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# NEWSLETTER

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## Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates

### TOPICS OF THE EDITION:

1. Moldovan Parliament has passed a series of controversial decisions which stirred concern among the European and international institutions. Expert opinions-**Anatol Taranu, Viorel Chivriga, Arcadie Barbarosie and Corneliu Ciurea.**
2. Moldova - a success story brought to ground zero. An editorial written by **Victor Chirila**, Executive Director of the Foreign Policy Association.

The recent period has been marked by a series of important events for the Republic of Moldova.



The European Parliament approved on April 18 visa facilitation procedures to certain categories of Moldovan citizens. European visas will be issued under a facilitated regime and will have a reduced fee or no fee at all for journalists, drivers having international destinations, students, young participants at seminars and sports or cultural events, close relatives of people with legal residence in the EU. The Polish authorities have decided that from May 1 on Moldovan citizens will be exempted from consular taxes while applying for long stay visas to Poland.



In the context of preparing for the round of negotiations for the Transnistrian conflict resolution in the 5 + 2 format that is going to take place in May, the special representative of the Ukrainian Presidency in Office of the OSCE, Andrei Desca, had a series of meetings with the authorities in Chisinau and Tiraspol administration. Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration, Eugen Carpov, expressed concern regarding the deterioration of the situation in the Security Zone on the River Nistru, as a result of unilateral and uncoordinated actions of the Bender city administration.



Several European decision makers expressed concern regarding developments in Chisinau and have expressed the hope that the political class will find a solution to stabilize the situation in the Republic of Moldova.



The head of the EU Delegation to Moldova, Dirk Schuebel, said that it is unacceptable to change the electoral system so quickly, without consultation with civil society, and recommended that the new law on single vote to be consulted with the Venice Commission and be amended in such a way as compatible with Council of Europe standards.



Council of Europe Secretary-General, Thorbjorn Jangland, stated that he regrets the fact that amendments to the electoral law were consulted neither with the opposition nor civil society. The official pointed out, in an interview to Free Europe, that normally such a bill must go through a long way, after extensive discussions with civil society and political parties in power and in opposition.

## *The EU is concerned by some controversial decisions taken by the Moldovan Parliament*



On Friday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, on the eve of Easter holidays, an ad-hoc majority created in the Moldovan Parliament, including MPs from the Communist and Liberal Democratic Parties, have passed a series

of controversial laws. Hours after the adoption, the amendments have been criticized by the Venice Commission, the European Commission and the Council of Europe.



Through a joint vote with the Communists, the Liberal Democratic Party of former Prime Minister, Vlad Filat, have broadened the powers of the interim Prime minister, empowering him to appoint and dismiss ministers. The National Anticorruption Center was brought under the Government and its director will be appointed and removed from office by the President, on the proposal of Prime Minister. In addition, the Prosecutor General, Corneliu Gurin, was dismissed just 15 days after being appointed in office by the Parliament. LDPM also got an interpretation of the no-confidence motion against the government of March 5, stating that the vote was “a political sanction, rather than being based on legal or criminal arguments.”

On the other hand, Communists seem to have paved the way for early elections. With the support of Liberal Democrats, they repealed the Law on the mixed-member proportional voting system, passed a few days earlier by the LDPM together with the Democratic Party (PD), and have removed the prohibition on voting for holders of Soviet passports. Communists and Liberal Democrats also voted to increase the threshold for parties to enter parliament from 4 to 6 percent. The threshold for electoral blocks made of two parties was increased from 7 to 9 percent while for alliances including more than three parties

- from 9 to 11 percent. The Parliament also voted an initiative put forward by the Communists, to lift the immovability of judges of the Constitutional Court, i.e. to grant the Parliament the right to remove judges from office “for breach of oath or loss of trust”, by a majority of 61 votes out of 101 MPs.

***Concern voiced by the Venice Commission and the European Commission***

A few hours after the vote, the Venice Commission stated that the decision of the Moldovan Parliament to lift the immovability of judges of the Constitutional Court, is in clear contradiction with the EU legislation, but also violates the Constitution of Moldova.

