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NEWSLETTER

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Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates

TOPICS OF THE EDITION:

1. Opinions expressed by the leaders of the political parties represented in the parliament on the significance for the Republic of Moldova of the Vilnius EaP Summit from November 28-29. Interviews with **Valeriu Streleț** (PLDM), **Marian Lupu** (PDM), **Ana Guțu** (PLR), **Valeriu Munteanu** (PL), **Mihai Godea** (CAD), **Dmitrii Petrenco** (PCRM), **Igor Dodon** (PSRM).
2. Association Agreement with the EU: a historic chance for Moldova. An editorial by the executive director of the Foreign Policy Association, **Victor Chirila**.

The last period has been marked by a series of important events for the Republic of Moldova:



Chisinau is going to initial in less than one week the Association Agreement (AA) with the EU. The event will take place within the third EaP Summit in Vilnius, capital of Lithuania, on November 28-29.



The event is considered to be a historic one and is going to mark a new stage in the rapprochement of the Republic of Moldova with the EU. In the preparation stage of this important event, the European and American leaders have addressed support and encouraging messages to Chisinau. The German chancellor Angela Merkel has written on the Twitter account of the political party she is leading – Christian-Democratic Union – that the "Republic of Moldova is the country which showed the highest commitment on the European path".



Also, in preparation for this event, in Brussels, on November 15, the report on the fulfilment by Chisinau of the commitments for the visa liberalisation regime was presented. The chairman of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, stated that Moldova has fulfilled all criteria for lifting the visas with EU and a recommendation in this sense is going to be made within the EaP Summit in Vilnius. The European experts have estimated that the Moldovan citizens holding biometric passports will be able to travel to the EU without visas starting with next autumn. "The European path of the Republic of Moldova is a reality", has concluded Jose Manuel Barroso.



The Ukrainian government announced on November 21 that it had cancelled the preparations for signing the Association Agreement with EU, an event which had to take place in Vilnius. It motivated its decision with the need to ensure national security, re-launch the economic relations with Russian and prepare the domestic market for relations with the EU. Russia has welcomed the decision while the EU expressed its disappointment. "We think, it is disappointing not only for the EU, but also for the Ukrainian people", the EU commissioner for foreign affairs, Catherine Ashton, has stated.



On November 3, on the National Assembly Square in Chisinau, the parties of the pro-European coalition organized an ample meeting in support of the European course of the Republic of Moldova. According to the organizers, about 100 thou people participated in the meeting.



On November 14, the parliament from Chisinau adopted a resolution on the importance of the AA with the EU and of the visa liberalization regime for the Moldovan citizens. The parliamentary opposition – the communists and socialists – refused to sign the resolution.

On November 13, during a visit to Berlin, the speaker of Parliament, Igor Corman held a public speech at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung on the topic "The Republic of Moldova: reforms and integration in the European Union". Igor Corman spoke about the efforts made by the Moldovan government and the people's support within the European integration process and about the need to continue the reforms in the area of the independence of justice, prosecution, fighting against corruption. The event was attended by German MPs, politicians, representatives of the business and civil society circles, diplomats.

The Vilnius moment – a historic event for European future of the Republic of Moldova



In several days, the EaP Summit will start its works in Vilnius within which Moldova is going to initial the Association Agreement (AA) with the European Union, including DCFTA. Also in Vilnius, the European Commission is going to recommend the member states to exclude the Republic of Moldova from the list of the countries which need visas to travel in the EU.

The Vilnius moment is promising to be extremely important for the European future of the Republic of Moldova. In today's programme we have sought to know the opinion of the political forces represented in the Parliament about what the EaP Summit means for the Republic of Moldova and if the European course can or cannot become irreversible.



LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Valeriu Streleț: **Our European course will be constant**



Chairman of the parliamentary group of the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova, Valeriu Streleț, is saying Vilnius is a symbolic moment for the Republic of Moldova and it marks the move to a new stage in the relations with the EU.

■ **Valeriu Streleț:** After the Vilnius summit, the character of the European course of the Republic of Moldova may become irreversible, though there are no guarantees. Everything depends on the performance and conduct of the political class.

During the discussions with the European officials, the latter have presented us with very clear benchmarks to be met and reform stages that we should pass after Vilnius so that we can count on the signature of the AA and DCFTA until September 2014. In parallel, we can obtain the abolition of the visa regime in the European Union for the Moldovan citizens.

■ **Lina Grău:** What are these stages?

■ **Valeriu Streleț:** The main benchmarks are as following: - eradicate the corruption not only at the level of statements and legal acts adopted, but also in concrete actions; ensure functionality of public and state institutions; ensure transparency in the administration of public ownership, which means transparency in eventual privatisations which should be done only through public investment contests; ensure fair justice, which means reforming of the judiciary as a whole.

In addition to these four important areas, there are other fields which will be under monitoring by our colleagues in the European Union. These refer to the finance of the political parties, education and health reform, infrastructure reform, especially the transport infrastructure.

After all, these elements are not just tributes to be paid to our European partners

but elements and stages meant to improve the conditions of the Moldovan citizens and which will influence positively the situation in the country as a whole. We hope very much that after Vilnius we will have the necessary motivation and arguments to stick devotedly to these benchmarks and not to compromise the confidence that our citizens entrusted us with, on one hand, and our development partners, on the other hand.

