



**11th meeting, Brussels, 30 March 2023**

**JOINT DECLARATION**

The EU-Moldova Civil Society Platform<sup>1</sup> (CSP) is one of the bodies set up under the Association Agreement between the European Union (EU) and the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter the "Association Agreement"). It enables civil society organisations from both sides to monitor the implementation process, to draft recommendations for the relevant authorities on the two sides and to endorse declarations that outline the progress achieved and address issues of concern.

***With regard to Moldova's EU candidate status, the CSP members:***

1. take note of the analytical report<sup>2</sup> published by the European Commission on 2 February 2023 on the Republic of Moldova's application for membership of the European Union which provides a roadmap for further European integration of Moldova;
2. welcome the continuous multi-stakeholder EU-Moldova dialogue confirmed by the results of the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EU-Moldova Association Council, the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Association Committee and other new formats such as the EU-Moldova High-level Political and Security Dialogue;
3. recall that in accordance with Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, EU accession is dependent on the fulfilment of the established Copenhagen criteria for EU membership, requiring the adoption and implementation of reforms in the areas of democracy, the rule of law, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the market economy as well as the full implementation of the EU acquis;
4. welcome the continuous EU support to the Republic of Moldova helping to strengthen the country's resilience, security, stability, economy and energy supply in the face of destabilising activities by external actors, and Moldova's accession path to the European Union; in this regard, welcome the recent invitation of the EU Council to the European Commission to present a new support package to the Republic of Moldova;
5. call on the EU to launch the accession negotiations with the Republic of Moldova as soon as possible, ideally before the end of 2023, provided there is a considerable progress in the nine areas outlined by the European Commission in its opinion<sup>3</sup> on Moldova's application for membership of the European Union published on 17 June 2022; welcome the intention of the European Commission to provide an update on Moldova's progress in meeting EU recommendations in spring 2023, and look forward to the European Commission's report as part

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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>.

<sup>2</sup> [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-02/SWD\\_2023\\_32\\_%20Moldova.pdf](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-02/SWD_2023_32_%20Moldova.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/opinion-moldovas-application-membership-european-union\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/opinion-moldovas-application-membership-european-union_en)

of its regular Enlargement Package in autumn 2023; in this regard, underline the importance of an inclusive and multi-stakeholder evaluation and stress the readiness of Moldovan civil society to contribute with its independent assessments;

6. call on the European Commission to further advance the review of both European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Policy to ensure the transition of Moldova together with Ukraine and Georgia from the EU's association neighbours to EU accession countries;
7. call on the EU Member States to re-energise the enlargement process and deliver on their promises through concrete positive steps in the accession processes of countries that seek to join the Union and deserve to be part of the European family, allowing for the gradual integration of Moldova into both the EU single market and the relevant sectoral programmes, including access to EU funds in the respective areas, and enabling the citizens of Moldova to reap the benefits of accession throughout the process rather than only on its completion; in this regard, welcome the EU and Moldova's commitment at the 7th Association Council to develop a Priority Action Plan for Moldova in order to further deepen sectoral cooperation in key areas of the DCFTA and speed up Moldova's access to the EU single market;
8. welcome the clear commitment of the Moldovan government to pursue the country's ambitious pro-European and pro-reform agenda; welcome the EU's continuous support to Moldovan civil society in line with Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society in the Republic of Moldova for the 2021-2027 period; call on the Moldovan authorities to take decisive steps to ensure full implementation of rules of transparency in the decision-making process, in particular by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, and to abandon the practice of fast-tracking legislation at the expense of avoiding a genuine consultation process;
9. call on the Moldovan authorities to further consolidate dialogue with civil society and increase its participation in the EU accession process, and in this regard reiterate the call on the Moldovan government to invite representatives of the civil society to be part of the 35 working groups responsible for the negotiations of the chapters for the accession to the EU;
10. agree to transform the EU-Moldova Civil Society Platform established under the Association Agreement into the EU-Moldova Joint Consultative Committee to mark the new EU candidate status of the Republic of Moldova and the enhanced role of civil society in order to further contribute to the implementation of the Association Agreement and the EU accession process; in this regard, call on the EU-Moldova Association Council to formalise this decision;
11. reiterate their recommendation to establish an autonomous institution that could represent employers', workers' and other civil society organisations in the Republic of Moldova, similar to the European Economic and Social Committee and call on the EU to financially support the establishment and consolidation of such an institution;
12. call on the EU to provide financial support in order to increase the efficiency and quality of civic and social dialogue;

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

13. welcome the outcome of the 7<sup>th</sup> EU-Moldova Association Council held on 7 February 2023<sup>4</sup> as well as of the meeting of the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Association Committee held on 23 March 2023;
14. welcome the outcomes of the 7th joint meeting of the Republic of Moldova – European Union Domestic Advisory Groups on Trade and Sustainable Development, which took note of the nine priority measures presented in the Commission's opinion on the Republic of Moldova's application for membership of the European Union published on 17 June 2022, in particular the call to enhance civil society involvement in decision-making processes at all levels;
15. welcome the EU's Association Implementation Report published on 7 February 2023 reviewing Moldova's implementation of commitments under the EU-Moldova Association Agreement; commend progress made since last year in several key areas; notably in the area of foreign and security policy, combating violence against women, in the judiciary sector, energy, customs and trade facilitation, as well as implementation of sanitary and phytosanitary standards;
16. call on the Moldovan authorities to maintain progress in fully implementing the Association Agreement, which shall also guide Moldova to further advance its legal approximation with the EU acquis which is already part of the Association Agreement;
17. welcome the systemic extraordinary justice reform initiated by the Moldovan authorities, namely the vetting of future members of the new Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM) and the Superior Council of Prosecutors (SCP); call on the Moldovan authorities to take proactive steps, improve its communication and inclusive consultations with all interested parties, civil society and justice actors in the creation of the new SCM and SCP, ensuring that these bodies are fully functional and involved in the next justice reform, and promoting further implementation of the reform of the Supreme Court of Justice and full vetting of judges and prosecutors in full compliance with Venice Commission recommendations and in close cooperation with the EU and other international development partners;
18. welcome the progress made in the fight against corruption which has also been recognised by Transparency International<sup>5</sup>; are alarmed, nonetheless, by the registered cases of corruption among lawyers, prosecutors and judges and recommend creating a single transparency register following the model of the EU transparency register;

