

## ***Moldova Weekly – December 2 – 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 [kristinaprunerova@eupd.eu](mailto:kristinaprunerova@eupd.eu).

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### **FOREIGN ENGAGEMENT**

#### **EU approves of first year Moldova-EU Mobility Partnership results**

The results achieved during the first year of implementing the Moldova-EU Mobility Partnership have been discussed in Brussels at the second high-level meeting of the Mobility Partnership. New objectives for the immediate period were set at the meeting. The European Commission welcomed the Moldovan authorities' readiness to use the opportunities offered by the Mobility Partnership to support the Government's efforts to liberalize the visa regime. Among the best results mentioned were the projects to strengthen the national authorities' capacities to implement the best European practices and standards on migration and asylum, the development of projects to reintegrate the migrant workers into the national labor market, the development of the labor market and strengthening of the relations with the Moldovan communities. The European officials

informed those present about new project initiatives under the Mobility Partnership like the alleviation of the consequences of migration in healthcare, creation of the migration profile and its use in the process of formulating national policies, the EU member states' new initiatives as part of the European Commission's Thematic Program on circular migration, combating the trafficking of human beings, strengthening of Moldovan communities abroad and establishing cooperation relations with the country of origin. *IPN, 25 November 2009*

## **Moldova to open talks on new agreement with EU**

Moldova will open the talks over a new agreement with the European Union in January next year. A relevant decree was issued by the Acting President of Moldova and Head of Parliament Mihai Ghimpu. In May 2008, the EU said it was ready to start negotiations on a new agreement with Moldova that will replace the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which covers most of the areas of cooperation, including the political dialogue, trade in goods and services, investments, etc. The ten-year agreement came into force on 1 July, 1998, but was then extended for an unlimited period. Currently, Moldova benefits from Additional Autonomous Trade Preferences. For an extensive economic integration, the new agreement should envision the creation of a free trade zone that would include access to the market of goods, services and investments, and commitments as regards the gradual implementation of the communitarian acquis. *IPN, 18 November 2009*

## **Premier discusses prospects for Moldova's integration into EU**

Prime Minister Vlad Filat on Thursday met the political director of the Belgian Foreign Ministry, Jean-Arthur Regibeau, and the state secretary of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Gabor Iklody. The officials discussed prospects for Moldova's integration into the European Union. Jean-Arthur Regibeau said that Belgium will hold the European Union's Presidency in the second half of 2010, and Hungary will take over this office in the first half of 2011. 'I want to express our commitment and support for Moldova's European aspirations on behalf of these two states. Belgium is an old EU member, and Hungary is a newer one, but both states are willing to provide Moldova with support to meet the European standards,' Jean-Arthur Regibeau said. Gabor Iklody said that the new government's actions very clearly show Moldova's wish to become an EU member. Prime Minister Vlad Filat thanked the governments of Belgium and Hungary for the constant support given to Moldova. He also said that Moldova needs a clear-cut prospect of integration into the EU. Vlad Filat informed the guests about the economic situation in Moldova, as well as measures undertaken to improve and stabilize it. *Moldpres, 19 November 2009*

## **PACE, European Parliament to help Moldovan legislature in decision taking**

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament will render assistance to the Moldovan legislative forum to help make more efficient the work of the Parliament's apparatus and the forum's standing committees at decision-making, it was stated by PACE Secretariat experts William Hendrik de Beaufort and Olga Kostenko during their meeting with Moldovan Parliament Speaker Mihai Ghimpu on Tuesday. The assistance project will be implemented by the PACE jointly with the European Parliament to help promote parliamentary democracy in Moldova. Mihai Ghimpu asked PACE's assistance in organizing trainings and seminars for Moldovan lawmakers, in organizing courses of English, French and German, and in providing the Moldovan Parliament with up-to-date equipment. *Infotag, 24 November 2009*

## **Sweden to remain Moldova's faithful partner on European integration path**

Prime Minister Vlad Filat on Monday met members of a Swedish parliamentary delegation led by First Deputy Parliament Speaker Jan Bjorkman. The sides tackled the political situation in Moldova, prospects for European

integration and development of the Moldovan-Swedish bilateral relations. Jan Bjorkman positively appreciated the Moldovan government's consistent actions to meet the European integration objective. He voiced hope that the political situation in Moldova will improve, and the parliamentary factions will reach consensus on the issue of president's election. Attending the meeting, Swedish Ambassador to Moldova Mats Aberg said that Sweden will remain a faithful partner to Moldova on the path of reforms and European integration. *Moldpres, 23 November 2009*

