

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 • AUGUST 2024 • NR. 8 (222)

Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates

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News in Brief



The Embassy of the Republic of Moldova in Moscow sent, on August 23, to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a note in which it requested information about the Moldovan citizen who is alleged to be an agent of the Ukrainian special services and was detained in the city of Kerchi, Crimea, by the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB). "If it is confirmed that he is a citizen of the Republic of Moldova, in accordance with international law, our diplomatic representation will provide him with all the necessary consular assistance", stated the Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to the Russian news agency Ria Novosti, citing the FSB, the citizen of the Republic of Moldova, born in 1992, was previously convicted of theft on the territory of Ukraine. In April 2024, the man, via the Internet, cooperated with a representative of the Ukrainian special services, on whose instructions he collected and sent photos and video materials regarding the location of the military equipment of the Russian Federation and air defence positions, as well as objects of transport and energy infrastructure of Crimea.



The opportunity to carry out joint projects to stimulate the development of the tourism sector was discussed at the meeting of Prime Minister Dorin Recean with Romanian mayors, members of the National Association of Spa and Balneoclimatic Resorts in Romania on August 23. The Head of the Executive emphasized the importance of the partnerships established between the local authorities of the two countries, noting that the experience of the Romanian side in developing communities according to the European model is a valuable one for the Republic of Moldova, according to a press release issued by the Executive. "In the effort to build Europe at home, we need the support of our partners, good practices and guidance in the process of absorbing European funds. We are ready to strengthen the Moldovan-Romanian partnership in all key areas - the energy sector, the road infrastructure of our countries - and to intensify the collaboration to jointly develop the tourism sector as well", said Prime Minister Dorin Recean. During the meeting, they also talked about seaside and spa tourism, and the possibility of expanding the Romanian holiday voucher program in the Republic of Moldova.



On August 22, the Constitutional Court rejected the request of the deputies of the Socialist Party (PSRM) to suspend the action of the amendments adopted by the Parliament on July 25 to the Law on the administration and denationalization of public property. The authors of the notification are the deputies of the Bloc of Communists and Socialists, Vlad Batrincea, Petru Burduja and Grigore Novac. They asked the Court to verify the constitutionality of the law to amend the annex to the Law on the administration and denationalization of public property. At the same time, they asked the Court to suspend the action of the contested law, justifying their demand by the risk of imminent negative consequences as a result of the leasing of the commercial spaces in the Chisinau Airport building, under the management of the state enterprise "Chisinau International Airport".

Average progress and results: Moldova implements modestly the EU recommendations



Headquarters of the European Commission in Brussels

The Republic of Moldova is not only facing an opportunity to get closer to the EU, but also an exam. The quality of becoming the "hardworking student" of the class should not only manifest itself through political will, but also

through concrete actions that the state institutions undertake on the path of European integration.

The road to the EU should not be seen only as a journey, but rather as a laborious process, requiring maximum

concentration and extremely hard work. There is need for a corporate mindset of growing numbers and fewer festive moments. The figures and findings of the latest Shadow Report on Moldova's progress regarding

► the implementation of the EU recommendations are not bad, but they are not satisfying either.

It is the time which is of the essence here. Precisely because of this, the report's conclusions are that the Republic of Moldova needs to accelerate and deepen the European integration process on the most important chapters that the EU does not compromise on, namely the "Fundamentals" cluster. This is the cluster of chapters that opens and will

close the EU accession negotiations at the end of the process.

It is essential that the Republic of Moldova make considerable efforts in areas such as justice, security, the fight against corruption, and the economy. I have listed only these because they are interconnected in a perfect symbiosis. Without a system that is based on the rule of law, where corruption is reduced to a small degree, but also without military defence and security, no foreign investor will risk his/her

money in a state that does not provide these preconditions. And Moldova needs money and foreign investment badly, mostly from the Western countries.

Therefore, the Republic of Moldova must do everything in its power, quickly and unequivocally, to align these sectors with the EU requirements. Not so much to tick them off in front of Brussels, but for itself.

Madalin Necsutu

The problem of judicial vetting - it is not independent from politics and does not inspire confidence

The expert in anti-corruption, lawyer *Cristina Ciubotaru*, spoke about the judicial reform in an interview for the FES/APE foreign policy newsletter. We also talked about how the EU evaluates Moldova's progress in the field of justice, but also what is happening inside the judicial system with the magistrates and the institutions designated to fight the widespread phenomenon of corruption. We are inviting you to read the interview in the lines below:

■ What is your assessment of how the Republic of Moldova implements the recommendations of the European Commission from its November 2023 report? Have the EU requirements been met or not? And what do you think about the recent assessment by civil society?

■ The European Commission's assessment of the justice reform is political rather than realistic. The EC is a political body that has repeatedly expressed its support for the current government. There is probably also



an electoral stake in "seeing" success in justice reform, which is by far the most important reform we have been promised. That's why I think that, no matter how modest the progress, the conclusion of Brussels is and will probably continue to be that Moldova

is a success story and that the country is getting closer to the European integration.

This evaluation by EC is strikingly similar to its evaluation from 10-12 years ago, when Moldova was dubbed

“the frontrunner of the Eastern Partnership”, while the EU’s support for Maia Sandu reminds of the EU support for the PLDM leader, ex-prime minister Vlad Filat. In 2019, however, the EU’s excessive appreciation for the “the frontrunner” did not deliver an electoral victory to PLDM, and in the 2021 early parliamentary election, none of the PLDM’s former alliance partners for European integration passed the electoral threshold.

I’m not saying the history can repeat itself. And yet, if the electoral score does not allow the ruling party to stay in power or if in the future it has to share power with others, it would be good to understand that not only the chemistry between the EC and the politicians matters in the process of European integration. The citizens of the Republic of Moldova are also important. And some of them are in favour of European integration regardless of politics and EC preferences in Chisinau.

Governance failures seen up close cannot alchemically be transformed into successes by the EC’s assertion that from a distance they are seen as successes. Failures continue to be failures, only that their positive assessment by the EC discourages a part of the electorate, who get to say: “I support European integration, but if Europe means this and that, then I don’t want this Europe any more”. The findings of the EU regarding the achievements that are inexistent discourages a part of the pro-European electorate. And the disappointment of even 10-15% of Moldovan population can divert the majority pro-European support.

