

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

MONTHLY BULLETIN • JULY 2021 • NR.7 (185)

## Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates

The newsletter is developed by Mădălin Necșuțu, editor-coordinator

### TOPICS OF THE EDITION:

1. Interviews with Stela Jantuan and Ion Tabarta, political experts: "The oligarchic elements will not give up so easily, they will try to adapt and regroup depending on the situation"
2. Editorial by Ludmila Nofit, Program Coordinator Association for Foreign Policy: "The Republic of Moldova has a new and probably last historical chance. The main challenges and immediate priorities of the government"
3. Interview with Vladimir Bolea, PAS vice-president: "We are realistic and take the victory of July 11 as a huge responsibility"
4. Interview with Ana Mihailov, Director of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Moldova: "For the first time people voted for urgent changes in society, leaving aside geopolitics"

### News in Brief:



The new Parliament met on Monday, July 26, at its first sitting after the early parliamentary elections that took place on July 11. After the legal constitution of the Parliament, the speaker and vice-speakers of the Parliament are elected and the Permanent Bureau of the Parliament is established. Within 10 days since the first sitting, the parliamentary factions are set up, which operate on the basis of their own rules of procedures. The Parliament is considered legally constituted from the date of the first sitting of the Legislature. According to the results of the early parliamentary election from July 11, the PAS will have 63 seats, the Bloc of Communists and Socialists - 32 seats, and the Shor Party 6 seats in the new Parliament. PAS, which has a majority in parliament, has announced the formation of the new government as soon as possible. President Maia Sandu warned in her message in Parliament that the problems are many and complex and that there is no time to waste. She expressed hope that the new Parliament will be able to quickly regain the trust of citizens in this important institution through fair and courageous decisions, which will stop corruption and improve the living conditions of the Moldovan citizens.



The USA has appointed a new ambassador to Chisinau in the person of diplomat Kent Doyle Logsdon. He will replace Dereck J. Hogan. Kent Doyle Logsdon is a member of the senior US diplomatic corps holding the rank of Minister-Counselor and is Chief of Staff to the Undersecretary for Growth, Energy and Environment. Previously, Logsdon served as Deputy Secretary of State for the Energy Resources Office, Deputy Head of Mission at the US Embassy in Berlin, Germany, and Chargé d'Affaires, from January 2017 to May 2018. Logsdon worked previously also in Kiev, Ukraine, Bangkok, Thailand, Alma Ata, Kazakhstan, Islamabad, Pakistan, and Stuttgart, Germany. He holds a master's degree from the University of Virginia and a bachelor's degree from the University of Notre Dame. He is recipient of a presidential award for meritorious services and is fluent in four foreign languages: Russian, Ukrainian, Thai and German.



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bogdan Aurescu, declared on Friday, during a press conference in Chisinau held together with the President of the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu, that Romania will not only continue the support for the Republic of Moldova, but it also accelerate this aid. "Romania's support for the Republic of Moldova will be manifested in all areas. We have the availability to do this", said Aurescu. He spoke about the implementation of several projects related to energy and infrastructure. In her turn, the President Maia Sandu has stated that she appreciates highly the availability of support from the authorities in Bucharest. "We have the opportunity to build a strong and mutually beneficial partnership, based on a sincere dialogue that will open opportunities for development and bring us even closer," said President Maia Sandu, who thanked Romania for its support to the Republic of Moldova.

## PAS and Maia Sandu, face to face with success and responsibility for reforms



The hardships are just beginning for the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) voted by the Moldovan citizens to deliver the reform agenda of President Maia Sandu. The victory is a historic one for the pro-European forces in the thirty years of Moldova's existence as a state, after the declaration of independence from the defunct Soviet Union.

PAS has marched in the parliamentary elections and got 52.80 percent of the one and a half million votes cast,

of which about 212,000 in the diaspora. Transposed in seats the score means 63 out of 101 deputy seats in the Parliament. The remaining 32 seats were obtained by the Electoral Bloc of Communists and Socialists (BeCS), and 6 seats by the Shor Party led by the fugitive oligarch with the same name.

The result is remarkable given that this has been for the first in the history of the Republic of Moldova for a pro-European centre-

right party to obtain such a high score and such a comfortable majority in the Chisinau Legislature. At the same time, this is a scathing defeat for the pro-Russian left-wing political forces in Chisinau and, in extenso, a blow to Russia's influence and direct interests in Moldova.

PAS will face a number of major challenges. The party has to pass the maturity test and show that it is a stable party with a compact vision, a partner of

► President Maia Sandu and not a political instrument of the Moldovan leader. PAS should avoid the mistakes of the Socialists' recent experience, when Igor Dodon was both head of state and leader of the majority, and of the formal and obedient political government led by Ion Chicu.

