

Foreign Policy Association together with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung offer you a newsletter on foreign policy and European integration issues of the Republic of Moldova. The newsletter is part of the "Foreign Policy Dialogue" joint Project.

NEWSLETTER

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Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates

The newsletter is developed by Mădălin Necșuțu, editor-coordinator

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News in Brief



The plenary session of the European Parliament meeting in Strasbourg voted on May 5 a resolution calling for the granting of the EU candidate country status to the Republic of Moldova. "The European Parliament welcomes the submission by the Republic of Moldova of the application for EU membership on March 3, 2022; calls on the EU institutions to grant Moldova the EU membership candidate country status, in accordance with Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union and on the basis of its merits, while in the meantime continue its efforts to integrate this country into the EU single market and intensify sectoral cooperation", the Resolution states. At the same time, the EP calls for a clear and strong political signal with regard to the European path chosen by the Republic of Moldova at the June European Council meeting. In their speeches, MEPs expressed their solidarity with the Moldovan authorities and citizens.



The European Union will mobilize an additional EUR 52 million for the Republic of Moldova to promote the country's resilience, recovery and long-term reforms, in particular through the implementation of the initiatives set out in the Union's Economic and Investment Plan for its eastern partners. Through the EU4Reforms programme, the EU will support the Republic of Moldova in the implementation of reforms related to the EU-Moldova Association Agreement and the comprehensive free trade area. Through the EU4Recovery and Resilience, the EU will contribute to resilient, sustainable and inclusive economic development of the Republic of Moldova, including by supporting SMEs, improving the business climate through trade facilitation and employability enhancement.



The Republic of Moldova will receive non-lethal military equipment from the European Union to equip the army for defense purposes, said the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, during his visit to Chisinau on May 4. "We will help Moldova to strengthen its resilience, and cope with the consequences of the spill-over from the Russian aggression in Ukraine. Last year, we announced support of €7 million for equipment, and this year, we plan to significantly increase our support for Moldova by providing its armed forces with additional military equipment, as well as support to counter disinformation, strengthen social cohesion, and withstand cyberattacks", said Charles Michel in Chisinau. He insisted that the EU did not want any escalation of tensions in the Republic of Moldova over the Transnistrian separatist region and the recent provocations that took place there last week. For her part, the President of the Republic of Moldova said that Chisinau's assessments at the moment are that there is no danger coming from the Transnistrian separatist region.

Republic of Moldova and its chance on the European path: candidate country status for the EU membership



Foreign minister Nicu Popescu and the EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Oliver Varhelyi

After filling in two questionnaires from the European Commission, the Republic of Moldova is facing the most important test on the path towards the European Union, which is just beginning - receiving the EU candidate country status.

With a pro-European reformist power that coincides with a period in which the European Union also needs to deliver on the hopes of several states knocking on its door and capable of great sacrifices, this could be the chance of the Republic of Moldova.

The European Parliament has given a clear signal of support by voting a resolution urging the European Commission to give a positive opinion on receiving the EU candidate country status.

Even though the Republic of Moldova has

► filled in and submitted, in about one month, two questionnaires to the EU of 369 and over 1,900 pages respectively, this is not enough. There may be a need for locomotive countries such as Romania and Poland to push Chisinau's wishes to Brussels.

There is still a need for an intense lobby in all European capitals, and the Republic of Moldova cannot do this alone. The good thing is that it has the main European powers - Germany and France - on its side. However, this is not sufficient given that the vote for the status of candidate country must be given unanimously.

There are also countries such as the Netherlands or Austria, but also others, which show some reluctance. At least

the Netherlands will be a hard nut to crack, given the selflessness with which this country has been opposing for years, for political reasons, and not technical, the entry of Romania and Bulgaria into the Schengen area.

The Republic of Moldova should also find common grounds with Ukraine in order to help each other in this process. It takes a lot of diplomacy and skills to get through this hurdle. At the same time, the accelerator pedal must be pressed in terms of reforms, and the domestic situation is not the happiest for the Republic of Moldova, which is going through an acute economic crisis felt by the population.