■ **Lina Grău:** You have mentioned about the development partners. What do you think should be their attitude so that the Republic of Moldova could move in a more speedy way towards the European integration? What should be the Brussels approach towards the Republic of Moldova?

■ **Valeriu Streleț:** Any process, of course, needs encouragements together with consistent and trenchant approaches. So far, we have had both. We are encouraged on our way towards European integration through various assistance programmes, including technical assistance and we are treated in a consistent and trenchant manner, just like friends. For instance, we are pointed unequivocally on the shortcomings which should be removed. I think that this attitude is correct and should be kept.

■ **Lina Grău:** What should the governance do so that 2014 does not mark a hiatus in the European course of the country and does not bring to power forces which would slack or even change the European course?

■ **Valeriu Streleț:** We can obtain that only through concrete results which should be felt by each person. And we have the necessary conditions to produce such results for the citizens. Beside the important infrastructure works which have started, like European roads, we should put more effort in order to increase the wages, eradicate the

corruption, and improve the performance of the judiciary and civil servants. We count a lot on these changes.

Of course, the most important practical result will be the abolition of the visa regime in September 2014. Many more countries have experienced that effect on their European path and the representatives of those countries have told us that their citizens had become more pro-European since visas had been abolished. This is a real result which can give citizens more confidence in the pro-European coalitions and in the pro-European course of the country in general.

By all means, the AA and DCFTA will bring tangible results even though the effects will not be immediate. These documents will create a policy framework for the results to follow, while lifting of the visa regime is an immediate result which would give the citizens more confidence in the pro-European coalition in power.

I have brought only several examples which we hope would allow us to tell our citizens confidently and with dignity about successes and failures, as well as about the risks in case the European course is compromised.

■ **Lina Grâu:** What are we doing with Transnistria? The problem is perceived as a hook which keeps us attached to the East and by means of which the Republic of Moldova can be influenced by Russia.

■ **Valeriu Streleț:** The minimum set of actions regarding the degree of integration of the Eastern territories of the Republic of Moldova into the European integrationist processes has already been determined. Only those entities will benefit by the effects of the AA and DCFTA which will be part of the legal environment of the Republic of Moldova. Those which will neglect the norms will not be able to benefit from the results.

On the other hand, the actions oriented towards monitoring the flow of citizens

in this region have already been taken- there are migration check points in place for foreign citizens who travel in this area and better conditions have been created in order to obtain documents confirming the citizenship of the Republic of Moldova to those who can prove the domicile in Transnistria and wish to obtain the citizenship of the Republic of Moldova.

In other words, we do not have any shortcomings in relation with Transnistria. Our European course will be constant regardless of the eventual developments on this segment. We understand very well that this is a problem for our country- the fact that we cannot ensure total control of the sovereign state and we know it very well that very often the solution of this problem does not depend only on us. But the European course of the Republic of Moldova is not jeopardised in a decisive manner by the situation in the Eastern districts.

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF MOLDOVA

Marian Lupu: It is a historic chance but we should wither some myths: Europe will not come to develop our country for us

The chairman of the Democratic Party parliamentary group, Marian Lupu, is saying that initialling of the Association Agreement with EU in Vilnius is a historic moment for the Republic of Moldova- a big success but also a big responsibility.

■ **Marian Lupu:** Initialling and signature next year of the Association Agreement make the European integration process irreversible, though we cannot say that putting the agreement into operation alone can lead the country in this direction.



It is evident that no government will afford to denounce this agreement because this would be an out of the ordinary action. It is very important how active the future governments will be in implementing this agreement. That is why, in order to guarantee an irreversible character to the European integration process, we will need to have qualitative governance elected by people. It will depend a lot on the future governments whether this document will be implemented or not.

Secondly, initialling and signature of the Association Agreement gives us the possibility to apply for the EU candidate-state status, provided we apply the European standards in all areas –political, democratic, economic, social, education, infrastructure etc.

Thirdly, we should mention the advantages offered by the AA to the Moldovan citizens. The document gives the possibility of developing a customs-free trade. This would create new advantageous conditions for the European investors to come to the Republic of Moldova, for new enterprises to open, new production to develop, new jobs to be created and new economic and commercial partnerships to develop. It is about a new business culture and new standards.

This means new funds, assistance and support by the EU in order to develop the economic and social infrastructure. This is about a European education system for our children and nephews, a European social protection and health care model, new opportunities for a better life- people to have jobs, earn decent salaries and lead a good life.

But I would like to underline one aspect. We should wither some myths here and tell the people that the AA and the European integration process itself will not produce miracles like the Europeans will develop our country economically and socially for us. Europe will offer us opportunities. EU will also support us financially – through grants, technical assistance and transfer of experience. Everything depends on the unity of our society, on our work, on our wish and

intelligence to use all these opportunities offered to us.

I have listened very attentively to the messages passed by the commissioner for Enlargement, Stefan Fule, and the chairman of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso. The European integration process should not be transformed into a discord and division of the society. I am sorry that certain political formations in the Republic of Moldova are trying to antagonize the society on this issue.

