

## ***Summary of Discussions***

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### ***The Window of Opportunity Remains Open: What's Next in the Strategic Partnership for European Integration*** March 3, 2011, Chișinău

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*This debate session in Chișinău, organized by a Romanian think tank, represents the first event of this kind in which not only officials of both countries but also members of civil society and independent experts participated.*

*The session's objectives were to identify the commitments Romania has made (or which are to be made as our project unfolds) in terms of supporting economic and institutional reforms in Moldova, to monitor the extent to which these commitments have been implemented and to identify other opportunities for collaboration and areas of public policy in which Romania can help Moldova, in an honest exchange of ideas between participants.*

*During the session, the following CRPE reports were presented:*

- **Cristian Ghinea**, director of CRPE: *"How We Used the Window of Opportunity: The Balance One Year After the Revival of Relations Between Romania and the Republic of Moldova"*, CRPE Policy Memo 19, December 2010
- **Dragoș Dinu**, public sector coordinator for CRPE: *"Views on the Role Played by Romania in Moldova"*, CRPE Policy Brief 6, March 2011

## ***Ideas Discussed***

### **Public and political support for integration in Moldova**

- Moldova must gravitate around a bigger organization, and that organization is the EU. There is a pressure from Moldovan society to accelerate integration. According to the barometer of public opinion in 2009, 63% of Moldovan citizens would vote for EU integration.

- There is an open window, in the form of a very firm declaration of intent from AEI. But what will result from this intent? At the current pace, efforts will have to lead to the preparatory stage.

### **The dialogue between the EU and Moldova**

#### *The integration agenda*

- There is recent a dynamism in the relationship between Chişinău and Brussels. The European commissioners have visited Chişinău six times. This is proof of the EU's commitment to Moldova. Moldova has managed to become a role model, "a success story within the Eastern partnership".
- While Moldova agreed to be lead by a Moldova-EU Plan of Action over 2005-2008 , it has expired. The question is what comes after.
- The question of enlargement is no longer a priority on the European agenda, having been overshadowed by issues like the economic crisis and economic governance, but the recognition of Moldova's European perspective remains an open question. The perspective of future integration would create additional incentives.

#### *The Association Agreement*

- Negotiations over the Association Agreement have been launched, and dynamic progress has been made. Moldova's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration (MFAEI) hopes to re-launch the negotiations in May, during the next Cooperation Council. The Eastern Partnership does not offer a wider context. The MFAEI is working ambitiously to convince Moldovan citizens, partners and EU alike that Moldova hopes for a real accession perspective. This would be an incentive for institutional reform as well as for economic development.

#### *The Visa Dialogue*

- The Visa Dialogue was launched. The process was quick, and, in 6 months' time (on January 24, 2011), the Action Plan was received. The Cabinet approved a national plan for the implementation of these actions. A report concerning the implementation of this plan will be produced by May 2011.

#### *Human rights*

- The Moldova-EU dialogue on human rights was launched in 2010. It played an important role in the Visa Dialogue.

#### *Transnistria*

- The EU is an important actor in the issue of Transnistria. An EU representative was appointed to the European External Action Service in the 5+2 process. We are hoping that EU rapprochement will solve the issue of Transnistria.
- Moldova's rapprochement with the EU facilitated the solution to the Transnistrian issue.

#### *Energy transport*

- Among Moldova's priorities is also the consolidation of the Moldova-EU dialogue, as well as connecting Moldova to ENTSO-E, the pan-European electricity transport network.

### *The Acquis Communautaire*

- The transposition of the *acquis communautaire* is happening slowly but surely. But this transposition is taking too long. There is a need for more thorough debates on how the *acquis communautaire* should be transposed, as well as for the introduction of the key subjects related to its transposition on the public agenda.
- The European Institute of Romania offers expertise on translating the *acquis*. In April, a one-week training for the CARE functionaries will take place.

### *Economic relations*

- Commercially, Moldova is semi-integrated with the EU. It was no more difficult to transport goods through Romania after it became a member state of the EU.
- In Moldova, businessmen encounter difficulties in accessing the EU market. In order for them to travel and develop European contacts, the visa regime must be eliminated.

## **Relations between Romania and the Republic of Moldova**

### *Agreements and bilateral coordination*

- Bilateral relations between the two countries have been revived. They have gained strength, dynamism and diversity. Moldova has been active and professional in its undertakings.
- A number of bilateral agreements were signed during the AEI government. Consulate Generals were opened in Iași, Bălți and the Mihai Eminescu Romanian Cultural Institute was created. Romania contributed to better visibility of Moldova within the EU. The continuation of this political support is encouraged, with bilateral cooperation a very important aspect.
- The treaty regarding the border regime is a document that was signed to bring greater coherence to border relations. It is a document that has a technical dimension, as well as a political dimension. Always insisting that this treaty is insufficient is a false problem.
- On February 28, 2010, a meeting to discuss the accession of Moldova to ENTSO-E, the pan-European electricity transport network, was called by Romania in Brussels. Money will be allocated for a feasibility study preceding this accession. Furthermore, the subject of Moldova's participation at the Cernavodă Power Plant is being discussed publicly in Chișinău. Right now, the subject is being analyzed, including by the Ministry of Economy in Chișinău.
- There are aspects that can be coordinated in Romanian-Moldovan relations, but there are also aspects that elude coordination efforts, which is quite normal. Relations between the two countries have a degree of ease, of spontaneity, that will undoubtedly always escape monitoring and institutional control, either by civil society or by the governments of the two states. The ministries have found a sort of natural enthusiasm for bilateral collaboration.