Good internal communication is needed to explain to citizens why they have to

make sacrifices and tighten their belts, against an unfavourable background of rising inflation and prices for the fuel and consumer goods. In other words, the context is very unfavourable. On top of that, the war in the neighbouring country is approaching the borders of Moldova, so the anxiety among the population is growing.

All in all, the Republic of Moldova has to pass two tests: one internally and the other one externally. However, the benefits and a better future for its citizens are sufficient arguments for the entire society - from citizens to politicians - to confirm the vote in the last presidential and parliamentary elections and stay on the European path at all costs.

Madalin Necsutu

The most important thing is the political decision that the Member States will take and offering a clear EU membership perspective

Iulian Groza, director of IPRE

The Director of the Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE), Iulian Groza, has talked in the interview for the newsletter about the questionnaires from the European Commission filled in by the Republic of Moldova. The questionnaires were filled in as part of the evaluation by the European Executive of the political and economic situation of the Republic of Moldova, with a view to deciding on offering Moldova the candidate country status for the EU accession following the application submitted by the Moldovan authorities on March 3rd in Brussels. We are inviting you to read about this in detail in the following interview:



■ **Mr Groza, the Republic of Moldova is going to fill in the second questionnaire for the European Commission. The first one contained about 380 questions, while the second -nearly 1,900 questions. The Republic of Moldova has moved relatively quickly in this process. How difficult was it to fill in the questionnaires, and did the IPRE experts help with this process?**

■ The second part of the questionnaire is being developed. Most likely, the Republic of Moldova will send the answers to the second part of the questionnaire to the European Union by the end of next week.

With regard to the process of drafting this questionnaire, I would like to mention that the authorities have called on the non-governmental organizations participating in the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum to support this effort.

The process of assessing the status of candidate country of the Republic of Moldova is a broad and complex one, which requires an inclusive effort, not only by the authorities, but also by all national governmental and non-governmental experts.

■ **How do you assess the involvement of NGOs in this activity? They say both the officials and civil society representatives have worked around the clock to fill in questionnaires...**

■ The National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum is one of the most representative umbrella organizations that includes about 100 non-governmental organizations. During a discussion at the beginning of March with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Nicu Popescu, the latter came up with the request to assist with this exercise and we have responded with great openness. We

have immediately understood that the EC's assessment of the Republic of Moldova is of particular importance for our European integration, thus filling in the questionnaires should be a national effort.

We have managed to mobilize several organizations from the Platform, namely the Institute for European Policy and Reforms, Expert Group, Legal Resource Center from Moldova. Also, together with the Soros Foundation Moldova we have managed to mobilize over 15 experts from among our organizations who produced contributions and put forward proposals and recommendations for the answers to the questionnaires. We have also helped with reviews of the contributions of the authorities.

Speaking of the speed of the work, at first, I was relatively sceptical that the European Commission would be able to send this questionnaire to the Republic of Moldova in such a short time and, secondly, I was sceptical even about the deadline for the Republic Moldova to fill in the questionnaire. This is because the process of assessing the accession applications for the aspiring countries, from the experience of the Balkans, has shown that this is a rather long and complex process. A lasting one. In the case of the Balkan countries, it took much longer to send the questionnaire to the aspiring countries. On average, it took one year since the launch of this process.

In our case, the European Commission was invited in March, in record time, by the European Council to work on this opinion. For its part, the European Commission has done its utmost to transmit this questionnaire within a very short period of time.

Within a few weeks since the submission of the application,

Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia have received the questionnaires. When it comes to the actual preparation of the answers, I think that the level of mobilization of the authorities has mattered a lot, but also the involvement of the NGOs and experts from the diaspora. So, all of these things have shattered my initial fears along the way, and we have quickly sent back the answers. The first part of the questionnaire contained about 380 questions, covering two chapters - the political and economic criteria.