This is not easy to achieve despite the 63 seats in the Parliament that bring those in the PAS closer to the constitutional majority. PAS is very close to the maximum power limit, which can create a number of inconveniences in the future, not only political advantages. First of all, the power comes with a huge responsibility that presses on the shoulders of PAS, but also on those of Maia Sandu. The responsibility is at least as high as the resounding victory.

The kleptocratic system built in Chisinau during the three decades of independence is not going to give up that easily. Even if the time of oligarchs like Vlad Plahotniuc or Ilan Shor seems to be over in the Republic of Moldova, the kleptocratic system will raise new heads from among those who have been exploiting the system for years. In addition to this fierce battle, it will be difficult for the PAS to fight the deeply-rooted corrupt judiciary.

The external evaluation of magistrates by Maia Sandu and PAS will not be easy to implement. This caste will insistently invoke the separation of powers in the state and will use this argument to demand non-interference of politics in justice; if it succeeds, it will be a good cover for the corrupt and oligarchs.

It will be a trench fight, and this redoubt will not be so easy to conquer. On the other hand, there will be street pressure looking for fast results. The citizens of the Republic of Moldova will move as quickly as possible in this regard, and the PAS parliamentary majority will have to deliver tangible results both for their own citizens and the foreign donors who are going to pump even more money into Moldova, especially since the western money depends a lot on the progress of reforms.

**Mădălin Neacșu**

## ***The oligarchic elements will not give up so easily, they will try to adapt and regroup depending on the situation***

***We've discussed with two political experts - Ion Tăbârță and Stela Jantuan – within two mini-interviews about the main challenges that the ruling party PAS could face in the near future. Lack of experience, temptations to corruption and others are just some of the challenges listed by the interviewers. We are inviting you to read below our discussion:***



***Ion Tăbârță,***  
***political analyst, IDIS Viitorul***

■ **What do you think will be the main obstacles in the near future of the new power in Chisinau, installed after the July 11 elections?**

■ The main obstacles are related to the cleaning of state institutions. We have to admit that the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) and President Maia Sandu have raised the expectations a lot, raising also the stakes in the fight against corruption, the justice system reform and respecting the rule of law. The justice system includes not only judges, but also the Prosecutor's Office and other institutions.



***Stela Jantuan,***  
***political analyst***

Though everyone is now triumphant and there is a certain euphoria, I find it hard to believe that the hostile oligarchic elements will give up that easily. I also don't rule out the fact that a number of politicians will pack their luggage and flee the country just like Vlad Plahotniuc and Ilan Shor did in 2019.

However, we have also seen with Plahotniuc and Shor in 2019 that the existing schemes have been taken over by other people in the second line. We don't rule out now that these people will also flee Moldova. But there are other people, somewhere in the third echelon,

who will try to maintain this situation of widespread corruption in the Republic of Moldova, because this oligarchic and kleptocratic system feeds a good part of the officials who, in addition to the official salary, have also huge economic dividends from the schemes.

We will see if Maia Sandu's team will have the tenacity to clean up and face the challenges. And here we should take into account several aspects. Maia Sandu's team is not experienced and many would argue it is really unripe and leaves much to be desired when it comes to competence and professionalism, therefore they will need to attract people from outside the party.

Though people of integrity, many of them have not held important positions in the state before where the temptation to corruption is very high. We cannot exclude the hypothesis that the oligarchic elements will try to corrupt certain members of the team, or those who came to the leadership of this team, offering them exorbitant amounts of money. We have had promising and uncompromising young people before, for example in the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM), but when they were offered large amounts of money, they did not hesitate to switch parties and join the Democratic Party.

That is why I think the oligarchic elements will not give up so easily. They will try to adapt and regroup according to the situation. At the same time, we will see the capacity of Maia Sandu's team to implement the promises.

The promises and expectations have been risen a lot and so have been the stakes for success in this regard. The higher the hopes, the bigger the risk of disappointment. If Maia Sandu and her team are not able to implement at least a good part of their anti-corruption programme - because we are not naive to believe they will do it 100% - we will not be able to talk about any success.

We could repeat the history of 2009, when there were a lot of expectations, it started well, but we know how it ended.

### **Possible internal conflicts**

■ **Do you see any threats with a party concentrating so much power in its hands now? Do you think there might be tendencies to abuse power?**

■ I don't rule this out. There have been talks about certain frictions within this team and this might be true. At some point, there were also talks about frictions in the Democratic Party, but no one believed that. But we could see that after Plahotniuc left and the party went into opposition, members of the party have started breaking ranks.

In any big party there are such groups. When the party is small and has a small team, its purpose is to consolidate in order to assert itself, but when you are in power, of course, the egos and pride within the party are also increasing, so this risk should also be taken into account.

