

COOPERATION AND AMBITIONS OF INTEGRATION:

Moldovan steps towards the European Union between 2004 and 2008 (Abstract)

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After the fall of communism and the collapse of socialist regimes, democratization started all over Europe but some countries like Moldova had difficulties getting away from the Soviet past.

The country - led by the Communist Party (without any coalitional partner) since 2001 - has been facing great political and economic challenges. The newly founded European Neighbourhood Policy became the framework for stronger cooperation with the neighbouring countries. So in 2004 negotiations started between the EU and the Moldovan Republic to outline a programme that approaches Moldovan public law system to European patterns, and promotes Moldovan economic integration in the region as well as in Europe. In the framework of this action plan the Union defined certain tasks and regulations that would help the completion of democratic reforms, among others protection of human rights, independence of courts, freedom of press and media. From the economic point of view the aim is to develop an adequate investment environment, and tackle organized crime and corruption. The action plan focused on security policy as well, underlining the importance of securing borders and solving the situation in Transnistria.

But during the completion period, it turned out that reforms lack fundamental political and social foundations. The ruling party had a monopolistic role in the country; it controlled all three branches of power, the media and the commerce. Unfavourable foreign policy further complicated the situation: they confronted the earlier supportive Russia hoping that the EU will keep on providing financial support and will accept the façade democracy of PCRM because it is opposing Russia. But the 2007 election made the political leadership realize that the EU is not willing to accept this party-built system so they started approaching Russia again. Russian resistance made carrying out democratic efforts more difficult since Russia perceived both the ENP and the action plan as a threat. Moscow thought that the EU aims at opposing territories of Russian interest to Russia. Not only the political but the social system as well leaves a lot to desire. People are not aware of democratic achievements and they are indifferent regarding politics - legacy of the socialist era. Civil society is powerless so people cannot do anything against political measures, although civil society would be able to control and counterweigh political activity very well.

But not answering the requirements is not only Moldova's fault; Western countries did not realize basic differences between Central European countries and Moldova. But when Moldova entered the second half of the action plan, a growing interest developed for the region. At first Visegrad countries started backing up Moldovan efforts, as they have experience in transition that could set a good example for Moldova. Lately (from 2009) the European Union is tightening cooperation by starting the Eastern Partnership that has the same objectives as the Action Plan used to have. The Eastern Partnership does not only mean financial support to help the poorest country in Europe but also means implementing programs that would promote democratic reforms.

Taking into account the result of 2009 elections (when the opposition took power) we can say that Moldova was given another chance to carry out the requested reforms and thus approach Europe in political, economic and cultural terms as well.

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