“A constitutional court has the task of controlling the work of Parliament. Subjecting its judges to the need of being “trusted” by Parliament is in evident contradiction with the very purpose of a constitutional court.”, said the President of the Venice Commission, Gianni Buquicchio.

The same day, the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs, Catherine Ashton and Commissioner for Enlargement Štefan Füle, have expressed their concern over the developments in Moldova. According to the EU officials, the Friday’ amendments, “have

been adopted with extreme haste, and without proper consultation with Moldovan society, or appropriate regard to European standards on constitutional reform.”

“In this regard, we fully share the concerns expressed by the President of the Venice Commission. We understand that these laws, in addition to the measures affecting the Constitutional Court judges, include measures on the electoral law, the threshold required for parties to enter parliament, the powers of the Acting Prime Minister to dismiss Ministers and Heads of Institutions and a change in status of the National Anti-Corruption Centre. This follows a worrying new pattern of decision-making in Moldova, reflected also in other recent legislative moves, where the institutions of the state have been used in the interest of a few. We reiterate our concern that these measures, carried out without proper preparation and consultation, could constitute a threat to the independence of key national institutions, and an obstacle to Moldova’s further democratic development and stable rule of law”, said the two European officials in a joint statement.

Catherine Ashton and Štefan Füle urged political leaders not to lose sight of the long-term impact of their decisions, including on the achievement of Moldova’s aspirations.

## European Parliament, PACE and OSCE calls on the Republic of Moldova to conform to the European standards

Following the developments in Chisinau, the European and international institutions have reacted to the recent events.

Jean-Claude Mignon, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), has voiced concern about the current situation in the Republic of Moldova, where a political struggle seems to be in danger of jeopardising the Moldovan people's aspirations on the road to the European integration.

"Some recent votes in the country's Parliament concerning issues vital to the

operation of democracy - such as compliance with the constitution, the independence of the judiciary and the electoral system - have been conducted in great haste, without any efforts to seek broad consensus within the Parliament," the President said. In a press release, he urged all political forces in the country to put their partisan and personal interests to one side and work together for the European future of the country and its citizens, while underlining that PACE "is willing to facilitate the dialogue between the various political parties, if they wish so".



Council of Europe (CoE) Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland has also voiced concern over the recent legislative amendments to the Law on the Constitutional Court which "seem to be in contradiction with the Moldovan Constitution, as well as with European standards on constitutional justice."

"The laws on the constitutional court, the electoral legislation, the functioning of the Government and the functioning of the law-enforcement structures have been changed, sometimes repeatedly, without proper consultations. These amendments and the way they have been enacted risk to undermine the independence and the balance of institutions", says the Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland, who draws the attention to the fact that the coherence and the credibility of the Republic of Moldova's European path is at stake.

The Chairman of the European Parliament Martin Schulz has also voiced concern about the deepening of the political crisis in the Republic of Moldova and said that if continued, the political wrangling may blow the country's European integration effort off its course.

"I am particularly worried by last week's votes in parliament to amend a number of important laws. Those amendments allowing removal of judges from the constitutional court by the Parliament will have far-reaching, potentially negative consequences for the country's democratic development. Those amendments were passed too hastily and without proper consultations and preparation, having been strongly criticized both by the Council of Europe and the Venice Commission", mentions Martin Schulz in a press statement. According to the official, those legal changes should be reconsidered.

Moreover, he urged the Moldovan politicians to stop the political war and continue the reforms.

"Moldova has advanced substantially in recent years on its path towards the European integration, becoming one of the leaders in the eastern partnership programme. This effort could be wasted if the political crisis continues and private and partisan interests prevail. Constructive cooperation among all political forces is needed to finalize the Association Agreement", added the chairman of the European Parliament.





Head of the EU Delegation to Chisinau, Dirk Schuebel, has stated that promulgation of the laws voted in the parliament by PLDM and PCRM would mean violation of the Moldovan Constitution.

