

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF STRATEGIC ANALYSIS AND SECURITY POLICY

SECURITY NEXUS

NO. 3 (JULY – SEPTEMBER 2026)



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Contents

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON SECURITY

The NATO Summit in Ankara and Its Implications for the Republic of Moldova (Elena Mârzac, Rodica Panța).....	8
Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova: the Transformation of Bilateral Dialogue after 24 February 2022 (Angela Grămadă).....	12

SECURITY NEXUS (INTERDEPENDENCIES)

The Energy Dimension of the Republic of Moldova's National Security (Natalia Antoci).....	16
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EU & THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

EU–Republic of Moldova Summit (Laurențiu Pleșca).....	19
Chișinău Receives a New Mandate from Brussels: The European Parliament Report and What Comes Next for the Republic of Moldova (Laurențiu Pleșca).....	21
The EU Artificial Intelligence Act: Implications for Cyber and Information Security of the Republic of Moldova (Rodica Panța).....	23
Chapter 24: From the Opening of Negotiations to the Test of Implementation (Sanda Sandu, Ana Negru, Irina Bogdan).....	26
Chapters 30 and 31: From Alignment to the Capacity to Act as an EU Member State (Rodica Panța).....	29

RISK AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Poverty Weaponisation – from Orchestrating Illegal Migration in Spain's Ceuta to Electoral Interference in Moldova (Denis Cenușa).....	32
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THEMATIC DOSSIER

The Transnistrian Region's Digital Integration into the Russian Information Space and the Risks to Human Rights (Sanda Sandu).....	36
“Unification” as a FIMI Instrument in the Kremlin's Toolkit (Mihai Isac).....	39

SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

Security Sector Reform in the Republic of Moldova
in the Context of the War in Ukraine and European Integration
(Iurie Pîntea)..... 42

The Tofan Government: Priorities and Objectives for 2026–2029
(Laurențiu Pleșca)..... 43

Power, Control and Trust: The New Balance of Security Sector
Governance in Moldova (Vadim Enicov)..... 48

INFORMATION SECURITY AND DISINFORMATION

Information Security in Summer 2026: Pressure on Public Trust and
Consolidation of National Rresilience (Sanda Sandu)..... 52

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Strategic Communications in Latvia: From Countering Disinformation
to Building Resilience. Lessons for the Republic of Moldova (Elena
Mârzac, Rodica Panța)..... 55

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

The Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia and the Localisation of
the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Community Resilience,
Regional Vulnerabilities and Inclusive Security 59

EVENTS

Moldova Security Forum 2026 61



Editorial

SECURITY NEXUS – THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF SECURITY IN A CONNECTED WORLD

PHOTO: <https://www.magnific.com/>

The security environment in which the Republic of Moldova finds itself today requires us to look beyond traditional definitions of security. The Russian Federation's war against Ukraine, hybrid threats, information pressure, technological transformations, and energy and economic vulnerabilities are becoming increasingly interconnected. They intersect, reinforce one another and, in one form or another, affect citizens' daily lives. Therefore, a state's security must be assessed not only in terms of its defence capacity and military capabilities, but also by whether people have access to essential services, can rely on functioning institutions, trust the information they receive and navigate crises in conditions of safety and stability.

This perspective provides the common thread running through the third issue of Security Nexus. From regional developments and the Republic of Moldova's relations with NATO and the European Union to energy security, artificial intelligence, security sector reform, information security, strategic communication and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, the analyses brought together in this edition demonstrate how deeply interconnected the various dimensions of security have become.

At the regional level, the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine continues to reshape the European security architecture and the strategic choices available to states in the conflict's immediate vicinity. The NATO Summit in Ankara highlights the shift from political commitments to the development of concrete capabilities in areas such as air and missile defence, counter-drone technologies, infrastructure, innovation and resilience. For the Republic of Moldova, including within the framework of its constitutional neutrality, these developments have a direct bearing on

the regional environment in which the country is strengthening its own capacity to anticipate threats, defend itself and build resilience.

The war has also made the security interdependence between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine far more visible. Energy, infrastructure, border management, civil protection, population movements, connectivity and the environment are all areas in which one state's vulnerabilities can have direct consequences for the other. This reality confirms the close relationship between human security and geopolitics: decisions and crises at the regional level directly affect the safety and well-being of communities.

At the same time, European integration is increasingly becoming a process of strengthening security. The opening of negotiations on Chapters 30 and 31 goes beyond the technical exercise of legislative alignment. The European Union will increasingly assess the Republic of Moldova's ability to translate political alignment into functioning institutions and effective implementation capacity. This requires the state to anticipate risks, manage crises, protect critical infrastructure and the information space and, in the longer term, contribute to European security.

The same logic is evident in the energy sector. The experience of recent years has demonstrated how quickly economic dependence can become a security vulnerability and, subsequently, a human security concern. Rising prices, energy poverty and pressure on households show that energy security encompasses not only pipelines, interconnections and strategic reserves, but also citizens' access to energy

and the state's capacity to protect vulnerable groups during periods of crisis.

In this respect, the Republic of Moldova is undergoing an important transformation: from ad hoc management of crises and dependencies towards diversification, the establishment of strategic reserves, the development of interconnections and integration into European energy mechanisms.