Since not all people in PAS are competent and fully meet the requirements, I hope PAS will co-opt as many people as possible from civil society as well as professionals from the parties which did not enter the Parliament, PPDA for instance.

I don't want to believe that the proposal for the government team of Mrs. Gavrilita or that of Mr. Igor Grosu will remain intact, as previously presented, because a number of people there clearly do not meet the criteria to occupy these positions. The only merit of some of them is that they were PAS members and were more visible at certain times. However, these people are not prepared to hold these positions.

The government by one single party can be also an advantage. If we remember, the coalition governments in the

Republic of Moldova were complicated and decisions were difficult to make. Compromise decisions were made which were not necessarily to the benefit of state institutions. Of course, we will now have a one-color government. However, it is a good thing after so many conflicts and so much instability caused by the coalition governments until now.

We need a period of stability in the Republic of Moldova to get things right. At the same time, everything now depends on the temperature and the relations within PAS, and on the major role that President Maia Sandu is going to play.

She is not involved in the activity of the party as Igor Dodon was in the case of PSRM, when he was head of state, but her authority and personality are felt in the PAS activity. We can say that the current PAS electoral result is, de facto, due to Maia Sandu. It is her political rating that has automatically transposed to the party. Her indirect influence on the activity of this party will be very big and, of course, certain decisions at government level will be consulted with the Presidency.

The fact that we will have a tandem at the helm is good in the current situation, especially since this political force cannot be suspected of acting against democracy. Their intentions are surely good; however, we will see what capacities they have and how they are going to resist the temptations.

### **The need for external support**

■ **Do you think the reform agenda can be implemented without help from the strategic partners of the Republic of Moldova - USA, EU and Romania?**

■ No, I find it hard to believe that we will succeed on our own, because the oligarchic elements will be hiding behind the justice system. We surely need a Prosecutor's Office that works. I am sure

now that the Information and Security Service will become more influential if the Prosecutor's Office doesn't produce results. I don't rule out that the justice system reform will start even at the level of security services, as once the big cases in Romania started with the help of intelligence services, after which the DNA started to work.

Most likely we will start with the reform of the Information and Security Service, National Anti-corruption Centre, the Prosecutor's Office, and then extend it to the entire system. We will have to work harder in the case of the judiciary, where we will also need external experts. I don't believe that the judiciary is capable of self-cleaning and reform. The justice system will invoke certain pretexts such as the independence of the judiciary in order not to admit reforms and rehabilitation of the system.

Therefore, I think that at least for the external evaluation we will ask for the help of the EU and Romania. This external expertise will be welcome and will help reform the judiciary in the Republic of Moldova, which is in fact the biggest challenge of the next government.

**Stela Jantuan,**  
**political analyst**

■ **What are the main challenges for the new power in Chisinau from your perspective?**

■ The first and the most important test and challenge for PAS is the formation of Government. All political actors who have not entered Parliament will wait for their first mistakes. And those may start with the formation of Government.

PAS will have to understand that it came to power on a wave of protest, when a certain psychological situation in society was created and when all citizens, regardless of their political affiliation,

were looking for changes as the system was no longer working.

They need to be aware of this and not forget how they came to power. This has always been the mistake of the new Moldovan parties, namely that they believed they have come to power because they are talented, smart and professional. In fact, the situation is that they took advantage of the social grievances and knew how to capitalize on them. De facto, there wasn't even much to do in this campaign. PAS members just had to be persevering and consistent. Specifically, not to deviate from their initial line, which they did.

Their expression as a party resonated with what society wanted. And it's one thing to rise on this wave, and quite another to have concrete strategies and steps to follow, because if they go on fractional approaches like pension increases, things will not go well.

PAS has set itself an ambitious goal, which is to change the system, because this change is needed. We understand very well that the system cannot be changed so quickly, but a systemic signal must be given, through concrete actions, that changes are coming. Thus, the system will react and begin to adapt to the situation.

PAS could face a situation similar to that faced by the Communists in 2001, when they came to power with 70 seats in Parliament and did not know how to proceed. Voronin's communists had no staff and admitted that by turning to specialists from outside the Communist Party.

It remains to be seen if PAS has enough personnel or if it is able to find the necessary staff elsewhere. PAS can afford this luxury now - to go only with members of the party team, but not necessarily with those it had on parliamentary lists. If they remove the most experienced ones from among the

parliamentarians, PAS will get rather exposed with a parliamentary team that has no experience. In this case, they will not focus on changing the face of the Parliament they wanted so much, but on the Government. Therefore, Parliament may turn "volens nolens" into a voting machine. These are some of the biggest challenges that PAS will have to face in the near future.

