

## ***Moldova Bulletin – June 25, 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](mailto:klaraweger@epd.eu).

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### **FOREIGN ENGAGEMENT**

#### ***European Commissioner for Enlargement: Moldova could serve as model***

The European Commission has submitted to the European Parliament a legislative proposal for a €90 million macro-financial assistance package for Moldova, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle has told an EPP public hearing on EU-Moldova relations on June 9. He told his audience that Moldova was “the front runner in EU assistance in this part of the world”. The Commissioner said he was proud the EU’s pledge of a €550 million assistance package for Moldova, made at the international donors’ conference in March this year, would materialize in a few weeks with a €45 million programme “to foster economic activity

outside Moldova's urban areas." Talking about the EU-Moldova visa dialogue launched on June 15, Commissioner Füle said "This visa dialogue will allow (...) to examine (...) in a structured manner the conditions for visa-free travel of Moldovan citizens to the European Union. Moreover, in the regional context, this approach applied in the case of Moldova could serve as a model for other Eastern Partnership countries bearing in mind the specificity and progress of each country". *IPN, 11 June 2010*

### ***Moldovan foreign minister on working visit to Berlin***

Deputy Premier, Foreign and European Integration Minister Iurie Leanca paid a working visit to Berlin on 16-17 June at the invitation of Deputy Chancellor, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle. The two ministers reviewed the current stage of the Moldovan-German bilateral cooperation, pointing out the advanced level of political dialogue and Germany's active support for the democratic processes and reforms underway in Moldova. The Moldovan minister welcomed the memorandum signed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev on 5 June 2010. The top diplomat expressed conviction that the political commitment of the leaders of the two states would open up promising prospects in the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. Guido Westerwelle said that Moldova would further enjoy Germany's support and encouraged the democratic processes taking place in the country. He noted that Moldova's European path would largely depend on how Chisinau would advance towards the implementation of assumed commitments. The German minister also told journalists that he accepted Iurie Leanca's invitation and would visit Moldova on 25 June 2010. It will be for the first time ever that a German deputy chancellor and foreign minister will visit Moldova. *Moldpres, 17 June 2010*

## **MOLDOVA POLITICS**

### ***Gagauzia has its own ideas concerning constitutional reform in Moldova***

The Popular Assembly [legislature] of Gagauzia, an autonomous region in southern Moldova, has decided to send to the Venice Commission its own proposals on amending the Moldovan Constitution. The local lawmakers hope their proposals will be thoroughly analyzed in the Council of Europe, after which they will discuss the Venice Commission's conclusions and recommendations, and will then send their final legislative initiative text to the Moldovan Parliament. The Gagauzia initiatives on the Republic of Moldova Constitution reform include the proposals to make Russian an official language in the Republic of Moldova; to equip Gagauzia with the right to self-determination in case Moldova loses its independence; and to convert the Republic of Moldova into a federative state consisting of three subjects - Moldova, Gagauzia, and Transnistria. *Infotag, 10 June 2010*

### ***Court bans collecting signatures on referendum to teach religion in schools***

The Chisinau Court of Appeals banned the initiative group for the organization of a referendum on teaching the Basis of Orthodoxy in schools from collecting signatures in favor of the plebiscite. The decision was passed on Tuesday, June 15. The court accepted the complaint of the initiative group for the promotion of a secular state, which is composed of 17 NGOs, against the Central Election Commission's decision to allow collecting signatures in favor of the referendum. *IPN, 15 June 2010*

### ***Mihai Ghimpu: we will hold referendum and then dissolve Parliament***

The Parliament will be dissolved after the referendum, Acting President and Head of Parliament Mihai Ghimpu said on June 16, when it is one year of the last dissolution of the legislative body. "The constitutional wheel starts turning round today. From today, I can dissolve the Parliament as, in accordance with article 78 of the Constitution, if the head of state is not elected, the legislative body is dissolved and early elections are announced," Mihai Ghimpu said. "I'm not obliged to dissolve the Parliament today or tomorrow. I will issue a decree to dissolve it after the referendum as the decree must contain the date of the early legislative elections." Mihai Ghimpu stressed that until the referendum, the Parliament will be functional and nobody can accuse the