“Promulgation of the laws voted in the parliament would mean violation of the Moldovan Constitution and the Constitutional Court should be an independent institution”, said Dirk Schuebel within the “Public area” programme of the Radio Moldova.

“We hope that a new Government will be established soon in Chisinau and that the

The Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Ambassador Janez Lenarčič has also voiced concern about the developments in Chisinau, warning that the recent legislative amendments, in particular those regarding the constitutional court and electoral code, might undermine the development of a pluralist democratic system.

“All political actors have to work together to ensure that the principles of democratic law-making and an independent judiciary, as well as a level electoral playing field for all political parties and candidates, are guaranteed”, said the ODIHR director. The official reminds that as an OSCE participating State, Moldova has committed itself to enact all legislation, including that affecting democratic institutions, in an inclusive, transparent and consultative manner.

new Government will promote the same ideas and will have the same European integration priorities for the country”, mentioned Dirk Schuebel. The official has added that the EU will continue to back Moldova in its European integration process, but a political stability in the country is needed for that.

On Tuesday, during a telephone conversation, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, has advised the president Nicolae Timofti not to promulgate the package of laws voted by PLDM and PCRM.



## Reactions by the Moldovan political class



The leader of the Communist Party Vladimir Voronin has severely criticised the statements of the European officials.

“The Strasbourg and Brussels statements represent today the most serious blow given to the European modernisation of Moldova. It is a blow given to all the citizens of the country who genuinely believed that the decisions of such a level cannot be taken under the primitive pressure of personal

corruption and of the xenophobia from the cold war times”, stated Voronin. The latter reiterated the PCRM intention to trigger early parliamentary elections.

“At present, the opinion of the European bosses interests us least of all. The influence of these bosses is not higher in Europe than in Moldova. It is the opinion of our citizens which interests us primarily. And I support all the decisions which have been adopted mainly because they increase the chances of triggering early parliamentary elections, free and democratic elections, decriminalisation of the country and for a dignified and democratic future”, stated Voronin.

The leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM), the ex-premier Vlad Filat, has stated at a press conference that he knows the European officials are concerned about the laws passed by the Parliament but



he thinks the decisions taken are correct, bringing strong reasons for each of them. The premier has also stated that the leader of the Democratic Party Marian Lupu and the leader of the Liberal Party Mihai Ghimpu are the ones who have sabotaged the European integration course over the last three and a half years.

In response to some statements of the PDM leader Marian Lupu who was pointing out at

the multitude of critical reactions coming from the European institutions, Vlad Filat has stated that the “obscure evolutions” in Chisinau have been engineered by the PDM. “How could they forget about the position of the European officials when they dismissed the Government? Three EU foreign ministers were then in Chisinau and gave a clear message but were not heard. They also probably forgot about the concerns regarding the decision of the Constitutional Court from April 22 (which declared unconstitutional the presidential decree on the appointment of Vlad Filat as prime-minister candidate), which has thrown the country into the chaos. PLDM took great effort to form a new Government. We made concessions and showed flexibility but our effort has been blown. It is an open secret who has compassed this obscure plan”, stated Vlad Filat.

parliamentary majority and establish a new Government and that it is opting to avoid early elections which would throw the country into chaos and would definitively compromise the European course of Moldova”.



The following day after the common PLDM-PCRM voting in the Parliament, the leader of the Liberal Party Mihai Ghimpu, who did not participate in that sitting, wrote on his blog that “the new red-green PLDM-PCRM coalition has done a real coup d’etat”.

Mihai Ghimpu said that they „hit into the rule of law, democracy, the European course, into the hope of people most of whom live under the poverty line”.

The Liberal Party leader mentions that the new coalition which is encroaching on the democratic institutions in a state, would bring the Republic of Moldova back under the Moscow influence and would draw it in new parliamentary elections. “New laws have been adopted in order to spoil definitively our relations with EU, that is to change our foreign policy vector and turn us towards Russia, to stop the fight against corruption and to prepare the ground for early elections”, writes Mihai Ghimpu on his blog.