Another dimension of security concerns the information and technology domains. The development of artificial intelligence, deepfakes, cyberattacks and influence operations means that citizens' trust in information and in the institutions providing it has itself become a strategic resource. Cybersecurity, information security and strategic communication must increasingly be regarded as components of the same resilience architecture.

This dimension acquires additional relevance in relation to the Transnistrian region, where the tendency to align the so-called "legislation" governing the presence of "state institutions" and local administrations on social media with the practices of the Russian Federation must be examined in a broader context.

Beyond the technical aspects of institutional communication, such developments may further connect the region's information space to Russian models, practices and information ecosystems. For the Republic of Moldova, this is also a matter of human security: ensuring citizens' access to pluralistic information, strengthening their ability to distinguish between reliable information and manipulation, and maintaining information links between the two banks of the Dniester.

At the same time, the experience of recent years demonstrates that information threats require analysis that goes beyond the content of an individual falsehood or narrative. The contributions to this issue show how legitimate topics of public debate can be instrumentalised to deepen polarisation, erode trust in institutions or challenge the Republic of Moldova's strategic choices.

From this perspective, strategic communication must move beyond a reactive approach to disinformation.

The experience examined in this edition points to the need for a more fundamental shift: from countering falsehoods to reducing vulnerabilities, from fragmented institutional communication to shared objectives and narratives, and from treating citizens as passive recipients of information to recognising them as active participants in national resilience.

Taken together, the contributions to this issue lead to the conclusion that state security becomes sustainable when it translates into security for people. Defence capabilities, European integration, energy and cybersecurity, the protection of the information space, strategic communication and community resilience are different dimensions of the same security architecture.

In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has taken important steps to adapt its policies and institutions to a profoundly transformed security environment. The next challenge is to translate reforms, partnerships, strategic documents and investments into a genuine capacity to anticipate and prevent threats, respond effectively and adapt to change.

Dr Elena Mârzac,

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Deputy Editor-in-Chief

Regional and International Security Perspectives

ARTICLE



The NATO Summit in Ankara and Its Implications for the Republic of Moldova

✦ *Elena Mârzac¹, Rodica Panța²*

Against the backdrop of a European security environment shaped by Russia's war against Ukraine, the intensification of hybrid threats and the need to strengthen Europe's defence capabilities, the NATO Summit in Ankara marked an important milestone in defining how the Alliance translates its political commitments into concrete capabilities for deterrence, defence and resilience.

The NATO Summit in Ankara on 7-8 July 2026 can, above all, be viewed as a summit - of implementation. Following the decisions taken in the Hague in 2025, when the Allies set the objective of investing 5% of GDP in defence and security by 2035, - at least 3.5% for core defence requirements and up to 1.5% to critical infrastructure, resilience, network security, innovation and the defence industrial base - the focus in Ankara shifted from making commitments to translating them into military capabilities, production,

infrastructure and preparedness. NATO reports that, in just one year following the Hague Summit, the European Allies and Canada increased investment in core defence requirements by more than USD 139 billion. From this perspective, Ankara signals a new phase in strengthening the Alliance's effective capacity to deter and, depending on security developments, respond to threats in an increasingly unstable environment.

The six-point Ankara Summit Declaration, , reaffirms collective defence as set out in Article 5 and the 360-degree approach to deterrence and defence. At the same time, Russia continues to be defined - as a long-term threat to Euro-Atlantic security. An important political message is the assumption of greater responsibility for defence by European Allies and Canada, in cooperation with the United States, which NATO frames as building a "stronger Europe



PHOTO: <https://www.nato.int/>

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within a stronger NATO". The Alliance aims to maintain its military edge through investment in long-range precision strikes integrated air and missile defence, drone systems, advanced technologies, intelligence, cyber capabilities and the use of artificial intelligence .

These priorities are backed by concrete decisions and commitments announced in Ankara. Governments and the defence industry announced more than EUR 50 billion in new capability -. procurements. Through the *NATO Drone Edge* initiative, the Allies intend to invest more than USD 40 billion over the next five years in capabilities to counter drones and other autonomous aerial systems. In addition, an investment of EUR 27 billion was announced to modernise fuel storage and distribution infrastructure, including new facilities and pipelines extending towards the eastern part of the Alliance. The Summit therefore placed a strong emphasis on both the technologies and capabilities needed for modern warfare and on the industrial and logistical capacity to sustain them over the long term .

A decision of particular relevance to the security of our region concerns the continuation of support for Ukraine. The Declaration explicitly states that Ukraine's security contributes to transatlantic security.

At the same time, , NATO states that it will continue to adapt to the strategic competition, instability, hybrid threats and recurring shocks that characterise the current security environment⁶.

The Republic of Moldova: Strengthened Partnership under Constitutional Neutrality

For the Republic of Moldova, the Summit should be analysed in the context of a relationship with NATO that has evolved towards practical, institutionalised cooperation aimed at developing the country's own security and defence capabilities. The main framework currently in place is the Republic of Moldova–NATO Individually Tailored Partnership Programme 2025–2028 (ITPP), approved by the Government in January 2025, alongside the Defence Capacity Building Package. The cooperation focuses on modernising the security and defence sector, training, human resource management, interoperability, cyber defence, strategic communications and strengthening resilience against hybrid threats. NATO conducts its cooperation with the Republic of Moldova in full respect of the country's - constitutional neutrality, based on requests and priorities defined by the Moldovan authorities⁷.