Although the first part was shorter in terms of number of questions, at the level of answers it did not involve only technical aspects, but also evaluations and analyses. All this should give the European Commission a better impression of the state of the Republic of Moldova with regard to the two criteria mentioned above.

The second part of the questionnaire is larger. It covers 33 chapters and contains over 1,800 questions. Most of them are technical in nature and aim at transposing and implementing the legislation. For the Republic of Moldova, it was relatively simple here, given that the country has been in the process of implementing the Association Agreement with the EU for eight years.

We know that the Association Agreement and its annexes have included several commitments to transpose European legislation. If we were to summarise the effort, it was relatively easier for the Republic of Moldova compared to other countries to develop these answers in a relatively short time.

Next steps

■ **What are the next procedural steps after the transmission of the second part of the questionnaire to the EC?**

■ After Chisinau submits the second part of the questionnaire, we will wait for the final evaluation by the EC. In parallel, this assessment is already being made by the EC based on the answers to the questionnaires. We can probably expect that by the end of May - beginning of June, the EC will finalize its assessment of the questionnaires and of the status of candidate country for the countries that managed to send the answers in a short time.

The opinion of the Commission will then be forwarded to the Council of the European Union working group for discussions at the level of Member States. It is likely that by mid-June we will have the first signals on the assessment of the membership application and recommendations to the EC from the Member States at the Council of Ministers level. Following the decision of the EU Foreign Affairs Council, we will see a final European Council decision scheduled for 23-24 June.

■ Do you hope for a positive opinion from the European Commission?

■ At this moment we cannot anticipate what the European Commission's opinion will be. If we have managed to implement the Association Agreement and the Commission has already made its own assessment, I think it is going to be generally favourable. As Moldova moves forward in implementing its commitments, it is clear that there are certain sectors that need more involvement and results, but we hope for a positive EC opinion. But it could also include some recommendations for aspiring countries, such as the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia, in the direction of negotiating an Accession Treaty and to have a future perspective.

The technical part for us is in principle clear, because the EU Treaty and the requirements are also clear. But, in addition to the technical aspect that is important, we understand very well that the evaluation process of a candidate country is an eminently political. This also requires political decisions by the EU Council and the EU Member States. We are well aware that such decisions require consensus and unanimity in all 27 Member States.

We will see what the discussion will be at the Member State level and in the European Council. At least the signals from Brussels and other European capitals indicate that the EU is much better prepared today to offer a clear European perspective to Ukraine and Moldova.

What will matter will be a process of negotiation between the Member States and the European Commission. But I hope that these negotiations and preparations with the European Council will result in at least a unanimous political message that would mean offering a European perspective to our countries like in the case of the Western Balkan countries in 2003 at the Thessaloniki summit.

This political decision to offer the European perspective and the promise that the Balkan countries will become part of the EU, when they meet the criteria, was the most important in increasing the momentum of the EU-wide processes on the accession of the West Balkan countries.

We can say in retrospect that, after about 10 years, Croatia became a member state after receiving this European perspective. Other Balkan countries are at different stages. Some are already candidate countries negotiating the Accession Treaty, some have obtained the status of candidate

countries, and others have not yet received this status, even after 20 years.

The political decision is the most important

■ Are you optimistic about the decision of the European Council to be held on 23-24 June? What are the scenarios on how it could operate in the case of the Republic of Moldova, or do you think Moldova could directly receive the status of a candidate state for EU accession?

■ First of all, what we need to understand is that even offering the status of candidate countries is not a technical issue, but a political decision. So, we have to wait for this signal from the Member States. When our countries obtain this status, we could discuss the next step, which is the preparation for the negotiation of the chapters of the Accession Treaty.

The important thing is to manage the expectations very well. Secondly, let us understand that the process of accession and then integration is a complex and time-consuming, it doesn't happen automatically. Once the Republic of Moldova obtains this status, it will involve great efforts on the part of the country.

EU enlargement policy adjustments are also needed at the EU level. We will probably see a revision of the Eastern Partnership policies. Moreover, we may see also a revision of the EU's multi-annual financial framework.

