

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.

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Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates

The newsletter is developed by Mădălin Necșuțu, editor-coordinator

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News in Brief



The EU officially launched, on June 25, in Luxembourg, the accession negotiations with the Republic of Moldova, according to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium, Hadja Lahbib. For his part, Prime Minister Dorin Recean announced this in a post on Facebook, noting that the negotiations started by the Republic of Moldova are a real success and that our country will make every effort to become a member state of the EU. "Today we have entered a new stage, which brings us significantly closer to joining the European Union. Today's Republic of Moldova - EU Intergovernmental Conference sets the official start of accession negotiations and demonstrates that we have the ability to build, until 2030, a prosperous state, a European state," wrote Prime Minister Dorin Recean. The Republic of Moldova officially submitted its application to join the European Union on 3 March 2022. On June 23, the Republic of Moldova received the candidate country status, and on 25 June 2024, the accession negotiations officially began.



The Council for the Promotion of Investment Projects of National Importance decided to withdraw the permissive documents for television broadcast and audiovisual services of the SRL "Media Resource" company, the founder of the Orhei TV and TV6 stations, affiliated to the fugitive oligarch Ilan Șor. According to the authorities, at the moment "Media Resource" SRL is subject to a ban by a judicial executor and a ban on the alienation of the social part applied by order of the State Tax Service. Previously, the permissive documents were withdrawn from the companies "Telesistem TV" SRL (Primul in Moldova, Accent TV), "Archidoc Group" SRL (Orizont TV) and "Telesar Media" SRL (Channel 2 and Channel 3), the last two being affiliated to the oligarch fugitive Vladimir Plahotniuc.



The Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration, Oleg Serebrian, met on June 25 with Thomas Lenk, head of the Section for Ukraine, Moldova and Black Sea Cooperation within the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany. During the meeting, the current situation of the Transnistrian settlement process was discussed, with an exchange of views regarding the interactions between Chisinau and Tiraspol within the existing dialogue formats and the priorities of the Moldovan authorities in the field of the reintegration policies of the Republic of Moldova. Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Serebrian thanked the German official for the fruitful cooperation in various spheres of common interest, including the Transnistrian issue, evoking the satisfaction for maintaining bilateral relations at a high level and their advancement, including in the perspective of Moldova's commitment towards the strategic objective of European integration.

The Republic of Moldova at the moment of truth: elections, reforms and negotiations with the EU



The Moldovan Prime Minister Dorin Recean together with the head of the Belgian diplomacy Nadja Lahbib and the EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Oliver Varhelyi in the press conference on June 25 in Luxembourg. Foto: Moldovan Government facebook.

The Republic of Moldova is facing a historic moment in its path to EU integration, however there are still challenges that Moldova must manage very carefully.

On June 25, the Belgian presidency of the European Union convened the intergovernmental conference with the

Republic of Moldova and Ukraine which officially opened the next stage of negotiations, the one on accession chapters between these candidate countries and the EU.

The moment was specially chosen as the last exercise of the current rotating presidency of the European Council held by

Belgium, but also at the end of the mandate of the current composition of the European Commission, which fully supports the two countries on their way to join the EU. Last but not least, this exercise took place before Hungary takes over the rotating presidency of the EU in the second half of this year, a country that

► is not at all favourable to Ukraine's accession to the EU.

The European Council has decided since the summit of 14 December 2023 to start accession negotiations with the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, and until now a screening process has taken place, a first stage of the accession negotiations. The screening was carried out jointly by the European Commission and the candidate country and refers to 33 chapters of the EU acquis that must be harmonized with the national legislation of the candidate states. The 33 accession chapters will represent a titanic task, but Moldova has been preparing for the launch of negotiations since last year. On 7 October 2023, the Government approved the National Action Plan for the Accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union for the years 2024-2027, which covers the areas and chap-

ters of negotiations for EU accession. The document was developed in collaboration with numerous institutions and active consultations with civil society and is divided into seven compartments that include: fundamental values (rule of law and justice); internal market; competitiveness and inclusive growth; green agenda and connectivity; natural resources, agriculture and cohesion; and last but not least foreign relations and defence.

For this technical process of negotiation on accession chapters with the EU, Moldova also takes into account the help that some member states of the EU could offer to Moldova. The first targeted country is the neighbouring country Romania, due to the affinities of language and culture, but also from the perspective of the experience of about two decades that Romania has as a member country of the EU, which went

through this process of negotiations on chapters at the time of its accession to the EU. Last but not least, the challenges relate to strengthening the institutional capacities for reforms, attracting experts, but also to Russia's assault in all forms aimed at derailing the Republic of Moldova from the European axis.