We should not balance the European integration processes with the traditionally good relations that we should maintain with our eastern partners. It is in the interest of the Republic of Moldova to have good relations with the latter.

For example, we have had for many years free trade with the CIS countries. Signature of the AA and putting in application of the DCFTA with the EU does not mean that the free trade regime with the Eastern partners will disappear. On the contrary, it is in our interest to have the same trade regime with the West and East.

It is the same with reference to the visa liberalisation regime. We are interested in maintaining, and we will maintain, the same regime with the Eastern partners. This way we will provide more opportunities to the Moldovan citizens.

So, Vilnius is not just a chance offered only to the political class. It is a chance offered to our whole society and it is the responsibility of everybody to take this chance.

■ **Lina Grâu:** What are the things Moldova should do after Vilnius in order to move faster on it European integration path?

■ **Marian Lupu:** The signature of the Association Agreement is opening the door to the next legal-political stage- that of applying for starting the negotiations on the status of a candidate-state for the Republic of Moldova.

I do not want to anticipate and say this thing will be possible in one, two or

more years. This decision of EU does not depend only on the internal conjuncture within the EU. A country like the Republic of Moldova will be accepted only when it comes with such an application and when EU sees that all the public and private systems – justice, courts, police electoral system, party system and their financing, economy- function based on European principles. So, when there is stability based on EU criteria and standards. And this should be everybody's work.

■ **Lina Grâu:** What are we doing with Transnistria? The analysts say this problem attaches us to the eastern space and makes it difficult for us to advance towards the EU. How should we manage it in order not to create impediments on our European integration path?

■ **Marian Lupu:** I would compare the situation with the two sides of the coin. On the one hand, we are aware of the fact that the Republic of Moldova will not be accepted into EU as long as the separatism issue is not resolved. On the other hand, I am absolutely sure that our advancement towards the EU will make it possible to improve the standards of living. When this happens on the right bank of the Nistru, this cannot but influence the thinking of the people on the left side of the river who will see the changes in the development. This way the motivation will increase and help to advance the solution of this issue.

But we understand it is a specific issue, which will probably not have an immediate solution. It is not simple either. On the other hand, in comparison with other so-called "frozen conflicts", this problem has never been caused by religious or ethnic factors. It has been an ideological and political issue.

And the problem is not an internal one. The problem will never be solved on the Chisinau-Tiraspol Axis. There are much more interests involved in this region and too much influence from outside. It is a problem which jeopardizes the regional security and a solution can only be found on a larger geopolitical platform.

REFORMISTS' LIBERAL PARTY

Ana Guțu: The Vilnius Summit will not put an end to the Russian pressures

The chairman of the Parliamentary commission for foreign policy and member of the reformists' liberal group, Ana Guțu, says the Vilnius Summit which is a historic event is not only marking the beginning of a new stage in our European integration process, but is also summing up the four-year period of the pro-European governance in Chisinau.

■ **Ana Guțu:** The expectations have been very high and the citizens expected that the visa liberalisation will happen quicker and that the wages and pensions will increase. Unfortunately, these did not happen because when we came to power we had to start anew the legislative process within which we adopted completely new laws and in parallel we continued with the European integration reform process. It is important to understand that the EaP has been a useful tool for the Moldovan citizens. It has also been good for the country that it had the opportunity to compete in this geographical area of the Eastern Europe.

Out of the six countries involved in the EaP- Belarus, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan,- the Republic of Moldova has been clearly a front-runner. It has not only met the conditionalities, but also moved much faster with the phases of the Moldova-EU Action Plan for the Visa Liberalisation, breaking also the record in finalising the negotiations for the creation of the free trade area.

We should not imagine that the Vilnius Summit will put an end to the Russian pressure- an eventual strategic partner, as other would imagine, for an eventual non-existent Eurasian Union. Of course, the pressures will continue and therefore it



is not correct to think that after Vilnius we will be able to guarantee the irreversibility of the European integration process. Not even after the EaP Summit in Riga from 2015 will we be able to do so.

At the same time, we should gather more strength on our European integration path so that we have enough energy to go beyond Vilnius towards the parliamentary elections in order to re-constitute the governance coalition. We have all the interest to come back to power – we, the parties that embrace the European integration idea- in order to work further so that the Republic of Moldova becomes a civilised and modern country.

■ **Lina Grâu:** What are the implications for the Republic of Moldova of the Ukraine oscillations on its European path?

■ **Ana Guțu:** Of course, the Republic of Moldova cannot be taken out of the

regional context. What is happening in Ukraine at the moment is of big interest to us – a country provided it signs the Association Agreement, would guarantee to us at least a territorial shield because we would not have in that case a common border with what Eurasian East means.

I am sure that the sensitiveness which exists at the moment in Ukraine will dissolve with the times. It is only about political competition but also about some occult interests. Maybe somebody can be blackmailed and is not that clean, therefore fears an eventual coming-back of Timosenko as president in Ukraine.

But I think, in the end, everything will be set aright. Ukraine cannot be but a European country. It has demonstrated several times that it has enough courage and political will to say “No!”, including to the Russian gas.

