

EU-MOLDOVA PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE

Ninth Meeting

22 March 2021

Remote meeting, (via ‘Interactio’)

STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

pursuant to Article 441(3) of the Association Agreement

Adopted on 22/03/2021

The ninth meeting of the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Association Committee (PAC) was held on 22 March 2021 by remote means due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. The meeting was co-chaired by Ms Ruxanda Glavan on behalf of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter ‘Moldova’) and Mr Siegfried Mureşan, on behalf of the European Parliament,

The Parliamentary Association Committee reviewed the state of play of EU-Moldova relations and of implementation of the Association Agreement.

The Parliamentary Association Committee agreed on the following final statement and recommendations:

On the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic

1. Recognises the pain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in Moldova and in the European Union; expresses its condolences to the citizens affected; and looks forward for continuous solidarity between both parties to overcome this unprecedented period of human suffering and socio-economic stagnation;
2. Welcomes that the lives and health of citizens has been prioritized over other considerations; Calls for a quick inoculation of vaccines to the entire population in 2021, as the only way to halt the high human toll and to reactivate our economies;
3. Welcomes the continuous financial and medical assistance provided by the European Union and its Member States in order to combat the epidemic in Moldova; Confirms that that the ‘Europe Team’ approach and the coordination with the World Health Organisation (WHO) has been the appropriate and necessary tool to face this dramatic development; Calls for continuing the provision of EU support and to facilitate the arrival of vaccines in Moldova as soon as possible; Welcomes the Romanian decision to share with Moldova

- 200,000 doses of its own vaccine allocation; Recalls the EU commitment with the COVAX Scheme for vaccination and welcomes the delivery of the first and second batches of COVAX vaccines in Moldova; Looks forward for Moldova's coordination with the WHO in developing an efficient vaccination campaign;
4. Appreciates the redirection of bilateral EU support to Moldova to fight the huge health, economic and social challenges caused by the pandemic, amounting so far to EUR 127 million;
 5. Welcomes the recent signature of the COVID-19 Resilience Contract for the Republic of Moldova, worth €15 million, which focusses in Moldova's coping with the virus outbreak and its socio-economic impact, as well as in boosting the resilience of the healthcare system;
 6. Looks forward for the reactivation of Moldova's and EU's economies and for the reduction of the high unemployment figures;
 7. Calls for a special attention given to the youth during the economic recovery, facilitating the creation of attractive jobs and better future in their own country, preventing their emigration and the country's brain drain;
 8. Asks for efforts to include rural population, persons with disabilities, women and any other possible disadvantaged sectors of the population, as well as minorities, in all the national plans for economic recovery;

On reinforcing EU-Moldova relations and on a joint solid economic recovery

9. Values the EU-Moldova Association Agreement, including its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, as the solid basis on which our cooperation and solidarity is founded; Calls for the core common values of the Association Agreement to be always respected, particularly the human rights, fundamental freedoms, rule of law, separation of powers and the respect for democratic principles;
10. Expects that Moldova's administrative reforms are upheld and accelerated, strengthening the common values; Notes that particularly the justice, medical, economic and banking sectors require deep reforms; Calls for the Moldovan authorities to give a special priority to the fight against corruption and money laundering; Asks to fight smuggling and all types of organised crime, including human trafficking;
11. Expresses its concern with the slow pace of the judicial proceedings on the massive 2014 banking fraud; Asks to bring swiftly all responsible persons to

- justice in order to meet the citizens' expectations and ensure asset recovery; wishes to see the law enforced on all schemes of money laundering and acts of corruption;
12. Calls for the adoption of the new Association Agenda, aimed at a closer EU-Moldova political cooperation and deeper economic and trade integration;
 13. Calls on the EU and Moldova to focus future cooperation projects in the Moldova's socio-economic recovery, always aiming to the benefit of the Moldovan population;
 14. Considers that the EU-Moldova Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area should be implemented under the present circumstances with an emphasis to facilitate a swift and sustainable economic recovery;
 15. Recalls that the EU is Moldova's first trading and investment partner; Calls for building in the recovery period a modernised and competitive Moldovan economy, in compliance with the principles of the 'European Green Deal' and digital transformation; Notes that commitment to economic multilateralism will help the world recovery;
 16. Encourages the Moldovan authorities to strengthen their measures to tackle climate change and decarbonised industry, agriculture and transport sectors, in line with the Paris Agreement and later UNFCCC meetings;
 17. Reaffirms the necessity of ensuring environmental sustainability and consolidating the efforts of the Republic of Moldova and the European Union in the field of waste management and sustainable and efficient water use, the protection of aquatic biota, of landscapes and other elements of the River Nistru basin. Acknowledges the strategic importance of the River Nistru for the Republic of Moldova and expresses its deep concern regarding the potential impact on the environment related to Ukraine's intentions to enlarge the Novodnestrovsk Hydroelectric Power Plant, as well as the building of a cascade consisting of six new hydroelectric power plants on the River Nistru
 18. Expresses its satisfaction for the disbursement of the first tranche of the new EU macro financial assistance programme to Moldova;
 19. Asks all Moldovan authorities to dedicate intensive efforts to the fulfilment of the conditionality related to the release of the second and final tranche of the new EU macro financial assistance programme; Recalls with regret that the EU was unable to release the third tranche of the previous macro financial