Alliance for European Integration of not respecting the Constitution. He also said that the decision on holding a referendum was drafted. It is to be signed by all the members of the governing Alliance and will be then submitted to the Constitutional Court. Under the law, the Court must examine and approve the decision within ten days. Afterward, the Parliament will adopt it. Asked about the dialogue to reach a compromise with the Communist Opposition, Mihai Ghimpu said the Alliance's proposal is the bird in the hand, while the PCRM's proposal is the bird in the bush. "The gates are open for a compromise, but the Communists will have to support our proposal or cooperate with us in making it better," he said. *IPN, 16 June 2010*

### ***Communists renounce cooperation with governing alliance***

The opposition Communist Party (PCRM) said in a press statement on June 17 it was breaking every relation with the governing Alliance for European Integration and was withdrawing all the initiatives on building a "constructive partnership", including intentions concerning the amendment of the Constitution. According to the PCRM, the referendum for the amendment of the Constitution is an "instrument to fool people", a way of avoiding early legislative elections and remaining in government for an unlimited period of time. "This complicated scheme with the referendum and the subsequent presidential poll pursues just one goal: to mislead voters, to deceive and disappoint them and, eventually, to renounce holding early parliamentary elections", the communique says. Commenting on the statement by Speaker Mihai Ghimpu that he would dissolve Parliament only after the referendum, the PCRM has said this indicates that the current government is set to "definitively liquidate the remains of the Moldovan democracy and break the constitutional foundations of the state". *IPN, 17 June 2010*

### ***Synod of Orthodox Church in Moldova supports the creation of a new political force of Christian Orthodox orientation***

The members of the Synod of the Orthodox Church of Moldova have recently signed a declaration in which they explained they were willing to give full support to the process of self-assertion in the public life of a new political force of Christian Orthodox orientation, which will be created by the former director of the Security and Information Service, Valeriu Pasat. "The massive opposition of the political establishment to the initiative to hold a referendum on the introduction of the discipline Bases of Orthodoxy in the pre-university education, and the threats to the clergymen convince us that a political force representing the interests of the Christians and the Church on the whole should be created in Moldova. In this respect, we deem as just Valeriu Pasat's intention to create a new party of Christian and Orthodox orientation," the declaration said. *Moldpres, 17 June 2010*

### ***Parliamentary majority diminished from 52 to 51***

The parliament made a string of amendments to its regulation. The MPs ruled that the parliamentary majority will be made up of 51 lawmakers and not 52, as it has been so far. Under the new amendments, both the organic laws and the draft laws will be passed with a majority of 51 MPs. Also, the amendments to the regulation see that the MPs who are groundlessly absent from meetings will be sanctioned. Parliament Speaker Mihai Ghimpu said that today the parliament puts right an older mistake, as "logically, the majority of 101 MPs would be 51 and not 52 MPs", as the Constitutional Court established several years ago. "The amendment was made at a request by the Academy of Sciences, which has repeatedly drawn our attention to this," Ghimpu added. The draft which sees the amendment of the parliament's regulation was criticized by a non-affiliated MP, Victor Stepaniuc. He said that it is not necessary to change the majority recommended by the Constitutional Court. More MPs contested Stepaniuc's statement. They said that the Constitutional Court had to express its opinion on the number of MPs which would represent the majority. The lawmakers stressed that neither the constitution nor the parliament's regulation provides for a concrete figure, and the decision that the majority is made of 52 and not 51 MPs was taken by magistrates at a request by the former government. *Moldpres, 18 June 2010*