We can anyway say that the Republic of Moldova has fetched away from its totalitarian past. Even the communists that are in opposition now and who declare that they are against the European integration are cheating and do not say the truth.

■ **Lina Grău:** What do we do in this situation with Transnistria? The problem is regarded as an anchor which holds us tight and makes us vulnerable to the eastern influence and Russian interests.

■ **Ana Guțu:** The political solution of the Transnistrian conflict is not possible in the short and medium term. The resolution of the frozen Transnistrian conflict is possible only in the long term and it will happen

together with the European integration of the Republic of Moldova with its controlled territory. The population from the left bank of the Nistru should be convinced that getting integrated in the sovereign space of the Republic of Moldova, it will benefit from the same facilities as the other Moldovan citizens.

We are aware of the fact that Transnistria cannot ensure its independence. The Transnistrian economy is financed by Russia- the Transnistrian residents do not pay for the Russian gas. If we imagined this was stopped, Transnistrian economy would collapse.

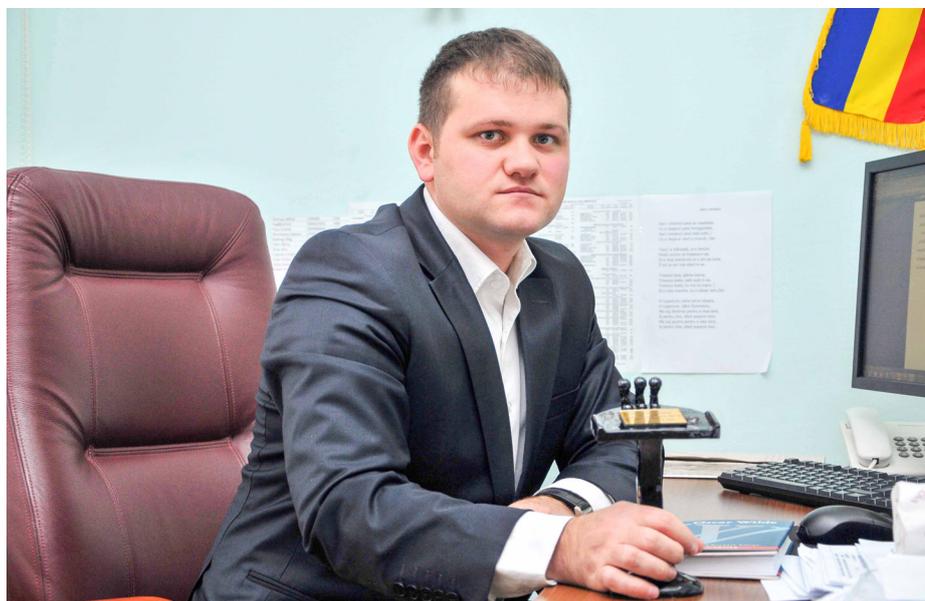
Therefore, we should not hope and have illusions that an immediate solution could

be found to the Transnistrian conflict. At the same time, we should follow the small-step policy, because it brings results even if they are not visible. And the governance, despite all its problems, has resumed the negotiation process in the "5+2 format", which is already a good thing.

We should continue step by step, through NGOs, European funded programmes to communicate with the Transnistrian residents and explain them what EU means. This policy is correct and we should not despair but continue on this way.

LIBERAL PARTY

Valeriu Munteanu: In the medium term, the situation in the Republic of Moldova is much worse than in Ukraine



The Liberal Party is not part of the government though it has publicly announced very often that the support of the European integration of the Republic of Moldova continues to be a determinant principle of the party activity. The chairman of the LP parliamentary group and the deputy chairman of the party, Valeriu Munteanu, says the Vilnius Summit is an important moment but we cannot yet affirm the European course of the Republic of Moldova has become irreversible.

■ **Valeriu Munteanu:** Unfortunately, it would be premature to declare that initialling of the Association Agreement in Vilnius would mark an irreversible process for the Republic of Moldova. It would be immature and even a criminal act because

this would mean that everybody has done his/her homework and that we are on the correct way.

Unfortunately, this is not so. There is more chaff than wheat in the governance act and everybody knows that.

Yet, our relations with the EU, the European Commission, the European Parliament and other development partners base exclusively on the confidence we were credited in the beginning, back in 2009, and unfortunately, this credit is close to an end. Actually, what we had to do in order to honour this confidence were just simple conditions- to become aware of what the rule of law means and to implement those principles. Unfortunately, for various reasons, the government failed to implement them.

The position of the Liberal Party is that the irreversibility of the European integration process should have been ensured by modifying the Constitution and introducing the principle that the RM is a European country and that there is no other acceptable way.

From this point of view, our situation is much worse than that of Ukraine. And I will tell you why. Today, in Ukraine, a pro-Russian left is in power. Just imagine that a pro-Russian left-wing government is fighting vehemently for the European integration. And just fancy the prospect of the right-wing parties coming to power after elections. The new parties in power will continue on this path and probably in a more correct way.

Our story is just opposite. Today, the right-wing parties have been able to form a very fragile and vulnerable majority, which unfortunately, has a lot of sins. In the situation when because of the internal fights in the governing coalition the Moldovan citizens lose confidence in the parties in power, the left-wing parties will come to power, which will be a catastrophe for the Republic of Moldova.