But in the end, the pace of chapter negotiations with the EC can be imposed primarily by Chisinau, and the European Commission can adapt to it. The more willing the Republic of Moldova will be to a sustained effort, the more Brussels will be involved in helping even more. It depends a lot on the ability of the Republic of Moldova "to be able to jump over its shadow", surpass itself and regains its label of "the best student of the class" through hard work.

Madalin Necsutu

Moldova must dare to come up with solutions and proposals as creative as possible in its negotiations' approach with the EU

Romanian MEP Dragos Tudorache, who has just finished his term as European Parliament rapporteur for the Republic of Moldova, gave an interview in Brussels to the FES/APE foreign policy newsletter about what is next in the European path of the Republic of Moldova. We discussed about the impact of the European Parliament elections on the Republic of Moldova, about the hybrid war waged by Russia against Moldova and the related security threats as well as about Romania's role in Moldova's European integration process. We also talked about how reforms should be carried out in Chisinau



and what the relationship with the European Commission should be. We are inviting you to read the interview in the following lines:

■ **Mr. Tudorache, you had the important mission in the European Parliament of being the rapporteur for the Republic of Moldova. What are your conclusions about your mandate in this capacity?**

■ For me, you should know that from the very beginning it was a great pleasure and honour to have this mandate. More precisely, this role of rapporteur of the European Parliament for the Republic of Moldova, because even if we could not anticipate then, at the beginning of 2019, what was going to happen - namely the entire change of the geopolitical configuration, not only of European security, but I would even say on a global level - from the very beginning we set out with the ambition to contribute as much as possible to a European option for the Republic of Moldova.

And what happened after 2019, in all these five years, from my point of view, is a success story primarily for Moldova, because some extraordinary steps have been taken on this European path that I don't think anyone could have hoped for. I think this is due, first of all, to the Moldovan citizens. They are the ones who expressed a clear option through the political vote they gave and through the political mandate they gave the pro-European forces. Moldovan society wanted this and this is the most important thing.

And then, of course, there was the context I was referring to, in which opportunities often appear, at the political level, but which we don't always manage to capitalise on. In these last five years, the Government in Chisinau, with the support of those who believed

in Moldova's cause, in Brussels and in other European capitals, this extraordinary path has been achieved. Therefore, I am leaving this mandate satisfied that many things have been achieved in favour of Moldova.

Collective effort for Moldova and Ukraine

■ **You were among the most vocal advocates of the Republic of Moldova, along with other fellow Romanian MEPs in Brussels. How much did it matter that the European interests of the Republic of Moldova were intensively promoted by the Romanian MEPs?**

■ It's very important. It was a collective effort, not just mine. We all believed in this cause and each, through our contribution, supported and helped it. It is very important because the Parliament plays its political role, at least in terms of major political orientations and in the foreign policy. The European Parliament has a very important political say through the messages it gives to both the European Commission and the European Council.

It is no surprise, nor is it new, that the European Parliament as an institution has always had a more ambitious agenda than governments that have their own political limitations. But this time an alignment was achieved between what the Parliament wanted, what the European Commission also wanted and the national interests of each member state.

A lot of work was done visibly, but also behind the scenes. And often in politics or diplomacy, what happens behind the scenes is more important than what happens on the stage. Because there it was very important to be able to join the political forces,

regardless of their ideology, and line up with the ambition related to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.

Thus, parliamentarians played an important role, each in their European political group. European governments come from all over the political spectrum and then each had to play its role in order to reach a consensus. We are talking about an essential consensus, at the European level, for all the dreams that have been brought – those regarding the recognition of the candidate country status and those regarding the opening of negotiations. This is important even now, at this moment, when the accession negotiations with Moldova and Ukraine will soon begin.

■ **Mr. Tudorache, how do you think the results of this June European parliamentary elections will impact the European path of the Republic of Moldova?**

■ I am convinced that there will be no negative impact, at least from the European Parliament. Even though we have seen that there is a change in the political configuration following the elections, it is an increase in the number of members of the European Parliament who come from parties with an agenda not necessarily of the far right, but an agenda closer to that of Moscow that the one usually promoted at European level.

But the political centre of the European Parliament remains unchanged and that is very important to understand. The strong pro-European majority which we had in the previous Parliament will be maintained also in this Parliament. The forces in the center – the EPP, the socialists and the liberals – still remain a majority that can support the election of

the new Commission and the new president.