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-ministerial-meetings/2023/02/07/>

<sup>5</sup> In 2022, Moldova's corruption rating improved, with the best assessment in decades;

19. acknowledge progress in justice reform but note that the reform is too slow and the results are not tangible; stress that a robust judiciary system is key for the country's integration with the EU;
20. firmly reject attempts to intimidate members of Selection Committee for the new Head of the Prosecutor's Office for Combating Organised Crime and Special Cases and underline the need to conduct the selection in a transparent manner;
21. appreciate the initiation of the Public Administration Reform and underlying local administration reform by the government of Moldova; call for deeper cooperation with civil society at national and European level to ensure that citizens' wellbeing is at the centre of the reform; encourage the development partners to ensure all support needed for successful implementation;

***Furthermore, the CSP members:***

22. are deeply concerned by the continuous external pressure and numerous attempts to destabilise the country and create panic among the population; underline the need to step up efforts to fight disinformation and recommend creating a consolidated framework to assess hybrid threats and to strengthen institutional capacity to tackle cybercrime;
23. welcome the initiative of the EU and its Member States to deploy a civilian mission in the Republic of Moldova;
24. call on the EU to integrate Moldova into the European single market which would boost the Moldovan economy and trade and have a positive impact on decent job creation and thus on the wellbeing of the people of Moldova; recommend allocating financial resources and exploring mechanisms to encourage production and promotion of high quality Moldovan products in accordance with sustainability requirements;
25. encourage the EU to take measures aimed at full trade liberalisation, in particular in the trade of agricultural products and welcome the granting of access to the EU market for a series of products of animal origin (poultry and eggs)<sup>6</sup>; in this regard, emphasise the importance of implementing quality standards at company level; recommend steering agricultural support policy towards innovation, greater market integration and inclusion of farmers, promoting modern and innovative programmes in line with the European Farm-to-Fork strategy and targeting small-scale farmers;
26. acknowledge that the EU has consolidated its position as the main trading partner of Moldova, but emphasise the need to further increase the competitiveness of Moldovan exporters in order to increase the diversification and added value of exports to the EU; recommend that the

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<sup>6</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0404>

Moldovan authorities transpose the Directive<sup>7</sup> on unfair trade practices in the area of agri-food products;

27. underline the importance of consolidating the country's institutional capacity, which is key to making full use of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Eastern Partnership<sup>8</sup>;
28. acknowledge the remarkable progress in transforming the energy sector and stress the importance of pursuing reforms in the sector, with a focus on strengthening the institutional framework for promoting energy efficiency and generation from renewable sources, modernising the electricity transportation infrastructure, and boosting the ability of the relevant enterprises and institutions to trade in global energy markets; in this regard, welcome the initiative of the Republic of Moldova to be the first carbon-neutral developing country;
29. call for further efforts to increase the minimum wage to 50% of the average salary in Moldova, in accordance with the provisions of the European Social Charter (revised) and the EU Directive on adequate minimum wages;
30. stress the need to further improve the legal framework in the field of wages for the public sector and to establish a unique reference value for all categories of employees in the budgetary sector;
31. call for the need to ensure a relevant and applicable legal framework aimed at regulating pay in the private sector;
32. call for compliance with the provisions of collective labour contracts and collective agreements, which are mainly related to the guarantees in the field of remuneration; in the case of enterprises, the price of their services is settled by a regulatory body;
33. stress the need to negotiate and conclude a national convention on the mechanism for informing employees about the level of salary in order to avoid the gender pay-gap;
34. insist on ensuring the discussion of initiatives to amend labour legislation within the Tripartite working group created under the aegis of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, composed of representatives of the social partners (government, employers, trade unions);
35. reiterate the need to implement the electronic registry of employees for all employers;
36. call on Moldovan authorities to transpose the EU Directive on adequate minimum wages with regard to the 80% of workers covered by collective agreements ;

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<sup>7</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/633 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on unfair trading practices in business-to-business relationships in the agricultural and food supply chain; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32019L0633>

<sup>8</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_21\\_3367](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_3367)

37. insist on the elaboration and adoption, as soon as possible, of the normative acts necessary for the implementation of the provisions of ILO Convention No. 161 on occupational health services;
38. stress the need to increase the capacities of the institutions responsible for managing processes on the labour market and increase their efficiency (State Labour Inspectorate, National Agency for Employment and General Inspectorate for Migration);
39. request the development and adoption of a policy document in the field of combating the informal economy;
40. call for tax exemptions for the state registration of trade unions in order to obtain the status of legal person and the elaboration of a normative act to remove obstacles in the activity of trade union organisations as soon as possible (with the status of legal person obtained on the basis of the statutes of national trade union organisations).