



**Seventh meeting, Brussels (virtual), 30-31 March 2021**

### **JOINT DECLARATION**

The EU-Moldova Civil Society Platform<sup>1</sup> (CSP) is one of the bodies set up within the framework of the Association Agreement between the European Union (EU) and the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter “Association Agreement”). It enables civil society organisations from both sides to monitor the implementation process and prepare its recommendations to the relevant authorities on the two sides, as well as endorse declarations outlining progress made and addressing issues of concern.

The seventh meeting of the CSP was held on 30-31 March 2021. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held virtually. The members of the CSP discussed the state of play regarding the implementation of the Association Agreement and focused in particular on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the socio-economic development of Moldova as well as on digitalisation of health care in Moldova.

***With regard to the implementation of the Association Agreement, the CSP members:***

1. welcome the ambitious reform agenda of the newly elected President of Moldova but express concern at the deepening political polarisation in the country; reiterate that justice reform, fighting corruption, strengthening rule of law and local administration reform are crucial for sustainable growth and prosperity and emphasise the key role of civil society in strengthening democratic values;
2. note that according to the Transparency International Index, the Corruption Perception Index in 2020 slightly improved compared to 2019 and Moldova ranked 115<sup>th</sup> compared to 120<sup>th</sup> in 2019;
3. point out that the pay gap between men and women remains; in this regard, call for the implementation of the principle of equal pay, facilitating the process of reintegration of women into the labor market after childcare leave, for promoting family-friendly policies and working time to ensure a work-life balance for both men and women, and for combating stereotypes regarding the social roles of women and men, we also ask the Government of Moldova to examine the possibility of ratification of the ILO Convention no. 156/1981 on workers with family responsibilities;
4. recall that Moldova remains one of Europe's most vulnerable countries to climate change. In this regard, they urge the Government of Moldova to promote environmental policies and legislation and increase public institutions' capacity to assimilate the budgetary sources allocated for environmental protection. Such measures are crucial to help mitigate the consequences of severe droughts and floods on agriculture and to increase its resilience to climate change;

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<sup>1</sup> The EU-Moldova Civil Society Platform's documents are available at <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/sections-other-bodies/other/eu-moldova-civil-society-platform/events>.

4. encourage the use of satellite technologies and digitalization in agriculture in order to prevent disastrous consequences of climate change;
5. welcome the submission of the second Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement and the aspiration of Moldova to reduce emission by 70% by 2030;
6. welcome the EU Focal Regions Programme thanks to which the EU supports local Moldovan entrepreneurs, create new decent and green jobs, boosts the economic recovery, promote collective bargaining, improves business environment and privileges green economic principles and sustainability;
7. encourage the Moldovan export of food products, in particular of those of animal origin; in this regard, they call on Moldovan authorities to update the Annex XXIV-B of the DCFTA Chapter of the Association Agreement and make it available for public. At the same time, they ask the Government of Moldova to submit all the tables of correspondence for the approximated legislation to the European Commission. Furthermore, the EU side is asked to combine the audit mission for poultry meat and eggs of category B and the necessary audit mission for checking the composite products containing dairy, which have been planned for the year 2021;
8. call for harmonization of roaming prices in the Eastern Partnership countries in line with the European Parliament's report A9-0112/2020;
9. urge the Government of Moldova to support businesses in investing into environmentally friendly production and technologies; to develop financial and fiscal supporting programme for businesses interested in investments implementing and promoting the circular economy;

***With regard to impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the socio-economic development of Moldova***

10. express concern at the scale of the economic, social and political consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic both in the Republic of Moldova and in the European Union;
11. welcome the solidarity shown by the European Union and its Members States in delivering financial and technical assistance to the Republic of Moldova to help fight the pandemic through the "Team Europe" initiatives; they are pleased to see that Moldova is the first European country to have received vaccines under the global COVAX scheme and call for this support to be continued; urges governments to consider all means at their disposal to speed up vaccine production and deployment.
12. note the importance of an efficient communication strategy explaining the vaccination campaign and vaccination benefits in the context of high refusal rates including from medical personnel. At the same time welcomes the initiatives, which the EU has taken in this regard;
13. call for a more sustainable and resilient public social protection system for all, including workers in the informal economy, which had to be developed in close discussion with the social partners and in line with international instruments of the ILO and Council of Europe;

14. warn that the serious liquidity shortage faced by a high number of companies has resulted in delays in wages and in lay-offs. These negative consequences can be reduced by providing short working schemes or wage subsidies by the government, or by a combination of both;
15. call on the Government of Moldova to guarantee banking loans and postpone fiscal payments for companies and individual entrepreneurs, to increase unemployment subsidies and tackle inequalities;
16. in order to mitigate the disruption of value chains caused by the pandemic, they underline the importance of a larger diversification of providers of raw materials' and of giving privilege to the domestic ones. They also underscore the need to focus on developing green technologies, quality schemes and enhancing technology of companies which would allow them to produce and sell more processed goods;
17. urge that civil society be qualitatively involved in the development of policies and plans to address the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and activities to implement them and underline the importance of enhancing their capacity building in this regard;
18. underscore that the pandemic, besides being of a great risk to human health, also impacts in a very negative way the psychological wellbeing of the population, in particular of children, youth, elderly, disabled and other vulnerable groups. In this regard, they call for actions to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on mental health by protecting and promoting the psychological wellbeing of vulnerable groups during and after the outbreak;
19. call on Moldovan authorities to apply a mechanism of direct support for lower-income workers and workers who have lost their source of income as a result of reduced economic activity due to the pandemic; they point out that the labor force was affected by job losses, interruption of work, reduction of working time, and finally loss of source of income for maintenance. In this regard, they ask the Government to encourage vocational training as a prevention of job loss;
20. urge the Government of Moldova to develop a support mechanism for parents with children in case of interruption of activity of educational institutions. The Impact Assessment Report<sup>2</sup> mentions women as one of the most affected groups that are experiencing a stronger impact of the COVID 19 pandemic. The health crises has disproportionately affected women due to the overlapping of several factors specific to the impact of COVID-19 on both the economy and public life. One such factor is the complete or partial closure of kindergartens and schools, with women taking on the main task of caring for their children. Under these circumstances, many women have had to reduce their working hours or leave the labor market to cope with the increased burden of childcare. In this regard, they call on the Government of Moldova to develop programs that will provide support to families with children;
21. point out that the pay gap between men and women remains; in this regard, call for the implementation of the principle of equal pay, facilitating the process of reintegration of women into the labor market after childcare leave, for promoting family-friendly policies and working