Getting back to the progress of the justice reform today, I believe that another explanation for the overly optimistic assessment, beyond political considerations, are the alternative reports of the civil society. The last report you referred to is no exception. When it gets to confront the official reports presented by the authorities

with the alternative reports of the civil society, the EC will undoubtedly see a progress which does not actually correspond to the reality in the Republic of Moldova.

The problem with EC evaluations is the lack of genuine “fact-checking” regarding what is really happening in Chisinau. The EU only sees what it receives in writing, on paper. And the main sources of information are the two kinds of reports: the official reports of the authorities and the alternative reports to the governmental ones, the so-called “shadow reports”, which are prepared by civil society. The basic idea is that a comparison of the two types of reports should allow the EU to draw some balanced conclusions. In other words, the alternative reports are the main “fact-checking” applied by the EU.

The problem, however, is that the civil society organizations, at least those active in the justice sector, that develop and submit such alternative reports are increasingly close to the government. Thus, their alternative reports are not that alternative anymore and merely confirm the official findings for the most part. During the public presentation of the last shadow report, I proposed that several well-known problems of the justice reform and the fight against corruption be reflected in the report, but my suggestions were not taken into account. And I’m not even surprised by this anymore.

Some members of civil society organizations can be found in many state structures, in addition to the Presidency, Government, Parliament, the Supreme Security Council, all sorts of commissions established in the justice sector: for selection, competition, evaluation, vetting, pre-vetting, etc. The same organizations and people manage processes and monitor how they are managed. Representatives of some organizations are omnipresent in state structures. They continue to present themselves as representatives of non-

governmental organizations, even if they are no longer perceived as such.

With all due respect, these organizations are rather an extension of government in the non-governmental sector. All of them benefit primarily from the EU financial support. And so it happens that the EU basically pays to be misled in this way, or at least not to be told the whole truth.

Thus, the optics of governance ends up being supported by the shadow reports produced by these organizations. Like any other government, the current one too tends to exaggerate its achievements. And it is natural that pro-government non-governmental organizations do not contradict the government.

The extraordinary evaluation of the magistrates

■ **How do you assess the progress of the pre-vetting and vetting processes? Are the results those expected by the authorities and how do you assess the speed with which things are moving?**

■ I’m not of the best opinion about the vetting and pre-vetting processes. I followed them closely from the very beginning, from the first concept documents of the Ministry of Justice, the draft laws, the opinions of the Venice Commission. Now I am watching how they are materializing in the activity of the extraordinary evaluation commissions.

It saddens me that an idea of promoting integrity, a concept I care about a lot, has degenerated into what vetting and pre-vetting have become today: the politicization of justice. In fact, I believe they are the most effective tools for the politicization of justice that I have ever seen, despite the dire consequences for the litigants.

Regarding the speed of the reform, there is an interesting [analysis](#) on the

web page of the Coalition of the UN Convention against Corruption published last year, in which the speed as well as the human and financial investment made in the Pre-Vetting Commission of Moldova are compared with similar investment for the external vetting of candidates to be appointed as judges with the Anti-Corruption Court of Ukraine and head of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine. The author estimated that in Moldova it took 3-7 times longer to evaluate 4 times fewer candidates than in Ukraine. Finally, in relation to financial and human resources, it was found out that in Moldova, the Pre-Vetting Commission spent 7-10 times more person days than in Ukraine. Given that the mandate of the Pre-Vetting Commission has continued after the publication of the article to date, the final investment in person days could be much higher than last year's estimates.

■ **How do you see the vetting process for judges at the Court of Appeal? Half of them resigned before this exercise, and how many out of the remaining 20 judges or so do you estimate will pass the evaluation, since the press has reported previously quite big integrity problems with some of them? And how are things at the Supreme Court of Justice in this regard?**

■ Before the vetting at the Court of Appeal, the vetting at the Supreme Court of Justice started, from where all the judges left. They stated at the time that they did not trust this mechanism. Right before they resigned, the Supreme Court magistrates had examined the appeals of the candidates who did not pass the pre-vetting to be elected to the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM) and the Superior Council of Prosecutors (SCP). So, the judges of the Court practically held the evaluation files in their hands and managed to understand the practices applied in the pre-vetting

process. They overturned all decisions of the Pre-vetting Commission.

The Court of Appeal judges said the same thing initially, that they did not trust the process.

I personally noticed an episode in which Prime Minister Dorin Recean pointed the finger at three magistrates, who had issued solutions that displeased him. The Prime Minister publicly threatened them that they would not pass the evaluation. At the beginning of vetting, all those three magistrates resigned. And I'm not surprised they did.

I don't think the judges resigned because they are corrupt or because they could not justify their assets. Now I'm sure that it's not integrity that makes some judges stay in the system and it's not corruption that makes others resign at the start of vetting.

It is not ok for political figures in the state such as the prime minister, the speaker of Parliament, deputies or the president of the country to point the finger at different judges and prosecutors and state that they should be "evaluated to blood" or that "they will not pass the evaluation". On 1 June 2024 in Paris, the Association of European Magistrates for Freedom and Democracy (MEDEL) issued a [statement](#) in this regard through which it condemned the political attacks on the Moldovan judiciary by the executive and legislative power, stating the constitutional balance and the rule of law were endangered.

When politicians make promises about the outcome of a vetting that has not yet taken place, on behalf of commissions that claim to be independent, I understand very well why judges do not trust this vetting process. Anyone in their place wouldn't have. Personally, I think it's a clever tool to make the judiciary politically loyal.

At the Court of Appeal, I find that not many people are eager to be promoted to replace the judges who have left. Because that would mean passing the same vetting. And even if there were corruption problems, I'm not saying they don't exist, but the worst problem with vetting is that it's not independent from politics and doesn't inspire confidence.

■ **Should there be a new breath into the prosecutor's office, with the election of a new Prosecutor General?**

■ The Prosecutor General Ion Munteanu is not that new. He had been acting general prosecutor in the last two years. Drastic changes in the Prosecutor's Office did not happen. Things are pretty much the same as they have been lately.

Mr Munteanu said previously he could assume things that only a general prosecutor with a full mandate could. Such fears are not new, and it is not him to speak about them for the first time.

If we look at it from the perspective of the interims, the specialized anti-corruption and anti-organized crime prosecutors in the Republic of Moldova have been active for long periods in interim situations. And this does not come from the current government, it's a much older gimmick. Probably, the political powers had their reasons to be cautious, so that the fight against corruption and organized crime don't unleash. It's easier to remove an interim who becomes uncomfortable, as opposed to a chief prosecutor who is guaranteed a five- or seven-year term.