## **Moldova and EU likely to start visa liberalization talks**

The opening of talks on the liberalization of the visa regime for Moldovan citizens could be discussed at the 21 December meeting of the Moldova-EU Cooperation Committee. The announcement was made by Prime Minister Vlad Filat and Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy Benita Ferrero Waldner at a news conference on 27 November. According to the European Commissioner, this is a long-term objective of the new agreement between Moldova and the EU that will be negotiated as from 12 January, 2010. Asked if the Transnistrian dispute hindered the developments in this direction, Benita Ferrero Waldner said she trusts the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM). *IPN, 27 November 2009*

## **Italy to help Moldova in dialogue with Brussels over visa regime liberalization**

Italy will help Moldova in the dialogue with Brussels over the liberalization of the visa regime. Moldova's Foreign Minister Iurie Leanca spoke about this after he had a meeting with his Italian counterpart Franco Frattini during a recent visit to Rome. Quoting Franco Frattini, Iurie Leanca said Italy is ready to play a crucial role in promoting Moldova's European course. *IPN, 26 November 2009*

## **Filat and Putin meet in Yalta**

The Transnistrian dispute and the Russian loan are the main items on the agenda of a meeting of Moldovan Prime Minister Vlad Filat and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. The two held a meeting on the sidelines of the Summit of CIS Heads of Government that which took place in Yalta, Crimea, on 20 November. The Russian Government expressed readiness to provide a state loan of US\$500 million to Moldova at the start of summer. It said the first tranche of the loan would be US\$150 million. However, the Governments of Moldova and Russia have not yet agreed the lending conditions.

'The meeting with Vladimir Putin was important as we conferred on issues of bilateral interest and established a personal relationship,' Prime Minister Vlad Filat said, referring to a meeting with his Russian counterpart in Yalta. According to Filat, he and Putin agreed to take steps to remove the barriers to the export of Moldovan products to Russia. They also discussed the supply of natural gas and the problems that appear owing to the situation in Transnistria. 'It was stressed that the 5+2 format of the Transnistria conflict settlement talks is acceptable to all the parties involved and that the solution to the conflict should be identified in the given format,' Filat said. As regards the US\$150 million loan that Moldova could get from Russia, Vlad Filat said there will be negotiated the technical details first and then there will be made a final decision. *IPN, 24 November 2009*

## **Moldova, Ukraine start border demarcation process**

A group of experts from the Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Saturday, 28 November, will travel to Kiev to start works on border demarcation with Ukraine, as agreed by Prime Minister Vlad Filat with his Ukrainian counterpart, Yulia Timoshenko, at the recent CIS summit in Yalta. Filat has said that it is important that understanding was reached with the Ukrainian side as to the procedures and the goals to be achieved during

this process. Answering a question on the subject, Filat said the ceding of a 7km segment near Palanca to Ukraine cannot be treated as surrender, because, in turn, Ukraine ceded Moldova a portion of over 400 meters at Giurgiulesti, which affords Moldova access to the sea. Moldova must observe the provisions of the agreement signed in 1999 and demonstrate that it is a reliable partner, Filat added. *IPN, 23 November 2009*

## **Cabinet approves Moldovan-Turkish visa facilitation agreement**

Moldovan citizens can obtain 90-day visas for Turkey under a preferential regime. Applicants will submit a reduced number of documents and the term of processing visas will be cut to three days. These provisions are included in a Moldovan-Turkish intergovernmental agreement on the facilitation of the visa regime approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on 18 November. The agreement sees no visa fee and extends the categories of citizens who can get long-term visas. Foreign and European Integration Minister Iurie Leanca said that the agreement aims at facilitating the issuance of visas for up to 90 days during 180 days for the citizens of both countries. Also, the agreement will facilitate the procedure of issuing visas for professional drivers, who until now had to wait for visa up to three months. In 2008, the Moldovan embassy in Ankara and the consulate general in Istanbul issued 12,000 visas for Turkish nationals, collecting fees of over 600,000 dollars. Also, according to the National Association of Travel Agencies, Turkey was visited by 31,200 Moldovan citizens the last year, with spending for visa standing at 938,000 dollars. *Moldpres, 19 November 2009*

