



12th meeting, Chisinau, 1 September 2023

JOINT DECLARATION

The EU-Moldova Civil Society Platform¹ (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 oral update¹, presented within the informal General Affairs Council of the European Union on 22 June 2023, which pointed out the ongoing dynamics regarding the implementation of the nine steps for opening the negotiation talks with Moldova; welcome the progress achieved by the Moldovan authorities regarding the implementation of these steps despite pressure from Russia and the crises triggered by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and call for continuous efforts to ensure the fulfilment of all the commitments, especially in the area of justice and the fight against corruption;
2. welcome the joint declaration by EU and Moldovan mobile operators to reduce roaming charges starting as of January 2024;
3. welcome the announcement of an enhanced support package for the Republic of Moldova, which includes support for security and resilience, as well as for strengthening the administrative capacity for Moldova to move forward on its European path;
4. welcome the deployment of the EU Partnership Mission (EUPM) to Moldova, which will further strengthen Moldova's resilience to external and internal threats;
5. welcome the one-year renewal and extension of the temporary suspension of all outstanding tariffs and entry-price system applicable for seven agricultural products from Moldova until 24 July 2024;
6. welcome the invitation of the Republic of Moldova to join the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, aiming at strengthening Moldova's disaster prevention, preparedness and response;
7. welcome Moldova's association with the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) programme, which will attract more EU funding for both Moldovan authorities and companies working in the field of infrastructure, energy, and digitalisation;
8. reiterate the call to the Moldovan government to invite civil society representatives, including social partners, to be part of the 35 working groups responsible for the negotiations of the chapters for accession to the EU and enhance the cooperation with civil society and social partners in advancing the country on its European path;
9. reiterate the call to the EU to start the accession negotiations with Moldova by the end of 2023,

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_23_3460.

provided that there is measurable progress in the nine areas outlined by the European Commission in its opinion² on Moldova's application for membership of the European Union published on 17 June 2022 and following the European Commission's positive assessment of Moldova's country report, which is expected to be published by October 2023;

10. reiterate their support to transform the EU-Moldova Civil Society Platform established under the Association Agreement into the EU-Moldova Joint Consultative Committee to mark the 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. call on the European Commission (EEAS) to strengthen the human and financial capacities of the European Delegation to the Republic of Moldova with a view to responding to the needs of the country stemming from Moldova's new status of candidate state;
12. 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;
13. call on the EU and its Member States to support the Republic of Moldova's integration by incorporating the country into EU programmes, instruments and agencies such as the EU single market programme, the Digital Europe programme, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the European Environment Agency, the Connecting Europe Facility, the European Defence Agency, the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC), DiscoverEU, the Employment and Social Innovation programme and others, as well as enhancing the Republic of Moldova's participation in programmes it has already joined, such as Erasmus Mundus³;
14. encourage the EU and Member State leaders to continue to invest in political dialogue with the Republic of Moldova and also to visit the country, including as a way of showing the EU's commitment to Moldova's European future; call on the Commission to attach clear, measurable and consistent criteria and benchmarks to the nine steps identified for the Republic of Moldova to advance towards EU membership;
15. underline the importance of advancing the country's reform process in order to improve the living standards of the population, especially of the more vulnerable population groups and those in the regions; also recall the need for Moldova to uphold its commitments to enhance gender equality and fight violence against women, as noted in the nine steps identified in the Commission opinion⁴;
16. call on the Moldovan authorities to build up and finance the implementation of public policies that offer equal and fair opportunities for women and men to participate in decision-making processes in all areas of development, including in the negotiations for peace and conflict resolution;
17. call on Moldovan authorities to encourage and support youth entrepreneurship, including at local level, which will provide young generations with attractive prospects for life and work in the country;
18. welcome the Republic of Moldova's commitment to increase its efforts to comply with the de-

² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_3790.

³ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-04-19_EN.html#sdocta6.

⁴ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-04-19_EN.html#sdocta6.

oligarchisation requirement set out in the Commission opinion;

19. welcome the draft law on de-oligarchisation, the legislation on media ownership and the adoption of the new strategy on the management of state property, state enterprises and entities with state capital 2022-2030; urge the authorities, however, to address the Venice Commission's recommendations to adopt a systemic approach to strengthening the institutions and legislation relating to monopoly prevention, competition policy, political parties, elections, taxation and fighting corruption and money laundering;
20. call on the European Commission to clarify the de-oligarchisation process described in the nine steps⁵;
21. call on Moldovan authorities to publish the non-paper reports drafted for the attention of the European Commission on relevant Ministries' websites for the sake of transparency.