### ***Parliament passes Electoral Code amendments***

Parliament passed amendments to the Electoral Code upon second reading on Friday, June 18. Under these amendments, political parties will have to muster at least 4 percent of the popular vote to enter Parliament; the threshold for blocs consisting of two parties is 7 percent and for blocs consisting of three or more parties is 9

percent; independent candidates will have to clear a 2-percent threshold. The modified Code provides for a lower turnout required for a parliamentary poll or a referendum to be declared valid – one third of the eligible voters. The required turnout in the case of local elections is even lower – one fourth, and there is no turnout requirement at all in the case of rerun elections. Overseas polling stations will be opened at Moldova's diplomatic missions and in any other locations agreed by the relevant authorities of the given host country. However the lawmakers scrapped the initial proposal to allow overseas polls to last two days. *IPN, 18 June 2010*

### ***Voronin warns Russian Patriarch of church involvement in politics***

Former Moldovan president Vladimir Voronin, the leader of the Moldovan Party of Communists, has sent a letter to Kirill, the Patriarch of Moscow and Entire Russia, expressing his concern about the open involvement of the Moldovan Metropolitan Church in a political project. Vladimir Voronin tells the Patriarch he is concerned about the image of the Moldovan Church. "The Church discredits its reputation and disappoints people by getting involved into the market of political projects", writes Vladimir Voronin. The Communist leader specified he was sending the letter as an ordinary citizen, who was concerned about the catastrophe that was about to happen to the Church in Moldova. *IPN, 22 June 2010*

### ***Moldova to hold referendum on September 5 or 12***

The announced constitutional referendum where the Moldovans will be asked to decide on the way of electing the country's president will take place either on September 5 or a week later, on September 12. Ion Plesca, the head of the constitutional amendment commission, has told the ruling Alliance for European Integration (AEI) shall decide between these two dates. Ion Plesca has added that AEI is also to determine the date when the referendum papers will be submitted to the Constitutional Court for expertize, hinting that it could happen by the end of the week. Within 10 days from the submission, the Constitutional Court shall issue a legal brief, after which Parliament will determine the date of the referendum. In the recently amended Election Code, the required turnout in referenda has been lowered from three-fifths to one-third of the registered voters. *IPN, 22 June 2010*

### ***United Moldova criticizes electoral amendments***

The United Moldova Party intends to ask the advice of the Constitutional Court and the Venice Commission about the recent amendments to the Election Code, in particular that concerning the required voter turnout in a referendum. Vladimir Turcan, the party's leader, stated at a news conference on Tuesday the amendments could "shaken the legal safeguards of the constitutional provisions". Turcan argues that under the current legislation, to amend the fundamental law it is necessary to muster two-thirds of the Parliament's votes, which means 66 out of 101 MPs, who in turn represent approximately 1 million voters. Following the amendments, however, the turnout required for a constitutional referendum to be deemed valid has been lowered to 883,000 voters (one-third of the eligible voters); this means that 441,667 yeas (half of the votes cast) are enough to make the change; in Parliament this would be equal to 28 votes out of 101. According to Turcan, this would enable the next governments to modify the fundamental law as they please. *IPN, 22 June 2010*

### ***Constitutional Court C rejects draft parliamentary resolution on referendum***

The Republic of Moldova's Constitutional Court has returned the draft of the parliamentary Resolution on the organization of a constitutional referendum back to the document authors, the Parliament, for further improvement. Last Monday, the draft was filed with the Court by MP Corina Fusu on behalf of 35-of-53 members of the governing Alliance for European Integration. Constitutional Court Chairman Dumitru Pulbere stated that the draft Resolution was insufficiently well motivated and grounded. "For instance, the request to organize the referendum on amending Article 78 in the Constitution was not substantiated in the way it is demanded by the law, and in the accompanying notice the authors did not even mention an intention to hold a referendum to amend the Main Law", explained Pulbere. Furthermore, he said, the draft authors, who are proposing to organize the constitutional referendum, were supposed to substantiate reasons why such a poll is necessary, and to prove that Article 78 cannot be amended in parliament. So now, he said, the Parliament must improve the document and

submit it to the Court once again, and the Constitutional Court will issue its conclusion within subsequent 10 days.  
*Infotag, 23 June 2010*

