

Moldova Bulletin – July 9, 2010 – Report on the current situation in Moldova

The European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) is a Brussels-based organization active in the field of democracy assistance which has Moldova as one of the target countries. Using our partner organizations in Moldova we try to bring current information from established international and Moldovan news agencies in order to provide an independent view on Moldova to the Brussels decision makers. Please address any questions or comments to klaraweger@epd.eu.

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FOREIGN ENGAGEMENT

OSCE and Moldovan Government sign memorandum of understanding

The Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Ambassador Philip Remler, and the Moldovan Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Valentina Buliga, signed on June 25 a memorandum of understanding between the OSCE Mission to Moldova and the Moldovan Government on a project to help former officers and warrant officers obtain gainful civilian employment. "Helping former officers and warrant officers to find worthwhile civilian employment promotes security sector reform," Ambassador Remler said. "The project is open to ex-military personnel from the Transnistrian region and can make a positive contribution to confidence and security building measures". The project will start in September 2010. It was developed in close co-operation between the OSCE Mission to Moldova and the Ministry of Defense and is funded by extra budgetary contributions from the United States and Sweden. It is expected to last for four years. *OSCE press release, 24 June 2010*

Russian MFA warns Ghimpu's decree is start of political confrontation

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a commentary to criticize Mihai Ghimpu's presidential decree (declaring June 28 to be the Day of Soviet Occupation) as being "spearheaded against the Moldova-Russia partnership". According to the commentary, Mihai Ghimpu's decree is based on historical falsities and doesn't take into account the interests of society. The Russian MFA described this unexpected move from Chisinau as a start of a political confrontation that will lead to further division among the multi-ethnic Moldovan society. *IPN, 25 June 2010*

US visas to be issued to Moldovans for up to 5 years

Moldovan Prime Minister Vlad Filat and US Ambassador to Moldova Asif J. Chaudhry signed on June 28 a new visa arrangement to lengthen the validity of several categories of visas and reduce fees for Moldovan citizens. Under the concluded agreement, Moldovans traveling to the United States on work and study visas will now receive multiple-entry visas valid for the period of their studies or employment, up to five years, without paying additional surcharges other than the visa application fee. Prior to this new arrangement, the validity dates on US visas had been a maximum of one year. The Moldovan Premier said the facilitation of the visa regime would remove certain barriers for traveling to the US, which would lead to the intensification of cooperation between Moldova and the US. Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry also said that this agreement represents a big progress in Moldova's foreign policy and a step forward in the relationship between Moldova and the US.

U.S. Government provides Moldova with a grant of \$10 million

The Government of the United States will provide the Moldovan Government with a grant of \$10 million for the development of the economical sector, including regulations' reforms and for the improvement of the tax administration system. A corresponding agreement was signed by the Moldovan Prime Minister Vladimir Filat and the US Ambassador to Moldova Asif Chaudhry in Chisinau on Tuesday, July 6. The Prime Minister said the agreement fits into the strengthening of the Moldo-American partnership. Filat explained that \$8.8 million from the grant will be used for the realization of projects in the private sector. Financial aid will also be offered to economic agents from the left bank of the Dniester. "We thank the government of the US for the constant aid offered to Moldova, which is even more precious, since it is offered in such a difficult period for the country", said Filat. Asif Chaudhry explained that the new agreement between the US government and Moldova proves once again the American support for ambitious actions and reforms of the Moldovan government. *Infotag, 6 July 2010*

Ukraine accuses Moldova of delaying transmission of land at Palanca

The Ukrainian Rada intends to set up a commission to investigate "Moldova's delay" in transmitting a portion of road and adjacent land in the vicinity of Palanca village. The subject was discussed at a broader meeting that brought together Ukrainian MPs, members of the Government and the Odessa administration. According to the press release issued by Ukrainian MP Pavel Ungurean, Odessa Governor Eduard Matviychuk expressed his surprised concern about Moldova's failure to honor its obligations, especially as it received the lands promised under the agreement and gained access to naval transportation. "We don't intend to constrain anyone. But we want to point out that we too have our own interests which we'll insist on. We respect the interests of the Moldovan party, but we want respect as well", said the governor. *IPN, 6 July 2010*

MOLDOVA POLITICS

Social-Democrats condemn June 28 presidential decree

The Moldovan Social Democratic Party believes that the sovereignty and independence of Moldova are in danger. The Moldovan Social Democratic Party issued a statement on Monday to condemn the decree by acting President Mihai Ghimpu proclaiming June 28 as the Soviet Occupation Day. The SDP criticized the decree as a document that would lead to disunity and bitter tension among Moldovan society. The SDP is condemning "the actions and

statements by the acting president and is calling on all the Moldovan people and international community to treat this decree as a personal and subjective position of Ghimpu and by no means an official position of Moldova". *IPN, 28 June 2010*

Communists to challenge constitutionality of the same June 28 decree

By issuing a presidential decree declaring June 28 to be the day of Soviet occupation and commemoration of the victims of communists, acting President Mihai Ghimpu has flagrantly abused the powers granted by the Constitution, stated Sergiu Sirbu, the Communists' legal representative, announcing on June 25 he would file a request with the Constitutional Court to check the decree in question for accordance with the Constitution. *IPN, 25 June 2010*

