

Policy Brief

THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA – EUROPEAN UNION COOPERATION IN SECURITY AND DEFENCE: FROM SECTORAL ENGAGEMENT TO STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

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● INTRODUCTION

The adoption of the new Military Strategy (2025–2035) by the Government of the Republic of Moldova on 8 October 2025 has formalized the country's pro-Western orientation in defense policy. The strategic document, which envisions the modernization of the armed forces and their alignment with European security standards, also reflects the Republic of Moldova's aspiration to become a member of the European Union (EU) and reaffirms the “national commitment to a European, democratic, and prosperous Moldova, where citizens live in safety and peace.”

● DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

The Strategy was adopted against the backdrop of an unprecedented acceleration in security and defence cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union (EU) in recent years — particularly after 2022, amid the war in Ukraine and the growing regional security risks.



On May 21, 2024, the Republic of Moldova was the first non-EU member country to sign the Security and Defense Partnership with the EU.

This Partnership represents a landmark moment in redefining Moldova's security paradigm. It provides for enhanced political consultations and joint actions across a wide range of areas, including cybersecurity, countering disinformation, counterterrorism, crisis management, border security, anti-human trafficking, and the fight against organized crime.

The document establishes a formal framework for politico-military cooperation, going beyond the declarative dimension of the Eastern Partnership, and effectively anchoring the Republic of Moldova within the European security governance system.

This evolution reflects Moldova's adaptation to new regional realities shaped by the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine, as well as the need to strengthen national and democratic resilience against hybrid threats. Through the institutionalization of a high-level political and security dialogue and an annual defence dialogue, the Partnership provides the Republic of Moldova with a permanent communication channel with the European Union.

● OVERVIEW

At the current stage, the European Union applies an integrated approach towards the Republic of Moldova, combining financial, operational, and

institutional reform instruments aimed at enhancing the country's resilience.

” Through the European Peace Facility (EPF), the EU has so far allocated nearly €200 million to the Moldovan armed forces.

This assistance focuses on non-lethal equipment, secure communications, mobility assets, and individual protection gear, thereby strengthening Moldova's territorial defence capacity and its crisis response capabilities.

The support also carries a political dimension, as it signals the EU's confidence in Chişinău's determination to strengthen its strategic autonomy, while still adhering to the constitutional principle of neutrality. In analytical terms, the EPF functions as a mechanism of constructive securitization — a framework through which the EU contributes to enhancing the defensive capacities of a vulnerable partner state without pursuing its militarization.

The benefits of cooperation with the European Union are particularly evident in the context of hybrid warfare. In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has frequently become a target of propaganda, electoral interference, and cyberattacks. Cooperation with the EU has granted Moldova access to advanced expertise and technology, notably through the European Cyber Rapid Response Teams (CRRTs) established under the framework of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).

Since 2022, these teams have conducted multiple missions in Chişinău, supporting national authorities in protecting critical networks and electoral processes, including during the 2024 Referendum. Moldova's commitment to participating in PESCO projects demonstrates the maturity and deepening of its relationship with the EU. Although its status remains that of a partner rather than a member state, Moldova's involvement in initiatives related to cybersecurity and critical infrastructure protection reflects a

growing technological and normative convergence with European defence policies. Looking ahead, this collaboration could lay the groundwork for Moldova's integration into Europe's digital defence chains, thereby contributing to the strengthening of its cyber and institutional resilience — both of which are key domains in a geopolitical environment increasingly dominated by hybrid threats.

On the civil and institutional dimension, the European Union launched in 2023 the EU Partnership Mission (EUPM) — the first European initiative specifically designed to strengthen a partner state's resilience against hybrid threats. With a mandate extended until 2027, the mission has a civilian and advisory character, aiming to enhance the state's capacity to prevent and respond to hybrid threats, including disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, and external interference in democratic processes. Through EUPM, the EU acts not merely as a donor, but as a strategic partner in institutional transformation, providing expertise, training, and advisory support in areas such as national security, public order, and societal resilience. The mission's impact goes beyond the technical dimension — it strengthens political trust and inter-institutional cooperation, becoming a pillar of Moldova's democratic resilience. Through the combined efforts of EUPM and the CRRT teams, Moldova's governmental cyber infrastructure is now significantly better protected, and Moldovan authorities possess crisis response procedures and plans developed with European expert guidance, as well as an early-warning network established in cooperation with EU institutions.

” In July 2022, the EU established in Chisinau the Hub for Internal Security and Border Management, facilitating cooperation with Europol, Frontex, and EUBAM.

This platform has facilitated reforms and investments in border infrastructure, joint operations against criminal networks, and a visible reduction in smuggling along the Transnistrian segment.

The Republic of Moldova contributes to European security through its participation in CSDP missions, thereby gaining practical experience and strengthening military interoperability. Its involvement in EUTM Mali and Operation Althea (Bosnia and Herzegovina) carries multiple strategic benefits: it demonstrates the state's external action capacity, provides operational experience in international theatres, and fosters technical and doctrinal interoperability with European armed forces.

This participation also serves as a tool of international legitimacy, reaffirming the Republic of Moldova's role as a security provider — not merely a beneficiary of protection.

● CONCLUSIONS

Recent developments demonstrate that the Republic of Moldova and the European Union have moved beyond occasional and sectoral cooperation, entering a phase of deep strategic partnership in the fields of security, defence, and democratic resilience. Within just a few years, Moldova has been integrated into a European network of instruments and mechanisms that strengthen its ability to address hybrid risks ranging from military assistance and advisory missions to programs countering disinformation and corruption. This close cooperation has significantly enhanced the state's capacity to manage security risks, while simultaneously reinforcing democratic institutions and internal social cohesion. In other words, external cooperation with the EU increases Moldova's resilience and international credibility, while internally it strengthens democratic order and public trust in the country's pro-European direction.

The lessons of recent years show that security cannot be achieved through isolation or passive neutrality, but rather through anchoring within a collective system of values and defence — a system that the European Union provides. Moldova's European trajectory depends directly on the success of the formula: security + democracy = resilience. Close collaboration with the European Union offers the country a historic opportunity to demonstrate that this formula can succeed even under the most challenging geopolitical circumstances.

● RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen cooperation with the European Union in the field of security and defence, the Republic of Moldova should develop an integrated governmental coordination mechanism — a joint RM-EU structure that unifies strategic and institutional efforts. Continued alignment of national legislation with European standards is essential, alongside the expansion of assistance through the European Peace Facility (EPF) and the EU Partnership Mission (EUPM), as well as active participation in CSDP missions and PESCO projects.

Education, research, and civil society play a crucial role in promoting European security values and standards, countering disinformation, and strengthening public trust in state institutions. Moldova should continue to expand its participation in European missions and projects, capitalizing on the experience gained to consolidate its profile as a contributor to continental security.

By deepening cooperation, modernizing national capacities, and building sustainable resilience, the Republic of Moldova reaffirms its commitment to becoming an active and responsible partner within the European security system — one capable of defending its democratic values and ensuring stability in an increasingly complex geopolitical environment.