

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

DELEGATION TO THE EU-MOLDOVA **PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE**

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

INFORMATION NOTE

ON THE WORK OF THE **DELEGATION TO THE EU-MOLDOVA** **PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE**

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR
EXTERNAL POLICIES OF THE UNION

9 June 2004
EUR/TB/ES

Introduction

The European Parliament delegation to the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Cooperation Committee has until now been part of the joint delegation for relations with Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. The framework for the activity of the European Parliament delegation for relations with the Republic of Moldova is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) which was negotiated with the EU and came into force on 1 July 1998. These agreements, that were agreed with many other former Soviet republics, are designed to provide a clear framework for the development of bilateral political and economic cooperation. They are based on the assumption that the countries concerned will proceed with market reforms and enable their political institutions to function on the basis of democratic principles.

A key element of each Agreement is the process of interparliamentary cooperation. It is intended that a Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (PCC) should exert parliamentary control over the implementation of the agreements and act as an open forum for debate on questions of mutual interest. The relevant articles of the PCA that cover the PCC are as follows:

Article 87:

A PCC is hereby established. It shall be a forum for Members of the Moldovan Parliament and the European Parliament to meet and exchange views. It shall meet at intervals which it shall itself determine.

Article 88:

- It shall consist of members of the European Parliament, on the one hand, and of members of the Moldovan Parliament on the other.
- It shall establish its rule of procedure.
- It shall be presided in turn by the European Parliament and the Moldovan Parliament respectively, in accordance with the provisions to be laid down in its rules of procedure.

Article 89:

- It may request relevant information regarding the implementation of this Agreement from the Cooperation Council, which shall then supply the Committee with the requested information.
- It shall be informed of the recommendations of the Cooperation Council.
- It may make recommendations to the Cooperation Council.

Republic of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova is a small country, with strong Latin influences on its culture. It enjoys a special relationship with Romania - although this is less significant since the advent to power in 2001 of the Communist government of President Voronin. Nevertheless the deep links with Romania make it especially concerned about the implications of the EU enlargement. Moldova has stated that it seeks eventual EU membership and this policy has cross-party support.

The Communist government's grip on power is considered to be firm, nevertheless it faces a vocal, if divided, opposition on the right. In 2002 there were large street demonstrations against the government and smaller rallies took place in 2003. Local elections in May 2003, in which they gained just under 50% of the votes, confirmed the Communists' predominant position. Three of the opposition parties formed an alliance - "Our Moldova".

The central government in Chisinau does not have control over the Transnistria region, which seceded after a brutal war in 1992. Talks between the two sides have taken place but remain largely deadlocked over crucial differences. Chisinau wants a unitary state, with Transnistria a subordinate federal subject with extensive internal autonomy. The Transnistrian authorities want equal status for their region and favour a confederal arrangement in which they would have equal powers. Some

Russian troops and arms are still present in Transnistria, although it had been agreed at the OSCE Istanbul summit in 1999 that they would all leave by the end of 2002. The problem remains a running sore and there are serious security concerns, with evidence that the region is a base for arms smuggling and trafficking in people, tobacco and drugs.

Official figures show that Moldova is the poorest country in Europe and this is exacerbated by its energy dependence on and energy debts to Russia. Since 2000 there has been some economic growth, albeit from a very low level. Structural reform has been limited, especially in the field of privatisation. 40% of the industrial capacity is located in Transnistria. Many young Moldovans have left for work abroad and, according to some official sources, 600,000 people or more than 30% of the economically active population, are working abroad.

Moldova became a member of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the WTO in 2001. It is also a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States. It has received a total of EUR 253 million in assistance since 1991. In 2002-2003 it received EUR 54 million, of which EUR 25 million came from the TACIS programme. One continuing source of annoyance is the lack of a full European Commission Delegation in Chisinau - this concern has been raised in several joint statements by the PCC.

The European Commission published proposals for a European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) on 12 May 2004 which covers the "new neighbours" including Moldova. The document largely consists of general principles and the Commission promises to provide the substantive details in Action Plans for each country. The policy is supposed to be separate from the membership question, offering the chance of progressive integration without prejudging which countries might someday join the EU. For many in Moldova - particularly in the pro-European parliamentary opposition - the fact that the ENP contains no promise of accession diminishes its attraction. In addition the Commission has had to work within the EU's existing policies; so it is unable at present to offer Moldova and other neighbouring countries two benefits that they really want: visa-free access to the EU and free trade in agricultural products. The Action Plan will be tailor made to reflect the existing state of relations between the two sides. The priorities set in the Action Plan will define the way ahead over the next three to five years. From 2007 the Plan will be complemented by a new financial instrument - the European Neighbourhood Instrument - which will focus on cross-border cooperation.

European Parliament activity

Throughout the current legislature the European Parliament has maintained a political dialogue with the parliament of Moldova. The delegation has also provided a focus for the expression of concerns about human rights abuses. It has, for example, addressed the issue of the periodic government crackdowns on the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition. In addition to the annual PCCs there have been regular meetings of the Bureaux of the two delegations.