During the current government it has been proven that some interims in the justice system can last almost as long as a full term or even longer. And I agree here with the general prosecutor Ion Munteanu, that the interim is a way of keeping the head of a prosecutor's office in insecurity and uncertainty, it does not allow him/her to fully manifest

his/her managerial potential, while the prosecutors subordinate to the interim - the procedural potential. Prosecutors are thus forced to be comfortable in order not to create problems for those on whom the subsequent appointment for a full term depends.

I'm wondering, if an acting general prosecutor becomes a full-time prosecutor, is that a guarantee that things will change in the prosecutor's office? Or maybe the interim was a trial period? A way to demonstrate loyalty before being entrusted with the full mandate? I am not saying that Mr Munteanu will necessarily be loyal to the government. We will see what happens in the future. But this is a valid question in relation to all the interim in the past in which the heads of different prosecutor's offices were for long periods.

The competition for the position of Prosecutor General was spectacular. First, the contest was allegedly rigged by a member of the Superior Council of Prosecutors (SCP), whose integrity had not been suspected in the pre-vetting process. Then, the competition was cancelled and even a criminal trial started, with the SCP member resigning after only 2 months in office. Then, the criminal case also failed, when, at the repetition of the contest, the one who is now speculated should have won from the start won the competition, that is the current general prosecutor.

I do not know what the truth is, and I do not rule out that all those involved in the organization and failure of the contest, and the criminal proceedings were honest. It's just that for the time being, General Prosecutor Ion Munteanu is not taking on too many things. Is he prevented from doing so or should we wait for some time? I wonder, if he was appointed the way he was appointed — with sacrifices, cancellation of a contest, and a criminal trial— in order to get

into office, to do what...? To do things differently? Or to leave things exactly as they were in the period in which he was interim?

Fighting between anti-corruption institutions

■ **How do you assess the activity of the Anticorruption Prosecutor's Office and the National Anticorruption Centre, and what are the causes of friction between the two institutions?**

■ To be honest, the friction between these two institutions is also nothing new. The problem has only become more visible lately, although the rivalries have been going on for years. The enforcement institutions have always been somewhat more arrogant.

It is normal for prosecutors and anti-corruption officers to have a more assertive discourse, to be brave, sure of their actions, daring, and provocative. Up to a certain point, the existence of a competition between the enforcement institutions is a matter of their intrinsic character and nature. So, it is not necessarily about hostility, rather it is about a competition, which has always existed between the National Anticorruption Center (NAC) and the Anticorruption Prosecutor's Office (AP). The intelligent leaders of the NAC and AP have always understood that their effectiveness depends on the tandem work of these institutions.

What is happening lately, however, is something else. The brothers in arms in the anti-corruption fight, the NAC and the AP, were forcibly separated.

After the 2012 reform, the NAC under the leadership of the AP, focused exclusively on the fight against corruption, especially large-scale corruption. In 2016, this changed, when the Prosecutor's Office was reformed, and the effect of the NAC reform was

compromised. The Anticorruption Prosecutor's Office has been assigned its own powers to fight high-level corruption. However, the prosecutors do not have their own operative, technical, etc. resources. They had to rely on NAC anyway. And the rivalry between the institutions deepened: "who is the boss?", the NAC that has all these resources, or the prosecutors who carry out the criminal investigation in particularly important cases?

Also today there exists this competition, which is considered normal. For several years now, every time there are changes in the Prosecutor's Office in the Republic of Moldova, we keep being told that a DNA ([National Anticorruption Directorate) is being created, just like in Romania. I heard this in 2012, and in 2016, and in 2019, and now when AP was separated from NAC.

The big problem is that the institutions in the Republic of Moldova are configured differently than in Romania. We can't establish DNA in Moldova exactly as in Romania. We have to understand what our advantages and disadvantages are and create an institution that would work. It is enough to understand what enhances the efficiency of the DNA in Romania in order to create our own mechanisms that would similarly enhance the Anticorruption Prosecutor's Office (AP) here.

But without destroying the NAC or merging the two institutions. Veronica Dragalin, at one point, said that the Anticorruption Prosecutor's Office, which she leads, does not have enough resources in the NAC, therefore she is of the opinion that the AP should "swallow" the NAC. Then this conflict between the Prosecutor's Office and the NAC was resolved politically, so that the NAC files would no longer be taken by the anti-corruption prosecutors, and the anti-corruption prosecutors would no longer work with the NAC.

■ How do you see the idea of an Anti-corruption Court that would solve with celerity large-scale corruption cases? Is this idea viable or not and why?

■ I am a big supporter of the idea of creating an anti-corruption court in the Republic of Moldova and I will explain why.

There are states where the fight against corruption has a specialized approach. That is, special anti-corruption institutions are created. And there are countries that do not specialize in this, considering corruption as a crime like any other, which needs to be fought by the police, prosecutors and courts that examine all types of crimes.

In the Republic of Moldova, as in Romania, anti-corruption specializations were created. It was considered that there is a lot of corruption, that this is a serious problem, and for this reason we need to have specially trained professionals, whom to provide the necessary resources so that they can focus only on this criminal phenomenon, which is very serious for us.

In Romania, the National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA), the General Anticorruption Directorate (DGA), and the National Integrity Agency (ANI) were specialized.

In the Republic of Moldova there is NAC, responsible for prevention, education, and fighting corruption in all sectors, throughout the country. NAC does not have an exact counterpart in Romania, although it has many counterpart institutions in the world, for instance, in the Baltic countries. In the world, this institutional model is called universal, that is, the one that combines the functions of prevention, education, and fighting corruption. The universal model comes from the legendary Asian models of Singapore and Hong-Kong.

In the Republic of Moldova, there is also the Anticorruption Prosecutor's Office (PA) and the National Integrity Agency (ANI), just like in Romania. There is also SPIA, an internal protection and anti-corruption service of the Ministry of the Interior, rather the equivalent of the Romanian DGA.

Therefore, both in the Republic of Moldova and in Romania we have certain specialized bodies for preventing and fighting corruption. But the results and efficiency of all these special bodies ultimately depend on the court's decision.

Even if there is a lot of talk in society about corruption, the judges, not being specialized, cannot give priority to corruption cases, because all kinds of cases get on the judges' desks, and their workload is constantly increasing, especially because of the vetting and pre-vetting from the judiciary. So, to the extent they have the time, the judges examine corruption cases, along with many other types of cases.