This European majority, which are carrying out negotiations these very days here in Brussels, I believe - based on the way the negotiations have already been going for a few days, namely in a good direction - will guarantee that the political options made earlier will be maintained by the European Parliament. Therefore, I do not anticipate a change of perspective in such an important matter as the relationship with the countries of the Eastern Partnership, and especially with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.

It is very important what is happening now. In a partnership there are two partners and the Republic of Moldova and the Moldovans also choose their political options this year and next year. That is why it is very important that Moldova maintain the same tone, the same political orientation and the same objectives so that the two partners meet halfway.

Intensification of hybrid warfare

■ How do you assess the intensity of the hybrid war waged by Russia in the Republic of Moldova and should we expect a recrudescence of this hybrid war with the approach of the presidential elections and the European integration referendum that will be organized in the Republic of Moldova on October 20th?

■ Unfortunately, the situation cannot improve, on the contrary. The Republic of Moldova was one of the epicentres of the hybrid war strategies that Russia deployed in the region. Not only Moldova,

obviously, but Moldova was, from the very beginning, under pressure, I would say, even greater than many of its neighbours. Why? Because they relied on Moldova's vulnerability and weaknesses that would promote Russia and the war it is waging against Ukraine.

Moldova was, from the very beginning, under hybrid attack. This has been seen in the public space at the level of disinformation, at the level of public attacks, through the social media and against Moldova's European choice.

So it began and then continued throughout the two years of war, and I can only anticipate that it will increase with the approach of the presidential election and the referendum on EU integration.

These are very important elections for the Republic of Moldova, but also very important for Russia's interests, namely to continue to control and undermine the countries that Russia believes, with its imperialist vision, are in its sphere of influence and interest. Unfortunately, we can expect to see a recrudescence of this type of hybrid attack in the coming months leading up to the election.

■ What will the start of the first round of technical negotiations with the EU, on June 25, mean for the Republic of Moldova?

■ First, it has a political symbolic value, and I would start with that. This shows that the process is already starting, it is underway, I dare say it is irreversible and from now on it is only a matter of time, of method, of meeting the criteria and obligations, of taking measures. This, I believe, is the political message and the important political symbol of the start of the negotiation process.

At the administrative and technical levels, it means the moment of truth for the Government and the central authorities in Chisinau. Because now begins what is a very complicated process for which the Republic of Moldova must be as prepared as possible, as agile and alert as possible, in order to maintain a sustained pace in these negotiations. It means the promotion of many legislative packages and the adoption of *acquis communautaire*, but not only that. It means very important reforms at the level of all institutions.

These negotiations have technical elements in them. However, the criteria are not checked only by making laws, but important structural reforms that are not made just for the sake of the criteria, but are, first of all, beneficial to the society, the economy and the state of the Republic of Moldova. This will be a tremendous effort that the administration will have to see through to the end.

Schedule and fixed requirements

■ What should be the priorities in terms of reforms for Chisinau? With which chapters of negotiations with the EU should the Republic of Moldova begin?

■ There is a schedule and a structure. The negotiation methodology is fixed, clear, and the European Commission conducts it based on a predetermined calendar. It is known that there is one criterion that stands above all, namely the rule of law, which is about the health of democracy in a country.

And we see, including in some member states, when the reforms in this area are not mature enough

and well established enough, there is always the risk of a setback.

Because of this, in the approach to the negotiations, this is a chapter that opens them and remains open throughout the negotiations until the end. Each state must show that it remains fully committed to respecting the rule of law and democratic criteria. There are also the most difficult reforms such as justice and the public administration reforms. These are the issues concerning the essential pillars of the state, being the most difficult reforms to achieve.

Then there are the more technical chapters, those chapters that relate to various line public policies, whether it is transport, culture or economic. I am not saying that they are simpler, but there the political effort is lower compared to the other chapters. There it is a matter of normative adoption of the rules of the *acquis communautaire*. But even there there are important structural reforms to be made, because the economy and the various economic sectors and their functioning depend, to a large extent, on the health of the institutions that govern them.

I don't want to minimize the political importance of those negotiations and those chapters, but those close once, technically, the negotiations are over. Those chapters can be closed earlier, which gives access to various support tools that are very important in this journey that Moldova is starting.

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Tangible political target

■ **Is European integration by 2030 a tangible and realistic target for the Republic of Moldova?**

■ I'd like to think so. I also said it in the public, even before the statement made by the president of the European Council, Charles Michel, that I believe that Moldova must itself assume an ambitious target – to stick to this ambitious target and somehow impose, through its own pace of progress in the negotiations, an increased pace on the other side as well, on the part of the European Commission, which will adapt.

