

Moldova Weekly – October 21 – Report on the current situation in Moldova in the weeks after the preliminary elections held on 29 July

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.

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FOREIGN ENGAGEMENT

CoE and European Commission initiate Democracy Package for Moldova

The Council of Europe and the European Commission initiated the Democracy Package for Moldova. The Moldovan authorities' stance on this package is examined by a European delegation headed by Claudia Luciani, Director for Political Advice and Cooperation of the Directorate General of Democracy and Political Affairs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs says the presented package will assimilate national authorities' proposals formulated during the European delegation's visit as regards the assessment of the shortcomings in implementing the legislation on human rights, holding of those who violated human rights accountable, guaranteeing of the rights of the persons in custody, strengthening of the ombudsperson's position and improvement of the situation of the mass media. In this connection, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Natalia Gherman informed the European experts about the Moldovan Government's priorities concerning European Integration and promotion of reforms. During a meeting, the interlocutors considered the possibility of formulating new programs for Moldova's Transnistrian region. *IPN, 15 October, 2009*

Moldova's talks on association agreement with EU to start this week

The negotiations between Moldova and the European Union on the signing of an Association Agreement will begin this week, when a delegation of experts is to arrive in Chisinau. The announcement was made by Moldovan Prime Minister Vlad Filat and Sweden's Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, at a joint press conference on Friday in Chisinau. The association agreement with the EU will be based on three key components: the political agreement, the creation of a free trade zone, and the liberalization of visa requirements. 'There is a lot to be done, but I hope our political will and the endorsement of our European partners will allow us to launch these important initiatives this year, during the Swedish presidency of the EU, and I think that a good start will also find support from Spain, which will take over the EU's presidency at the start of the next year', stated Vlad Filat. He added that a new arrangement would also enable stronger cooperation with the EU on matters of regional and international security. Minister Carl Bildt said the democratic reforms that are to be implemented are essential for Moldova and a more ambitious Association Agreement needs to be signed. 'You inherited a very difficult economic situation, which is practically on the verge of absolute difficulty. This, of course, requires urgent measures from your government, but I can assure you that the EU as well as international and European institutions is here to help you. I hope that the signing of the agreement with the IMF will open the way to obtaining considerable financial assistance, which may be followed by financing from the EU', said Bildt. Both Filat and Bildt refrained from estimating the time needed for the talks on the agreement, shifting focus on its content. Carl Bildt reiterated the need for political stability to implement reform. Vlad Filat assured the EU official that Moldova has a functional government and parliament and that the negotiations won't be stopped even if the legislature fails to elect the country's next president. After a recent visit to Brussels, Mihai Ghimpu, speaker of parliament and simultaneously acting president of Moldova, announced a new agreement with the EU could be signed by yearend or early next year. Vlad Filat however declared that the agreement could be signed later. 'I don't think the agreement will be signed during the Swedish presidency', said Carl

Bildt in this context. The EU delegation also included representatives of Spain, which is to take over EU's presidency from Sweden on 1 January 2010. During his one-day visit to Chisinau, Carl Bildt also met with Mihai Ghimpu, and the Communist leader Vladimir Voronin. *IPN, 16 October, 2009*

Convention on Small-Scale Border Traffic to be signed officially

The Moldovan and Romanian authorities initiated the agreement to sign the Convention on Small-Scale Border Traffic. Moldova's Foreign Minister Iurie Leanca said the first permits allowing entering Romania visa free could be issued by this yearend. The parties are to agree on the number of Moldovan settlements that will benefit from the new conditions and to determine the area that will be covered by the convention – 30 or 50 kilometers of the border. The Moldovan citizens will not pay for the permits as the convention says that the tax for the permit is equal to the fee for a short-stay visa for Romania, which is now issued free of charge, Iurie Leanca said during a briefing on Tuesday. Initially, the convention said the permits for Moldovan citizens will be valid for 1 to 5 years, but during talks the parties agreed on a term of 2 to 5 years. 'Though Brussels imposed certain conditions, the Romanian authorities showed flexibility and identified optimal solutions for the Moldovans,' the minister said. He also said that in order to facilitate the obtaining of permits, the Romanian authorities agreed to open consulates in Balti and Cahul in the near future. The issue of opening a Moldovan consulate in Iasi in the immediate future was also discussed. Iurie Leanca said the Romanian authorities are also ready to extend the initially agreed area of 30 kilometers and allow the Moldovans holding permits to travel visa free within the entire perimeter of Romanian state border. During the briefing, Iurie Leanca assured that the Moldovan authorities will take steps to secure the border and prevent smuggling. The talks over the signing of the Convention on Small-Scale Border Traffic between experts of the Moldovan and Romanian foreign ministries were opened in Chisinau on Monday morning. The negotiations have been delayed for several years as the Moldovan Government was willing to sign the document only after the signing of the Border Treaty and the Basic Treaty. The Romanian authorities did not accept such an approach. *IPN, 20 October, 2009*