At each PCC a joint statement is adopted which addresses issues of common concern. One of the main themes of these statements has been support for closer links between Moldova and the EU. They have also stressed the importance of "the principles of democracy and the rule of law (as) the foundation of EU-Moldova relations". On Transnistria the delegation has consistently underlined "the need for urgent steps to be taken to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, in line with OSCE declarations and with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova". It has also repeatedly supported cross-border cooperation between Moldova and its neighbours. The most recent joint statement is attached.

The European Parliament as a whole has also taken a close interest in events in Moldova. The most recent resolution by the plenary was adopted on 18 December 2003. This called on the Moldovan

Government "to respect democratic principles, fundamental rights and human rights, including minority language rights, and intensify the process of economic and social reform, including the further development and implementation of anti-corruption measures". The Parliament has consistently called in its resolutions on Eastern Europe for the EU to pay more attention to the Moldova. A recent example was its resolution on 20 November 2003 on "Wider Europe" in which it welcomed "the joint initiative of all parliamentary parties to call for support for Moldova's desire for EU integration, which is increasingly becoming the binding element in the country".

The Chairman between 1999 and 2004 was Mr Jan Marinus WIERSMA (PSE, Netherlands). Previous chairs of the Delegation were Mrs Erika MANN (PSE, Germany) between 1997 and 1999, and Mrs Elisabeth SCHROEDTER (Verts/ALE, Germany) between 1994 and 1996.

Interparliamentary meetings:

IPM EP-Ukraine/ IPM EP-Moldova	30 June - 4 July 1998 in Kyiv and Chisinau
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EU-Moldova PCC:

First EU-Moldova PCC	7 - 8 October 1998 in Strasbourg
Second EU-Moldova PCC	11 - 14 October 1999 in Chisinau
EU-Moldova PCC Bureau	29 February 2000 in Brussels
EU-Moldova PCC Bureau	10 July 2000 in Brussels
Third EU-Moldova PCC	18 - 19 September 2000 in Brussels
EU-Moldova PCC Bureau	20 June 2001 in Brussels
Fourth EU-Moldova PCC	16 - 19 September 2001 in Chisinau
Ad hoc delegation to Moldova	5 - 6 June 2002 in Chisinau/Tiraspol
Fifth EU-Moldova PCC	25 - 26 September 2002 in Strasbourg
EU-Moldova PCC Bureau	19 March 2003 in Brussels
Sixth EU-Moldova PCC	11 June 2003 in Chisinau
EU-Moldova PCC Bureau	10 - 11 March 2004 in Strasbourg

EU-MOLDOVA PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE

SIXTH MEETING

11 June 2003

CHISINAU

Final Statement and Recommendations

23 June 2003
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EU-MOLDOVA PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE

SIXTH MEETING

11 June 2003
CHISINAU

Co-Chairmen: Mr Jan Marinus WIERSMA and Mr Victor STEPANIUC

Final Statement and Recommendations **pursuant to Article 89 of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement**

Under the co-chairmanship of Mr Jan Marinus WIERSMA (PSE, Netherlands) and Mr Victor STEPANIUC (Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova) the sixth meeting of the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Cooperation Committee was held in Chisinau on 11 June 2003. The Committee exchanged views with Mr Vasile TARLEV, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, H.E. Mr Panagiotis GOUMAS, Ambassador of Greece to Ukraine and Moldova, on behalf of the Greek Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union, and Mr Steffen SKOVMAND, Chargé d'affaires of the Head of Delegation to Moldova in Kyiv, on behalf of the European Commission.

The Parliamentary Cooperation Committee agrees the following:

EU-Moldova relations

1. stresses that the EU is a community of shared values of respect for human rights and democracy as outlined in the Copenhagen Criteria; reiterates its view that the EU-Moldova relationship must be based on the acceptance and implementation of these values;
2. welcomes the European aspiration of the authorities and the people of the Republic of Moldova and all efforts to deepen their relationship with the EU;
3. urges the Republic of Moldova and the European institutions to examine how further relations might be strengthened within a realistic political framework, including the new political framework of a Wider Europe that is proposed by the European Commission;
4. taking into account that the Commission will elaborate an Individual Plan of Action for the Republic of Moldova, stresses that the success of the Plan will depend on the active implementation of the necessary obligations by the Moldovan authorities and underlines that the Plan should take into consideration Moldova's aspirations to integrate to the EU;
5. notes that the present enlargement process should also bring benefits in terms of peace and security, as well as economic and social prosperity, for the people of the Republic of Moldova; takes note of the request to treat the Republic of Moldova in the same manner as the EU treats other South-East European states and reiterates the conclusions of the fifth Parliamentary Cooperation Committee meeting on this issue;
6. reiterates its support for all efforts by the Government of the Republic of Moldova to approximate its legislation to that of the EU and to European standards; underlines the EU's readiness to continue cooperation and support with regard to legislative approximation; welcomes the prospect offered of access to the Single Market and encourages the Republic of Moldova to undertake all necessary steps to achieve this goal;