From my experience, including from the perspective of Romania's EU accession process, the Commission also bends, somehow, to the commitment that a candidate state maintains. If it sees that the candidate state does not have a great appetite to work intensively on the chapters, then the Commission cannot work miracles either. On

the contrary, if it sees that there is will and capacity, then the Commission can bend to such a pace of negotiations. I believe that the Republic of Moldova must maintain this objective.

Moldova may even try to be destructive, in a positive way, in the way it approaches these negotiations. Moldovans must dare to come up with solutions and proposals as creative as possible in the way they approach negotiations and the approach to measures and reforms.

Moldova must prove that it can be a state whose size only gives it an advantage. The fact that the Republic of Moldova is a small state means that it is also an agile state. Let's look, for example, at what the integration process meant for the Baltic states. They were much more agile in their reform processes compared to the larger candidate states in the 2004 accession package.

And I believe that Moldova can do the same and use its reduced size of the administration, the state and the economy, to move faster in the negotiation process and to demonstrate to the member states and the European Commission that it can be prepared for the moment of 2030.

On the other hand, the EU will have to demonstrate that this enlargement process is a political imperative. Also, this political process is not just a matter of form, but there is also political will to achieve it in concrete terms.

And then, I think Moldova has a competitive advantage here that should play to its advantage in the coming years.

■ **Thank you!**

Editorial

Why are the European parliamentary elections a test for Moldova's future?

Editorial by Madalin Necsutu, journalist with TVR Moldova and Balkan Insight

The fever of the June 9 European Parliament elections was an important test for the awareness of the society in the Republic of Moldova about the European path chosen by the majority.

The record number of over 57,000 Moldovan citizens who also hold the citizenship of other European states, in their quasi-majority the Romanian one, who voted in the European parliamentary elections on June 9, is an important indicator for the continuation of the European path of the Republic of Moldova. The fact that Moldovans with Romanian citizenship, who accounted for about 25% of the total number of Romanian citizens who voted in the diaspora at the European Parliament, shows to some extent that many consider themselves European citizens and want to actively participate in the political life of the United Europe.

The signal is all the more important as it comes in an extremely difficult security context in which Russia invaded Ukraine precisely on the basis of this country's proximity to Euro-Atlantic structures and the desire to break away from the orbit of Russian influence.

The courage to vote in large numbers on the part of Moldovan citizens confirms the desire of the majority that the Republic of Moldova wants to continue on the European path, despite the harsh threats that come constantly and in crescendo from Moscow.

Presidential elections' stakes and the European integration referendum

The large participation in the European Parliament elections is also a barometer that shows a certain increased predisposition



on the part of the Moldovan population to participate in the presidential elections and the referendum for European integration that will take place on October 20. The citizens thus demonstrated that they are ready to take their fate into their own hands, despite the hybrid war and the malignant actions promoted by Russia to thwart the European route of the Republic of Moldova.

While with regard to the presidential elections things are somewhat clear and it is very difficult to believe that the current head of state, Maia Sandu, will not obtain the second presidential mandate, things are different with regard to the referendum.

Russia has changed its strategy and has two goals in the short and medium term. The first, the short-term one, concerns the referendum for European integration. Russia has every interest in the failure of this referendum, either by not reaching the participation threshold, or by the final result not allowing the clear direction of European integration to be written into the Constitution.

The second refers to the parliamentary elections scheduled for July 2025, where

the pro-European forces hope to be able to forge again, for the next five years, a real pro-European coalition that will continue the reforms to align the Republic of Moldova with European standards.

Russia will invest massive resources, money and the employment of internal and external actors in a failure of the referendum. In such a scenario, Russia subsequently pursues the development of a narrative according to which the population does not actually want EU membership and this European direction is nothing more than a chimera pursued by pro-European parties that are only puppets representing the interests of the West, without having but a factual basis among the population.

Work scenarios

So, Moscow's stake is in two steps. In the short term, it ensures the referendum is invalidated, so that later, after the July 2025 parliamentary elections, a fragile majority is formed, by introducing into the governing coalition some "Trojan horse" type parties that mimic the continuation of the European course, but de facto, sabotage it. Or the second scenario, the

most optimal for Moscow, the formation of a pro-Russian majority that marches entirely on abandoning the European course and turning towards the Russian Federation.