## **USA to continue supporting Moldova**

Prime Minister Vlad Filat on Thursday met US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Dan Russel, on a fact-finding visit to Moldova. US Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador to Moldova Asif J. Chaudhry was also in attendance. The discussion was focused on the social and political situation in Moldova, the Transnistrian conflict, fight against human trafficking, and a visit to Washington by Vlad Filat due in January 2010. Dan Russell congratulated Vlad Filat on the progress made by the ruling Alliance for European Integration. He specified that the ruling coalition is a successful example of democracy. 'The USA will continue supporting Moldova, and the agreement worth 262 million dollars between the Millennium Challenge Corporation and Moldova's government, the bilateral programmes of assistance of 50 million dollars and the agreement with the International Monetary Fund, recently negotiated in Chisinau, come to prove this,' Dan Russell said. As concerns the Transnistrian conflict, Dan Russell said that the USA will back Moldova to find a viable solution. Referring to Transnistria-related issues, Vlad Filat said that USA's role is important, and thanked the US Government for the support provided to this end. Referring to human trafficking, Vlad Filat said that combating this negative phenomenon is one of the government's priorities. He added that the cabinet will do its utmost to foil it. *Moldpres, 19 November 2009*

## **Moldova's MCC Compact will be signed in second half of January**

'The U.S. Government's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Board of Directors approved a \$262 million MCC Compact with the Government of Moldova on 30 November. The Premier Minister Vlad Filat said the five-year, economic development grant will improve irrigation infrastructure and management; increase the production and marketing of high value agricultural products; and rehabilitate part of the country's national road network. *IPN, 1 December 2009*

## **Premier Filat: Moldova not going to join NATO**

The Republic of Moldova is not planning to accede to NATO, and all media stories concerning such a plan are but inventions, Moldovan Prime Minister Vlad Filat stated in his interview with Russia's official ITAR-TASS news agency, adding that during the first month of his premiership he has already got tired refuting the inventions. Filat explained the republic is not going to join NATO because its Constitution says clearly that Moldova is a

neutral country. He stated that Moldova seeks to integrate into the European Union, but this does not mean the Moldovan Government is refusing to cooperate with Russia or with the Commonwealth of Independent States. Filat refuted media stories that he is allegedly going to demand in an ultimatum-like form a withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from Transnistria. *Infotag, 19 November 2009*

## **National commission for Moldova-NATO IPAP implementation holds meeting**

The National Commission for the implementation of the Moldova - NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) has held its first meeting in the new composition. Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign and European Integration Minister and commission's head Iurie Leanca assessed the present state in the IPAP's implementation. The plan provides for reforming and upgrading the security and defense sector, deepening cooperation within the European and Euro-Atlantic structures and institutions, promoting democratic reforms in different fields, consolidating democratic control of the armed forces, etc. The minister said that, regrettably, the Plan's implementation has been mired so far. This confused approach stained Moldova's image as NATO's predictable and reliable partner. Referring to Moldova's cooperation with NATO, Leanca stressed that certain stereotypes about this organization are perpetuated in society. He said these stereotypes are also nourished by the lack of sources of truthful and unbiased information about the values and goals of the North-Atlantic Alliance. Iurie Leanca said that the situation can be improved only by concerted and persevering efforts by competent institutions. *Moldpres, 30 November 2009*

## **MOLDOVA POLITICS**

### **Andrei Popov named Deputy Foreign Minister**

The Government Thursday appointed MP Andrei Popov as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. From 1997, Popov had worked in the central apparatus of the Foreign Ministry and at the Embassy of Moldova in the United States. During the last few years, he had been director of the Foreign Policy Association. He entered the Parliament after this year's July elections on the Democratic ticket. The executive also approved the presidential draft decrees to call the ambassadors Ion Robu (Azerbaijan), Eugenia Chistruga (representative to the Council of Europe), Lidia Gutu (Bulgaria), Valerian Cristea (Czech Republic), Valeriu Bobutac (Belarus) and Veronica Iftodi (France). The Government also named Sergiu Ciobanu and Ilarion Popa as Deputy Ministers of Economy. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy Valeriu Lazar said Sergiu Ciobanu is a Doctor of Economics and has experience in research and private business. He will coordinate the industrial and competitiveness policies. Ilarion Popa will be responsible for the energy sector. *IPN, 19 November 2009*

### **More deputy ministers appointed**

The Government on Wednesday continued to name deputy ministers and other officials to posts. Thus, Gheorghe Susarenko was appointed Deputy Minister of Justice. Earlier, Susarenko had worked as judge at the Constitutional Court, had been an MP and has a rich experience in the field. In other decisions, the Government named three Deputy Ministers of Agriculture and Food Industry. These are: Vasile Bulmacov, expert for the 2 KR Project and former Minister of Agriculture; Stefan Chitoroaga, head of a farm in Ungheni district and head of the Ungheni local office of the National Farmers Federation, and Gheorghe Arpentiev, president of the Union of Oenologists of Moldova. Eduard Banaruc was named as Deputy Minister of State. The executive dismissed Viorel Dandara from the post of Deputy Minister of Finance and Ion Perju and Anatol Spivacenko from the posts of Deputy Ministers of Agriculture and Food Industry 'on the basis of their resignations.' The rector of the Technical University of Moldova Ion Bostan, the rector of the State University of Moldova Gheorghe Ciocanu and the rector of the Tiraspol Pedagogical University Laurentiu Calmutski were

confirmed to the posts. Deputy Minister of Health Mihai Magdei will simultaneously hold the post of chief sanitary inspector. *IPN, 25 November 2009*