I personally think that the anti-corruption court would have been an excellent alternative to all the vetting which is done at the moment. People's dissatisfaction with the judiciary in the Republic of Moldova is related to the examination of high-profile cases, the absolute majority of which are corruption cases. But they represent a small percentage of the total volume of cases. The number of corruption cases is less than 1% of all categories of cases that make up the workload of the courts.

In general, ordinary people rarely end up going to court. They have no way of forming their own opinion about what justice is and how it is done. Citizens perceive justice only from what they see on television. And on TV they only see what politicians or journalists tell them. If the essence of justice reform is "thieves, to prison!", we should

understand very clearly that this is about a very narrow category of cases.

The annual number of corruption cases submitted to the court by prosecutors is up to 200, maximum 300. However, this is not even half of the annual workload of a single judge, which today ranges between 500-1,000 cases annually.

Through the judicial reforms, we today "terrorize" in a way the entire judicial system, seriously affecting the functioning of the system throughout the country, on all categories of cases: divorces, debts, thefts, inheritances - everything and anything. Corruption cases are no exception. We turned the court system upside down and almost blocked it. And these extraordinary evaluations called vetting continue to paralyze it more and more.

Why did we need such a reform? Because we wanted to see a different dynamic on certain "thieves, to prison!" cases, the number of which is less than the annual workload of a single judge. And in the end, none of those thieves we wanted in jail got there, so they never got to jail. On the contrary, the judicial system and the dysfunctional prosecutor's offices because of the reform only increase the psychological comfort of thieves.

In the Republic of Moldova there are around 400-450 judges and 600-650 prosecutors. Some of them are corrupt and give us big headaches. But no matter how much our head hurts from them, pills with a focused action on headaches are preferable to the guillotine. Or, if there is corruption in all state structures, for consistency, the government should apply the same vetting approach everywhere. And then nothing would work anymore, from kindergartens to Parliament.

Even if the corruption cases are not many, however, given their importance to society, no more than five judges

could be specialized. That way we could provide what people have been waiting for a long time - speed and efficiency. This does not mean exclusively sentencing solutions. Prison only if it is proven that they are thieves and corrupt. Otherwise, let the innocent go free.

I do not think that the two approaches to justice reform are complementary: 1) the “guillotine” through vetting and 2) the “treatment for headaches” through the creation of the anti-corruption court. It would make more sense to try the headache pills before the head was cut off and not after. That’s why it seems rather pointless to me to discuss today the creation of the specialized anti-corruption court. What could it do in today’s conditions but get bored?

The Anticorruption Prosecutor’s Office has been “bleeding” even before beginning of the vetting. Although the Parliament doubled their number of employees on paper, in reality, the number of existing prosecutors has already been halved, and the vetting of their integrity has not even begun. In addition to integrity, an anti-corruption prosecutor also needs courage. The prosecutor who only has integrity but lacks courage is not effective in fighting corruption. With prosecutors who are only obedient or with ones who have been worrying about vetting, the creation of a specialized anti-corruption court is completely useless.

If the judiciary and the prosecutor’s office ever recover, and dissatisfaction with their work continues, the idea of creating an Anti-Corruption Court could become relevant again.

Selective justice

■ **What can say about selectivity of justice and what are your observations regarding this phenomenon during the current government compared to**

the previous governments before July 2021? I know you are monitoring this phenomenon within a Freedom House report.

■ Yes, I am doing this together with the journalist Mariana Rata, as part of a study for Freedom House. Based on the criteria developed by us, we have already been monitoring for several years the selectivity of criminal justice in high-profile cases. That’s why I told you above that most resonant cases are the corruption cases. Dissatisfaction that exists in society and among government with regard to justice is largely due to what is known as high-profile cases. This is where all the conclusions I stated above in this interview about judges, specialized anti-corruption prosecutors, etc. come from.

The know-how of this government is that those who have been involved in the justice reform are part of a special interest group that has leverage to influence justice. They are the same people who were also in different enforcement structures, ministries, Parliament, Superior Council of Magistracy. Certain criminal cases were of interest to the members of this group, whether it was the cases concerning the members of this group or the cases of their opponents.

In the case of the opponents of this group, the court proceedings were conducted in an unfortunate manner for them, while for the affiliates of the group – in a very gentle manner. At the same time, this group delivered the necessary course to the resonance cases, when a suitable political interest appeared.

For example, in the same period when the suspicion arose that the government and its political opponents, Igor Dodon and the Socialist Party, had planned and reached some electoral agreements for the presidential and parliamentary elections, the speed of the examination

of the criminal cases in which Igor Dodon and the Socialist Party were targeted were practically put on hold at the Supreme Court of Justice.

Parliament voted several laws to remove a certain prosecutor from Igor Dodon’s case. The Parliament changed the conditions so that this prosecutor could no longer act within the specialized prosecutor’s office, and therefore could no longer support the state prosecution in the respective cases.

Parliament has also voted other laws that could change the fate of the examination of resonance cases. It was proposed to abrogate the paragraph of an article of the Criminal Code on the basis of which Igor Dodon was accused in another criminal case. The amendment was voted in the first reading in the Parliament, then the press noticed and the legislative procedure stopped. But the draft law has neither been withdrawn nor voted in the second reading yet.

Through these interventions, the Parliament favoured a defendant in a high-profile case so that the judiciary had no choice but to exonerate him. This is the most direct political influence on justice: you change the law, and justice applies it as you changed it. Changing the rules of the game in such a visible way by amending the laws through Parliament is an unprecedented method of political intervention in the act of justice.

Current judicial reforms have not reduced judicial corruption, rather they have perpetuated its selectivity. Justice becomes selective, primarily under political influence. The current political situation, in addition to the traditional methods of influencing justice, has discovered new forms of determining justice to be selective.

■ **Thank you!**

Editorial

Why is it necessary to change the paradigm: from political leniency to a real effort to integrate into the EU?

*Editorial de Madalin Necsutu,
journalist with the Balkan
Insight and TVR Moldova*

There are two premises from which a comprehensive analysis of the current relationship between the Republic of Moldova and NATO can be started. Never in its 33-year history has the Republic of Moldova been in such a close relationship with the European Union, and it is the first time in the last decade, since Croatia's accession to the EU in 2013, that the European Union wants to enlarge the community block.