***The temptations of power and "realpolitik"***

■ **What do you think about the immense power in the hands of PAS now? Are attempts of abuse of power possible?**

■ This tendency of abuse of power may not exist now, but the practice and the "realpolitik" show that when you have an unprepared team and you only resort to party management, this can happen. Moreover, you do not have strategies and ideas. In such cases, the party turns into a dictatorial party, the parliamentarians of such parties become those who, by coercion, will promote certain things.

This is what several authoritarian parties have done. It was the case of the Communists and also of Vlad Plahotniuc when he did not have enough staff in the PDM. These could be the biggest challenges of the PAS in the future.

If they understand this as well as the fact that the entire responsibility belongs to their party, they will adopt strategies that will not disappoint. If they fail, it will be a big disappointment not only in the PAS, but in all pro-European parties and, finally, in the Republic of Moldova.

Many say the fight which is now starting will be a decisive one and, indeed, it is. If you as a party do not have concrete ideas and strategies how to implement reforms, you are risking to compromise everything and arouse hatred.

■ **Thank you!**

## Editorial

# The Republic of Moldova has a new and probably last historic chance. The main challenges and immediate priorities of the government

**T**he results of the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) in the early parliamentary elections of July 11 (63 seats out of a total of 101) exceeded all expectations. This resounding victory is, in essence, a non-confidence vote given by the citizens of the Republic of Moldova to the corrupt governments, populists, oligarchs and opportunists and, at the same time, a great historical chance given to the younger generation of politicians represented by PAS.

Today, PAS has all the necessary levers to start a new stage of transformation and democratization of the country, which will obviously be accompanied by many challenges, but also opportunities. All attention, both internally and externally, will be focused on the immediate actions and concrete results of the future government, which will have to justify the vote of confidence given by the citizens.

The immediate challenge for PAS is, of course, the full takeover of the governance. However, this means identifying and hiring at all hierarchical levels of the bureaucracy an impressive number of staff, well-trained experts and, of course, incorruptible, which is



**Editorial by Ludmila Nofit,  
programme coordinator with  
Foreign Policy Association (APE)**

not going to be an easy task. PAS has good professionals, but their number is limited for the time being. Therefore, the new government will have to rely on professionals/experts from civil society, pro-European opposition parties and, last but not least, the diaspora.

Another challenge is the fight against corruption, where the PAS government will have to demonstrate tangible results in a very short period of time. At the first sitting of the newly elected Parliament, the President of the country, Maia Sandu, declared zero tolerance for corruption, at any level and in any institution [...]", emphasizing that integrity will be a

defining criterion in assessing those who work in the administrative system. Citizens who voted for the PAS want a broad cleansing of the judiciary, bureaucracy and the political system from corrupt elements, but this effort will not be easy or quick. The PAS proposal to carry out an external evaluation of judges and prosecutors as a filter of integrity and professionalism for those in the field is a welcome initiative, but it will have to be carried out in strict compliance with the legal framework. Otherwise, there is a risk that people removed from the system will return in a certain period after winning the lawsuits. This truth also applies to

employees in the central and district administrative system.

Overcoming the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the country's economic recovery is a pressing challenge that requires concrete and urgent action. In this regard, the resumption of external financing of the Republic of Moldova is an immediate action. First, it is necessary to negotiate and sign an agreement with the IMF that will unblock the financial assistance provided by the country's main development partners and send an encouraging signal to potential foreign investors. It is also important that the programme with the IMF be a balance between the conditionalities of reforms and the social promises of new governments. The implementation of structural reforms without a package of social programmes to alleviate the costs of reforms, is risking alienating citizens from the reform agenda announced by PAS and President Maia Sandu.

Settlement of the Transnistrian conflict is a major long-term challenge. Currently, the Republic of Moldova is not ready for a comprehensive resolution of this conflict. First of all, there is a need for the internal consolidation of the state by fighting high corruption, reforming the judiciary and central administration, economic recovery, deepening our economic and infrastructural integration with the EU and reforming the national security and defense sector. In the meantime, it is important to continue the dialogue with all actors in the Transnistrian region - political, economic and social; to develop the economic, social and infrastructural relations between the two banks of the Dniester; to continue the confidence building measures, which effectively contribute to the reintegration of the region in the economic space of the Republic

of Moldova. It is also crucial to prepare the ground for the transformation of the current peacekeeping mission into an international civilian observer mission/ civilian police. The mission does not meet the OSCE criteria and is a major obstacle to bringing the two banks closer together. This objective can be achieved only in close dialogue with all the main strategic partners of the Republic of Moldova.