PHOTO: <https://www.magnific.com/>

For 2026, the Allies have committed to providing EUR 70 billion in military equipment, assistance and training, while also declaring their resolve to maintain at least an equivalent level of support in 2027.



PHOTO: <https://www.magnific.com/>

⁵ Secretary General on the Ankara Summit: NATO delivers. <https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/articles/news/2026/07/08/secretary-general-on-the-ankara-summit-nato-delivers>

⁶ The Ankara Summit Declaration. <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/2026/07/08/the-ankara-summit-declaration>

⁷ Relations with the Republic of Moldova. <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/partnerships-and-cooperation/relations-with-the-republic-of-moldova>; Neutralitate protejată: Guvernul aprobă nou plan de parteneriat cu NATO. <https://mfa.gov.md/ro/content/neutralitate-protejata-guvernul-aproba-nou-plan-de-parteneriat-cu-nato>



PHOTO: www.mae.gov.md

In 2026, political and practical dialogue intensified. On 11 March, Deputy Prime Minister Mihai Popșoi held meetings with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte and took part in discussions with Allies within the North Atlantic Council. The Secretary General noted the significant increase in dialogue and practical cooperation and highlighted Moldova's resilience in the face of Russian interference and threats⁸. In March, this was followed by a visit to Chișinău by the Chair of the NATO⁹, Military Committee, while in June, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Partnerships Kevin Hamilton held discussions with the Moldovan authorities on strengthening defence capabilities, resilience, cyber infrastructure and the capacity to counter malign interference. Moldova, in turn, contributes to Euro-Atlantic security, including through the participation of its military personnel in the KFOR mission in Kosovo.

The final Declaration of the Ankara Summit makes no explicit reference to the Republic of Moldova¹¹. By comparison, the 2024 Washington Summit Declaration explicitly addressed the Republic of Moldova: Allies welcomed the continuation of democratic reforms and European integration, expressed support for the development of its security and defence capabilities and for

strengthening its resilience against hybrid threats. The same document called for the withdrawal of Russian forces stationed on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, in line with the position of the constitutional authorities in Chisinau. This difference can primarily be explained - by the nature of the Ankara Declaration, which is considerably shorter and focuses on collective defence, capabilities, Ukraine and the Alliance's adaptation. The 2025 Hague Declaration adopted a similar approach and likewise omitted - a specific reference to the Republic of Moldova. In the period that followed, NATO-Moldova cooperation deepened through the ITPP 2025-2028, the DCB package, political dialogue and numerous institutional contacts. Consequently, practical indicators of cooperation provide a more meaningful picture than an explicit reference in a summit's final document¹⁴.



PHOTO: <https://www.magnific.com/>

What Do the Decisions Taken in Ankara Mean for Moldova?

The Republic of Moldova is indirectly affected by a significant number of the decisions adopted in Ankara, despite the absence of an explicit reference to the country in the final Declaration. First and foremost, Moldova's security is closely linked to the course of the war in Ukraine. Given the current geographical circumstances, Ukraine's ability to defend its

⁸ Secretary General praises the close cooperation between NATO and Moldova. <https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/articles/news/2026/03/11/secretary-general-praises-the-close-cooperation-between-nato-and-moldova>

⁹ Chair of the NATO Military Committee visits the Republic of Moldova. <https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/articles/news/2026/03/20/chair-of-the-nato-military-committee-visits-the-republic-of-moldova>

¹⁰ NATO's Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Partnerships visits Moldova. <https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/articles/news/2026/06/22/natos-deputy-assistant-secretary-general-for-partnerships-visits-moldova>

¹¹ The Ankara Summit Declaration. <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/2026/07/08/the-ankara-summit-declaration>

¹² Washington Summit Declaration. <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/2024/07/10/washington-summit-declaration>

¹³ The Hague Summit Declaration. <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/2025/06/25/the-hague-summit-declaration>

¹⁴ Cooperarea Republicii Moldova cu Alianța Nord-Atlantică, discutată la MAE. <https://www.mfa.gov.md/ro/content/cooperarea-republicii-moldova-cu-alianta-nord-atlantica-discutata-la-mae>

Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova: the Transformation of Bilateral Dialogue after 24 February 2022

Angela Grămadă¹⁸

The expansion of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 had a major impact not only on the regional security architecture but also on relations between the states in the immediate vicinity of the war. In this new geopolitical and security context, bilateral dialogue between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, neighbouring states directly exposed to the consequences of Russian aggression and facing similar threats, has acquired - new dimensions and priorities. The war has put pressure not only on the two states' capacity to make political and security decisions in a profoundly unstable environment, but also on their sovereignty, territorial integrity and strategic choices. For both Chişinău and Kyiv, strengthening resilience and safeguarding their European orientation have become -part of a broader effort to adapt to a security environment in which Russia represents a direct and persistent threat.

This analysis briefly examines the main elements of bilateral dialogue between Chişinău and Kyiv that have changed or gained new relevance since 24 February 2022.

Particular emphasis is placed - on changes in security cooperation and the diversification of its forms, ranging from the management - of shared risks and strengthening institutional cooperation to coordinating positions in the context of European integration processes. In essence, the war in Ukraine has demonstrated that closer bilateral cooperation is no longer merely an instrument - for addressing neighbourhood-related issues, but also a component of the joint effort to respond to - similar risks and threats.