Equally important is the context for this window of opportunity, namely the Russian military invasion of Ukraine. It is also in the interest of the EU that Ukraine and Moldova, as well as several countries in the Western Balkans, are included in the next wave of EU enlargement which we hope to materialize in the horizon of 2030, or even earlier.

But for this desideratum to be achieved, as an American aphorism says, "it takes two to tango". Here, not only Chisinau's political will must intervene, but also the administrative and managerial capacity to manage a large, dense and highly bureaucratic accession process. All internal cogs and mechanisms of the Republic of Moldova need to be fixed according to Brussels time and this needs to be well understood in Chisinau.

If the decisions made in the case of the Republic of Moldova were political until now, it is time for the authorities in Chisinau to demonstrate that they can meet the expectations of Brussels.



Shadow Report nr. 1 "Evaluation of the progress of the Republic of Moldova regarding the implementation of the recommendations of the European Commission in the context of the accession process to the European Union", developed by 10 civil society experts within the Civil Society for European Integration Project, at the end of July, shows deficiencies or modest results in the implementation of the EU recommendations in several key areas, more precisely, on the chapters of the "Fundamentals" cluster. The 35 chapters that the Republic of Moldova will negotiate with the EU are divided into six clusters.

Need to strengthen the institutional capacities

Thus, the areas of democracy, public administration reform, justice reform, the fight against corruption, fundamental rights, freedom of

expression, security, the existence of a functional market economy, public procurement, statistics, financial control, social policies, and employment received relatively modest scores when it comes to the implementation of the EU recommendations by Moldova.

What is important is that Moldova urgently needs to strengthen the capacity of specialists and provide attractive salaries for them. Chisinau has no time to lose and must act decisively in the relationship with the EU. So, both hiring specialists domestically and attracting them with motivating salaries, regardless of the shortcomings of the system as we all know them, must be taken very seriously.

It is also necessary to convince the development partners to invest in civil society so that it gives a helping hand, and maintain bilateral discussions with the EU member states with which

Moldova has a good relationship in order for them to send to Chisinau as many experts as possible to study the specifics of the Republic of Moldova and then to harmonize the internal legislation with that of the European Union.

Reforming the economy – “priority zero”

The Republic of Moldova needs to become attractive for foreign investors, and this can only be done through a double effort, according to the conclusions of the above mentioned. Moldova needs to facilitate the conditions for the foreign investors who have the courage to come here.

As Westerners are still reluctant, Moldova could have a much friendlier policy towards investors from Romania who, according to statistics, seem to be the most willing to come to Moldova. Moldova needs to get out of the assistance paradigm as much as possible and start functioning on its own.

One area in which the Republic of Moldova is deficient is the labour force, a considerable percentage of which has left for abroad in search of a job. That is precisely why Moldova needs to analyse the possibility of liberalizing the import of labour. Also, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Labour should keep their word and ease the bureaucracy regarding the employment documents for the EU citizens who want to come to work in the Republic of Moldova. That would mean an influx of skilled labour that is currently held back by red tape that has no justification.

Justice reform, a very difficult task

When it comes to the justice reform, a faster vetting process is also needed, so that the extraordinary evaluation does not drag on for years. Likewise, speed in solving resonance cases is absolutely necessary. The government is already

in its fourth year in office, but most of the high-profile corruption cases remain unsolved. Except for the sentencing of the fugitive oligarch, Ilan Șor, in April 2023, there have been no other resounding convictions.

The experts note in the quoted report that the analysis of the situation regarding the justice reform “focuses more on findings in the field of corruption, than on the causes that generate this phenomenon, which creates difficulties in determining the correct interventions.”

The difficulty with which political corruption and the vitiation of democratic voting processes are punished shows an extremely reduced capacity of the state apparatus - public order, security and justice - to deal with this hybrid war element coming from Russia through its proxies, the fugitive Moldovan oligarchs, who have recently created entire networks and tested mechanisms for defrauding democratic voting processes.

The vetting process is not only cumbersome, but also risks leaving the system without magistrates. Massive departures from the system cannot be replaced very easily with young and inexperienced magistrates. Keeping the corrupt in the system is not a solution either.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the government to have both a fair process of extraordinary evaluation and the infusion of “fresh blood” in the judicial system of Moldova. According to the shadow report “an additional constraint is the risk of the departure of a large number of prosecutors, as a result of the launching of the evaluation process”.

Regulation of the online media, an urgent need

Last but not least, the authorities need to regulate the online media as

soon as possible. After the closure and dismantling of the TV and radio media concentrations, the latter have moved online in recent years. The owners remain the same, and the goals are similar: the fight for the hearts and minds of the citizens.

The biggest problem is that this fight is fought with the same means of fake news and manipulations to create an amorphous mass that is easily controlled and responds to certain stimuli. The goals remained aligned with Moscow and the interests of the fugitive oligarchs, a tandem that currently works hand in hand to topple the pro-European power in Chisinau.

Moreover, a law on digital markets was introduced at the EU level in March 2023. The *Digital Markets Act (DMA)* is part of a package that also includes the *Digital Services Act (DSA)*. In short, they regulate the operation of social platforms in a more controlled and responsible way.

As propaganda and manipulation enter the Republic of Moldova in their vast majority through the online media, it is imperative to implement these European directives as soon as possible in the Republic of Moldova. This should be a priority given that we have three important events in the next eight months: presidential elections, a referendum on European integration, and parliamentary elections.

In conclusion, the Republic of Moldova needs to understand and assume the transition from the political leniency shown so far by the EU, to taking the bull by the horns and making reforms, sometimes draconian, that will align this state with the norms of the European Union.

The oligarchs are still present online, but they are not as visible on classic television

Executive director of the Centre for Independent Journalism, Nadine Gogu, spoke in an interview for the FES/APE foreign policy newsletter about how Moldova implemented the recommendations of the European Commission (EC) for a better regulation and functioning of the media. She said that, in general, Moldova is not doing badly in this respect, but that there are still gaps that need to be fixed. Read below the full interview:

■ What is the current situation with the freedom of expression for journalists in the Republic of Moldova? To what extent has the Republic of Moldova implemented the EC recommendations in this field?