These scenarios can only be fought democratically through a massive pro-European vote in the fall of 2024 and the summer of 2025. It is vital for the Republic of Moldova to secure a majority vote for pro-European political forces and their initiatives, in the case of the referendum, to be able to continue in the next five-year electoral cycle to get closer to that desired EU accession in 2030. Externally, especially for Ukraine, it is vital that a pro-European power continues to govern in Chisinau and that does not create problems for Kiev behind the front.

The results of the European Parliament elections, namely the securing of a majority in the EP by the classic European families who believe in and continue to promote the European project of the EU - the European People's Group, the Socialists and Democrats, Renew Europe or the Greens - make us optimistic that in Europe there is a majority that will leave open the enlargement option of the European Union. The large number, but not the majority, of extremist anti-European and anti-enlargement forces in the EP must also be a factor to be considered in the big equation of the European road for the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

But the signal given at the European Parliament must be seen as a prelude to the increased interest in the Republic of Moldova towards the European project, and the role of pro-European forces and the whole society is vital in explaining in the coming months why that percentage of 50-60% of Moldovans who want to join the EU must be increased to over 70%. It would also be a signal for the European Union states, on which this European path of the Republic of Moldova depends, namely that there is a solid majority that wants to follow this path. Currently, the window of opportunity is still open for the Republic of Moldova. That is why there must not be a single moment of apathy or political anemia on the part of the pro-European forces. It is imperative that the tandem of pro-European political forces in Chisinau continue to follow the line of the majority political forces in the European Union for the next five years.

Internally, the Republic of Moldova must be super-zealous regarding the technical process of accession by chapters. The Republic of Moldova, as Deputy Prime Minister Cristina Gherasimov publicly stated, does not seek shortcuts and does not want favouritism.

But in this case, an even greater marching is needed to strengthen the institutional capacities to face an extremely difficult and bureaucratic process of implementing difficult reforms and, at the same time, to harmonize the internal legislation with that of the European Union. There is a need for specialists who must be remunerated properly. Help is also needed from the partner states, especially Romania, with expertise and professionals to ensure the "know how". It is also necessary that throughout this process the rule of law be consolidated, and that the justice reform remain central.

It is difficult to maintain a correct balance in avoiding excesses – even if we are talking about a noble goal and a national interest – and to make draconian reforms that will radically change the face of the Republic of Moldova from an ex-Soviet republic, at the level of the collective mind of society, in a European-type, open and tolerant society, which puts the citizen and not the state in the centre of attention, as happens with autocracies like the Russian Federation.

Such transformations do not happen overnight and usually require at least a generation, but it is the turn of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova to demonstrate through maturity and will that they belong to a new space of values close to the European Union and not that of the Eurasian Union led by Russia in an unsuccessful reissue of the Soviet Union.

There is a need for an intrinsic impulse among Moldovans to show that they too are European citizens in their own right, not just through the prism of a Romanian passport necessary for better working or travel conditions.

Challenges and threats

The still low level of resilience and consolidation of state institutions strike a dissonant note with the political will that

exists on the part of the ruling class in Chisinau. But we are on the right track and that gives us hope. The Republic of Moldova must go through unimaginably difficult efforts to succeed, in a time of war on its borders and a hybrid war in full swing on the part of Russia inside, to emerge victorious from the given situation.

Compared to other states in Central and Eastern Europe, which have joined the EU in recent decades, the Republic of Moldova must do so under the threat of Russian weapons. The work is an extremely difficult one, and perhaps that is precisely why Chisinau receives help and understanding from the EU. It is an extremely difficult time to manage, but every crisis also brings opportunities.

If it successfully passes this test, the resilience that we talk about constantly and which is de facto the ability of a state to recover from a historical trauma, could rise to a high level. Even Rome was not built in a day, just as no one from the Republic of Moldova can claim to achieve spectacular results overnight.

Nevertheless, the political class and the state institutions have the unwavering mission not to abdicate any effort necessary to achieve the goal of joining the EU by 2030. Unconditional support and incentives are needed from strategic partners for each stage that the Republic of Moldova goes through with great efforts and in which it fights with the local kleptocratic system and the destructive elements promoted by Russia in the Republic of Moldova with particular voracity.

Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova are indeed an important part of the test of the new European architecture and future peace, now disrupted in Europe after some 80 years of Russian neo-imperialism and militarism in its proximity and the Black Sea Basin.

However, the electoral appetite shown by the citizens of the Republic of Moldova in the European Parliament elections on June 9 must remain an indicator of the increased desire of Moldova to drive with the engines revved to the maximum towards the European Union, with all the baggage of problems created by the Kremlin and its local acolytes.