From Neighbourly Relations to Security Interdependence

Following the declarations of independence by the two states, the bilateral relations between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine evolved within a context shaped by both shared experiences and differences that influenced the bilateral agenda and political interaction. The Soviet legacy, complex political and economic transitions, and the gradual shift towards European regional structures and initiatives created numerous areas of convergence.



PHOTO: <https://cotidianul.md/>

¹⁸ Angela Grămadă, Ph.D. in Political Science, specializing in international relations, President of the Experts for Security and Global Affairs Association, Romania

At the same time, the size of their economies, available resources and the choices made by political leaders resulted in - differing approaches to certain issues of common interest. One of the most significant challenges to bilateral relations has been the Transnistrian conflict. For a long time, Ukraine -held a position different from that of Chişinău, including by maintaining pragmatic relations with the authorities in Moscow and assuming the role of mediator in the negotiation process - However, Ukraine's own experience of confronting Russia, which began in 2014 with the illegal annexation of Crimea and the Kremlin's support for separatist groups in eastern Ukraine, led to a significant shift in Kyiv's perspective on separatist conflicts and the instruments used by the Kremlin regime against former Soviet republics. The Ukrainian authorities thus gained a clearer understanding of the risk that the Transnistrian model could be used to constrain a state's sovereignty and political decision-making capacity if appropriate decisions were not taken or if the approach to the risks confronting the neighbouring state was not changed. Between 2014 and 2022, the authorities in Kyiv made considerable efforts to prevent federalisation from being imposed as a model for resolving their own security dilemmas. The Republic of Moldova went through a similar phase in the context of the Transnistrian issue. Other sensitive issues concerned economic and energy interdependencies, border management and the movement of goods and people, and countering cyber threats. While initially the focus was on minimising the impact of smuggling or illicit trafficking in goods and services, the priority subsequently shifted towards preventing the Russian Federation from gaining access through Ukraine to the separatist regime in Tiraspol²¹.

Another topic of discussion was energy cooperation²². The aim is to strengthen the resilience of the two energy systems so that they can both respond to the challenges associated with Russian aggression, including attacks on infrastructure, and align with European realities in the context of accession negotiation process. For the Republic of Moldova, dependence on regional energy infrastructure and resources has represented a significant vulnerability, while issues concerning access to infrastructure, property and connectivity have periodically generated tensions in relations with Kyiv. Some issues have required considerable investment and political effort, while others have been postponed until less sensitive periods in terms of regional security. These issues did not disappear after 2014, however -the full-scale war against Ukraine fundamentally changed the way in which they are perceived. Bilateral vulnerabilities increasingly came to be viewed through the lens of shared security, and cooperation between Chişinău and Kyiv became a strategic necessity, not merely a component of good- neighbourly relations.

Practical Cooperation

The expansion of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine transformed bilateral dialogue between Kyiv and Chişinău, giving it a stronger focus on security and interinstitutional cooperation.



PHOTO - <https://radiomoldova.md/ro/66903>

¹⁹ Ukrinform, У Молдові підтвердили, що отримали від України інформацію про план РФ із дестабілізації, Kiev, 9 februarie 2023, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-world/3668035-u-moldovi-pidtvordili-so-otrimali-vid-ukraini-informaciu-pro-plan-rf-iz-destabilizacii.html>

²⁰ EUAM Ukraine, Підтримуємо українські та молдовські відомства у реагуванні на надзвичайні ситуації на пунктах пропуску, Kiev, septembrie 2025, <https://www.euam-ukraine.eu/ua/news/supporting-ukrainian-and-moldovan-authorities-in-developing-emergency-response-exercise-at-border-crossing-points/>

²¹ Directoratul Național de Securitate Cibernetică, COMUNICAT DE PRESĂ: Trei state – un vector strategic: Ucraina, România și Republica Moldova înființează Alianța Cibernetică pentru Reziliență Regională, București, 20 februarie 2026, <https://www.dnsc.ro/citeste/press-release-three-states-one-strategic-vector-ukraine-romania-and-moldova-establish-the-cyber-alliance-for-regional-resilience>

²² Moldpres, Republica Moldova și Ucraina consolidează cooperarea în domeniul energetic și stabilesc prioritățile pentru pregătirea de următorul sezon rece, Chişinău, 15 mai 2026, <https://www.moldpres.md/rom/economie/republica-moldova-si-ucraina-si-consolideaza-cooperarea-in-domeniul-energetic-si-stabilesc-prioritatile-pentru-pregatirea-de-urmatorul-sezon-rece>

The new context required measures to mitigate external threats, manage the implications of the illegal presence of Russian troops in the Transnistrian region for Ukraine's security, and reduce the economic and energy vulnerabilities of both states.

The first example is the management of the large influx of Ukrainian refugees. Relative to its population size, the Republic of Moldova became one of the main host countries in the region, which required stronger national civil and social protection mechanisms. Cooperation with Ukraine and support from European partners helped alleviate pressure on domestic resources and develop bilateral mechanisms for assistance and social protection.

The cooperation has also expanded into the military-technical²⁴, economic and energy sectors.



PHOTO: <https://www.magnific.com/>

In February 2026, the authorities in Chişinău resumed the process of updating the bilateral framework for military-technical cooperation by initiating steps to negotiate a new agreement. In parallel, the two states have sought to strengthen energy security, including by synchronising

their electricity systems with the European ENTSO-E grid, developing infrastructure for regional transit and pursuing joint energy projects.