■ The European Commission's first recommendation for Moldova refers to a more effective protection of journalists against intimidation and attacks, and quality investigations by law enforcement agencies. We haven't had many cases of journalists being physically, verbally attacked or intimidated, respectively, there have not been many cases investigated by the authorities. It should be mentioned, however, that the authorities intervened when the journalists from the TV8, Viorica Tătaru and Andrei Captarenco, were detained in Tiraspol. Thanks to the Moldovan authorities, they were released.

We have pointed out to the constraints in the report and argued that, in the future, the institutions need to investigate cases of harassment, abuse and cases of radio censorship. There was such a case last year at the Teleradio Găgăuzia.

But you cannot intervene when a journalist is intimidated online through bullying or other methods. And we know who is doing these acts of intimidation,



but no complaints were filed with the police.

We can't wait for the police to start monitoring everything and intervene. Complaints need to be filed and then we can follow whether the authorities took any action following the complaints by journalists.

Transparency of media ownership

■ What can you say about the transparency of the print and online media ownership, which does not exist unlike TV and radio media? How do you see this being ensured for the print and online media?

■ The second recommendation of the EC report regarding media was about the transparency of media ownership. So far, certain things have been done in the audiovisual area, but the recommendation was to extend the requirements also for transparency of the print and online media.

During the one-year reporting period, nothing was done in this respect, except for discussions being initiated on this topic. Therefore, a score of 1 on a scale of 5 has been given when it comes to the implementation of the EC recommendations in this regard.

I couldn't assess this more positively, given that there is no document yet and very little progress has been made. According to the monitoring methodology, we could assign a score from 1 to 5, depending on what Moldova reached on this road.

■ In your view, what should be done to improve the self-regulatory bodies in the media, with obvious reference to the Press Council?

■ This is the issue that I monitored in the civil society report on Moldova's implementation of EC recommendations. This issue does not belong to the authorities, however, it was included in the report as a recommendation. It is

about monitoring self-regulatory mechanisms. Here we gave the highest score. The self-regulatory mechanisms pertain to the civil society and the Press Council was registered.

The registration last year of the Public Association of the Press Council of the Republic of Moldova was successful. Certain things happened here and certain decisions were made, but not as much as we would have liked. Probably, because, there are many cases in which the Press Council did not react. And the Press Council did not react because it is not yet developed from an institutional point of view, as it has been registered recently.

Most likely, more people will be hired within the Press Council, so that this self-regulatory body can make a strategic plan, a plan of actions to be guided by in the future.

Here we must admit that the journalists in the Republic of Moldova are not united. Not all media institutions recognize the authority of the Press Council. It would be ideal that, after the Press Council has been registered and strengthened, various projects are carried out in order to bring more journalists from various media to the Council. They should understand that this institution, which represents the press, is very important in the Republic of Moldova. The Press Council should react when decisions concerning the mass media are taken.

We are also trying to self-regulate within the editorial offices, and the Code of Ethics, which still has certain shortcomings, will most likely be revised this year. Some changes will probably be made. However, much more activities could be done for newsrooms, including helping them develop their internal Codes of Ethics and organizing certain trainings for them, as well as solidarity actions.

Reducing media focus on TV but not online

■ **Do you still notice a media concentration in the Republic of Moldova today? Are there still certain stations that are de facto run through intermediaries by runaway oligarchs?**

■ From what I have observed, many stations will not reflect the electoral campaign, for example, a fact that caused hysterics with a part of society. The list of stations that will cover the presidential election campaign and the referendum was published by the Broadcasting Council, and somewhat hilariously, there are many stations that no longer have the right to do so.

They are on the list, but they don't have the right to broadcast content, so there are far fewer stations left to cover the campaign, for example.

The online stations are expanding and we are seeing that trend. Particularly, in electoral campaigns, there will probably be an expansion of them, because the online media is not regulated. Oligarchs are investing in this segment so they can reach more people. Anyway, the online media from which the people have been increasingly informing themselves has ended up surpassing classic tv stations.

The Internet has become the most important source of information. Therefore, the oligarchs are present online, but they are not as visible on the classic television because those stations no longer exist. There are a few stations left that have news bulletins, but they don't have shows. Generally, there are many TV stations, but they are niche ones.

Problems for the media in UTA Gagauzia

■ **How do you see the situation of the media in UTA Gagauzia, where the media functions based on different principles compared to Chisinau?**

■ There it is much more problematic than in Chisinau. I've noticed this over the past year. We have made several statements in that regard following the problems reported from UTA Gagauzia.

Journalists are either kicked out of public meetings or denied access. They are victims of online abuse and intimidation by politicians, political advisers or their supporters.

There were different situations in this sense, but also different strange local initiatives in Gagauzia to introduce certain barriers for journalists, namely for those who want to be active in the online environment, to be registered. They are trying to control the press. I mentioned above that a case of censorship was reported at Teleradio Găgăuzia, the public broadcaster in the region. A journalist filed a complaint, but surely the political factor influences and controls most media in Gagauzia, which they finance, including in obscure ways. But fortunately, there are still some independent media outlets that are standing up to the situation and continue to produce independent content.

■ **There is also the phenomenon of self-censorship on the part of some journalists, especially those who do investigative journalism. They abstain from getting into the essence of suspicions of corruption among the current pro-European government, precisely for fear of harming the European course on the eve of presidential elections, referendum and parliamentary elections next year.**

■ Yes, there is. We have had discussions on this topic several times with several fellow journalists about situations when you have to make an editorial decision and choose the lesser of two evils. This phenomenon exists and there is the perception that many fellow journalists are now self-censoring specifically so as not to harm the European course.

■ **Thank you!**

We have pretty good strategy documents, but we have limited administrative capacity to implement them

Stas Madan, economic analyst with Expert-Grup, spoke in an interview for the FES/APE foreign policy newsletter about how the Republic of Moldova implemented the recommendations of the European Commission in the economic sector during the last year. We discussed about the main conclusions with regard to the economic sector of the Shadow Report no. 1 "Evaluation of the progress of the Republic of Moldova regarding the implementation of the recommendations of the European Commission in the context of the accession process to the European Union" published this July. The report was developed ten independent experts, within the "Civil Society for European Integration" Project, who analysed the implementation of the EU recommendations for Moldova since the last report issued by the European Commission last autumn. We learned from Stas Madan about how Moldova's EU accession process is proceeding from an economic perspective, what needs to be done to attract foreign investors, but also how the gaps in the labour market can be bridged. The full interview follows below:

■ The experts who contributed to this report made a complete X-ray of several key sectors that need to be reformed in the Republic of Moldova. How do you characterize the overall conclusions of the report, which includes an assessment of the progress on the most important negotiation chapters - justice reform, the fight against corruption, local public administration, parliament's activity, security and freedom of expression?