AEI leaders affirm they remain faithful to coalition principles

The leaders of the Alliance for European Integration say they remain loyal to the principles assumed after the July 29, 2009 elections, despite the latest dissensions inside the coalition. When asked to comment on the recently announced initiative of the four parties to make a possible nonaggression pact in order to save the Alliance, the first vice chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party Mihai Godea said, though the electoral campaign is approaching and there is great anxiety, the PLDM remains faithful to the assumed principles and has only one opponent – the Communists Party. The AMN leader Serafim Urecheanu, first deputy speaker of Parliament, confirmed this position saying the components of the Alliance will not attack each other as the coalition is united and has only one adversary – the PCRM. "I am in favor of working out a deontological code that would allow the voters to choose their favorites depending on the quality of the political message," said the Democrat leader Marian Lupu. *IPN, 3 July 2010*

Constitutional Court approves AEI's bill to amend Constitution by referendum

The Constitutional Court approved on July 6 the bill to amend article 78 of the Constitution by referendum, submitted by the Alliance for European Integration (AEI), so that it can be put to the vote in Parliament. Before the deliberations, MP Aurel Baiesu supported the bill saying that "the last eight years showed (the existing) modality was unsuccessful as it led to political, economic and social crises, frequent dissolutions of Parliament. This bill is designed to prevent such crises". Aurel Baiesu added that the direct election of the head of state will allow the people to express more precisely their political preferences. Polls show that 78% of the population is in favor of directly electing the President, Baiesu said. A final decision may be taken at the July 7 sitting of the Parliament. *IPN, 6 July 2010*

Referendum to be held on September 5, 2010 – PCRM reaction: AEI breaks law

The Parliament decided on July 7, following approvals by the Constitutional Court and the Government, that the constitutional referendum on the way to elect the president will be held on September 5. The referendum's ballot will contain a single question: "Do you agree for the amendment of the Constitution so that the president of Moldova is elected directly by the people?".

Democrat leader Marian Lupu said before the Parliament's decision that it would be more reasonable to amend Article 78 of the Constitution through parliamentary vote and invite the Communist faction to join it. But Mihai Godea, the chair of the Lib-Dem faction, said he did not trust the sincerity of the Communists. The acting President Mihai Ghimpu supported this point of view saying: "we have to overcome this political crisis and there is no time to stay idle". He recalled that a parliamentary commission was created to find a consensus on the constitutional amendments, but the Communists have failed to appear in Parliament for nearly half a year. After a short break asked by Marian Lupu, the decision to hold the constitutional referendum was adopted by a majority of votes.

The Communists Party reacted saying it considers the Alliance for European Integration's decision to hold a constitutional referendum on September 5 as illegal. "The AEI continues to usurp the state power. The decision

concerning the holding of the referendum is illegal. Nobody can be as cynical as the AEI members to disregard the rule of law," MP Igor Muntean, the press secretary of the PCRM's Central Committee, said. The PCRM affirmed that, according to Article 143 and 150 of the Constitution, the Alliance's constitutional amendment proposal should have been adopted in Parliament six months after the Constitutional Court approved it, not the one day after this approval. "The Alliance proposes violating all the constitutional rules," Communist MP Maria Postoico said. At today's sitting of the Parliament, Mihai Ghimpu explained the term of six months would have been respected if Article 78 of the Constitution had been modified in Parliament. "The Constitution will be amended by referendum and the Parliament had the right to decide now," he said. *IPN, 7- 8 July 2010*

Moldovan businessmen suggest blocking trade relations with Russia

A group of businessmen representing the Congress of Nongovernmental Organizations proposed on July 8 to end business relations because of the situations Moldovan exporters are facing at the Russian borders. According to this group, Moldovan entrepreneurs are humiliated by the Russian customs officers, border guards and militiamen, while the goods remain blocked in customs posts for weeks. In a news conference, the Congress's chairman Fiodor Ghelici said trucks with Moldovan license numbers stay in border crossing points between Ukraine and Russia for many days, regardless of the merchandise they transport. The Russian customs officers, border guards and militiamen insolently ask for bribe. The sums are exorbitant. When a politician like the Mayor of Moscow Yuri Lujkov demands boycotting the Moldovan goods, the most reasonable thing is to block the business relations with Russia, Ghelici said. "It is a tragedy for the export-oriented businesses. Many of them will have to stop work. It is said instructions were given to stop and check nonstop the vehicles coming from Moldova (...)" Fiodor Ghelici said. According to him, these serious problems arouse after the presidential decree of June 24 instituted the Soviet Occupation Day on June 28 and with regard to this situation, "Moldova should unite with Romania, the European Union and abandon the Commonwealth of Independent States that offers no advantage". *IPN, 8 July 2010*

HUMAN RIGHTS and RULE OF LAW

Ilie Cazac's father put on drip on 18th day of hunger strike

Alexandr Vinitiski, the father of Ilie Cazac who is detained in Transnistria on espionage charges, has to undergo daily intravenous drip therapy after the 18th day of his hunger strike. Stela Surkichyan, the mother, was already hospitalized at the Emergency Hospital on the 14th day of their hunger strike. *IPN, 29 June 2010*

Arrest warrant for Vardanyan extended for another 30 days

Ernest Vardanyan's Lawyer, Alexandru Postica announced the arrest warrant for his client was extended for another 30 days.. The lawyer said Ernest Vardanyan's wife told him that the hearing was held in Tiraspol on July 2. For her part, Irina Vardanyan was informed about the hearing one hour before it started by the ex officio lawyer provided by the Transnistrian authorities. "We are not allowed to attend the trial. Nobody can tell us what is going on. The ex officio lawyer does not cooperate with Ernest Vardanyan's family. His wife finds out parts of information like "we have the trial in an hour," Alexandru Postica said. The lawyer also said that as Vardanyan's representative at the European Court of Human Rights, he will inform the Court about all the latest developments. *IPN, 5 July 2010*