The leader of the Liberal Party has stated to the press that his party is ready to participate in an alliance with PDM and PLDM which would support the European course and would exercise governance “oriented towards people”.

In a statement made on Wednesday, May 8, the Government from Chisinau which is being led at present by the acting prime-minister Iurie Leanca, makes it clear that “it is examining very carefully the position of the European

institutions regarding the recent political developments, intending to sort out the problems which generated the concern of the strategic partners of the Republic of Moldova”.

The statement underlines that “the European integration objective and implicitly the edification of a society based on the supremacy of the rule of law and the pluralism and transparency principles are key elements which guide the state institutions in the fulfilment of the European reforms committed within the relations with EU and Council of Europe”.

## ***President Timofti has promulgated the controversial set of laws, except for the Law on the Constitutional Court***



On Wednesday, May 8, the president Nicolae Timofti submitted for re-examination in the Parliament the law providing for the possibility of lifting the Constitutional Court judges’ mandates by the Parliament in case of “losing confidence”, a law which raised most of the criticism by the European institutions.

In his letter, the president Timofti has underlined the need to respect the constitutional precept on the immovability of magistrates.

The following day, on May 9, the head of state promulgated four laws from the set of laws passed by the communists and liberal-democrat MPs- the one on the Anticorruption National Centre, the modifications to the electoral code, the extension of the Government attributions and of the acting prime-minister competencies.



The chairman of the Democratic Party Marian Lupu has addressed a letter to the president Nicolae Timofti, requesting him not to promulgate the laws voted by the PLDM and PCRM MPs and to expedite the appointment of a candidate for prime minister in order to overcome the political crisis.

At the same time, Marian Lupu requested Nicolae Timofti to appoint a candidate for prime minister as soon as possible as a “solution to stop the serious deflecting from the democratic and European course of the country but also to put an end to the political crisis”.

The PDM leader says that the political party that he is leading is ready to take part in the negotiations in order to form a new

*Political analysts in Chisinau assess the latest developments as quite dramatic. While some believe that politicians, being blinded by narrow interests and turf battles, have no excuse whatsoever, and that they have compromised, through their behavior, the European course of Moldova, others consider that such actions represent, to a certain extent, a fight of pro-Europeans against the functioning of an oligarchic state.*

## **Anatol Țăranu: In Moldova, we are witnessing a fight between the pro-Europeans and the oligarchs**



*Anatol Țăranu, Director of strategic research center "Politicon", says that the latest developments in the Moldovan Parliament, are in clear contradiction with the rules governing political life in Europe.*

■ **Anatol Țăranu:** At the same time, we must take into account another important aspect - in Moldova we see a bitter struggle between Europeanization of the state on the one hand, and oligarchic trends in political life, on the other. From the procedural standpoint, the latest developments in the Parliament, undoubtedly, raise concern among the Europeans. Still, a deeper look into these things will reveal that this vote, however imperfect and flawed it may be, represents an attempt to limit the oligarchic influences on the political processes in Moldova.

The next steps will be quite important. And in this regard, Moldova needs all the European support it can get, more than ever before.

■ **Lina Grau:** Much has been said about the

fact that the vote on May 3rd means a *de facto* return to power of the Communists, since the decisions taken seem to prepare the ground for early elections, while the results of recent polls suggest that the Communist Party could, in the event of early elections, win enough seats to form the government. In this context, don't the Liberal Democrats play on the edge?

■ **Anatol Țăranu:** Indeed, it is a very dangerous game, but one that was forced by circumstances. Anyhow, we have to admit that trends observable in Moldovan politics suggest a failure of the democratic forces in favor of the Communists. From this point of view, things have not changed for the worse. Another thing is that the Communists have strengthened their positions by raising the threshold and restoring the right to vote for their constituents, holders of Soviet passports. But these things are of secondary importance. The general feeling is that the parties from the former Alliance have engaged in a fight of mutual annihilation. But on a deeper look, it transpires that, actually, it is a fierce battle between two

trends in Moldovan politics - the one seeking EU integration and the other, an oligarchic one, that is trying to stop the integration of Moldova into the European space and acceptance of European values. Those who were trying to promote the course of European integration, clashed against the oligarchic tendencies that have grown to such an extent, that it became impossible to make any significant progress on EU integration. None of these trends appear in its purest form, but in my opinion, the EU integration camp is represented by Filat-Leancă team. Unfortunately, they also have made some oligarchic-type moves in their policies, but, by and large, they fight against the so-called oligarchic influences. The oligarchic camp is represented by the first deputy chairman of the Democratic Party, Mr. Vladimir Plahotniuc.