„We can contribute to maintaining stability and competitiveness in the European Union”

The Republic of Moldova is facing a historic moment, stated the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, Cristina Gherasimov, during the conference entitled “The stakes of the European Parliament elections for the Republic of Moldova: results, expectations and opportunities”, organized by the Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE) and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation on 18 June in Chisinau.

“It is an important moment for us to understand the implications of the results of the European Parliament elections for our European course. In this context, I would also like to note the fact that we have very good friends in Brussels and in the European capitals,” said Cristina Gherasimov.

She specified that there are several important priorities for the Republic of Moldova, especially for the coming years which will be very important for the country’s negotiations with the EU. “You know that next week we will officially launch the negotiation process, even though in practical and technical terms, we have already started it by initiating the explanatory screening stage. However, the first intergovernmental conference next week is a historic moment for us and I’m inviting you all to join us,” said the Deputy Prime Minister.

Support for Ukraine

Among the priorities of the next European Parliament, Gerasimov expressed confidence there will be continuous support for Ukraine “in the cruel war against the invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine”.



“For our country it is very important that this support for Ukraine, in all its forms – political, military, economic – continues and not only continues, but is increased. From this perspective, we very much hope that the next European Parliament will maintain at the highest level on the EU agenda the necessity of the member states, of the institutions of the European Union, to continue to be in solidarity with Kyiv”, she also said.

In addition to the processes related to the EU enlargement, Cristina Gherasimov also highlighted the importance for Chisinau of the reforms within the European Union and of the European institutions, which have been discussed in recent years. “It is very important that the member states have dialogue about the reform of the institutions of the European Union, and that we, for our part, do our homework. In Chisinau and not only in Chisinau, in the whole country, we are preparing for accession and we plan to be ready internally for the moment of accession towards the year 2030, for which we are making every effort to mobilize internally”, she explained.

However, the deputy prime minister emphasized that the accession of any state does not only depend on itself, but also on the political situation within the member states. “It also depends a lot on the political developments in the member states, but also on the political developments in Brussels. You know well that the dialogue in Brussels on the need for internal reform of the European Union is a topic that has reappeared on the European agenda in the last year. And we very much hope that this dialogue will be kept on the agenda of priorities, both in Brussels and in Strasbourg.

Accelerated pace and gradual integration

She also specified that a priority for the European path of the Republic of Moldova is the accelerated pace and gradual integration that Chisinau could benefit from in the coming years.

“The Republic of Moldova already participates in various programmes of the European Union that are usually

available or were made available only to the member states. Therefore, we benefit from the fact that we are included in various programmes and we very much hope that in the following years, we will continue to benefit from these programmes in which we will increase our participation”, she added.

The Deputy Prime Minister argued that this is a socialization process with the institutions of the European Union and the processes taking place in the European Union better prepare the Republic of Moldova to become a member state with full rights. “We can contribute to maintaining stability and competitiveness in the European Union. This in no way means that we want to take any shortcuts. We are fully committed to going through all those stages of any candidate state. We approach the National Accession Action Plan with full responsibility. We are committed to transform ourselves as a country, as a society, as an economy, in such a way that we become equal both in ambitions, opportunities, but also responsibilities with any other member state of the European Union in the near future”, she said.

At the same time, the Republic of Moldova will count on all the help it can get from European institutions. “It is very important for us to continue to benefit from those spokespersons within the European Parliament that we have benefited from until now [...] true friends of the Republic of Moldova, who always prioritize the priority topics on our reform agenda for the process of our transformation and modernization as a country and here we very much hope that in the next European Parliament we will continue those friendships that we have created during the last years, but also create new ones, new bridges of cooperation in such a way as our internal agenda should always be a priority in the European forum, but also in the European capitals”, she also said.

Since the decision of the European Council in December 2023 until 25 June 2024, there was a “screening” process carried out jointly by the European Commission and the candidate country that refers to 33 chapters of the EU acquis that must be harmonized with national legislation of the candidate states.

“Since February we have been in the technical process, which is called explanatory screening. Now we are moving into the second stage of the bilateral screening,” said the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, Cristina Gherasimov. “The first stage allowed us to understand what our capabilities are, where we need to work more, where we need to strengthen the working teams. We are currently working to identify those needs for the next steps,” she added.

Cristina Gherasimov also said that Moldova “does not look for shortcuts in this process” and that a deputy general secretary was hired in each ministry who focuses only on the European integration agenda. “These things help us to strengthen the government’s capabilities in general for this process,” she added.