The implementation of the ambitious reform agenda also calls for a favourable external environment. The Republic of Moldova will have to pursue a calm, dignified, principled foreign policy, avoiding being involved in unwanted conflicts, in particular with Russia, which is obviously not happy with the outcome of the Chisinau elections. Promoting a positive agenda in relations with Moscow, which looks with suspicion at the pro-European ambitions and goals of the new government, will not be an easy task. The reforms announced by the new government will, volens-nolens, affect the interests and influence of the Russian Federation in our country, therefore tensions will be inevitable. To cope with them, the Republic of Moldova needs internal consolidation of society and the state, as well as strong strategic partnerships with Romania, Ukraine, USA and the EU.

30 years after declaration of independence, the Republic of Moldova has a new and, probably, last historic chance to build a sovereign, democratic and prosperous state, so that all citizens, regardless of their language and ethnicity, are proud of it. We have entrusted this task to a new and young generation of politicians. Their success will be their "revolution," and their failure will be our tragedy. We are in the same boat.

# We are realistic and take the victory of July 11 as a huge responsibility

Vladimir Bolea, MP, Chairman of the Chisinau Territorial Organization of the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS)

**T**he MP and chairman of the Chisinau Territorial Organization of the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS), Vladimir Bolea, spoke in an interview for this newsletter about the key to PAS's success in the recent early parliamentary elections from July 11 and especially about the huge responsibility lying now on the shoulders of the party and of the entire power structure in the next years. We have also discussed about the priorities of the government and the first concrete steps that PAS is going to take in the field of reforms, as well as how it is going to address the governance sensitive issues on the agenda of the Republic of Moldova. We are inviting you to read this interview with one of the PAS leaders who has shared with us the political vision of the pro-European forces in Chisinau and how the party is going to live up to the expectations following the historic result obtained in the parliamentary elections:

■ **The Republic of Moldova has elected its Parliament. Did you expect such a categorical victory as 63 seats may be a lot even for the most optimistic in PAS? How do you explain such a result, a historical one I would say?**

■ We did not expect 63 seats either. It was an extraordinarily pleasant surprise for us as well. However, we have talked during the election campaign about a 58-seat majority, referring to Maia Sandu's score in the 2020 presidential election.



For this reason, we said that we should obtain at least 58 seats in the new Parliament. For example, I referred to the fact that in the 10<sup>th</sup> Legislative there were 54 pro-European deputies. In 2019, the Democratic Party entered Parliament as a pro-European party. Of course, the changes that have occurred along the way in the case of PD and the deviations from the pro-European course is already another story.

We believed we could get a maximum of about 58 pro-European mandates. The result was beyond expectations. The citizens have matured and placed a very high responsibility on our party. From my point of view, however, PAS, is no longer a young party. It has already 130 mayors, over 1,500 local councilors and had 15 deputies in the Parliament of the 10<sup>th</sup> legislature who were very active and experienced in

the Parliament. It also had the short experience of five months in the government [June 2019 - November 2019].

Thus, we came as a fairly mature party. We know the problems of the state and for this reason we have been voted. We were consistent, persevering and genuine.

■ **If you were to make a top five reforms and areas that need to be reformed, what would they be and what would be the strategy in addressing them? Will you solve them one by one or you will address them at the same time?**

We should address them in parallel because the state is a living organism and they are all closely related. These reforms cannot be developed separately. We are talking here

about justice, health, education, finance, agriculture and the social fields. All at the same time. We cannot talk about development in agriculture or rural activities if we do not have a vision of how we can develop the health care, for instance.

We know that health care in rural areas is deplorable. In some villages health care centres are missing. The situation of hospitals in the districts is not any better either. Under these conditions, people are leaving the country. So how can we talk about rural development?

The situation of kindergartens in Moldova is also bad. We have 50 kindergartens and 192 schools in the country that have the toilet outside. They are mainly in rural areas. If we do not develop the education system, if we do not reform it and make it a genuine European one, how can we talk about rural development? Again, people will be tempted to flee the country.

For these reasons, all these directions will be developed simultaneously. We have well-intentioned and professional people, able to learn and develop all these areas at the same time, including in the parliamentary committees. Everyone will work in his/her own area.

### **Openness for collaboration**

■ Given that PAS is a relatively young party and it's only at its second term in parliament (the first term was only two years), do you have enough specialists to implement the election programme and the promises made in the electoral campaign?

■ Yes of course, as we are a very inclusive party as a model. And one of the European principles is inclusive society. We are not saying that we are going to work for someone. We are coming to work next to everyone because the country belongs to everyone, it does not belong to PAS. Therefore, we call upon all the mayors of the Republic of Moldova and all professionals who could support the reforms in the country to work together.