- assistance package because Moldova had not fulfilled the conditions before the contractual deadline;
20. Stresses that the EU, along with the IMF, conditionality should be interpreted as opportunities to consolidate the institutional and administrative reform process in Moldova;
 21. Expresses the need of Moldova to keep cooperating with international partners truly interested in the pursuit of the reforms in the country;
 22. Proposes that, as Moldova progresses in its gradual integration with the EU acquis, it is made also beneficiary of and participant in a growing number of EU policies and programmes;
 23. Suggests that the European Union provides agricultural know-how and financial support to Moldova to tackle with pervasive droughts, like the one suffered in the country in 2020;
 24. Welcomes the gas interconnection established between Moldova and Romania and looks forward to the completion of the electricity interconnection; Stresses that increasing energy interconnections with the European Union is of fundamental importance to diversify energy sources and enhance the country's energy security;
 25. Calls for an extension of renewable energy creation in Moldova, reducing its dependence on fossil fuels; Recalls the importance of continuing the reforms in the energy sector in line with the Third Energy Package and Energy Community acquis;
 26. States that Moldova, as an Eastern Partnership country holding an Association Agreement with the EU, has a European perspective within the European Union; Underlines that such European perspective must be rooted first and foremost in the adherence to the values and principles which underpin the EU;

On political developments in Moldova

27. Express its concern with the extreme political polarisation in Moldova; Recalls that the country was able to successfully overcome in 2019 an oligarchic capture of the state institutions and a severe constitutional crisis; Hopes that, in that same spirit, the political actors provide constructive messages to the citizens, and that, when political impasse is reached, it will be overcome through transparent negotiations, or when required through constitutional decisions of legal institutions in accordance with the democratic norms of the rule of law;

28. Calls for the respect of the Constitution; Deplores any rushed changes made to legislation in the interest of certain political actors.
29. Acknowledges the importance of promoting transparency in public decision-making and ensuring proper involvement and consultation of stakeholders and civil society at all stages, which will also increase public scrutiny and the social acceptability of the reforms conducted by the authorities; points out the central role NGOs play in any democratic society and expresses hope that the newly adopted legislation on non-commercial organizations will improve the transparency of public decision-making and provide a modernized framework for the functioning of civil society in the country; calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide more political, technical and financial support to the civil society in the Republic of Moldova;
30. Calls to secure a free and diverse media in Moldova; Stresses that media pluralism, including a plurality of TV channels, protection of independent media and freedom of expression are basic elements sustaining a democratic political system;
31. Expresses its concern about the external financing of some TV channels in the Republic of Moldova; Encourages the enhancement of the legal framework in the field to ensure the economic sustainability, institutional autonomy and editorial independence of the media in the Republic of Moldova.
32. Welcomes the statements of the OSCE / ODIHR observation mission and the local observer organisations in the November presidential election in Moldova acknowledging that the elections were democratic and free, and that the identified violations committed did not affect the outcome of the vote;
33. Calls on the EU and Moldova to increase efforts towards gender equality and to offer more support to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in society, including full and swift ratification of the Istanbul Convention;
34. Calls the Moldovan authorities to close the legislative gaps, highlighted by the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODHIR, that undermined the effectiveness of the campaign finance oversight and the election-dispute resolution; asks for elections to be held under scrupulous fair and transparent rules and practices, and in an open and free media environment;
35. Urges to reinforce EU-Moldova cooperation to fight internal and externally induced disinformation campaigns and malicious use of the cyberspace that aim to create chaos and distrust among the population;

36. Reiterates the EU's demand to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova; Supports the commitment to find a final settlement by the '5+2' members and recalls their special responsibility for an unconditional withdrawal of regular troops, combat vehicles and ammunition from the region; Calls for an ambitious mediation role of the EU in the settlement process; Commends the work developed by the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM);

On Eastern Partnership issues and overall foreign affairs

37. Commends the valuable contributions made by Moldova to the Eastern Partnership throughout its twelve years of existence; Looks forward to a successful 2021 Eastern Partnership Summit after the summer; Hopes to see Moldovan input in setting the renewed vision for the Eastern Partnership in the post 2020 period;
38. Looks forward to the April 2021 plenary session of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly following a 2020 year in which the world health crisis has interrupted our regular meetings; Stresses the importance of the parliamentary dimension of the Eastern Partnership at a moment in which the region has been witnessing serious crisis and conflicts;
39. Commends Moldova's participation in EU's missions of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, including the Common Security and Defence Policy;