The imperative of reforms and the homework done conscientiously

For her part, Ionela Maria Ciolan, researcher and political analyst of the Wilfried Martens Center for European Studies in Brussels, urged the Republic of Moldova, at the same conference, to prepare its accession file, to make reforms and to be very determined in this integration process, as there may be distracting stages.

“It is important that the Republic of Moldova be very determined in its direction, because there are many distractions. It is very important for Moldova to prepare its file and to benefit from those windows of opportunity, as it has done in the last two years. If the Republic of Moldova had not been prepared, as in the case of Georgia, it

would not have been in this favourable position today. We don’t only need popular desire for European integration, we also need for Moldova to do its work regarding the reforms and meet the technical commitments towards the European Commission”, said Ionela Maria Ciolan.

The executive director of the Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE), Iulian Groza, stated that, regardless of the fact that radical parties achieved gains in some countries in the European Parliament elections, overall, the main political groups in the European Parliament remain the EPP and S&D, which shows that the enlargement processes will continue to be on the EU agenda.

“Beyond the interest that the Moldovan citizens show for the debates on European policies is the concern of what will happen next, the basic message being that the European Union expansion processes will remain on the agenda of Brussels. The basic challenge, after these elections, is how the participation of extreme parties in these processes will be managed and what will be the impact produced at the national level in their states”, pointed out Iulian Groza.

Last but not least, former German MEP Elmar Brok emphasized that the presidential elections and the referendum on European integration scheduled for October 20, which will send a strong message for the European Union, are very important. Brok also pointed out that the economic situation in many European countries has worsened as a result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and expressed bewilderment that some people are voting with pro-Kremlin parties. “The fact that the member states of the European Union are facing economic problems, including energy, is the result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Voting for parties that support Russia, which is responsible for the bad economic situation, seems like a joke, in my opinion. To support the Kremlin in this context is incomprehensible to me,” said Elmar Brok.

European Parliament 2024: Is the European integration of the Republic of Moldova threatened?



Mihai Isac, political analyst

The result of the European parliamentary elections from June 6-9, 2024 confirmed the repeated warnings from civil society in various EU member states, pan-European political circles and more, regarding the danger of the rise of radical forces in the European Parliament (EP). In fact, they ended up forming the Group of European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) in the European Parliament, whose main political force is the party of the Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. ECR became the third largest political group in the European legislature, ahead of the Renew Europe liberal group, informally led by the French President Emmanuel Macron.

The European Parliament plays a very important role in the leadership triad of the European Union, together with the European Commission and the European Council. Composed of 720 members, directly elected by an electorate of approximately 375 million voters in 2024, the EP is the legislative body of the European Union. The EP has legislative and budgetary powers equal to the Council, with some exceptions, when special legislative procedures apply.

The European legislature plays an important role when it comes to the EU's budget, the Republic of Moldova being a regular beneficiary of decisions regarding the allocation of funds, often at the initiative of Romanian MEPs.

The EP can hold the European Commission, the executive body of the EU, accountable, and there are various approaches to expand the powers in this regard. The EP elects the president of the European

Commission, being able to approve or reject the appointment of the entire Commission. At the same time, the EP can start the procedures that can lead to the dismissal of the Commission through a vote of no confidence.

The 27-member states of the EU represent one of the largest democracies in the world, with a population of approximately 450 million inhabitants. Only India, with a population of approximately 1.5 billion inhabitants, of which approximately one billion have the right to vote, outnumbers the EU, amid the policies promoted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, fiercely contested by the opposition and which have drastically limited the degree of democracy in the huge Asian state.

Important test

The results of the European Parliament elections are considered a barometer of the state of mind of the population, as well as trends that may affect the internal political life of the EU member states. The 2024 European Parliament elections were the first to be held after the Russian federal military launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, with Moscow actively trying to influence the election results as part of the Kremlin's all-out hybrid war against Western states.

This strategy of “divide et impera” (divide and conquer), applied with varying degree of success by the federal intelligence services from Moscow during the involvement in the European elections, directly influences the progress of the negotiations between the EU bloc and various states, including the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine or Georgia.

Through the participation of approximately 60,000 Moldovan citizens, who also have the citizenship of the Romanian state, in the European parliamentary elections, the Moldovans reconfirmed the increased interest in the EU and the European institutions.