7. acknowledges the stipulation of the Communication of the European Commission which opens the way for granting a preferential commerce regime for Moldovan products to the Single Market, provided these products meet the necessary quality criteria;
8. welcomes the resolution of the European Parliament of 5 June 2003 which invites the EU institutions to evaluate the feasibility of including the Republic of Moldova in the Stabilisation and Association Process and, if appropriate, to clarify the conditions to be fulfilled for that purpose;
9. stresses that the Republic of Moldova is an independent country which has the right to choose its own political course, that it has a high interest to develop regional cooperation and that it has elected to move towards the EU;
10. welcomes the signing by the Republic of Moldova in November 2002 in Athens of the Memorandum on the regional electricity market and its integration into the internal market of the EU; invites the Moldovan authorities to make every effort to ensure the successful implementation of this important regional project; supports the Republic of Moldova's desire to be included in the similar regional project currently elaborated by the European Commission in the field of gas;

Economic and social situation in the Republic of Moldova

11. expresses grave concern at the increase in the Moldovan national debt in recent months and reiterates its call on the Moldovan authorities to accelerate economic reforms and to cooperate more closely with the international financial institutions in order to adapt to the demands of the global economy;
12. welcomes progress made in the economic sphere, including the growth of 7.2% in 2002 and the decline in inflation in the year; nevertheless underlines that these improvements must benefit all sectors of society including the vulnerable, such as the elderly and children; in this respect welcomes the pioneer work being undertaken in de-institutionalised day care at the Speranza centre; also urges the rapid adoption and implementation of the draft legislation on children at risk;
13. reiterates its view that further structural, administrative and judicial reforms are essential for the economic development of the country; underlines the importance of creating a transparent and secure business environment that will attract foreign direct investment to the Republic of Moldova and in which corruption is not tolerated; underlines the need for significant steps to be taken to combat corruption as a precondition for the receipt of further EU aid;
14. supports the extension of the remit of the European Investment Bank to the Republic of Moldova in order to further economic development and investment in infrastructure projects, in coordination with EBRD and World Bank programmes;

Human rights and freedom of expression in the Republic of Moldova

15. underlines its position that respect for the principles of democracy and the rule of law are the foundation of EU-Moldova relations and an essential element of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and underpin the obligations to which the Republic of Moldova has committed itself as a Member State of the Council of Europe;

16. reiterates its statement that, opposition parties and minority interests must be given a full opportunity to participate actively in the political course of the country; supports continuing dialogue between government and opposition as a means of encouraging political stability; in this respect supports the promotion of the Round Table talks and the development of a less polarised political situation;
17. supports the continuing efforts of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to promote the strengthening of democracy, human rights, religious liberty and freedom of expression in the Republic of Moldova; in this respect welcomes those positive steps taken to date by the Moldovan authorities and urges full implementation of the Council's resolutions of 24 April 2002 and 26 September 2002;
18. takes note and support the conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR on the local elections of 25 May 2003 in the Republic of Moldova and urges the Moldovan authorities to take steps to implement the recommendations;

Situation in Transnistria

19. underlines its view that the resolution of the Transnistria issue is one of the key elements in promoting economic prosperity and political stability in the whole of Republic of Moldova; stresses again the need for urgent steps to be taken to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, in line with OSCE declarations and with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova;
20. supports attempts to draw up a new constitution for the Republic of Moldova by means of the Joint Constitutional Commission; stresses the importance of discussions being transparent and open;
21. welcomes the new active approach of the EU in the search for a settlement of the Transnistria dispute; welcomes in particular the nomination by the EU of an observer to the Joint Constitutional Committee and looks forward to the EU institutions - including the European Parliament – playing a more active role in the search for a constitutional settlement; welcomes greater EU involvement in resolution of border issues; also looks towards increased engagement by the EU in the implementation of an agreement, including the possibility of sending peacekeepers;
22. regrets the failure to achieve a complete fulfilment of the OSCE/Istanbul commitments on arms and troops withdrawal from Transnistria by the target date of 31 December 2002, and calls for the new deadline of 31 December 2003 to be observed;

Border issues

23. reiterates its emphasis on the importance of establishing a common and secure border management regime that is based on a common understanding on the fight against organised crime, terrorism and corruption, as well as on common rules for immigration, protection for asylum seekers and re-admission;
24. supports recent moves by the European Commission to promote cross border cooperation and welcomes in particular the possible introduction of mobile monitoring units; welcomes too the Ukraine-Moldova customs agreement and mutual recognition of the new Moldovan customs seal; also takes note that the Republic of Moldova asks for a greater EU involvement in issues of border security;

25. supports the activities of the new Euroregion “Upper Pruth” made up of five regions of the Moldova, Ukraine and Romania, in particular the implementation of the environmental projects: expresses its hope that the Moldovan government will also provide financial support for the agreed projects;

European Commission delegation

26. strongly urges the establishment of a permanent European Commission delegation in Chisinau as a matter of urgency; stresses that a full delegation would significantly strengthen the EU’s political influence in the country and provide a focus for its activities; considers that the current situation is not sustainable in view of the significant and pressing demands on the EU; reiterates too its call on EU member states to strengthen their diplomatic presence in the Republic of Moldova.

Adopted unanimously.