With regard to the Association Agreement, the CSP members:

22. call on the Moldovan authorities to advance the implementation of the Association Agreement and accelerate the legal approximation with the EU acquis;
23. welcome the progress achieved so far with justice reform, namely the pre-vetting and vetting processes, and call for an accelerated evaluation of the candidates for remaining positions in the Supreme Council of Magistracy (SCM) and the Superior Council of the Prosecutors (SCP), as well as for the new composition of the Supreme Court of Justice;
24. call on the Moldovan authorities to further consolidate their efforts to fight corruption, in particular by strengthening the institutional capacity of the Anticorruption Prosecutor's Office and by improving the effectiveness of the National Anticorruption Center and the National Integrity Authority;
25. call on the Moldovan authorities to ensure a fair, equal and inclusive organisation of the electoral process for the upcoming local elections, scheduled for November 2023;
26. welcome the initiative of the Moldovan authorities to create the Centre for Strategic Communication and Fight against Disinformation and call on the EU to offer technical support for ensuring the transfer of best practices in the area of combating disinformation and fake news;
27. encourage the Republic of Moldova to continue resolutely with its reform agenda on democracy and the rule of law;
28. encourage the government to work with all stakeholders to achieve a profound, sustainable and comprehensive justice and anti-corruption reform, in line with EU and Venice Commission recommendations;
29. commend the decisive steps taken by the government to improve the functioning of the judiciary, including the progress achieved in the pre-vetting procedure for new members of the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM) and the Superior Council of Prosecutors (SCP);
30. encourage all relevant actors, in particular the General Assembly of Judges, to ensure that the remaining positions on the SCM are filled swiftly and in accordance with the high standards set for the integrity of its members;
31. welcome the measures taken in the area of anti-corruption such as the implementation of the

⁵ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-04-19_EN.html#sdocta6.

- legislation on trial in absentia and the progress of the prosecution on a number of high-profile anti-corruption cases or those relating to the USD 1 billion bank fraud;
32. call on the Moldovan authorities to continue and further strengthen their efforts to fight corruption, in particular by clarifying the mandates of the country's specialised anti-corruption institutions and by strengthening the effectiveness of the National Anticorruption Center and the National Integrity Authority;
 33. recall the importance of establishing a credible track record of prosecutions and convictions for corruption on the basis of proactive and efficient investigations as a matter of the greatest priority⁶.

Furthermore, the CSP members:

34. reiterate the joint declaration adopted at the 11th meeting of the civil society platform in March 2023⁷;
35. note that the encouraging developments in the Republic of Moldova enhance the opportunity to intensify efforts at the political, legislative and administrative levels to set up an institutionalised framework for social and civil dialogue, through the establishment of an Economic and Social Council based on the best practices in the European Union; point out that in the initial stage, EU funds could co-finance this initiative and that the European Economic and Social Committee can support this process of institution building with its expertise;
36. are deeply concerned about a recent amendment adopted by the parliament regarding the external evaluation of judges and prosecutors; in this regard, the amendment specifically addresses in Law No 252 of 17 August 2023 "the external evaluation of judges and prosecutors and amending certain normative acts"⁸, Article 13, paragraph 1, which stipulated that the evaluation commission conducts its activities in closed hearings;
37. are deeply concerned about the Supreme Court of Justice's decisions on the annulment of 21 decisions of the Pre-Vetting Commission, which is responsible for evaluation of the integrity of candidates for membership in the Superior Council of Magistracy and the Superior Council of Prosecutors;
38. appreciate the approval of the Public Administration Reform Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for 2023-2030, which aims to support the implementation of reforms on five components: the management of the public function and civil servants, the institutional framework of the central public administration, the system of strategic planning and elaboration of public policies, de-bureaucratisation and the development of electronic services, as well as local public administration; call on the authorities to take more actions oriented at enhancing local autonomy and decentralisation⁹;
39. call on Moldovan authorities to identify a legal possibility to grant to the trade unions and employer associations the right to benefit from the "2% mechanism", in the context of the new strategic document for the development of civil society in the Republic of Moldova;
40. call for the development and adoption of a policy document in the field of combating the informal

⁶ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-04-19_EN.html#sdocta6.

⁷ <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/11th-meeting-eu-moldova-civil-society-platform/documents>.

⁸ <https://www.parlament.md/ProcesulLegislativ/Proiectedeactelegislativ/tabid/61/LegislativId/6543/language/ro-RO/Default.aspx>.

⁹ <https://gov.md/en/content/government-approved-public-administration-reform-strategy-moldova-2023-2030>.

economy;

41. call for enhancement of the capacities and efficiency of the State Labour Inspectorate, the National Agency for Employment and the General Inspectorate for Migration to better manage processes on the labour market;
42. request the development and/or improvement of mechanisms for assessing the standard of living of the population in accordance with its needs, including with a view to assessing the level of labour remuneration;
43. stress the need to urgently develop and promote the Occupational Safety National Programme, based on the European legal framework;
44. stress the need for development, negotiation and implementation of a national convention on the mechanism for informing employees about the level of salary in order to avoid the gender pay gap;
45. call on Moldovan authorities to transpose the EU Directive on adequate minimum wages, including adopting measures to ensure at least 80% coverage of workers by collective agreements;
46. call for improvement of the legal framework in the field of social partnership with a view to regulating the bipartite system of social dialogue at national level;
47. call for approval and implementation of the relevant legal framework aimed at regulating the wages in the private sector;
48. 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;
49. reiterate the need to implement the electronic registry of employees for all employers.