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<sup>2</sup> UNDP, UNFPA, GOV of the Republic of Moldova. Impact Assessment Report. Social and Economic Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable groups and economic sectors in the Republic of Moldova. November 2020

- time to ensure a work-life balance for both men and women, and for combating stereotypes regarding the social roles of women and men, we also ask the Government of Moldova to examine the possibility of ratification of the ILO Convention no. 156/1981 on workers with family responsibilities;
22. encourage and fully support young people to start their own businesses and include them in retraining and training programs aimed at the young population, who was much affected by the pandemic;
  23. underline the need to maintain the growth rate of salaries and not to allow the accumulation of arrears; it is necessary to mention that wages remain an important source of income and their lack significantly affects the workers' life standard. At the same time, it is necessary to increase the minimum wage to 50-60% of the average wage in the economy.
  24. encourage social partners to return to the conclusion of a national collective agreement that would regulate the payment of the compensation bonus for work performed in unfavorable conditions as this issue remains unsolved.
  25. call for establishment of a longer notice period for employees with lower employment possibilities, namely, for employees with disabilities, employees who have little time left until retirement and others in case of liquidation of the unit or staff reduction;
  26. urge that the clause no. 5 of Directive no. 1999/70 / EC of the Council of 28 June 1999 concerning the framework agreement on fixed-term work concluded by ETUC, UNICE and CEEP is efficiently transposed into the national legislation;
  27. underscore the need to implement the electronic register of employees for the real sector of the economy;
  28. ask to establish a more advantageous guarantees for employees who are in technical unemployment or stationary and to facilitate preferential treatment for dismissed employees due to reducing or staffing the unit;
  29. call for a development of a policy document in the field of occupational safety and health and a policy implementation plan;
  30. exclusion of the State Labor Inspectorate from the incidence of the Law on state control over entrepreneurial activity no. 131 from 08.06.2012. Strengthen the institutional capacities of the State Labor Inspectorate (human resources / supplementing with the necessary personnel, according to the personnel statements, calculation technique, information systems, provision of cars, etc.), as a result of its empowerment with the right to investigate work accidents, organizing staff training on the most effective methods of preventing accidents at work and professional diseases.
  31. urge development and adoption of regulations that would ensure the implementation of ILO Convention on.161 on occupational health services;

32. recommend providing necessary support to employers for the implementation of EU directives on occupational safety and health;
33. ask to extend the consultations of the Commission for Exceptional Situations of the Republic of Moldova and the National Extraordinary Public Health Commission with the social partners, for preventing the decisions which have a negative impact on employees and employers. Following this, it is necessary to enhance social dialogue through wider communication, including in the National Commission for Collective Consultation and Negotiation.

***With regards to digitalisation of healthcare in Moldova:***

34. the COVID-19 pandemic has put national health systems all around the globe under immense pressure and has tested their resilience and efficiency. In this regard, the CSP highlights the potential role of digitalization in making a healthcare system more sustainable and efficient;
35. point out that epidemiological crisis has exacerbated the systemic challenges posed by limited digitization in healthcare in Moldova, revealing the lack of integrated informational systems and updated information in online format on the number of hospitalizations, general availability of resources, access of patients to health services etc.;
36. underline the need to recognise the importance of integration of healthcare information systems; in this regard, it is important to strengthen the accessibility of healthcare related data to all stakeholders, including national authorities, medical institutions and patients, and supporting transparency of health funds allocation and distribution;
37. reiterate the need of launching a unique electronic patient registration system (EPR) in healthcare, fostering the use of ICT tools for providing remote medical services; ensuring the functioning of e -prescription and e-medical certificate systems;
38. emphasise that citizens should have the right to access their health data and to decide if and when to share their personal data, and that health data must be protected as a public good;
39. welcome the EU-supported initiative EU4Digital which aims at expanding the European Digital Market to the countries of the Eastern Partnership and encourage its partners in Moldova to make full use of its programmes and actions;
40. underline the need for appropriate training for the general population, patients and healthcare workers and for development of further education programmes focusing on digital health literacy, skills and trust;
41. warn that digitalisation must not lead to personnel lay-offs, a deterioration in pay or working conditions, or cuts in the quality and availability of services. It should rather be used to strengthen the functioning of healthcare systems. Healthcare and social care must be considered as a public service and especially with ageing populations, new concepts of long-term care need to be developed. Digitalisation will not replace the need for more investment in health and social care services and staff;

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