The bilateral dimension is complemented by the -I cooperation in the trilateral format with Romania²⁵. Initially, the dialogue was narrowly focused on addressing challenges in a specific field: foreign policy or energy cooperation²⁶. Over time, these areas of cooperation expanded. Today, dialogue is gaining new dimensions and greater potential as discussions are elevated to the level of the three heads of states, under their auspices.²⁷. The Republic of Moldova's position as a regional transit and logistics hub enables it to participate in projects related to Ukraine's reconstruction and facilitate the transport of resources and products. One example is the ongoing adaptation of transit arrangements for Ukrainian agricultural products in response to developments in Russian attacks and the infrastructure available.

However, closer relations between the two states also bring more complex issues to the fore. The management of water resources, particularly those of the Dniester River, will become an important topic in the context of the European integration of both countries. Attacks on Ukrainian energy and hydraulic infrastructure, as well as the way water resources are used, have direct implications for the civil and environmental security in the Republic of Moldova and communities in the Odesa region. Bilateral cooperation will therefore need to strike a balance between Ukraine's post-war reconstruction needs and the protection of the security interests of both societies.

²³ Ministerul Muncii şi Protecţiei Sociale al Republicii Moldova, Republica Moldova şi Ucraina au semnat Acordul privind securitatea socială în cadrul Conferinţei la nivel înalt privind drepturile sociale, Chişinău, 20 martie 2026, <https://social.gov.md/comunicare/comunicate/republica-moldova-si-ucraina-au-semnat-acordul-privind-securitatea-sociala-in-cadrul-conferintei-la-nivel-inalt-privind-drepturile-sociale/>

²⁴ Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, Acordul de cooperare tehnico-militară dintre Republica Moldova şi Ucraina va fi actualizat, Chişinău, 11 februarie 2026, <https://parlament.md/ns-newsarticle-Acordul-de-cooperare-tehnicomilitar-dintre-Republica-Moldova-i-Ucraina-va-fi-actualizat.nspx>

²⁵ Ministerul Afacerilor Externe al României, Trilaterală România – Ucraina – Republica Moldova, Bucureşti, 2026, <https://www.mae.ro/node/1511>

²⁶ Economica.net, Trilaterală România – R. Moldova – Ucraina la nivel de miniştri de externe se va reuni vineri la Chişinău, Bucureşti, 4 iulie 2024, https://www.economica.net/trilateral-romania-r-moldova-ucraina-la-nivel-de-ministri-de-externe-se-va-reuni-vineri-la-chisinau-758216.html?uord=RQ-8XSldg2H_R8%3DzUk43rSAXHEvm2RF-G-35kiJXPEchGP6QqWqIE2Omcq-RH7_I0I6WXeVSjFmLPYBIIPdU%3D3qVU4azeODMslvpVGOb-87h2VJSD%3D5WHy/SPHlU4Aob-FMHQb

²⁷ Calea Europeană, Prima trilaterală prezidenţială România – R. Moldova – Ucraina, la Odesa: Când Chişinăul, Kievul şi Bucureştiul acţionează împreună putem construi un drum clar spre o Europă unită, liberă şi democratică, 11 iunie 2025, <https://www.caleaeuropeana.ro/prima-trilateral-roman-romania-r-moldova-ucraina-la-odesa-cand-chisinaul-kievul-si-bucurestiul-actiuneaza-impuna-putem-construi-un-drum-clar-spre-o-europa-unita-libera-si-democrati/>

The European Dimension of Bilateral Dialogue

The launch of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine also accelerated both states' rapprochement with the European Union. Kyiv submitted its application for EU membership shortly after 24 February 2022, followed a few days later by Chişinău and Tbilisi. Although the three states were at different levels of preparedness in terms of reforms and strengthening democratic institutions, they shared a major strategic vulnerability: exposure to threats arising from Russia's presence and actions.

In this context, European integration acquired an additional security dimension for the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The EU is no longer perceived solely as a source of economic opportunities or as a normative power capable of transforming the institutions and societies of candidate countries, but also as a space for resilience, stability and reduced external vulnerabilities. The path towards European integration thus became part of the strategic response of two states to the new security environment.

However, the interdependence of these paths did not eliminate differences in interests. At times, Kyiv criticised what it perceived as Chişinău's use of the political and diplomatic circumstances created by Russian aggression to accelerate its own accession process. At present, both states are now candidate countries and have begun accession negotiations, but the prospect of a possible "decoupling" of their paths remains part of the European debate. Ukraine's size and its demographic and economic implications raise distinct concerns among member states, while the Republic of Moldova may progress at a different pace.

For Kyiv, this differentiation could become a negotiating tool in its relations with member states. However, Ukraine's own strategic interest also requires recognising that its security is linked to the political stability and resilience of the Republic of Moldova. From this perspective, the European paths of the two states towards European integration are competitive in some respects, but fundamentally interdependent.



PHOTO: <https://www.magnific.com/>

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The transformation of bilateral dialogue between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine after 24 February 2022 should not be understood solely through the lens of the Russian military threat. The war has brought into sharper focus a security interdependence encompassing politics, energy, the economy, infrastructure dimensions, as well as interinstitutional cooperation, civil protection and environmental concerns. In this new context, it is increasingly difficult to address the security of the two states separately, and the vulnerabilities of one can directly affect the other. These interdependencies are becoming increasingly evident and call for an approach adapted to the new realities.