Therefore, we, the liberals have assumed

the outpost role in the European integration process and we will try to fight from outside the government if the case may be, in order to show what the real situation is and what the true European principles are. And we hope that the things we will say will be embraced by the present governance so that the European course becomes irreversible.

■ **Lina Grău:** What should the attitude of EU towards the government be so that the European course of the Republic of Moldova does not derail?

■ **Valeriu Munteanu:** Unfortunately, over the last years, EU treated Moldova like parents would treat their children – it loved and pampered it. This was not a correct education method because this spoiled child, the Republic of Moldova, did not learn the lesson. I still think that a tough position – I insist on this word- a trenchant and explicit position will discipline the decision-makers in the Republic of Moldova. The examples of the Savings Bank and the Chisinau International Airport show it very clearly that the governance does not understand on its own free will what the rule of law and other European values mean.

■ **Lina Grău:** What are the post-Vilnius challenges that the Republic of Moldova should solve so that in the following two years, in 2015, at the next EaP summit in Riga, Moldova could submit an application for joining the EU, as some Moldovan officials suggest it may happen?

■ **Valeriu Munteanu:** The biggest challenges refer to the correct understanding of the governance act and rule of law and avoidance of anti-democratic derailing.

Unfortunately, I have to admit that at this stage, 12 months before elections, the election campaign has already started. Chisinau is full of posters belonging to one political party which is trying to mask an early beginning of an electoral campaign with a so-called social campaign. Channelling of the main party forces in the

government into political actions will be a very big danger.

The agenda should be realised- that of the parliament and especially that of the central and local governments. This is an important challenge- ensure the efficient implementation of the law to the lowest level so that people cannot be brought to the National Assembly and told that European integration is a good thing but be able to understand, wherever they are – in Sturzovca, Calfa, Zolotievca or elsewhere in the Republic of Moldova- that the benefits of the European integration are tangible and beneficial. The discrepancy between what they see on TV and the real life is big and could be dangerous for our society.

■ **Lina Grău:** What are we doing with Transnistria in this European integration process? This is a problem which keeps us anchored in the eastern space and makes us vulnerable to the Russian pressure and various manipulation and provocations coming from that side.

■ **Valeriu Munteanu:** My opinion is that the EU has accepted us together with the handicap. It is important that this problem be addressed correctly. Of course, a positive result for Ukraine in Kiev would have guaranteed the correctness of Ukraine, including in the Transnistrian regulation process. Thus, Ukraine could have played further next to the Republic of Moldova and the European Union.

The Republic of Moldova should be more decisive and be able to take decisions regardless of the Moscow endorsement. I have seen with how much clumsiness and lack of confidence important documents on the Transnistrian conflict have been adopted, especially this autumn. I am speaking about the check points for migration control on the Nistru, because the EU wants to ensure that Moldova controls that territory. Those 300-400 thou citizens are not a threat. The biggest threat is that hole of some hundreds of km for Asia and the Middle East and the EU cannot afford such problems.

DEMOCRATIC PARTY ACTION

Mihai Godea: The enormous wave of expectations linked with the Vilnius summit is dangerous because the population can get disappointed



The leader of the Democratic Action Party, the MP Mihai Godea, is saying that his party supports actively the European course of the Republic of Moldova even if it is in opposition with the governmental parties. Mihai Godea has welcomed the initialing of the AA in Vilnius but criticised bitterly the government for anti-democratic derailing, corruption and inconsistency in reforms.

■ **Mihai Godea:** In concrete terms, the Republic of Moldova is entering an integration framework which together with the ratification of the AA by the Moldovan parliament is becoming practically irreversible.

Of course, the Vilnius Summit in itself will not produce wonders in the peoples' life and the fact that the governing coalition is creating an enormous wave of expectations in relation with the Vilnius Summit is at least not correct, not to put it differently. They have created a similar wave with the election of the president and people understood no wonders happened after the election of Timofti as president. This wave of expectations will be followed by a big wave of disappointments. Euro-scepticism could increase in the society.

That is why; I think that what the governing coalition is doing at the moment is dangerous for the European integration process of the Republic of Moldova.

They would do better if they spoke less and did more. The things in the country did not change very much in comparison with two years ago- they are governing on TV, the people are offered promises through mass media. It is a governance of very good political marketing which produces no results. Such governance cannot simply produce results for the day-to-day life of the ordinary people.

■ **Lina Grâu:** So, how do you think should the Vilnius moment be addressed? Because there is a massive propaganda coming from the eastern side through the TV, NGOs financed by Russia...

■ **Mihai Godea:** There are very attractive commercial offers coming from the east for our officials. We are getting integrated in Europe, while the economically strategic assets are being ceded to the East. European integration is also about economic integration. How can the

economic integration into the eastern space be explained with the apparent political European integration? My impression is that a very dangerous double-faced game is being played, which has been characteristic to all the governments since the independence of the Republic of Moldova. I do not think that the current government of Moldova is able to modernise and integrate the Republic of Moldova into the EU.

■ **Lina Grâu:** And what would be the solution then in this situation?