Apart from the approximately one million citizens of the Republic of Moldova who have also regained their citizenship of the Romanian state in the last three decades, according to the national legislation of Romania, between the Prut and the Dniester, but also in the region illegally controlled by the pro-Russian regime, in the east of the country, live tens of thousands of citizens of other EU member states. Whether we are talking about Bulgaria, France, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Germany, Spain or the Nordic states, hundreds of thousands of citizens of the Republic of Moldova are already integrated into the common community space through their citizenship. They actively voted at dozens of polling stations opened in the Republic of Moldova, especially in Romania (52), but also in the embassies or consulates of the EU member states in Chisinau. Practically through this active participation, the citizens of the Republic of Moldova reconfirmed their membership of the common European electoral space.

Despite the fact that no statistics have been published regarding the voting participation on the territory of the EU member states of citizens of the Republic of Moldova, who have European citizenship, it is enough to follow the posts on social networks to understand the extent of the involvement of the original diaspora from the Republic of Moldova in this democratic exercise at community level. Some of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova have proven that they are already an integral part of the EU, long before the state institutions of the Republic of Moldova, which unfortunately remain outstanding in many important chapters, especially when we talk about the reform in the field of justice.

The rise of extremists

After calming the spirits of the international media and vote counting, this rise of the far right could be better understood. Despite the victory in these elections of some radical parties in important states of the Old Europe such as France or Austria, the most gloomy forecasts did not come true.

The leaders of the main parties in the EP signalled from the beginning the decision to form a cordon sanitaire that would not allow the ascent of representatives of the far right or left in leadership positions from where they could have decisively influenced the future community policy.

The prolonged crisis in the Middle East, the illegal war waged by Russia against Ukraine, but also the far-reaching economic problems in most European states led to an increase in the protest vote, that the extremist

or populist parties took advantage of, putting European democracies under pressure. On a separate note, the European Parliament elections were held in the Republic of Moldova, where the vote given to the extremist parties was lower than expected, showing a more pronounced maturity than that of a part of the electorate in much more consolidated European democracies.

Against the background of these problems, it is expected that the relations between the Republic of Moldova and the EU bloc will be subjected to additional pressure, as it is expected that a number of MEPs from populist parties will try to use for electoral purposes certain particularities and difficulties encountered by the reform processes in the Republic of Moldova.

Chisinau benefits from unique favourable historical conditions, including the presence in the EP of an important group of Romanian MEPs, dedicated ambassadors of the European integration of the Republic of Moldova. Practically, the integration of the Republic of Moldova is the only major foreign policy objective supported by all important parties in Romania, together with the European political families.

Under the threat of Moscow

The 2024 and 2025 election years in the Republic of Moldova offer the Russian Federation new opportunities to implement harmful strategies, aimed at sabotaging Chisinau’s European path. The last years have abundantly demonstrated the use of corruption as a weapon to

undermine the target states by the intelligence services from Moscow, a weapon that has proven extremely effective in the current climate of the Republic of Moldova.

This situation can be speculated by a number of MEPs, close to the interests of the Russian Federation, in order to try to suspend or delay the negotiations between the EU and the Republic of Moldova, but this extreme situation can be avoided by a good cooperation of the Republic of Moldova with the main groups in the European Parliament. It would be useful for the representatives of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova to be actively involved in various forms of parliamentary diplomacy in order to support Moldova's position in the dialogue with the EP, but also with the national parliaments of the EU states.

It also depends a lot on the capacity of the Republic of Moldova to implement clear reforms in order to demonstrate to the new composition of the EP the political will necessary to join the EU. It is expected that a number of parliamentary groups, such as the Group of European Conservatives and Reformists in the European Parliament (ECR), will treat more carefully how Chisinau will implement the reforms, including for domestic political reasons specific to the EU member states.

The strategic importance of the Republic of Moldova in the context of the war in Ukraine, the relatively small number of the population and the special relationship between Romania and the Republic of Moldova offer some advantages to Chisinau on the long technical path towards the European integration. The adaptation and implementation of the Romanian

experience in the process of negotiations with the EU could help Moldova to avoid a series of mistakes made by Romania or other states at the time of their accession to the EU bloc.

The result of the Moldovan parliamentary elections in the summer of 2025 will influence any relationship between the EU institutions, including the EP, with the Republic of Moldova. There is a need for public information campaigns and a lot of strategic communication of the advantages of EU integration. The threat of establishing a Georgian model in Chisinau, where the power would mimic European integration, is as real as it can be, therefore there is need for the cooperation of pro-European parties to overcome it. The reaction of the EP to the result of these elections depends only on the will of the Moldovan electorate.

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.



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