My expectation is that at the June summit, whether the Member States decide in June to offer the EU candidate country status or send a strong message that our countries

can achieve this status, the most important is the political decision that the Member States can take of offering a clear accession perspective to our countries.

■ **The European Parliament has voted in favour of a resolution offering the Republic of Moldova the status of a candidate country for accession to the European Union. Though it is only a political statement, what does this mean?**

■ From what we have seen recently, including the European Parliament's resolution adopted last week, it is already encouraging. The text of the resolution speaks for the first time very clearly about the granting of the European perspective and of the status of a candidate country for the Republic of Moldova.

If we compare the texts adopted for the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in March, we will see that the text of the resolution on Moldova is much more ambitious and clearer. What encourages me is that this resolution was supported by the vast majority in the EP. Today we are in a situation where the European Parliament, a very important political institution in the decision-making process, has sent its message very clearly to the European Commission and the Member States.

We know very well that the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, has already sent very strong messages of encouragement to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova regarding our perspectives for the EU membership. And we will soon find out the Commission's opinion.

Most importantly, we will await the conclusions of the European Council at the June summit.

■ **Thank you!**

We need to reform the prosecutor's office in Ukraine, while for economic development, we will have to work harder on the anti-corruption

Nadija Afanasieva, the director of the Ukrainian Institute for International Politics in Kyiv



N***adija Afanasieva, director of the Ukrainian Institute for International Policy in Kyiv, has explained in an interview for the FES/ APE foreign policy newsletter that Ukraine is taking actions to join the European Union. The expert has referred to the priorities and sectors that need to be reformed***

in the neighbouring country that is currently facing the invasion of Russia. Last but not least, we have also talked about the security threats for both Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova coming from the Transnistrian separatist region. We are inviting you to read the interview below:

■ **Ukraine has recently received a questionnaire from the EC. The EC chief said the procedure “will not take years, but weeks”. Do you hope Ukraine will receive the status of a candidate country at the European Council in June?**

■ We will do everything in our power to make it possible. We are working on filling in this document together with the line ministries. We are also lobbying a lot with the civil society. We will soon have a meeting in Brussels on the Ukraine-European Union platform, where we meet twice a year.

This time, some of us in civil society will be in Brussels in physical format, while the others who cannot come for various reasons will be present online. We will also lobby for the questions in these questionnaires. We will talk about those reforms that we need to make and the support that is very important for us to get in a short time.

■ **Speaking about reforms, which are the most important and top priority for Ukraine?**

■ The judicial reform is the most important, I think. We have talked about this reform multiple times. We need to reform the prosecutor's office, but also the human rights part. If we talk about economic development, we will have to work harder on anti-corruption, which is also one of the top priorities.

Currently, we have very good results in the area of digitalisation. We have good solutions here - for instance, applications related to air raid alarms, healthcare and also food applications that can be offered to refugees from inside and outside the country. All these things can be easily accessed

from the mobile phone. We also have a portal called *Diia*. If anyone has lost their documents, they are stored on that website in electronic format. In other words, for someone who is in such a situation, that person only needs to have access to a phone.

The documents are digital and many banks accept such digitized documents from this database. Of course, in some parts of Ukraine the situation is also difficult with regard to mobile phones due to the fact that they were taken from the people by Russian soldiers.

Hopes and time horizon for the EU membership

■ **Are you optimistic about Ukraine's accelerated procedure towards EU? What would be the time horizon for that?**

■ When we talk about joining the EU, we have to also take into account the territories that are currently occupied. We refer here to Lugansk, Donetsk, and Crimea. Each of our countries - Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia - has a territory occupied by separatist regimes loyal to Russia.

It will probably take a few years for us to take control of those territories. Of course, it is important to take into account the citizens who live there. It is an open question also for me how many citizens remain in the occupied regions of Ukraine, how many are loyal to Moscow, and how many are loyal to Kiev.

I'm also wondering how many people will have to work in those regions because so many people in the Lugansk and Donbas region have been evacuated. Some of them were forcibly evacuated to Russia and it is very

difficult now to say how we can bring them back.