■ The average score given by the experts, based on a scale from 1 to 5, is somewhere around 3. Implementation of most recommendations was assessed with this score. Obviously, certain results have been achieved, but we need also to say that the recommendations of the European Commission are quite varied and heterogeneous to be able to evaluate them all uniformly.

Some recommendations are very technical, for example, adherence to a particular convention. However, there are also quite complex recommendations, such as mitigating vulnerabilities on the labour market, which is a much more complex process.

The European Commission's report, released in November 2023, makes an thorough assessment of all 35 negotiation chapters and contains recommendations on all these chapters. We started the monitoring with the chapters that are part of the cluster called "Fundamentals", since the 35 negotiation chapters are divided into six clusters. The European Union will start the negotiations precisely on these chapters, which refer to justice, rule of law, and functional market economy.

In other words, if we are deadlocked on these chapters, there is no point in opening the negotiations on others. So, there is a certain consecutiveness in the negotiation process with the European Union

and, because of this, the chapters that are part of the “Fundamentals” are the most important or represent a priority.

Precisely for this reason, we focused on these topics in our monitoring. It was a sustained effort, as we had a total of 43 recommendations to analyse, a rather impressive volume. 10 experts worked on this report, so you cannot say that a certain ideology was imprinted. The experts evaluated the extent to which the recommendations of the European Commission were fulfilled by the Moldovan government.

We have the lowest average score on the freedom of expression, but those recommendations are more about media transparency, not necessarily about not being able to express ourselves freely. And the best score was given to the security chapter. But somehow it is also logical that when we are good at security, we are a little weaker at freedom of expression.

The average score of the Republic of Moldova for fulfilling the 43 recommendations of the European Commission is approximately 3 out of 5 points provided by the evaluation methodology.

Restructuring and privatization of state property

■ **How can the business environment be improved and maintain a rapid pace of reforms to restructure and/or privatize state property? And what about the state interference in pricing?**

■ First of all, we need a very clear vision of what we would like to attain and, just as importantly, to have sufficient will and capacity

for implementation. Because, very often, we manage to develop a pretty good vision, but, unfortunately, when we get to implementation, there is limited administrative capacity.

Regarding the state interference in terms of the presence of state-owned enterprises, the Republic of Moldova has a very good strategy, which was adopted at the end of 2022. It has clear targets, including transparency and integrity with regard to the privatizations to be carried out. Very importantly, all the enterprises in the state portfolio are classified into several categories, as part of a process called the screening mechanism, which was developed by the Government. However, here unfortunately, we have a problem of transparency, because that list has not yet been made public, communicated or explained to the public – namely, which enterprises remain in the state’s portfolio and which are to be privatized, which are to be liquidated and under what shape. It should be noted that the enterprises are divided into five categories.

Regarding this chapter, we have a strategy, but we do not yet have an approved implementation programme. Such a programme was developed and has been under public consultations for several months, but its implementation is delayed.

We also talk about state interference when prices are influenced, this being generally a rather sensitive topic in society. In the Republic of Moldova, there is often a wrong perception about the state’s interference in setting the price. In reality, there is no very much interference. There was such a situation during the state

of emergency, when the state intervened. But that intervention was justified. When we had that rampant inflation, one of the state’s tools to limit price increases was to limit the trade mark-up on certain products.

Thus, they made up a list of important basic products, and when the inflation returned to the optimal parameters, they got back to the original list, those products being removed.

Regarding the business environment, in some areas we see certain progress, especially in deregulation and debureaucratization, where we have several packages developed by the Ministry of Economy and approved by the Parliament.

With regard to digitization, we have made certain progress, more precisely, in the digitization of public services. However, we still have reservations when it comes to the quality infrastructure, consumer protection, and competition protection. This is where intervention is needed in order to have a more viable and predictable business environment.

Improvements in the labour market

■ **What is the situation of the labour market, where there is a need, according to the report’s conclusions, for increased incentives to attract labour? And what are the measures to combat informal employment?**

■ Indeed, the Republic of Moldova has two major constraints that were highlighted by the European Commission. On the one hand, we have a very high inactivity rate, although the unemployment rate in

the Republic of Moldova is quite low. The inactivity rate in Moldova is one of the highest in Europe and that is a big problem.

Also, the informal economy has a fairly large share. Almost every fourth person in the employed population, who has some income, is part of the informal economy. Obviously, these are important challenges. What the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection has done in this field in the last three years is indeed commendable, at least from the perspective of the coherence of the policies developed and implemented.

There is a framework programme - the National Employment Programme - where these two issues are very well set. However, it is one thing to develop policies and another to have the tools to implement them. In this sense, the tools of the Ministry of Labour are two key institutions. On the one hand, there is the National Agency for Employment (ANOFM), whose main mission is to employ as many people as possible, which means to be a broker or an intermediary on the labour market on behalf of the state. On the other hand, we have the State Labour Inspectorate (ISM), whose basic mission is to combat undeclared work and legalize as many people as possible.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, in addition to that framework document - the National Employment Programme - has also developed two specific vision documents for each institution, with concrete action plans that must be undertaken to improve things, both for ANOFM and ISM. We already have some tangible progress, that is why, the evaluation of the implementation of the EC

recommendations in this area was positive, the score being 3.5 points out of 5.

For example, if we refer to ANOFM, in 2023 there was an increase of over 14% in the number of people employed with the assistance of this institution and a much better assimilation of the budget for active employment measures. Much has also been achieved in terms of the design of these active employment measures. For example, mobile teams were created to identify job seekers more easily. In short, quite good progress has been made in this regard.

If we are talking about the State Labour Inspectorate, this institution was somehow amputated with the 2018-2019 reform, when it was forbidden to make unannounced checks. Because how can you detect undeclared work in the case of a planned control? There is clearly a cognitive dissonance here. Parliament amended the legislation in force and this institution regained this right to make unannounced checks. It is also very important to note that controls are implemented based on risk criteria, so that honest economic agents are not inspected. Only those who are in the risk zone, according to certain parameters, are inspected.

As for the State Labour Inspectorate, it is equally important to mention that there has been a reorganization of this institution with a much better governance, because when you inspect an entrepreneur with the aim of detecting undeclared work, integrity and diligence of inspectors are very important. And here we can already talk about very good results, but there is certainly still a lot of work to do.