At the first press conference after the elections, we called upon all people who believe they are professionals and have the desire to participate, whether they are PAS members or not, to get involved in this process. We are less interested now in the aspect of political affiliation. We just want them to be smart, not to be corrupt, not to belong to any interest group and not to have issues of integrity. If they have such problems, they will not be able to work in the national interest. You know, there is a Romanian saying "Good cheese in a dog's bellows". No matter how good that cheese is, you can't eat it anymore.

I believe that the next government will be built on this Western principle "Nothing personal, just professional". No matter how good you are as a person, if you do not follow this principle, we will wait for someone more competent. After 30 years of independence, we can no longer wait and we will not tolerate failures.

### **Zero tolerance for corruption**

■ The kleptocratic and rotten system in the justice area is already 30 years old. Some experts say that even the prominent figures in the "black zone" will hide behind this corrupt

**justice system. They may be joined by external factors that do not want to clean the system. How will you cope with such a struggle?**

■ With a lot of intelligence, consistency and perseverance. That's how we're going to cope. Just as in 2016 when no one believed this party will be able to come to power, in 2021, with 63 seats in Parliament and with European spirit, we will make all changes irreversible.

And there is another European principle that we are guided by: If in order to combat an illegality, you are committing another illegality, then it is not okay. We will only go the legal way and this is the most important thing. It is certainly going to be very difficult, complicated, but not impossible.

With such a large majority in the Parliament and with the capacity to be as inclusive as we are, we will succeed. I am referring here to law firms, civil society and international structures. We are also talking here about the experts from international structures who will come to help us. I am convinced that we will succeed, I have no doubts about it.

But still, this is not going to happen overnight. We need to change the Law on the Prosecutor's Office and the Law on the functioning of the Superior Council of Magistracy. These laws are important. Things will move a little harder in this regard, but I think they will go in a safe and correct way.

■ In 2001 the Communists came to power with about 70 seats. Soon after they had to admit they did not have enough specialists in various fields. What is the situation of your party and are you thinking of bringing specialists either from among civil

### society, private sector or even other parties?

■ PAS has enough specialists, but as I told you above, we would like that the best of the best get involved in the governance process. We are open to civil society and that is why we made that appeal to the Moldovan citizens who want to get involved in the act of governance.

That is no question to us. After all, it's also about competition as this is what will change the world for the better, and in the Republic of Moldova there is a need for fair and healthy competition. If someone who comes from civil society happens to be better than a member of ours, we will certainly, without any hesitation, invite that candidate from the civil society to serve in certain positions.

### ■ Are you having discussions with people from other parties or civil society in this regard?

■ I think we're talking here about people who will go to the government. An electronic platform has been launched at the PAS office, through which all those who are interested can register. PAS is collecting their resumes.

Those who are working on the governmental dimension will analyse and discuss with potential candidates. After 30 years of total destruction of the Moldovan justice system, and here I am referring to the widespread corruption, one of the basic principles of ours is to check the integrity of candidates. We will be following the Albanian model. At the same time, there is an internal commission whose role is to verify the integrity. We care a lot about integrity, because a person who is

not accountable to citizens and obeys interest groups will never be able to act in the citizens' interests. That person may be a genius but won't just succeed.

### *Rethinking the paradigm of the Transnistrian settlement*

#### ■ The Transnistrian issue has somehow been put aside for more than half a year. What is PAS vision regarding the future negotiations with Tiraspol and who do you need to convince more in this case - the Transnistrian regime or Moscow?

■ The Transnistrian issue has been in a shadow cone for almost 30 years. As a deputy, after two years in office, I'd like to say that we don't have any relations with the citizens on the left bank of the Dniester, authentic citizens of the Republic of Moldova. For this reason, everything related to this discussion and the state of affairs should be completely reviewed. The Joint Control Commission (JCC) is not functioning and neither is the office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration. The people in office have acted formally and without success so far.

The JCC and the office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration were designed to bring the two banks of the Dniester closer together, and we have not seen it happening unfortunately. I think we will start with analyzing the internal work format, because the problem is primarily in the Republic of Moldova, more precisely Parliament and Government. And then on the left bank of the Dniester, in the Supreme Soviet and its leadership. Only then can we talk about external partners. And here I have in mind the Russian Federation, but also Ukraine, which should get more involved in these discussions given the common border.

And then also the partners in the European Union.

#### ■ How will you manage the relationship with Russia? PAS and President Maia Sandu speak in terms of partnership and respect, but Russia's attitude towards the Republic of Moldova in the last 30 years has not been at all equal, but rather of a regional power that wants obedient satellites. How will you manage this sensitive relationship with Moscow in the future?

■ The principle by which President Maia Sandu was guided is, I think, determinant in the relationship with the Russian Federation. Namely parity and respect. It does not matter that we are a small state geographically, administratively, and in terms of population. We are a state and for this reason we should be respected as well as all other countries.