Moldova has not yet missed its train towards Europe. Europeans do not quite understand what's going on in Moldova and this is natural. But I think that in the near future, they will realize what is happening and will adjust their approach and discourse accordingly.

The likelihood of early elections is very high – all pin their hopes on these elections – the pro-Europeans, the oligarchs and the communists. This means, that Moldova is virtually doomed to have early elections. However, theoretically, there remains hope that the democratic forces will realize the danger facing them, and will try to form a parliamentary majority, as needed to put a pro-European government in office, although this is highly unlikely. I believe that pro-European forces understand that it's in their best interest to give themselves some respite until the next ordinary elections, rather than delve into early elections now.

## **Viorel Chivriga: The story of Moldova could become one of the saddest in Europe**

*The expert of the Institute for Development and Social Initiatives "Viitorul", Viorel Chivriga, disagrees with the view explaining the position of the Liberal Democrats, when the latter decided to vote together with the Communists, as a fierce battle between pro-European and oligarchic forces, i.e. the Democratic Party and its first deputy chairman Vladimir Plahotniuc.*

■ **Viorel Chivriga:** I do not think this is a plausible explanation. Indeed, there are some political parties in Moldova whose leaders wield a lot of economic power. But I would not try to portray the situation as a fight between the pro-Europeans and oligarchic or pro-Eurasian forces. Judging by the latest developments, it looks like European aspirations are not too interesting for either party, because if they were, politicians would have overcome their personal and small group ambitions, to reach a compromise for the sake of the European future of Moldova. Countries that truly made European integration as their national priority, have succeeded to put aside their internal differences in order to secure a European future for their state.

European officials have been unusually outspoken in their statements, following the vote of May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Probably, they had not expected that the authorities in Chisinau would take actions calling into question the success story of Moldova, just before the summit in Vilnius, which was broadly expected to acknowledge the European aspirations of the country.

Actually, what is happening in Chisinau is the result of a power struggle between political parties, or a kind of a turf war between those in power, who seem to have forgotten that political parties and those ruling the country should be primarily guided by the interests of the people. Moldova is lagging behind in many areas and the authorities should have used the remaining few months before the Vilnius summit, to work hard in order to implement

completely the country's commitments towards the EU.

Now, the EU notes that there are serious deficiencies in the functioning of Moldovan Government and Parliament, which have quickly approved laws without following the required steps of the legislative process. And some of these laws, are designed to undermine the fundamental institutions of a democratic state.

One of the biggest problems of our country, is that over the past four years, there have been created many negative precedents for interpreting the laws. These precedents will play against the parties that were in power and have produced such precedents in the first place. I do not believe that the main opposition party - the Communist Party - will act in a more democratic manner and will refrain from using the same tools and methods in the political struggle against the parties of the former Alliance for European Integration. This certainly will happen, and Moldova's success story will turn into one of the saddest in Europe.

The developments in Moldova follow the Ukrainian scenario, if not worse – declared reforms, against the background of huge support from the EU and other partners, with many ambitious but unfulfilled commitments, and a subsequent hijacking of the European vector.

Moldova had sufficient time, capacities and resources needed to implement reforms and come closer to the achievement of the national objective of European integration. This idea however, has been compromised, with the population being disenchanted by the political class and now, it is very hard to identify new forces able to gain voters' confidence and lead Moldova on its



European path.

■ **Lina Grau:** In these circumstances, do you think that Moldova has lost the last train of European integration and the country risks remaining for a long time in a gray area of Europe?