■ **Mihai Godea:** The solution has always been the people and their vote. Even if the chances of the Moldovan politicians in power to get closer to the EU are getting thinner, I do not think the EU has closed or is thinking to close its doors for the Moldovan people. This gives us more courage and motivation to continue moving ahead.

■ **Lina Grâu:** Given the internal political situation in the Republic of Moldova, and the fact that the government and the opposition are the ones we have, and taking in consideration the possible change of power after the elections, according to the results of the opinion polls, does the Republic of Moldova have a chance to get integrated into the European space?

■ **Mihai Godea:** I think we are a bit in a hurry when we speak of things as having already been decided, regarding the parliamentary elections from 2014. The consolidation of a democratic and pro-European opposition pole is in full swing. And the opinion polls should not be interpreted ad-literam.

We could only then speak about Europeanization of the country when we had not only availability but also results in fighting against corruption and freeing the economic

initiative and the economy in general, in encouraging investments.

How to Europeanise the country in which the economy is groaning under the monopolies and in which the western investors with a different economic culture and approach do not come, when the justice is controlled and the mass media is following political orders? What are we speaking about?

■ **Lina Grău:** What should then be the EU position in relation to the Republic of Moldova in this situation?

■ **Mihai Godea:** I would agree with the prime-minister Leanca here. No "more pressure"

but "much more pressure!" on the Moldovan politicians. Just like in the soviet school. Because they cannot do otherwise, they are used to work under excessive pressure. The European partners should understand that here they are not dealing with a European democratic elite. Here they are dealing with imposture, economic interests and they should treat them accordingly.

■ **Lina Grău:** To what extent can the Transnistrian factor influence the European course?

■ **Mihai Godea:** It can have a big influence because Russia has a big stake in it and Russians do not hide this thing. Of course,

a lot can happen, including escalation and de-freezing of the conflict, as has Rogozin declared. Tiraspol will be used further as a blackmailing element against the Republic of Moldova on its way towards the EU.

Very many things depend in this situation on the position and movement of Ukraine towards the West. The last events in Kiev are alarming from my point of view- it is an evident hesitation of Kiev and bold implication of Kremlin in jeopardizing the signature by Ukraine of the AA with the EU. If Ukraine stays firmly on its European path, the stake in Transnistria will be much smaller than in the situation when Ukraine steps back and aligns again towards Kremlin.

The left-wing opposition is of the opinion that the historic importance of the Vilnius summit for the Republic of Moldova is exaggerated and the European course of the country can be stopped any time.

PARTY OF COMMUNISTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Grigorii Petrenco: Any process in politics is reversible

One of the leaders of the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova and member of the Parliamentary commission for foreign policy, Grigorii Petrenco, says the Republic of Moldova would have more advantages if it joined the Russia-Belarus- Kazakhstan Customs Union than staying for years in the waiting room of the European Union.

■ **Grigorii Petrenco:** I think there are a lot of myths related to the Vilnius Summit, a lot of disinformation, speculations and attempts to manipulate the public opinion. We do not know a lot of things about Vilnius because the AA draft which will be initialled has not been made public. Even the MPs who have access to secret documents could not familiarize themselves with the provisions of this agreement. Therefore, I think we will have lots of surprises after Vilnius when the content of this agreement is made public.

As to the statements that the Vilnius summit is a historic one, I would not exaggerate here because we do not know the final results yet.



Even if the AA is initialled, it will take long until it is signed, ratified and enters into force.

We are of the opinion that in such situations, when important decisions on foreign policy of the RM are taken, the decisions should be adopted by the citizens. We are in favour of organising a referendum on this subject. We do not want to impose anything and want that people have a say.

We suggested earlier to organize a referendum on joining the treaties within the Russia-Belarus- Kazakhstan Customs Union. This initiative has been rejected by the Parliament even if more than 200 thousand signatures were collected.

We think any process is irreversible in politics and those who declare the Vilnius Summit

is an important stage in our European integration process and makes our European course irreversible are exaggerating. After all, it is the citizens who should say it and not the bandits and thieves who are now in power.

■ **Lina Grău:** What is the position of the Communist Party- where to should the Republic of Moldova go? Should it join one of the geopolitical projects in the region – European Union or Eurasian Union?

■ **Gricorii Petrenco:** I said it in beginning that there are a lot of myths linked to the EU, the Vilnius Summit, AA. The citizens should understand and know that we are not speaking today about joining the European Union. Nor the EU is inviting us to join the EU. The EaP does not provide for the EU adherence perspective and this should be clear to everybody. Those who say that we are getting integrated and joining the EU are lying.

The European Union is not ready for a next wave of enlargement. They do not know what to do with the last enlargement wave, when Romania and Bulgaria became EU members. In these conditions, we cannot wait for ever

in the waiting room of the EU and be in the situation when we cannot decide on many things and when part of our sovereignty is passed to the EU and us not even being member of this Union and being in incapacity to influence the decision-making process.

There are other interesting integrationist processes which are developing and are rather attractive to the Republic of Moldova. We have analysed the benefits which could be obtained by the Republic of Moldova if it joined the Russia-Belarus- Kazakhstan Customs Union. We think there are a lot of economic advantages –for the economic agents, competitiveness of the Moldovan produce but also for the citizens- the free movement, possibility to work in all these countries. And we should take into account the interests of the Moldovan citizens.