I believe, however, that the problem is not in the Russian Federation, the problem is again in the Republic of Moldova. When meeting with the leaders in Moscow or any other leaders of this world, the Moldovan politicians should not forget that they represent the people of this country. This is where the construction of a dialogue should start. As a politician, you should keep in mind the interests of your state, the citizens you represent and who gave you a mandate to negotiate in their interests. The same should be done in the discussions about the left bank of the Dniester, about what we want in terms of trade, social and political aspects.

#### ■ There are talks about internal struggles for the party leadership given that PAS will have to elect its leader soon. You are one of the

### leaders of this party, are you going to run for its leadership?

■ Not yet. I'm reading a lot in the press about the so-called internal movements in PAS. We are having fun to learn about allegedly different currents inside the PAS. But I can tell you that we are not aware of these, we don't feel them and they only appear in the press.

So far, no one has spoken about his/her desire to run for chairperson of the party. We were very busy with the parliamentary elections and I think we did very well - we acted as a team, and the results are evident.

However, the position of party chairperson should not be an end in itself. It should rather be a tool in ensuring the actions to the benefit of the country. Now that people have given us 63 mandates, I think we all need to focus on fulfilling the promises we made.

Four years will pass very quickly and we will be the ones who will have to come before the people to ask them for another vote of confidence in 2025. I have a simple principle, in fact like all my colleagues do: after four years of government, we will not go to our electorate to tell them what we will do, but to report what we have done and what our results are. And if there is something we could not achieve, we will have to ask them for another mandate to continue and achieve that. We cannot have the discourse of the previous parties in this situation about "what we will do", otherwise we will have the fate of those who have not entered the Parliament.

In conclusion, I think that the position of party chairperson against this background is not exactly an end in

itself. I see it more as a formality. I haven't noticed any internal movements in this sense. But if we talk about competition, it would be beneficial as this the way a party can evolve. This is the only way to develop as a political formation, and in extenso, as economy and country. However, we are focused on bigger goals, namely, on delivering what we have promised.

Personally, I had 145 election meetings in this campaign - from north to south and from east to west, I was everywhere. People have told me, in the most concrete way, that "they will hit me in the head" if I come back with nothing to report. And I believe them, because 30 years have passed and that is not little of a person's life. This period was one of extreme poverty, in a country that was thriving 30 years ago and had industry. But now people are living in absolute poverty. There are extremely poor towns and villages in Moldova. We have reached in terms of income per capita the level of 1983. We will have no excuses if we fail to improve the situation, so things are very complicated from my point of view, and the responsibility is very high.

### **Priorities on the future agenda**

■ **Will you really start with that decalogue of the laws promised in the campaign or has the priority agenda changed in the meantime? What will be the first laws to be adopted in the future Parliament? Have any drafts been worked out by PAS?**

■ If the first sitting of the Parliament takes place on Tuesday, July 26, the bills I was talking about will be registered. One will be the Law on lifting immunity. However, this is

not an easy one, because this is a constitutional law and even if you have 67 MPs alone as a party [constitutional majority], the law stipulates that it should be analysed within working groups and discussed in public debates for at least six months.

And we are talking here about two constitutional laws: one is the law on lifting the immunity of MPs for criminal acts and the other one is on the confiscation of illicitly acquired assets. These two laws will certainly be registered without problems, but there are many other laws that will be voted in the first sessions.

I also have some draft laws I have worked on in the last legislature. There are also laws that we refer to as cancelling the small Moldovan tricks. More precisely, there are laws that seem to comply with the European standards, however, a series of articles have been introduced that reduce their effect.

■ **There is a tendency for excessive praise in both Brussels and Bucharest when it comes to the victory of PAS and Maia Sandu before the hardship begins. How hard will it be for the pro-European forces with so much power concentrated in their hands to keep their feet on the ground?**

■ We take power as a responsibility, not as a great success. I think that on a scale from 0 to 100, we are at level 0. We have not done anything yet, but we are going to demonstrate through work and show results.

We are realistic and take the victory of July 11 as a huge responsibility.

■ **Thank you!**

# For the first time, people voted for urgent changes in society, leaving aside geopolitics

Ana Mihailov, director of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Moldova about the parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova and the chance to build a political system in line with democratic standards



■ Many politicians and experts consider the early parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova decisive. Is that so and why are these elections so important for the future of the country?

■ You are right, early parliamentary elections were of decisive importance for Moldova's future because the country had to choose between two options: either it takes the democratic path of reforms, or it is suppressed by kleptocracy and corruption. We have seen recently how corrupt elements had regrouped and the country found itself at the edge of the abyss. The stakes were really high, but Moldova has successfully passed this test of democracy and maturity.