Together, but also separately

■ **At the beginning of March, Ukraine was not exactly happy that Moldova and Georgia would apply for EU membership. Is it better in the case of this accession procedure for the three states of the Eastern Partnership to go together or for each of them to go separately?**

■ I believe that each country should follow its own agenda. I can say that Ukraine's reaction to the accession of Moldova and especially Georgia was negative, as the Tbilisi authorities refused to join the Western policies of imposing sanctions on Russia. The Georgian government did not want this, despite massive protests of the population.

There have been many street demonstrations in support of Ukraine in this regard, but the Tbilisi Executive has refused to support Ukraine. However, we know that during such wars, emotions are high and that is why Ukraine has not reacted very positively to Georgia.

Regarding the Republic of Moldova, we understand that given the very high dependence on the Russian gas, but also the common border with Ukraine, as well as the Transnistrian region, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova will go together on the path towards the EU.

However, every country is independent and has to do its homework well. Here it depends on each country how it does it. But I do believe this process will involve both countries together - Ukraine and Moldova- as we are bound.

Regarding the sanctions that the Republic of Moldova could have imposed on Russia, I do not know how much it would have affected Moscow. I think the impact would be zero.

We also remember the 2006 and 2013 embargoes imposed on the Republic of Moldova by Moscow. Chisinau had the opportunity to redirect exports then. The Moldovan economy is not strong enough to make a difference in the event of sanctions.

If Moldova tries to impose certain sanctions on Russia, Chisinau will be pressured and blackmailed by Moscow.

Zelenski even more popular

■ **How do you assess the effectiveness of the public diplomacy and Mr Zelenski's speeches in various parliaments around the world in recent weeks? They say Zelenski is now one of the world's leaders who set new standards in strategic communication...**

■ We see a big difference between what Zelenski was before February 23rd and what he is today after weeks of war. He has changed a lot. His political rating before the war was below 50 percent and had been falling sharply in recent months. And now it is above 90 percent.

This is perhaps the first time in the history of Ukraine when the citizens are happy with the communication between the Presidency, the Government and the common people. I can also say this about local government. The mayor of Kiev, Vitali Klichiko, has a very good communication with the people, in particular regarding the dismantling of misinformation and false news. We have over 1,000 such misinformation

and he is very receptive - he denies such false news only half an hour after it appears.

Everyone has a role to play. For example, Zelenski has two roles. It's about communicating with the military and the officials in other countries. Klichiko is responsible for the communication in Kyiv. It's not just about fake news, it's also about the part of the infrastructure he is responsible for. If we talk about other people in the regions, we can mention the head of the local administration in Nikolaev, Vitali Kim, who has become very popular.

We also have local administrators in the Odessa, Lviv, and Kharkov regions. For example, the mayor of Kharkov, Ihor Terehov, speaks Russian and comes up with messages in Russian. I personally was not sure that he would side with Ukraine, because before the war he made a number of dubious moves, but now things are clear about his allegiance...

The Transnistrian danger

■ **How likely is the scenario of a junction between the Russian army, which is attacking the southern front and wants to reach Odessa, and the Russian and Transnistrian paramilitary troops stationed in Transnistria?**

■ We have to talk about three points from where Ukraine could be attacked: Belarus in the north, Transnistria in the west, and the separatist republics of Donetsk and Luhansk in the east. It is still unclear whether an attack on Ukraine will be launched from any of these directions.

As to Belarus, we understand that the leader in Minsk, Alexander Lukashenko, is not exactly sure of his army. He

doesn't know in which direction his army will attack if he gives such an order.

For example, Ukraine also has many volunteer Belarusians in its territorial security troops. And not only Belarusians, there are also Lithuanians, Poles, Georgians, etc. We have an entire international battalion.

We don't know if the Belarusians could cope if they are sent to fight in Ukraine, especially if we look at the state of the Russian army today. The Belarussian army is much lower in class than the Russian one.