However, this rapprochement does not mean that differing interests or sensitive issues disappear or be set aside. On the contrary, as cooperation expands, managing water resources, infrastructure, connectivity and the paths towards European integration will require more complex negotiations. Neglecting dimensions such as civil civilian or environmental security may affect not only bilateral political relations but also the human security of communities on both sides of the border and, consequently, have implications for regional security.

To remain sustainable, the Moldova-Ukraine partnership must be pragmatic, predictable and based on mutual respect for national interests. The solidarity generated by the war provides an important foundation, but the future of the relationship will depend on the ability of two states to translate this solidarity into institutionalised, equitable cooperation focused on shared security and European integration objectives.

Security Nexus (Interdependencies)

OPINION



The Energy Dimension of the Republic of Moldova's National Security

 *Natalia Antoci*²⁸

Significance of the topic: For many years, the Republic of Moldova has sought to find a way to balance its aspirations to become a member of the European Union, its constitutional neutrality and various forms of dependence on the Russian Federation. Persistent political instability and vulnerability to the influence of the Russian Federation have been - significant factors affecting the national security of the Republic of Moldova. This is particularly relevant given its dependence on Russian natural gas and energy imports. Dependence on imports and limited domestic energy resources increase the Republic of Moldova's vulnerability to supply disruptions and price fluctuations.

Between 2021 and 2025, the regional energy crisis and the war in Ukraine led to significant increases in gas prices, affecting the electricity sector and exacerbating energy poverty. This situation placed considerable pressure on public finances and on the ability of the least advantaged to pay their natural gas bills during the winter.

[illegible]

Approximately 60% of people in the Republic of Moldova experience energy poverty, and most households spend more than 10% of their budgets on energy bills.

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In addition, the economy of the Republic of Moldova faced further pressure from the war in Ukraine, the influx of refugees and the decline of remittances from Ukraine and the

Russian Federation. Reflecting Moldova's high energy vulnerability, the average import price of natural gas reached USD 926.9 per 1,000 m³ in 2022. The situation gradually improved through - 2023, when the average annual purchase price fell to approximately USD 750 per 1,000 m³. Procurement costs fell again through 2024. According to data provided by the National Agency for Energy Regulation (ANRE), approximately 808.6 million cubic metres of natural gas were purchased on the regulated market at a total cost of approximately 7.56 billion Mexican pesos²⁹. For a total volume of approximately 823.46 million cubic metres, the average purchase price of natural gas in 2025 was EUR 498.17 per 1,000 m³. Due to to European market dynamics and seasonal factors, prices will fall from MDL 10,891 per 1,000 m³ in January to MDL 8,145 per 1,000 m³ in December 2025, according to ANRE dat³⁰.

The pressure of the energy crisis on the Republic of Moldova has eased compared to the critical period in 2022. However, dependence on energy imports and price volatility remain major vulnerabilities, requiring the diversification of supply sources and routes, the strengthening of strategic reserves and deeper integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European energy market. To improve the security of natural gas supply, the Moldovan authorities aim to diversify supply sources and establish gas reserves for emergencies or specific situations. This is achieved by creating the necessary framework for purchasing, building up and using these reserves.

²⁸ Ph.D. in Economics. Associate Professor. Moldova State University

²⁹ Agenția Națională pentru Reglementare în Energetică (ANRE). <https://anre.md/index.php/anre-a-stabilit-obligatiile-de-stocare-a-gazelor-naturale-pentru-perioada-rece-20262027-3-1300?utm>

³⁰ Agenția Națională pentru Reglementare în Energetică (ANRE) <https://anre.md/rapoarte-de-monitorizare-3-95>

particularly in the event of a natural gas shortage. The structural transformation of natural gas industry of the Republic of Moldova, which was initiated in response to the regional energy crisis, continued into 2026. The focus of public policy is shifting from ad hoc crisis management towards strengthening permanent energy security mechanisms based on supply diversification, mandatory stockholding and alignment of the regulatory framework with the European .

Union acquis. Nevertheless, the energy security framework extends to the Transnistrian region, requiring the entity responsible for energy supply to hold adequate stocks equivalent to at least 15% of average annual consumption. These changes show that the Republic of Moldova has adopted a more sustainable, preventive energy security model integrated into European systems for managing energy risks



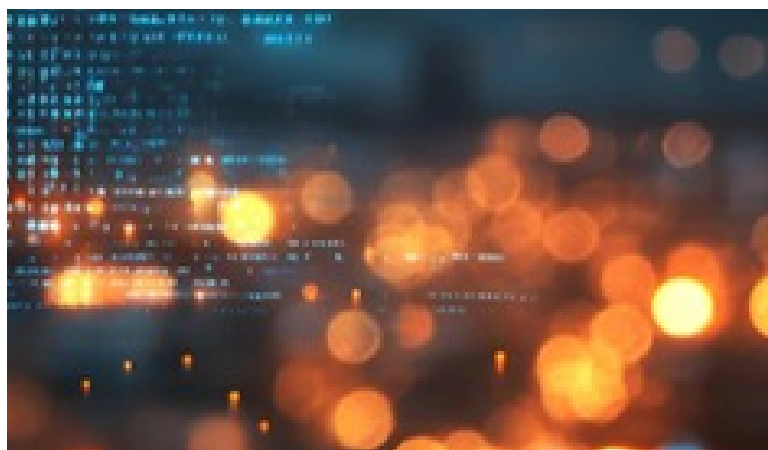
PHOTO: <https://www.magnific.com/>

The Role of Diplomacy in Ensuring National Energy Security

Against the backdrop of regional geopolitical and energy transformations, ensuring natural gas supply is one of the essential components of the Republic of Moldova's energy security in 2026. The authorities have adopted alternative measures to strengthen energy resilience due to the country's historical dependence on natural gas imports, its domestic storage capacity and its vulnerability to supply disruptions. Energy diplomacy has become increasingly important for national security through cooperation with the European Union and the Energy Community.