There are 700 thou Moldovan citizens working in the Russian Federation- they should be protected and should have the same social guarantees as the workers from the Russian Federation or Belarus. Under these conditions we came to the conclusion that taking into account the fact that we are not imposed

certain conditions to join the Customs Union, we would have more benefits participating in this union than waiting constantly in the waiting room of the EU and following the orders from the Brussels European commissioners.

■ **Lina Grău:** What would be the attitude of the Chisinau government towards the EU in case the Communist Party wins the elections from 2014 and comes to power?

■ **Gricorii Petrenco:** Our policy is consistent. It is the EU policy towards Moldova that has changed. Over the last years they have supported a government which has nothing in common with European integration and which has after all discredited the European integration idea and the European values.

We think that the citizens should take the decision and by means of referendum express their will. The Customs Union is an economic project and we should play in a pragmatic way and be there where the interests of the Republic of Moldova are and where there are more benefits for the national economy, for the local producers and Moldovan citizens.

SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Igor Dodon: The rapid and blind movement towards the EU will deepen the problems of the Republic of Moldova



The leader of the Socialist Party of the Republic of Moldova, Igor Dodon, says the EaP Summit in Vilnius will be important not only for Moldova but also from regional geopolitical point of view, but in his opinion, this will be a failure for the European Union.

■ **Igor Dodon:** The importance of the Vilnius Summit is about signing or non-signing, initialling or non-initialling of AA by several countries. The biggest stake is of course Ukraine. We have seen that lately the accents have changed in Ukraine and I personally believe that the chances are too low for Ukraine to sign the AA. In this sense, the Vilnius Summit will be a geopolitical failure.

We cannot categorically speak in the case of the Republic of Moldova about marking the

irreversibility in the European integration processes. Ukraine initialled the AA two years ago. It was ready to sign it and now we can see that many problems have appeared. The Republic of Moldova will be only initialling the AA in Vilnius and there are a lot of things to be done at home and by the development partners until it is signed. Therefore, those who are trying to place this summit too high and are creating expectations, are running a high risk.

Personally, I think that the Vilnius Summit is only a stage after which the Moldovan authorities and the parties in power will be imposed tougher conditions as far as reforms are concerned, transparency and fight against corruption.

Me, as a politician and the Socialist Party which I am leading are not supporting the AA initialling and signature. We are of the opinion that the Republic of Moldova should first resolve its internal social and economic problems, the country reintegration and only after that should we talk about the external integration. And before deciding upon the external integration, we should ask our citizens where they want to go- to the East or West.

■ **Lina Grău:** In principle, do you see the Republic of Moldova belonging to East or West? You cannot deny that we cannot do certain things domestically taking into account the regional conjuncture and the fact that we depend a lot on the influence from outside.

■ **Igor Dodon:** Even if we are a small country, this does not mean we have to obligatorily join others. I hear this approach very often and I categorically disagree with that.

We are Moldovans and citizens of the Republic of Moldova and we should be proud of this and try to resolve our problems here, domestically.

As far as the international cooperation is concerned, I am firmly convinced that from the economic point of view we will have only advantages if we deepen our cooperation within CIS, as well as with various structures that are being created in the CIS such as the Customs Union and Eurasian Union. Economically, we will only gain.

Let's deal first with our internal problems. We face major social and economic problems. We have problems with Transnistria and it is not clear what is happening with Gagauzia because there are some unclear processes there. The rapid and blind movement towards the European Union will only deepen these problems. This will categorically be no solution.

The biggest mistake is here. In order to obtain political dividends, the parties in power are trying to move very fast. Also because of political dividends, the Brussels bureaucrats are turning a blind eye to very many things. Political advances and bonuses are being offered to this government so that the latter is successful in the next elections. Otherwise, the parties in power have no results to go with in elections. Signature of the agreements and the visa liberalisation regime are just fireworks for the parties in power to say in the elections campaign "We are the best!"

The situation will be getting worse. They created too high expectations among people. The massive meeting from November 3rd and people brought by force for pictures is good but it is bad for the European integration process. Because people will hate it even more and will be against those promoting these values by means of such methods.

That is why I think that the parties in power will make a bad shot with such an approach- the blind movement towards the European integration. The bureaucrats from Brussels will have had it too because they turn a blind eye to the misdeeds happening in the Republic of Moldova and very often apply double standards. I see it that they need just to tick off a success story within the EaP which we can see it is falling apart together with Ukraine failing to sign the Association Agreement. They also have elections in the European Parliament and later in the European structures next year and they need to burst they have done something. But this is a wrong and unsustainable approach.

■ **Lina Grău:** Your opponents, when you say that only CIS is the vector which can ensure a prosperous development, would say that we have been more than 20 years in the CIS and that the Republic of Moldova is having the situation it has and that more and more Moldovans leave the country- a big part of the population has left to work abroad

because of poverty. What would you say to that?