## **Supreme Security Council has three new members**

The interim president, Mihai Ghimpu signed a decree according to which three new members joined the Supreme Security Council. According to the decree, the head of the Supreme Council Service of the President's staff, Iurie Richicinschi, was assigned as secretary of the Supreme Security Council. Anatolie Salaru, Minister of Transport and Road Infrastructure, as well as Dorin Dragutan, governor of the National Bank, were assigned members of the Supreme Security Council. The current Supreme Security Council was created at the end of October. *Deca-press, 18 November 2009*

## **Government approves Convention on Small-Scale Border Traffic with Romania**

The Government approved the Convention on Small-Scale Border Traffic signed by Moldovan Premier Vlad Filat and acting Prime Minister of Romania Emil Boc in Bucharest. The agreement will come into force 30 days after its ratification by the legislatures of the two countries. Under the agreement, the Moldovans living within 50 km of the Moldovan-Romanian border will travel visa-free within a similar area in Romania. They will need the passport and a special permit that will be issued by the Embassy and Consulate of Romania in Chisinau. The permits will be valid for two to five years. The convention covers about 1.2 million Moldovans from 651 settlements of 18 districts. *IPN, 19 November 2009*

## **Democratic Party to sign cooperation agreement with United Russia**

The Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) and the United Russia party will soon sign a cooperation agreement. The parties started working on the draft several weeks ago and its details were discussed during the visit of PDM leader Marian Lupu to St. Petersburg on Saturday, 21 November, where he attended the congress of the United Russia, whose leader is the Russian prime minister, Vladimir Putin. The PDM leader said the implementation of the agreement would allow them to assist each other, building at the same time, 'a new platform for interaction'. *IPN, 22 November 2009*

## **Foreign Minister about decision not to vote on UN resolution**

Moldova's abstention from voting on the UN Resolution on the Inadmissibility of Certain Practices that Contribute to Fueling Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance has no connection with neo-Nazi manifestations. This is how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Moldova responded to the Communist Opposition's request to explain why Moldova did not vote on the resolution on 19 November, 2009. Foreign Minister Iurie Leanca said in the Parliament that the decision to abstain from voting on the given resolution was made by the Communist government in 2005 and confirmed by its abstentions in 2006, 2007 and 2008. Leanca explained that the text of this year's resolution does not differ from that adopted the previous years. This fact made the Moldovan authorities decide to abstain again from voting and to align themselves with the European Union's common position on this subject. *IPN, 27 November 2009*

## **ELECTIONS**

### **Communists will not participate in improving electoral legislation**

Republic of Moldova Party of Communists (PCRM) has declared it will not participate in the specialized Parliamentary Committee on improving electoral legislation. The Communists believe that the existing electoral legislation, tested by the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Committee of CoE from Venice, is balanced and meets all European requirements and standards. A statement diffused by PCRM mentions that, communists supposed they would participate in the legislative improvement and 'not in the integral change of the electoral legislation provisions'. 'The changes are made in the interest of political parties that the new parliamentary majority represents, and the liberal democratic coalition proposes to change the game rules during the game', communists think. *Deca-press, 19 November 2009*

### **Marian Lupu submits set of proposals to PCRM**

The Alliance for European Integration's candidate for the presidency Marian Lupu submitted a set of proposals for voting in the head of state to the Opposition party, the PCRM. Marian Lupu enumerated all the 12 principles and actions for voting in the head of state by 10 December, which is the time limit. He said the list remains open for further negotiation so as to avoid early elections.

1. Adoption of the law on the parliamentary Opposition so as to ensure the principle of party equality in the work of the Parliament.
2. The parliamentary Opposition's right to designate the administration of the Court of Accounts and of the Central Election Commission.
3. Promotion of socially-oriented economic policies and strengthening of the social protection mechanisms.
4. Observance of the constitutional provisions and preservation of Moldova's status of neutrality.
5. Implementation of the reintegration policy by observing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova. Identification of a sustainable and viable solution to the Transnistrian conflict by engaging and consulting all the political forces represented in the Parliament of Moldova.
6. Strengthening and improvement of the mechanisms aimed at guaranteeing the rights of all the ethnic groups; creation of conditions for their active participation in the country's public life.
7. Strengthening of the local democracy. Promotion of a relationship based on the socio-economic priorities of the settlements and the people, not according to the political orientation of the mayors or local councilors.
8. Exclusion of economic entities' persecution on the grounds of sympathy or political affiliation.
9. Organization of the public broadcasting sector so as to minimize the political influence in the process of electing the members of the Broadcasting Coordination Council and the Supervisory Board of Tele-Radio Moldova.
10. Deideologization of the education system and balanced discussion of the issue of history teaching in schools.
11. Promotion of dialogue and political compromise; combating of aggressive and ideological intolerance.