■ What do you mean exactly?

■ The Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) established by President Maia Sandu was supported by 52.8% of voters. For the first time in the political history of the Republic of Moldova, a pro-European party won the majority in parliament. In my opinion, this victory was due to the anti-corruption programme and the announced reform package, including the justice system reform. For the first time, people have voted for urgent and pressing changes in society, leaving aside the geopolitical factor and the false agenda that used to divide the Moldovan electorate into pro-European and pro-Russian.

Judging by the result, many of those who previously voted for pro-Russian

parties have voted this time for a political force that promised to fight against corruption and hidden interests that have been decimating the Moldovan society. Two major unionist parties also received a minimum number of votes.

This is a sign of maturity of the electorate in the sense that people have put the real problems of society above the artificially inflated issues.

■ Will the winning party be able to form a majority in parliament?

■ The Action and Solidarity Party will have a comfortable majority in the new parliament, which will enable it to form its own government. This means it will have all the necessary leverages to implement its electoral programme and to carry out the necessary and promised reforms.

The fact that Moldova will be governed by a majority party will not allow for the division of spheres of influence over the state institutions among coalition members. In recent years, constant conflicts between the governing coalition members have been the cause of political instability in the country that has eventually ended up in being led by a group of kleptocrats or even by a single person. PAS has now the opportunity to eliminate this practice and build a political system in line with democratic standards.

■ **The main rival of the PAS was the Bloc of Communists and Socialists, which won slightly over 27 per cent. The leader of the Socialist Party, Igor Dodon, has already announced his readiness to work in the new parliament, “avoiding possible political crises and enmity”. Can we talk about the beginning of a constructive activity of the parliament?**

■ In the press conference after the election results had been announced, Igor Dodon said the Bloc of Communists and Socialists goes into opposition, which will be a tough one. There is nothing wrong with this as long as this opposition is constructive. However, I believe that PAS will be able to hold a civilized dialogue with the opposition and that is exactly what is going to do. Of course, many parliamentarians in the ruling party who are in their first parliamentary experience may find it difficult to confront the political veterans of the Communist and Socialist parties, especially given the staffing problems of PAS.

■ **The Moldovan authorities have always oscillated between Russia**

**and the West. Should we expect dramatic changes in foreign policy?**

■ I don't think there will be big changes in this direction. Both President Maia Sandu and PAS have had a balanced approach to foreign policy, this being also one of their success factors in the presidential and parliamentary elections. European integration is, without any doubt, the main foreign policy priority. At the same time, the development of good relations with the Russian Federation based on mutual interests will remain an important foreign policy objective.

■ **What are the people's hopes in relation to the newly elected parliament and what are the main tasks of the new government?**

■ The result of the parliamentary elections is the expression of the great credit of confidence given to the winning party by the citizens of the country. Given this enormous support from voters, the Action and Solidarity Party has a huge responsibility and has no moral right to fail.

The society's expectations are extremely high. First, there are high hopes with regard to the fight against corruption and the reform of the judiciary. In order to improve the citizens' living standards and ensure social justice that President Sandu often talks about, sustainable economic and social reforms are needed to set the country on the path towards modernization and development.

These are extremely difficult tasks and things that cannot be changed overnight. What we are expecting from politicians in the short run are a concrete development plan, consistency, professionalism, while from society - patience and desire to cooperate. However, the fact that we have now the main ingredient for this - the political will - is inspiring optimism, so we shouldn't miss this unique opportunity.

*Interview by Olga Vasytsova for the IPG Journal*

[https://www.ipg-journal.io/interviu/ljudi-vpervye-progolosovali-za-zhiznenno-vazhnye-izmenenija-ostaviv-v-storone-geopolitiku-1335/?fbclid=IwAR3N1suoD5V6E\\_MSOdisRWX6ARt6KgKJlutuSaVHvDgAShKVE3Rg2kTtwUE](https://www.ipg-journal.io/interviu/ljudi-vpervye-progolosovali-za-zhiznenno-vazhnye-izmenenija-ostaviv-v-storone-geopolitiku-1335/?fbclid=IwAR3N1suoD5V6E_MSOdisRWX6ARt6KgKJlutuSaVHvDgAShKVE3Rg2kTtwUE)

The opinions expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) or of the Foreign Policy Association (APE).



**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.



**Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)** is a German social democratic political foundation, whose purpose is to promote the principles and foundations of democracy, peace, international understanding and cooperation. FES fulfils its mandate in the spirit of social democracy, dedicating itself to the public debate and finding in a transparent manner, social democratic solutions to current and future problems of the society. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung has been active in the Republic of Moldova since October 2002.