■ **Viorel Chivriga:** There is some time left, but not much. Politicians still have some time to realize the blunders they made, and correct them. All leaders of political parties should reach a compromise, which means they should put aside their differences and agree on actions that would enable the country to achieve the national idea of coming closer to EU integration. Moving away from the national idea that enables Moldova to become an associated state with the EU in the near future, would be a fatal mistake for this country. A small achievement in the time remaining until the summit in Vilnius, would be for politicians to take some steps back and reach the last car of the train that goes to Europe.

If they fail to reconcile their differences, early elections will become the only remaining solution. However, these elections are no guarantee that parties of the former Alliance will remain in power. A lot of negative energy has accumulated in society - people had high expectations and now these expectations have been compromised.

## **Arcadie Barbaroșie: The political crisis has been triggered by the fight for influence between two persons**



*The director of the Public Policy Institute Arcadie Barbaroșie has a single explanation for what is happening now in the Republic of Moldova - the crisis situation has been triggered by the fact that the political parties are not formations based on ideologies but rather Ltds meant to generate profit.*

■ **Arcadie Barbaroșie:** The main cause of the crisis triggered after the hunting from December 23, and of the crisis generated after Vlad's Filat statement from February 13, 2013, as well as many other phenomena in the Republic of Moldova, can be explained by the fact that the Moldovan political parties are no more than Ltds, private businesses managed by a small group of people or by one person who finances the party. The political parties are not doctrinal organisations or organisations with internal democracy. I have to admit it with regret that our most democratic party is PCRM, because it seems to have some discussions even they do not appear in public, though could be followed on blogs and social networks. As for the three parliamentary parties, they are Ltds managed by one or maximum two persons. And the management of these parties is similar to the one of the private companies.

What has now come to the surface in the Republic of Moldova, is the fight between two parties (the Liberal Democratic Party and

the Democratic Party), which is actually a confrontation between the leaders of these two parties –Vlad Filat and Vlad Plahotniuc. And because the parties are nothing else than business enterprises, the political life has turned into a fight between two private companies trying to divide the spheres of influence. It seems that all the statements about “principles and values” could be thrown to the waste-basket.

The controversial laws voted by PLDM together with the Communist Party are also an indication of this struggle – a blow given to the enemy. Flad Filat hits thus the enemy- PDM, which at this moment is also the enemy of PCRM. The prime-deputy chairman of PDM Vlad Plahotniuc made his fortune mainly having served the communists or more exactly, having made very skilfully PCRM serve him since probably 2002. Voronin, feeling profoundly betrayed, is now hitting into Plahotniuc as well as into Marian Lupu, the latter having been member of PCRM and having quitted the party in 2009. We can thus see that it is about dividing the spheres of influence.

■ **Lina Grau:** Where can we see in this gladiators fight that you are describing the country interests that the politicians speak about when they want to come to power?

■ **Arcadie Barbaroșie:** It seems that the country and population interests are the

last things that these people think about now. Apparently, the country has to pass through this purgatory – for the garbage and offscourings to come to the surface- so that people could sooner or later become more conscious of the fact that it is they who decide the future of their country through their option. The people should make a conscious choice when voting, be it at the parliamentary or local elections, and in the intervals between the elections, they should be active in order to influence the decision-making process and to hold the political class accountable for their actions.

Despite the negative developments at present, I am still optimistic and think that on the whole, the things are moving into the right direction and are progressing. Even if the communists come back again to power for four or even eight years, the things will anyway gradually change for better. In the meantime, young and well-prepared people will come into politics. The risk is that some of these could be even more wicked than those that we have at present though there might also be people with high moral standards who will manage to change the quality of the political life in our country.

■ **Lina Grau:** What signals do these evolutions transmit to the western partners of the Republic of Moldova?