■ **Igor Dodon:** My answer would be very simple. The level of economic integration is much higher in the CIS countries when it comes to exports and remittances as well as energy resources import and others. And this situation cannot be changed as those in power claim – that we will sign the DCFTA and our goods will be immediately and massively exported to the EU and there will be demand for them. It is not like that. We know that even the quotas that we negotiated in 2008 within the Agreement on the Autonomous Trade Preferences are not exported. The explanation is that there is no demand for our products on the EU market.

In this situation, why should we cut our access to a certain market without having the clarity what we will do with our products? We may face the situation that some Baltic states face at the moment, where unfortunately the youth left the country and are working in various European countries, the country having big problems with maintaining the social fund. We are moving towards that situation and this is very risky.

Besides, we will undoubtedly lose Transnistria. What's more, we will have major problems internally with Gagauzia and other regions.

Where our governance is moving to? Sometimes, I am looking at them and have the impression they are not thinking about these things. They will be severely penalised for this.

■ **Lina Grău:** If the Socialist Party comes to power in a certain coalition after 2014, will it advocate for changing the current course towards the EU?

■ **Igor Dodon:** I am firmly convinced that the next government will be a social one compare to the oligarchical one that we are having now. We will do our best to resolve the internal problems of the country and later the foreign integration will be subject to a referendum and the citizens will have their say regarding our direction- East or West.

Personally, I am an advocate of a deeper integration with the CIS countries because we have enormous economic advantages.



Victor Chirila,
the executive director of the Foreign Policy Association

EDITORIAL

Association Agreement with the EU – a historic chance for Moldova

On November 29, at the EaP Summit in Vilnius, the Republic of Moldova will initial the Association Agreement with the European Union. Undoubtedly, this is a historic moment which will mark our destiny for many years ahead. Our country will make an enormous step in asserting itself as a democratic, prosperous and sovereign state in partnership with EU.

The Association Agreement is not, of course, a magic panacea but a unique chance to get our country out of this amorphous state in which it has been finding itself, at the limit of survival, for more than 22 years. Through this agreement, the European Union, the most prosperous state community in the world, will commit itself to support politically, economically, financially and technologically the Republic of Moldova so that it can consolidate its democracy and rule of law, modernise the institutions and the state laws, reduce the bureaucracy, fight against corruption, ensure the independence of justice, modernise the agriculture, develop the industry, renovate the infrastructure, demonopolise the trade, ensure energy independence, develop small and medium enterprises, improve the competitiveness of national companies, modernise education and health... And the list can continue.

In its turn, the Republic of Moldova will commit to implement the reforms under the agreement and respect the core democratic values of the EU and its agreements.

Not everybody likes the EU commitment, especially those at feud with democracy and the rule of law. As closer we are getting to the Vilnius summit the higher the internal and external pressure exercised on the Republic of Moldova by those who are not pleased with the European course chosen freely by us. The communist party, which was European as recently as yesterday, today is Eurasian and is threatening us with a velvet revolution to prevent us from initialling and later, signing the Association Agreement. The communists offer us instead a “bright future” and a “nostalgic deja-vu” in the Russia-Belarus- Kazakhstan Customs Union next to the last dictator in Europe, Lukashenko. The communists’ protests are flooding, trying this way to create chaos in the country.

Tiraspol is making promises to Moscow to bring Gagauzia and Balti into the Eurasian Union. The Transnistrian provocations in the security zone on the Nistru are increasing. Russia is boycotting our wines and

is threatening with new customs duties. The Russian vice-president Dmitri Rogozin “hopes” the Moldovans will not freeze in winter and is warning us prophetically that the association with EU will defreeze the conflict on the Nistru. Also, Rogozin and other Russian officials are reminding us very suggestively that hundreds of thousands of Moldovans are working in Russia, of which many of them illegally.

The anti-association offensive with the EU unleashed on Moldova by Russian and its acolytes will be intensifying after the Vilnius summit. Undoubtedly, Moldova will be subject to an ample political, energy and media attack/blackmail by Moscow. How efficient the Russian pressure is, we can judge by the sad examples of Armenia and Ukraine which have been forced to renounce their plans of initialling and respectively signing the Association Agreements with the EU.

Being encouraged by these “victories”, Moscow will easily draw its political attention to our country. In an electoral year, this thing can cost us a lot. Ukraine’s back down leaves us uncovered against Russia and motivates Tiraspol to be from now onwards more intransigent in promoting their plans on destabilising the situation in the security zone and sabotaging the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the EU. The promoters of the Eurasian integration from outside the country, openly and in a hidden manner, will become more united in discrediting the Association Agreement in the media and in harassing the pro-European governance, making capital out of its errors.

Will the Republic of Moldova resist to such an anti-European assault coordinated form both inside and outside? It is difficult to say. A country torn between East and West, a country subdued to poverty and corruption, a country which is disappointed and has no will, a country which lacks ambition and courage. A country which has no will to resist is an easy catch for Russia. Of course, EU will stand by us and those who want to build a free, democratic and prosperous country. But this will not be sufficient!

In order to resist the pressure and not repeat the fate of Armenia and Ukraine, and continue firmly on our way towards the European integration, we need to stand by one another here, at home, those who not even for the cheap Russian gas can exchange their freedom, dignity and destiny.