issue between the two countries relates to properties. And here I will draw a parallel with Romania,

which has wanted very much to guarantee its investments in Ukraine. Romania had the experience in Krivoy Rog- it failed to get anything back from what it invested in the late 1980s. Now it's insisting on some guarantees to be included in a special document. In the case of the Republic of Moldova, the problem is non-recognition by Ukraine of the right to property over its assets in the Odessa region of Ukraine. This issue among other things is generating mutual mistrust.

There are also image issues generated by what President Dodon is doing in the relations with the neighbouring states. The Ukrainians are rather sensitive to the statements made by the President of the Republic of Moldova and they don't deny that. They are not saying openly that they are not going to accept dialogue with President Dodon, but they expect from President Dodon to change his attitude and the content of his discourse regarding the annexation of Crimea and the situation in the eastern Ukraine.

■ **Lina Grău:** So we cannot hope for a meeting at the presidential level for the moment...

■ **Angela Grămadă:** Not yet. But I'm glad about the visit of the Ukrainian Prime Minister Groisman to the Republic of Moldova, which shows a rather good character of the bilateral relations at the Government level. In fact, many things can be solved at the Government level. In a parliamentary republic, the prime minister is the main person in the state who manages the internal affairs. So Groysman's

visit is a good example of advancing and deepening the bilateral economic relations between the two states.

■ **Lina Grâu:** This year there have been already two meetings between the prime ministers of the two countries - one in Kiev, in winter, and a recent one in Odessa. There have also been meetings at the level of foreign ministers. How do you explain this increase in the official contacts between Chisinau and Kiev lately?

■ **Angela Grămadă:** I think this is explained by the common challenges and common threats. And probably both sides have to deliver results on the bilateral relationship and show that there is openness and political will to overcome crisis situations. The problems have been ignored for too long a time and now that they have started “exploding”, they caught both sides unprepared to advance.

I think these are opportunities even though at some point I thought the political elite in the Republic of Moldova has lost the window of opportunity to promote the Transnistrian conflict settlement as a package solution while the Ukrainian side is trying to promote at various international forums the solution of their problem in eastern Ukraine - the Russian aggression in Donbas and Donetsk.

For example, in March 2015, there was a non-confidence motion against the Leanca government in Chisinau for the reason that the Republic of Moldova had joined the European sanctions against Russia. My opinion is that we are dealing with what we should not do. Instead we should promote our own national interests and goals. Several political forces were simply trying to gain electoral dividends before the presidential election campaign. This is about Dodon's Party of Socialists and the Party of Communists.

■ **Lina Grâu:** Ukraine plays a very important role in the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. To what extent can Chisinau count on its neighbour?

■ **Angela Grămadă:** It's a pretty complicated question. There has always been a dual attitude of the Ukrainian authorities regarding the Transnistrian conflict and it is very difficult to overcome this moment of mistrust.

■ **Lina Grâu:** Things have changed since the Donbas conflict...

■ **Angela Grămadă:** Yes, the things have changed, but if we look at the way the Ukrainian side reacted last year to a new round of 5 + 2 negotiations, it seemed to me it was quite soft. It could have been more aggressive in promoting the interest of the Republic of Moldova in resolving the conflict.

I believe there is mutual mistrust and the fact that this process has lasted for so long has eroded a great deal from our potential for dialogue, including on the Transnistrian problem.

There is a window of opportunity opened again due to the addressing by the Republic of Moldova of the Transnistrian problem at the UNO when it requested the withdrawal of the Russian troops. We have seen the openness of the Ukrainian side immediately on this issue, our neighbour promising to support this initiative.

■ **Lina Grâu:** Does Ukraine have an interest in establishing rigorous border control with the Republic of Moldova on the Transnistrian segment? We witnessed a series of episodes this year when there was some hesitation - the control was set up and then it was postponed. They were talking then about occult interests of some Ukrainian forces that are not interested in this control.

■ **Angela Grămadă:** There exist occult interests on both sides, not just in Ukraine. There are also interests in Chisinau and there are economic interests in the Transnistrian region as well. The EUBAM reports that I've been going through lately have shown some improvements on this border segment though not spectacular. That means there's still a lot to be done.

The situation has changed in the context of Moldova's and Ukraine's rapprochement with the European Union - the necessary legislation has been adopted, which puts into practice several levers and instruments available to both the Chisinau and Ukrainian authorities in order to solve a many of these issues. But if there is no economic and political will to reduce smuggling, illegal migration, etc., I do not think we will be able to remove this threat at the border.

There is a willingness at this moment as the Ukrainian side needs the Republic of Moldova as a partner in solving its conflict in eastern Ukraine.

■ **Lina Grâu:** The European integration has been mentioned as one of the areas where the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine could cooperate and exchange experience. What are the other positive cooperation areas that you have identified?

■ **Angela Grămadă:** Firstly, it is about political cooperation. If at certain times in the last three years Ukraine has served for the Republic of Moldova as a shield of protection against Russia, Moldova for Ukraine was an example of how to implement certain reforms. Of course, not everything is brilliant in the Republic of Moldova and the latter has its own problems, but the political cooperation is an area that can be deepened by the two countries.

# Moldo-Ukrainian Relations

by **Natalia Stercul**,  
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The main changes in the Moldovan-Ukrainian relations were determined by a series of factors, many of which are contradictory, aggravating the instability of the internal development of the states and consequently generating the mistrust of the political elite. Under the current circumstances, it is important to keep up with the recent trend of synchronizing the actions between Moldova and Ukraine in the field of cross-border cooperation, country reintegration and resolution of the Transnistrian conflict. The European factor, which plays a decisive role in these processes, allows for accumulation of EU experience, supported efforts by Moldova and Ukraine, raising the efficiency of the bilateral cooperation platforms and bringing the two states to a new level of cooperation.