For example, in the first five months of the year, the State Labour Inspectorate managed, thanks to the controls, to legalize people who worked illegally, so that they have an official employment contract. Thus, in a rather limited period of time, much more people were possible to legalize than in the entire 2017-2023 period. We understand that things have picked up speed, which looks very good, but it is very important that the implementation of those strategies continue.

In addition to this, efforts are certainly needed from other ministries, especially the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization. If we are to talk about the Ministry of Education, there is also a recommendation of the European Commission, whose implementation we evaluated. During the last year, the Ministry of Education promoted several reforms to make the labour market more flexible. Today much more attention is paid to education and lifelong learning. Because we live in a world where adaptability is becoming more and more important. It is imperative to invest so invest in the people's capacity to adapt. Certain instruments have changed, including the Education Code, by introducing the so-called micro-qualification.

In this field, as a whole, we have quite good progress in what the state institutions have done, but, of course, there is a lot of room for improvement. This progress must not stop here, there should be continuity in these reforms, because we already have some quite important dilemmas in society. One is related to the import of labour. There is increasing pressure from a section of the business community to import even more labour, to

liberalise the labour import even more. On the other hand, we still have a very high inactivity rate, which suggests that we have to work very hard to, first of all, reactivate or bring into the workforce people who are in the Republic of Moldova and currently not working for various reasons.

Strengthening energy security

■ One of the recommendations of the report refers to increasing investment in infrastructure, especially to improve energy security and to facilitate international trade, but also digitization. Can we hope in the coming years that at least a highway will be built from those pre-accession funds?

■ If we take concrete actions in this regard, the dream can become a reality. Indeed, the issue of connectivity is critical for the Republic of Moldova, under all aspects. In recent years, we have made substantial progress in energy connectivity. Until recently, we were practically 100% dependent on the Russian Federation and trembled at any blackmail from Moscow. Now, things have changed radically. The *Vulcanesti-Chisinau* overhead power line is under construction and there is already a concrete plan and financing for the *Balti-Suceava* high-voltage line.

It was a success of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova that in 2022, in record time, the connection or synchronization with the European energy system ENTSO-E was produced, which meant a lot for us, especially in the autumn 2022, when we had only certain periods without electricity. We could have been without energy in general if we

had not connected to the European system. So, significant progress has been made when it comes to energy security.

In terms of road and railway infrastructure, there are still a lot of growth reserves for the Republic of Moldova. Because if we look, for example, at the World Bank's logistics performance index, we have a rather modest score, only 2.5 out of 5. Infrastructure is a very important catalyst for the economic growth, and after the Russian invasion in Ukraine, when enormous pressure was put on our infrastructure, we realised we still have quite a few deficiencies.

It is very important that Moldova is part of certain transnational plans in terms of connectivity. For example, if we talk about railway connectivity, there is a joint *Poland - Ukraine - Romania* project. This would also mean having European gauge lines in the Republic of Moldova. Likewise, the *Unirii* highway in Romania, which will pass through the Republic of Moldova and further towards Odesa.

There exist good prospects, but we need to remain anchored in the European integration process. It is very important that we do our homework because when it comes to public investment we have a big problem. On the one hand, we have this acute infrastructure deficit, which means infrastructure investments are needed, but if we look at the level of execution of public infrastructure expenditures, every year only 70-75% of the budget is executed. So we fail to execute both what we plan and we can afford. This is very sad and we need to improve the processes in this regard a lot. We need to work much more on the preparation stage of the projects, so that we

have fewer impediments in their implementation. Especially since infrastructure projects are very complex. We need to work more thoroughly and spend more time on pre-feasibility studies. One of our recommendations was that these pre-feasibility studies be published on the websites of the central public authorities, so that there is also public control, so that we can see to what extent and how well those projects are planned and why we end up with blockages in their implementation.

Together with the European integration process, I think things will improve. It is important to be coherent in our policies because, unfortunately, certain reforms are somehow at odds with the national strategic planning framework. For example, we have this reform through which the state road administration absorbs the 10 *SA Drumuri*, that is joint-stock companies, which does not fit into the denationalization policy and will create impediments in the future. There are transnational plans in which the Republic of Moldova is included, and it is very important to have the absorption capacity as well as the necessary skills to convince the investors to come in Moldova.

For example, last year, we held a debate about the Republic of Moldova being able to issue a Eurobond in the next period. Namely to make the preparations in this regard, because we are the only country in Europe that does not have an economic reference on the foreign capital market. And this is not a good thing. We also need to issue new Eurobonds, because this also makes the authorities more accountable, since no one evaluates you better than the private investors who have invested their money.

The stumbling block in those discussions, however, is again which projects to finance so that they are economically viable enough and can be implemented domestically, because we usually have delays with infrastructure projects.

Conditions for attracting foreign investors

■ **Attracting foreign investment can only be done in a functioning rule of law and even a militarily defended one. How can we convince investors to come to the Republic of Moldova with a war in the neighbouring Ukraine?**

■ Yes, this indeed is a constraint, which has been highlighted also in this evaluation report. If we look geographically, we are the only neighbour of Ukraine that is not a NATO member. Obviously, the security risks for the Republic of

Moldova are much higher when we are evaluated from an investment point of view. And this is a risk that cannot really be fought. Investors' perception is also influenced by this factor.

But at the same time, again, we have to do our homework well. Because we had a national strategy for attracting investors and promoting exports that expired in 2020, and until July 2024 we did not have a strategic planning document. We did not have a clear, coherent vision of what we want to do and what we will do to attract foreign direct investment. This document was approved only at the beginning of July this year, and in addition to the strategy, we must provide stability and predictability. However, in the report, we have concrete examples of laws that directly target foreign investors. For example, the Law on foreign investments, the Law on

public-private partnership, the Law on concessions. From an investment perspective, these laws are very important. Last year, these laws were amended and we signalled, for example, that the public-private partnership draft law was not good enough. The law, however, was passed and a few months later, it was amended again.

If we look, for example, at the United States, which is the best performing economy in the world, we often wonder: How come they have such outdated provisions? Or why do they have such an electoral system? But they have it that way because there is stability and predictability in the legislative act. In conclusion, it is what we have to learn too, which is to offer stability and predictability to foreign investors.

■ **Thank you!**

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