■ **Arcadie Barbaroșie:** The western partners are extremely disappointed by what is happening in Chisinau and the evidence for that are the official statements made on this issue. I think they are aware of the fact that they had given too much and unconditional credit over this period of almost four years. The EU support might continue but starting from now on, the Europeans will be more demanding. It is important for Moldova that the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement are technically finalised. If these documents are in place, even if not signed or initialled in Vilnius, they will become the main legal

framework regulating the relations between Chisinau and EU.

■ **Lina Grau:** What could be the denouement of the political crisis in Chisinau?

■ **Arcadie Barbarosie:** There exist two solutions – either re-establishment of the parliamentary majority and formation of a new Government or early parliamentary elections. The communists have declared from the outset that they are in favour of

early elections, a reason for which the new majority could not be but a coalition of the same political parties which are in conflict now. The early elections could lead to coming back to power of the communists –alone or in coalition with one of the parties from the democratic coalition – for instance with PDM led by Marian Lupu and Vlad Plahotniuc.

I am optimistic and think that the things are developing no matter how dramatic they might look to us and the citizens who wish a better future for all of us. The democratic

processes in other countries were not any easier and many times they passed through the same stages that we are passing now. Contrary to those countries though, we enjoy the support of our European partners which I am confident will continue to back us. Democracy is difficult to learn and sometimes has dramatic evolutions, especially in times of economic crisis. But I am convinced that the Republic of Moldova will overcome this difficult period even though this process might take some years.

## **Corneliu Ciurea:** *The topic of the Republic of Moldova has disappeared from the European agenda at least for a short-term period*

*The expert of the Institute for Development and Social Initiatives, Cornel Ciurea, is also of the opinion that the main reason for the political crisis consists in the rivalry between “the two Vlad’s” and the situation at the end of the year 2012 aggravated unexpectedly after it was known that the Association Agreement will not be signed at the Eastern Partnership Summit. So the “Vilnius chance” has disappeared.*

The expert finds it irrelevant and partisan the point of view which is trying to explain the withdrawal of PLDM from the ruling coalition as a fierce struggle between the pro-European party in the Republic of Moldova and the oligarchic one which is controlling the state institutions and preventing the democratic development of the Republic of Moldova.

■ **Corneliu Ciurea:** This is a point of view promoted by those who do not want to be objective. My position is that oligarchs should not be divided into good and bad as they are all part of the same category. And it is undisputable the fact that Vlad Filat is not less of an oligarch than Vlad Plahotniuc. So this is an idea which is being promoted by those who do not want to be objective and equidistant.

■ **Lina Grau:** What signals do these evolutions send abroad, to the European partners who were ready to provide the Republic of Moldova certain perspectives in Vilnius even if we do not speak any more about signing the Association Agreement?



■ **Corneliu Ciurea:** The Republic of Moldova seems to be no longer in the cards of Brussels, the latter having sent clear signals in this sense. I think that the limits have been exceeded in violating the democratic principles. Unfortunately, the biggest part of the blame for these developments is on Vlad’s Filat shoulders and it is not only my opinion. This opinion is also shared by the western partners of the Republic of Moldova. Filat had the chance to write a brilliant page in the history of this country but he chose to pass it up. From this point of view, the coming back of the communists to power seems to be a solution and as paradoxically as it may seem, it re-establishes the Republic of Moldova on the democratic path.

Under these conditions, the early elections seem to be the only way out of this situation. I do not think that the current option with Filat, Lupu and Ghimpu have any moral right to stay in power now.

■ **Lina Grau:** The Republic of Moldova seems to have missed already the European train. When do you think it will have another chance?

■ **Corneliu Ciurea:** As mentioned above, the Republic of Moldova has been taken out of the equation by Brussels. Moldova will be ignored for a while by the European structures and certain financial sources from the international financial institutions may be delayed or could even not come. The situation might probably change at a certain moment on the medium-term period. It is quite serious the fact that the Republic of Moldova has disappointed its western partners and sent negative signals. The western partners will probably wait and see what the next government will look like in the Republic of Moldova and only then it will decide what has to be done being more careful in future.