In 2017, Moldova and Ukraine celebrated 25 years of diplomatic relations. The congratulations and the willingness for future cooperation expressed through the diplomatic missions by the foreign ministers Klimkin and Galbur, have exposed the insufficient efficiency of the platform for political dialogue and the existence of common problems in the bilateral relations.

Despite the recent and more frequent contacts between the two Prime Ministers, the Ukrainian president hasn't had any meeting with his Moldovan counterpart Igor Dodon. The duplicity in the positions of the pro-Russian president and of the pro-European government complicates the positive dynamics in the Moldovan-Ukrainian relations.

In 2017 the Republic of Moldova celebrated 25 years of the Border



Service, and on this occasion two interdepartmental protocols on the border regime were signed. On February 13, 2017, Ukraine and Moldova signed the road map for the development of Moldovan-Ukrainian cooperation this year, which involves the conclusion of the negotiations on the regulation of the conditions of the Nistru hydraulic complex operation, the conclusion of the demarcation of the state border (0.4% of the 2020 km have remained unmarked - in Giurgiulesti and in the Novodnestrovsk hydraulic hub area), as well as the mutual recognition of property rights.

Altogether, during the bilateral cooperation, more than 150 documents regulating the good neighbourly relations have been signed. In Ukraine and Moldova, the honorary consulates are expanding, which is particularly important in the context of controlling the increasing number of trips in the border areas, of facilitating the promotion of export production on the local markets, and of the strengthening of friendship relations between the parties.

The Moldovan-Ukrainian relations cannot be analysed outside the context of Russia's role. The hybrid war in the given circumstances becomes one of the biggest threats to the national security of Ukraine, of Moldova and of the countries in the region. Despite the fact that the new phase of reforms started in 2014, neither Ukraine nor Moldova, has fixed the term of the hybrid conflict in the official documents. The national security and defense strategies require revision in line with the current challenges. Special attention should be paid to the propaganda and misinformation, whose monolithic character is used as levers of influence, destabilizing the situation within the state.

Escalation of relationship between Ukraine and Russia in the context of the Crimean issue and that of the eastern regions of Ukraine allows to conclude that Ukraine faced similar problems to those confronted by Moldova. These issues include supporting separatist forces, compromising relations with Russia, and losing territories. This has made the Ukrainian authorities abandon the loyalty policy towards Transnistria and to move to new forms of cooperation characterized by Moldovan-Ukrainian symmetrical actions in the Transnistrian settlement.

The inclusion of the European factor in the political dialogue is the basic feature of the development of relations between Ukraine and Moldova. This has also influenced the intensification of high-level contacts and the building of relations in the spirit of pragmatism. Being convinced that the idea of federalization will inevitably lead to the breakup of the country, Ukraine speaks in support of reintegration and territorial integrity of the state, and of the return of the raions from the left bank of the Nistru river to the Republic of Moldova.

At present, the parties are implementing the plan of 13 common check points between Moldova and Ukraine, in order to tighten the border control. The given plan caused great dissatisfaction of the Transnistrian side. For the successful achievement of the proposed goals, it is important that the parties do not depart from the concrete legal positions in the Transnistrian issue, which will allow for acceleration in dismantling the corruption schemes and establishment of control over the unrecognized republic border.

An important role in the reintegration process lies with the EU-Border Assistance Mission at the Moldovan-Ukrainian border (EUBAM). An analysis of the mission reports for 2015-2016 reveals the issue of organized crime, including smuggling, among other things, weapons and ammunition on the Transnistrian border area as well as corruption. At present, the level of smuggling has been reduced by increasing the efficiency of customs control.

The EU supports the cross-border cooperation programme between Moldova and Ukraine, aimed at solving common problems in this area, in particular overcoming the lack of experience in the joint planning of the development of border territories, the difficulties in attracting more entrepreneurs and in implementing infrastructure and logistics projects.

Ukraine remains a major trading partner for the Republic of Moldova, ranking third after Romania and Russia. The volume of trade between the two countries in 2016 accounted for \$785 million. The Moldovan exports to Ukraine in 2014 accounted for 4.67%, while the imports - 10.28%. In 2015, the export volume decreased and reached 2.3%, while the imports accounted for 9.3%. In 2016, there was a slight increase in exports - up to 2.43% and in imports - up to 9.55%.

It is important to develop the experience of the Moldovan-Ukrainian cooperation in the energy field, with a view to the full participation of the two countries in the EU Energy Community. The two states have assumed certain obligations that relate to the implementation of the second and third energy packages. Under these obligations, Moldova and Ukraine have to harmonize their legislation in line with the EU standards, to reform their electricity market and to modernize their infrastructure. The main difficulties in this area are the cumbersome adoption of the regulatory framework and delays in the process of restructuring of the energy systems.

### **Recommendations**

The parties should continue to promote friendly relations taking into account the common European integration orientation of the foreign

policy. The proximity of the EU opens new perspectives in the construction of the European security system and creates conditions for the elaboration of effective measures to counter the current threats to the national security of Ukraine and Moldova.

It is important to judiciously approach the development of new forms of collaboration within regional structures, in particular within GUAM.

Supported efforts should be continued in the establishment of joint control of check points in the border area, and in the fight against cross-border crime. The political pragmatism should become a priority in issues related to the reintegration of the country.

It is necessary to activate the joint Moldovan-Ukrainian efforts in the fight with the hybrid threats, propaganda and misinformation. A great emphasis should be placed on the national interests of the two states in the anti-propaganda rhetoric.

It may also be important to develop a new long-term common concept for regulating and promoting good neighborly relations, taking into account the changes in the two countries and in the region.

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