In 2026, the Republic of Moldova could serve as a model for other states without domestic storage capacity by securing external access to natural gas equivalent to at least 15% of average annual consumption. A system has been established that relies on both commercial and strategic security stocks.

To reduce supply risks, all suppliers will be required to build up commercial stocks. International cooperation and energy diplomacy are essential for the Republic of Moldova to gain access to European energy security infrastructure and mechanisms, given that it has no storage facilities of its own. Thus, energy diplomacy has become an essential element of national security, helping to diversify supply sources and routes, build strategic reserves and reduce the Republic of Moldova's external vulnerabilities.



³¹ Energy Community Secretariat. South East and Eastern European gas security improves as storage rules advance, new report finds. 2026. <https://www.energy-community.org/>

Energy Diplomacy – a Strategic Instrument for Strengthening the Republic of Moldova's National Security

Against the backdrop of its dependence on imports and the regional instability caused by the war in Ukraine, energy security is vital to security of the Republic of Moldova. Following the 2021–2022 crisis, supply sources became more diversified and cooperation with Romania, the European Union and the Energy Community have increased. Access to European markets and the establishment of gas reserves will strengthen energy security by 2026, but dependence on imports and the lack of domestic storage capacity will remain significant challenges. The Energy Community Secretariat's 2026 gas storage report presents the Republic of Moldova as a model for European states with functioning gas markets but no domestic storage capacity. The Republic of Moldova has a two-tier system consisting of commercial stocks and security stocks, the latter intended exclusively for crisis situations. Since the Republic of Moldova has no domestic underground storage facilities, its reserves are held in Romania, Ukraine and other countries in the EU and the Energy Community. At the same time, ANRE has required active suppliers to build up approximately 140.35 million cubic metres of commercial stocks by 1 November 2026.

This has improved the state's capacity to manage potential supply disruptions. The strategic partnership between the Republic of Moldova and Romania is a distinct aspect of energy diplomacy. In terms of energy cooperation, the Republic of Moldova and Romania reached an agreement on prioritising fuel deliveries in crisis situations in 2026, which will help maintain continuity of supply and reduce energy vulnerabilities. The two states aim to commission the 400 kV Vulcănești–Chișinău overhead power line in 2026³². This infrastructure is essential to strengthen the connection of the Republic of Moldova to the European electricity system and reduce vulnerabilities related to electricity supply. However, the forward-looking nature of bilateral cooperation is underscored both by the acceleration of the



Bălți–Suceava project and by the exploration of opportunities to develop new electricity interconnections at different voltage levels. These projects do not only diversify supply routes but also improve the country's energy system. The process of aligning national legislation with the EU acquis also underscores the diplomatic dimension of energy security. In accordance with Regulation (EU) 2017/1938, the Republic of Moldova tested the capacity of institutions and operators to respond in a coordinated manner to a natural gas supply crisis in June 2026, with support from the Energy Community Secretariat and European partners. Therefore, European energy integration requires not only the expansion of physical infrastructure but also closer alignment of the institutional and regulatory framework with European standards. Thus, the experience of the Republic of Moldova shows that energy diplomacy can no longer be viewed solely as an instrument of economic cooperation or foreign policy. Cooperation with Romania, the European Union and the Energy Community through energy diplomacy contributes to diversifying supply and integrating the Republic of Moldova into the European energy market. The changes from 2022 to 2026 demonstrate a transition from dependence and vulnerability towards a European model focused on diversification, resilience and integration.

The changes between 2022 and 2026 show that energy security has become a strategic component of the national security of the Republic of Moldova. While accelerating the diversification of supply sources and routes, local crises highlighted the vulnerabilities arising from dependence on imports. Cooperation with Romania, the European Union and the Energy Community, the

³² Ministerul Energiei al Republicii Moldova. Cooperarea energetică dintre Republica Moldova și România. Disponibil la:

https://energie.gov.md/ro/content/cooperarea-energetica-dintre-republica-moldova-si-romania-printre-subiectele-principale-ale?utm_source

³³ Parlamentul European și Consiliul Uniunii Europene. Regulamentul (UE) 2017/1938 din 25 octombrie 2017 privind măsurile de garantare a siguranței furnizării de gaze și de abrogare a Regulamentului (UE) nr. 994/2010 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2017/1938/oj/eng?utm_source

[illegible]

EU & the Republic of Moldova

PHOTO: <https://www.freepik.com>

✍ *Laurențiu Pleșca*³⁴

that is no longer a future project but an ongoing reality. The summit should not be viewed through a triumphalist lens, but with clear-eyed realism. Moldova has accomplished serious things and received significant recognition. - The question now is whether it can maintain the momentum.