# Editorial by Victor Chirila

## Moldova - a success story brought to ground zero



Last month, after the Parliament passed a vote of no confidence in the Government headed by Vlad Filat on April 10, the President Nicolae Timofti appointed again Vladimir Filat as candidate to the post of Prime Minister. On April 19, the Parliament voted as a matter of urgency, and the President promulgated the law on the Introduction in the Republic of Moldova of the mixed uninominal voting system. Analysts said that the new system favors the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) and that it was a precondition of PDM, and especially of its Vice-Chairman Vladimir Plahotniuc for voting the new Filat cabinet of Ministers. On the evening of April 22, the Constitutional Court declared the Decree designating Vlad Filat as candidate to the post of Prime Minister unconstitutional. Three days later, on April 25, the Communists, Liberal Democrats and the non-attached deputies - a total of 76 votes - dismissed the Chairman of the Parliament, the Democrat Marian Lupu. The interim Prime Minister function is being fulfilled at the moment by Lurie Leanca, minister of Foreign Affairs.

What will be the impact of the latest political events on the European future of Moldova? Victor Chirila, the Executive Director of the Foreign Policy Association, is trying to answer this question give, in his editorial today: Moldova – a success story brought to ground zero.

Victor Chirila:

Sad but true, after 3 years and 7 months of governance by the Alliance for European Integration (AIE), Moldova has become a clumsy copy of Ukraine governed by the Alliance of the Orange Revolution Parties. Only in 4 months after the fatidic boar hunting, our country transformed itself in a country with dysfunctional institutions, a temporary government and a chaotic legislature without a parliamentary majority. The success story of the Eastern Partnership has vanished as a soap bubble, being turned into a new disappointment for us and Europe.

Our brave politicians are assuring us that everything is done in the interest of our country, for Moldova's European integration and thinking about the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius. A real mockery played on the expense of our present and future, of the ordinary citizens that are following powerlessly the political tragicomedy in Chisinau. It could have been funny if our destiny had not been at stake. Unfortunately, there is no place for fun, especially when our hopes, ideals and trust in the future of our country are methodically destroyed.

They are reassuring us that we are doing great progress towards Europe, but actually we are heading again towards the ground zero of the year 2009. Am I

exaggerating? Not, at all. According to the recent Barometer of Public Opinion elaborated by the Institute of Public Policies from Chisinau, the society is confused, disappointed and divided more than ever in the last four years.

After the endless political games played by the leaders of the Alliance for European Integration, 84% of Moldovan citizens consider that the situation in the country is not going in the right direction, and 52% of Moldovans are ready to vote tomorrow for Moldova joining the Customs Union Russia – Belarus – Kazakhstan. The Communist leader, Vladimir Voronin, who pleads for Euro-Asian integration is again enjoying the highest percentage of trust among Moldovans, and the Party of Communists, led by him, has the highest chances to regain power and form a single party government in case of early parliamentary elections.

Are the pro-European leaders aware of these realities? Yes, of course. But, are they still concerned about us when they are entirely absorbed by their desire of mutual annihilation in order to satisfy their vanities, enmity and group interests? Do our expectations and needs still count when their primary desire is to keep the power at all cost? I doubt that. We are no more than poor electoral souls for them.

In order to buy our silence, they promise us successes at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius. Dear pro-European politicians, wake up to reality, "You fiddle while Rome is burning". The success doesn't reside only in the signing and initialing of the future Association Agreement, which is very important, but is not everything. The image and perception of the country in the European capitals will weight, as well, a lot.

At the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, Moldova should have been raised on the pedestal of a successful democratic Eastern European country, which deserves a clear European perspective from the EU. Unfortunately, the total war unleashed by you has thrown a deep shadow of doubt over your political principles and values, your sincerity, your capacity to govern in common and, especially, the progresses made so far by Moldova on its European Integration course. More than that, Europeans' sympathy towards our country was heavily shaken by your irresponsible behavior and vandalism with respect to everything you managed to accomplish in those 3 years and 7 months.

Dear politicians, there is only one way to stop this gradual fall in abyss- to, wake up to the reality as soon as possible. Otherwise, we will see you at the elections judgment.