If we talk about the Russian army as the second army in the world, this war has shown us where the money for its modernization was wasted. Judging by the video recordings of the Ukrainian military, the Russian equipment is very outdated.

■ **Could the Russian and Transnistrian paramilitary forces attack pre-emptively the Ukrainian army?**

■ I don't think so right now. It is very important for Ukraine to maintain the territory we have now and we have a lot of work to do in this respect. I don't think Transnistria is the priority of Ukraine, but we understand that the eight-year experience of war and the training in NATO standards following the annexation of Crimea have improved the Ukrainian army. The Ukrainian army is also training hard to handle the modern weapons that are being delivered from the West to defend the country.

Every citizen of Ukraine has paid a fee for the army since 2014. And we are not talking about Ukrainian volunteers who can raise a few thousand dollars in half an hour to buy, for example, a high-performance drone to help

the Ukrainian army. We are also talking here about a war with modern weapons.

Reverse effect

■ This war has united Ukraine inland, uniting the West at the same time. Putin lost on both fronts in this regard...

■ Exactly, this was not possible in Ukraine in the 30 years of independence. I understood then why we could not do this - because there were several forces in Russia trying to destabilize the situation. They did it on the information front through television channels, but also on the political front via various political parties that were doing harm from this point of view. A conclusive example is Viktor Yanukovich and how he came to power. If it weren't for Yanukovich, there wouldn't have been a Euromaidan either. During the time of his party, Ukraine had become a very corrupt state, and the people simply could not resist, even in the regions of Ukraine where his party had won the elections.

Also, if we talk about the tensions that came from Hungary or Romania regarding minorities, they were also fuelled by Russia's manoeuvres inside Ukraine. The Russians tried to irritate Poland with the same tensions regarding the Polish minority in Ukraine, but they failed because Ukraine's ties with Poland are very close.

We can also say that the Ukrainians are much closer to the Belarusians than to the Russians, but Lukashenko still does a number of negative things. Despite this, though weak, there is still a connection between Ukrainians and Belarusians.

■ Thank you!

Editorial

Republic of Moldova with small but sure steps towards the EU

Madalin Necsutu, journalist Balkan Insight



There are opportunities in any crisis, and the Republic of Moldova is carefully promoting its final goal of joining the European Union one day. At this early stage, the Republic of Moldova needs to be honestly assessed with regard to its problems, particularly the sectors where reforms are needed. In this respect, receiving and answering the first set of questions as part of the questionnaire received from the European Commission can be

considered as the second important step. This is after Chisinau made the first step on March 3rd to submit the application for EU membership in Brussels.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24th has changed the paradigm. The Moldovan pro-European government was planning to apply for EU membership sometime in 2025, when the legislative term of the current parliament expires.

Moldova didn't do it alone, but together with the Eastern Partnership members Ukraine and Georgia. In the current context, the European Union also seems to have accelerated the procedures for these states, putting more or less in the background a few states in the Western Balkans. This is despite the fact that they were somehow, at least theoretically, ahead and would have been the first candidates in the event of a new wave of the European Union enlargement.

Therefore, the head of the Moldovan diplomacy, Nicu Popescu, received on April 11th, in Luxembourg, the questionnaire from the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, Oliver Varhelyi. The approximately 369 questions sent in the first part of the EU questionnaire were resolved in a relatively short time. It took only 11 days to fill in and resubmit the document to Brussels, so that on April 22nd the Chisinau authorities had already done their homework. What is impressive is that not only the civil servants and specialists, but also members of the civil society have worked to fill in the document. Everyone has mobilized in a considerable joint effort, giving a positive signal about the desire of the Republic of Moldova to move towards the European integration.

Support from Romania

The effort didn't go unnoticed by the Prime Minister of Romania, Nicolae Ciuca, who noted the speed with which the authorities in Chisinau moved to fill in that important document. In fact, the officials from Bucharest and Chisinau are in constant contact and are working on this dimension.