12. Promotion of policies aimed at strengthening Moldova's statehood; combating of irredentist phenomena that can undermine the country's sovereignty.

Communist MP Mark Tkachuk confirmed that the PCRM's Central Committee received the set of proposals. He said the list will be examined, but there are insufficient reasons to accept those proposals. Marian Lupu said the responsibility for implementing the proposals is borne first of all by him and by the Democratic Party that he heads, as well as by the whole Alliance for European Integration. The Parliament is expected to set the 7 December as the date for the second round of presidential elections at its Friday's sitting. During the first round on 10 November, the Communist MPs boycotted the elections. The head of state must be elected by 10 December. Otherwise, the Speaker will dissolve the Parliament and early elections will be organized next year.

*IPN, 26 November 2009*

## **Second round of presidential elections to be held on 7 December**

The MPs will make a second attempt to elect the President of Moldova at a special sitting on 7 December, starting at 10.00. Such a decision was taken at Friday's meeting of the Parliament by the vote of the government coalition. The Communist MPs abstained from voting. The first round of voting on 10 November ended unsuccessfully as the parliamentary group of the PCRM boycotted the elections. Only the Alliance for European Integration's candidate Marian Lupu was registered as runner in the presidential elections. The voting for a single candidate became possible after the Parliament modified the law on the procedure for electing the head of state, which initially said that there must be two or more candidates. If the President is not elected by 10 December, the Parliament will be dissolved and there will be announced early elections. The deadline for putting forward candidates for the post of President of Moldova expires on 3 December. The commission has issued a reminder that candidates must be older than 40, have lived in Moldova for at least 10 years on a permanent basis and know the official language. Under the legislation, the candidate for the post of head of state must be supported by at least 15 MPs. *IPN, 28 November 2009*

## **Parliament speaker sets up commission to amend constitution**

Parliament Speaker and acting President Mihai Ghimpu has made public an intention of the Alliance for European Integration (AIE) to amend the constitution so that the head of state is elected with the votes of 51 MPs. Ghimpu said on 1 December that he signed a decree on the creation of a commission for constitutional reform, which is to identify the gaps of the Moldovan constitution and carry out necessary reforms. The commission is headed by the parliamentary speaker, and includes representatives of all the AIE components, MPs of the majority coalition, the governor of the southern Gagauzian autonomy, a judge of the Constitutional Court, specialists in constitutional law. Ghimpu stressed that two members of the Party of Communists may also be included in the commission. Mihai Ghimpu said that the presidential election mechanism should be simplified so that the Moldovan head of state is elected with the votes of 50 plus 1 lawmakers. The parliament speaker said that this way the snap elections will be avoided. Ghimpu described these polls as costly and useless, given that they will not change the political situation in the parliament. The commission is to decide how this reform should be carried out: by changing the presidential election mechanism, holding a referendum or adopting a new constitution. If the parliament disagrees to the commission's proposals, Ghimpu said he has one more 'ace up sleeve', without giving details. The speaker said he was sure that a referendum on this issue would be held. Mihai Ghimpu spoke out for the election of the AIE's presidential candidate, Marian Lupu, in line with the current procedure. After the draft is elaborated, it will be submitted to the Venice Commission. *Moldpres, 2 December 2009*

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### **Moldova has two representatives in Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Steering Committee**

Moldova will be represented by two civil society activists on the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. Natalia Cojuhari, the head of the National Youth Council of Moldova, was elected as coordinator of the Contacts between People platform, while Sorin Mereacre, who heads the Representative Office of Eurasia Foundation in Moldova, became facilitator at the national level. The Steering Committee was elected by the participants of the Civil Society Forum held in Brussels attended by 220 representatives of different nongovernmental organizations from the six states covered by the Eastern Partnership and the EU. The Civil Society Forum will come together once a year. In the meantime, the coordinators at the level of platforms and at the national level will deal with the current activities. The Eastern Partnership is a European Union initiative aiming to improve the political and economic trade-relations of six Post-Soviet states - Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia with the European Union. It was launched in May 2009. *IPN, 20 November 2009*