MOLDOVA POLITICS

Explosion shakes Great National Assembly Square on Chisinau's Day

An explosion happened on Wednesday evening at 22.08 in the Great National Assembly Square during the recital given by the Romanian singer Stefan Banica Junior, where thousands of people came to take part in the festivities held to mark the Day of the City. Initially, the ambulances transported 25 persons to the Emergency Hospital, two minors to Valentin Ignatenco Hospital and four persons with burns on the eyes to Saint Trinity Hospital. Most of these persons received multiple injuries on the hands and legs. Fortunately, there was no casualty. At first, the police suspected an explosion of a gas or hydrogen cylinder, but the injuries sustained by the persons showed it could be a RGD grenade. Prosecutor General Valeriu Zubko told on Thursday that the explosion that happened in central Chisinau on Wednesday evening is an act of terrorism organized by a criminal person or group of persons. He said that two threatening phone calls were made to Premier Vlad Filat's anteroom from abroad yesterday at about 10 AM. *IPN, 15 October, 2009*

Deputy Ministers will be named and dismissed by minister

The deputy ministers will be appointed and discharged by the minister. They will start work when the new minister is named, if they have not been confirmed to the post by the Government at the proposal of the minister. The Parliament adopted an amendment to the law on the government on October 15. By another parliamentary decision, the law on the public post and the status of the public servant was also modified. The deputy ministers were excluded from the list of senior public servants and included in the list of ordinary public functionaries. The parliamentary group of the Communists Party did not vote on this bill, saying it is political in nature. 'It seems that the Alliance for European Integration, after distributing the ministerial seats according to an algorithm, started to distribute the posts of deputy ministers according to the same principle,' said Communist MP Valentin Guznac. Another Communist MP Iurie Muntean said that the contest to fill the post of deputy minister is thus removed. One of the authors of the bill Mihai Godea said yet that if the new administration approves of the professionalism and abilities of the deputies who worked until present, the Government can confirm these persons to the posts again, at the suggestion of the minister, as an exception. *IPN, 15 October, 2009*

Filat and Voronin discuss election of head of state

Prime Minister Vlad Filat had a meeting with the leader of the Communists Party (PCRM) Vladimir Voronin. 'We exchanged opinions and spoke about the dangers threatening Moldova is the head of state is not elected. But we did not reach a conclusion over this,' Vlad Filat said. The Premier expressed his hope that until the presidential election set for 23 October; the PCRM will make a correct decision. Otherwise, they will be to blame for new early elections. Communist MP Mark Tkachuk said the discussion between Filat and Voronin was aimed at 'evening out' the rhetoric between the Opposition and the government. *IPN, 15 October, 2009*

Presidential vote could be delayed

Parliament could not vote to elect the country's president on 23 October, the date announced initially, as only one candidate had registered with the election authority before the deadline expired Saturday night, 24:00. A ruling by the Constitutional Court says the election of the president shall be held with at least two candidates standing, Central Election Commission chairman Ion Plesca has stated. 'A report will be presented to Parliament and the legislature shall announce a new date for the election', said Plesca, adding that the Constitutional Court will be solicited to advise. The Communists Party, which is in opposition to the ruling Alliance for European Integration (AEI) in Parliament, said earlier it would not field any challenger to Marian Lupu, the AEI's choice, and so far the only candidate, for the post of president. *IPN, 18 October, 2009*

PDM: AIE considers modifying Constitution, choose President by direct vote

The situation after the last three parliamentary elections, when the Parliament has encountered difficulties in electing the head of state, could have been avoided if the people have had the possibility of voting for the President themselves, considers the president of honor of the Democratic Party (PDM) Dumitru Diacov. The Constitution of Moldova does not provide for alternatives in electing the head of state, while the Communist MPs misinterpreted the stipulations of the Constitution when they presented alternative candidates for the presidency in the Parliament, Diacov said on Monday. 'We did not want to look ridiculous by fielding a decorative candidate,' the MP said. According to him, the first round of presidential elections could take place on 23 October as planned initially, even if only Lupu was registered as candidate for the presidency. But the MPs could ask the Constitutional Court to interpret the Constitution. Dumitru Diacov also said that the Alliance for European Integration is considering the possibility of modifying the Constitution so as to allow the people to choose the President by direct vote and avoid similar situations in the future. There could be held a referendum or the issue could be put to the vote in the Parliament. However, at least two thirds of votes will be needed in the second case to adopt a decision. *IPN, 19 October, 2009*

The parliamentary commission for the examination of causes of the April events has been created

The Chisinau Parliament adopted the decision on creating the Commission for the examination of causes and consequences of April events. At the same time, the members of the committee have been nominated, DECA-press Agency informs. The president of the commission will be jurist Vitalie Nagacevschi, Member of Parliament of PLDM. The deputy president is the communist MP Vadim Misin, and the secretary - liberal MP Gheorghe Brega. Four communist MPs are members of the commission (Anatol Zagorodnai, Vadim Misin, Irina Vlah and Igor Vremea) and per one Member of Parliament from four parties (Vitalie Nagacevschi and Valeriu Ghiletschi - PLDM, Iurie Colesnic - AMN, Alexandru Stoianoglo - PDM and Gheorghe Brega - PL), that form the Alliance for European Integration. At the end of the current year, the Commission will present the Parliament a report referring to the April events. *DECA-press, 20 October 2009*