Romania has gone through this process and has the necessary experience and

know-how to help the Republic of Moldova. The fact that there are no barriers in communication and that the two countries operate in the same language is an asset. In fact, the head of the Romanian diplomacy, Bogdan Aurescu, contacted his counterpart from Chisinau, Nicu Popescu, the very first day of receiving the questionnaire and openly offered Romania's assistance in this regard.

Romania is by far the strongest advocate of the Republic of Moldova in Brussels, and the synchronization of diplomacy and lobbying by Bucharest and Chisinau can only bring benefits. This was best seen on April 5th at the Donors' Conference co-organized by Romania, France and Germany in Berlin. Dozens of states and international institutions have promised the Republic of Moldova grants and loans of 695 million euros with very low interest rates.

Obstacles and the need for better communication

However, there are a number of issues related to this process. Ukraine was not happy from the beginning that the Republic of Moldova "got on the train" of joining the EU as a passenger with Ukraine. This was stated in the first days after the Republic of Moldova submitted its application for accession on March 3rd. The Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmitro Kuleba said that "Moldova and Georgia's application for EU membership now looks like an attempt to attach their two railroad cars to a high-speed Ukrainian train traveling to Brussels."

The same metaphor of the train and the railroad cars was used in mid-April by the Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister, Irina Vereshciuk. The official from Kyiv said the Republic of Moldova

looks like a "railroad car" hanging from the Ukrainian locomotive and that Moldova would try to take advantage of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Obviously, such statements have been made under the influence of strong emotions and are understandable for a country that is struggling with a bloody invasion. But at the same time, Kiev must understand that the Republic of Moldova is doing its best to help the refugees. At present, there are already about 100,000 refugees in Moldova, while almost half a million Ukrainians have transited the Republic of Moldova since the war has started.

Kiev is also disturbed by the fact that there is no full solidarity by Moldova and Georgia over the economic sanctions imposed on Russia. Of course, this has no economic relevance, but politically, it would be a signal of solidarity, in Ukraine's view.

Not even before the war the relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova were at the highest level. There are still unresolved issues, including some with future prospects such as the intentions to build a large hydrocomplex by Ukraine on the Dniester, the main source of drinking water for about 80 percent of the Moldovan population.

Positive examples

However, the current context should reset other issues as well. Thus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine should work together on this common goal. An example of this could be the cooperation between Romania and Bulgaria, neighbouring states that joined the European Union in 2007.

Many times, the impression is created of a communication vacuum between

Chisinau and Kyiv and a kind of not very beneficial competition to get on the same train together to the EU. Of course, with a full pro-European power skeleton and a small country of about 2.7 million citizens, it would certainly be easier for the Republic of Moldova to carry out the reforms required by the EU.

In turn, Kiev should not be afraid of unfair competition in terms of reforms and their implementation capacity, but should go together with the Republic of Moldova, a state that enjoys great sympathy in Brussels, perhaps the largest so far. There is a need for the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to communicate much better with each other, and for the diplomats to engage in better

coordination and communication than before.

A difficult stage is following, that of lobbying through the European chancelleries for the acceptance of the two countries as candidate countries for the EU. All this effort could be achieved through cooperation, and the effect expected by Kyiv and Chisinau could be maximized, along with that of Poland and Romania, which will also count in this endeavour.

The fact that in the last two months all the leaders of the free world have travelled to both Chisinau and Kyiv to take the pulse of the events on the ground can only be auspicious. It remains for the two capitals to step

up their efforts for the second set of questions in the forthcoming EU questionnaire. That will be an even more serious test, because it will contain, for the Republic of Moldova alone, at least 2,000 -2,500 systemic questions to which the authorities of the Republic of Moldova must answer quickly.

What is important is for the Republic of Moldova to remain on the same course of reforms, especially in the area of justice, a focal point and at the same time one in which the European Union wants tangible results and where there will be no concessions. Eradication of endemic corruption in the Republic of Moldova is perhaps the most important thing that Brussels expects from Chisinau.

The opinions expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) or of the Foreign Policy Association (APE).