## **HUMAN RIGHTS and RULE OF LAW**

### ***Ilie Cazac's parents go on hunger strike***

The parents of Ilie Cazac from Bender, who was arrested by the Transnistrian secret services for state betrayal and espionage, went on hunger strike in front of the Russian Embassy in Chisinau on June 12. Stela Surchicean and Serghei Vintchii hope they will be thus heard and helped. The parents are determined not to give up the hunger strike and say they cannot return home without results. "We don't know what's happened to our son. We don't know where to go and seek help. We will stay here until we die," said Stela Surchicean. Ilie's step father Serghei Vintchii said all their approaches to the Transnistrian authorities remained unheard. "We phoned and inquired about his health, but they refused to tell us something. They do not allow us and the lawyer to see him (...)". Ilie Cazac, 24, is an employee of the Bender Tax Inspectorate. He was arrested in March, when he was returning from work. The place where the young man is held is not known. Ilie Cazac is accused of spying for Moldova and betraying the state and faces up to 20 years in jail. *IPN, 12 June 2010*

### ***Four NGOs express solidarity with Ilie Cazac's family***

The nongovernmental organizations Promo-Lex, Hyde Park, the Human Rights Institute of Moldova (IDOM), and Memoria Center, picketed on Thursday, June 16 the Russian Embassy in Chisinau in solidarity with the couple Stela Surchicean and Alexandr Vintchii, who have been on a hunger strike outside the Embassy since Saturday, June 12. The parents of Ilie Cazac, who was arrested by the Transnistrian security forces on charges of treason, request the intervention of the Russian government to free their son, of whom the family hasn't heard any news since he was arrested in March. "The Russian Federation is a mediator in the 5+2 talks. The arrogance and the passivity shown about Ilie Cazac's case, as well as about the case of journalist Ernest Vardanyan and other people who have been illegally arrested, maltreated and tortured by the Tiraspol regime, makes it an accomplice to the this crime", declared Ion Guzun, IDOM project coordinator. Ghenadie Brega, Hyde Park member, said that the only authority that is allowed to move freely across the breakaway region and which has, in fact, "100% control" over Transnistria is Russia, which should put pressure on the Tiraspol authorities to ensure respect for human rights in that area.

### ***Filat meets relatives of people recently arrested in Transnistria***

Prime Minister Vlad Filat met the wife of journalist Ernest Vardanean, Irina Vardanean, and mother of Ilie Cazac, Stela Surchicean, both arrested by the Transnistrian law enforcers, the government's press service has said. Attending the event was also Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration Victor Osipov, who made a short presentation of evolution in the cases of Ernest Vardanean and Ilie Cazac. The deputy prime minister said that Head of the OSCE Mission in Moldova Philip Remler visited the two arrestees. According to information provided by the OSCE, Ernest Vardanean and Ilie Cazac are in a good physical condition. The prime minister gave assurances that the government would further monitor the cases of the two prisoners and would do its utmost to secure their release. *Moldpres, 21 June 2010*

### ***First European Partnership Fair for civil Society Organizations in Moldova, Held in Chisinau on June 15-16***

The first European Partnership Fair for Civil Society Organizations in Moldova took place the Republican Palace in Chisinau, on June 15-16 2010. The event was organized by the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), the East Europe Foundation (EEF) and „Promo-LEX" Association. The main goal of the event was to help strengthening the Moldovan Civil Society by sharing experience, establishing partnership relations with NGOs from European Union and CIS countries, as well as trying to provide some funding for joint initiatives launched by the Fair participants. The event was attended by approximately 150 NGOs and donor representatives from Moldova (88 organizations,

including 30 from the Transnistrian region) Europe and the CIS countries. At the end of the Fair a Basket Fund aiming to support partnership projects between different organizations was launched. The participants of the Fair also agreed on a resolution concerning the situation of Ilie Cazac and Ernest Vardanean. The conclusions of the European Partnership Fair and details regarding the Basket Fund can be found on the website: [www.partnershipfair.eu](http://www.partnershipfair.eu)