### *EU integration*

- Romania does not wish to be the only "advocate", the main protagonist of Moldova's EU integration in Brussels. Until the AEI came to power, Romania was in the situation of being the only advocate of Moldova's European integration, but that is no longer the case. Romania's goal is to broaden Moldova's support group. This explains the creation

of the Group of Friends in Brussels. To protect its own national interests, Romania needs a European, stable and democratic Moldova.

- Romania and Moldova are already working on a Plan of Actions in the hopes of structuring bilateral relations and Romania's potential contribution to the advancement of Moldova's European agenda; hence, everything is happening in line with the recommendations of the report. It is hoped that this instrument will be approved in March 2011.
- Moldova is counting on the support and expertise of Romanian colleagues to better outline the country's European trajectory.
- Although the window was opened, the way it was used is not above reproach. More could have been done faster. 2010 was a tough year, and it was supposed to create irreversible premises for Europeanisation. However, Moldova's ambassador in Bucharest was only appointed 10 months after AEI1 came to power. Furthermore, Moldova has only one Consulate General, and this one is in Iași, whereas Romania is much better represented in Moldova.

#### *Aid for development*

- The delays around the 100 million in loans is not an issue. Romania unlocked part of the money when it was asked to. Romania's intervention at Cotul Morii was a response to the requests from Moldovan authorities. The bilateral agreement offers Romania the possibility of implementing/allocating this money within 6 years of ratification. What matters is for Romania and Moldova to decide on the best procedures, to identify real needs, to create a forum for dialogue between Romanian authorities and the ones from Chișinău that would allow Romania to truly support Moldova.
- Development aid is one of the soft power instruments of any state, and this is also true of Romania-Moldova bilateral relations. There is an obvious political aspect to the development aid.

#### *Citizenship, migration and brain drain*

- There is a distinction between the process of granting Romanian passports and the process of regaining Romanian citizenship. Romania does not distribute passports to the all Moldovans. There is a big difference between the number of those who regain their citizenship and the number of those who, after regaining their citizenship, request passports. Not all of those who regain Romanian citizenship ask for a Romanian passport.
- There are approximately 14,000 Moldovan students at schools and faculties in Romania. Does the growing number of scholarships help Moldova or, given that the best students receive them, does it constitute brain drain?
- Romania has thus far spent over 40 million euros on scholarships. A solution for avoiding brain drain would be to grant postgraduate scholarships to the employees of Moldovan public institutions. Romanian universities have already opened departments at Cahul and Bălți. Over 1,700 out of a total of 5,000 annual scholarships are redirected for study in those institutions.
- Romania has offered Moldova the possibility of internships, but they remains unused.

- Another issue is illicit migration. Moldova benefits from remittances. Moldavans must migrate circularly. Free circulation could facilitate this matter.
- Migration must be circular, and because of this the issue must be analyzed from the origin. There is no clear strategy.
- There should be greater promotion of other cities besides the capital and more organization of events there, so that ministers can also leave their offices.

### **The role and impact of NGOs**

- The nongovernmental sector has gained vast expertise. The Romanian Embassy at Chisinau uses NGO reports. They have gained political clout and expertise. The Embassy has an active interlocutor in NGOs.
- DRP directly supports NGOs from Moldova.
- Since 2005, there have been continuous expert exchange programs between institutions in Romania and those in Moldova through multilateral projects coordinated by other European states. But there is no legal mechanism that would allow the Romanian Government to directly support NGOs from Moldova through its mechanism for development assistance (ODA) via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest. Discussions for the passing of a government decision began in the spring of 2009.
- Work at the GD has been going on for at least 2 years, and the Romanian Embassy insists upon it. The Multilateral agreements represent a crafted solution to finance civil society projects. Association with another financier is a solution, but a very expensive one.
- Better coordination does not mean knowing everything, it means having a strategy, monitoring and intervening. It is important for such events to exist so that a critical mass may be created.

### **Recommendations and observations**

- The CRPE report is a synthesis with simple, human, well-rounded recommendations, without too much theorizing, focused on the process of integrating Moldova within the EU.
- It was recommended that the following strategic themes be added to the CRPE agenda:
  - Positive management of migration;
  - Institutional reform;
  - Electoral reform.
- It is recommended that a report about Romanian investments in Moldova be drafted.
- Better circulation of elites and ideas is necessary, as well as a better exchange of ideas between the elites. This could be facilitated by the RCI.
- A report revealing what happens with Moldavian citizens who are graduates of Romanian universities would be interesting. An analysis of the situation in higher education and the way in which the instrument of scholarships for Moldovan students contributes to the development of this country would also be helpful.

- A very important aspect should be horizontal integration, the creation of links between Romanian and Moldovan civil society.
- It is suggested that products, authors and newspapers from Moldova be promoted in Romania.