The summit came exactly one week after another landmark moment: the opening, on June 15, 2026, of the first accession negotiation cluster, focusing on the rule of law, justice, and the fight against corruption. This sequence is not accidental. Brussels chose to hold the summit immediately after the opening of the cluster precisely to reinforce the political message: Moldova is no longer a candidate waiting in sidelines , but a state actively engaged in accession negotiations.

19

President of the European Council António Costa put it explicitly: Moldova's progress is impressive, and the EU is determined to move forward quickly. In Brussels' cautious diplomatic language, these words are not mere courtesy, but they represent a political commitment³⁵. The report of European Commission' on Moldova's progress confirms this assessment: the Moldovan state has fulfilled 93% of the reforms required under the Growth Plan, which unlocked the first tranche of €500 million from the total package of €1.9 billion for the 2025-2027 period. Moldova has already absorbed roughly a quarter of the entire package, an important indicator not only of political will,

million for border infrastructure. A framework cooperation agreement on research and innovation was also signed, connecting Moldovan institutions to European -networks of expertise. Von der Leyen announced that another €500 million is ready to be unlocked, conditional on continued implementation of reforms. These figures need to be placed in context in order to be properly understood. The total €1.9 billion package represents roughly 10% of Moldova's annual budget. Half of that sum consists of non-repayable grants, money that doesn't need to be paid back.

PHOTO: <https://www.magnific.com/>



but also of administrative capacity to manage European funds³⁶.

What Was Signed and What It Means

Beyond the declarations, the summit produced new and highly concrete financial commitments. Investments of €232.7 million were announced for the rehabilitation of the Porumbrei-Comrat road, €11 million for resilience against hybrid threats, and €17

And the €11 million allocated explicitly for resilience against hybrid threats sends a clear signal that the EU treats Moldova's security not as separate from the integration process, but as an integral part of it. Costa emphasized that Moldova's experience in countering hybrid threats has become a model for other states, a recognition that goes beyond the bilateral sphere and positions Moldova as a provider, rather than

³⁵ Remarks by President António Costa at the press conference following the EU-Moldova summit.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/06/22/remarks-by-president-antonio-costa-at-the-press-conference-following-the-eu-moldova-summit/>

³⁶ EU-Moldova Summit in Brussels marks a new milestone on path to EU membership.

https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-moldova-summit-brussels-marks-new-milestone-path-eu-membership-2026-06-22_en

³⁷ EU-Moldova summit to take place in Brussels on 22 June.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/06/17/eu-moldova-summit-to-take-place-in-brussels-on-22-june/>

a beneficiary, of regional security³⁸.

Gradual Integration: What Citizens Are Already Experiencing

An aspect of the summit that is often underestimated is the attention given to concrete benefits already reaching citizens, without waiting for the day of full membership. Moldova is integrated into SEPA, the European euro payments system, which allows fast and low-cost transfers across Europe. It is also already part of the the Roam Like at Home scheme, eliminating roaming charges across Europe. Moldova also t participates in the Creative Europe program and is connected to European energy markets. Starting in 2027, an expansion of the DiscoverEU rail pass is expected to be extended to young Moldovans European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen explicitly noted: Moldovan citizens and businesses are already feeling the changes.

This strategy of gradual integration has a strategic rationale that deserves recognition: the more areas of everyday life are connected to European standards and structures before formal accession, the more irreversible the process becomes and the harder it is to undermine through external pressure. It is 'not merely a matter of convenience for citizens, but also a mechanism for consolidating Moldova's geopolitical anchoring in Europe.

³⁸ EU-Moldova summit, 22 June 2026.

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/moldova/eu-moldova-summit-22-june-2026_en

³⁹ EU-Moldova Summit in Brussels marks a new milestone on path to EU membership.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_26_1406

⁴¹ Raportul privind Republica Moldova, adoptat de plenul Parlamentului European la Strasbourg. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-10-2026-0164_EN.html

⁴² Republica Moldova a primit statutul de țară candidată la 23 iunie 2022, negocierile de aderare s-au deschis oficial la 25 iunie 2024, iar procesul de screening bilateral, început în iulie 2024, s-a încheiat în septembrie 2025. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accession_of_Moldova_to_the_European_Union

⁴³ Comisia Europeană a constatat un nivel foarte bun de pregătire al Republicii Moldova la capitolul energie (capitolul 15) în Pachetul de extindere din 2025. https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/moldova-report-2025_en

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Chișinău Receives a New Mandate from Brussels: The European Parliament Report and What Comes Next for the Republic of Moldova

Laurențiu Pleșca

On 8 July in Strasbourg, the European Parliament adopted a report that unequivocally confirms its support for -European path of the Republic Moldova. The document is not an isolated symbolic gesture, but rather part of a process that has been unfolding for nearly four years—from the granting of candidate-country status in 2022 and the opening of accession negotiations in 2024 to the completion of the screening process in the autumn of last year. What the report adds is a clear timeline: Members of the European Parliament encourage the authorities in Chișinău to maintain the pace of reforms so that the negotiations can be provisionally concluded by early 2028, with the objective of achieving full accession by 2030.

The significance of this vote extends beyond a formal acknowledgement of Chișinău's efforts. The report reaffirms a principle that the Republic of Moldova has consistently invoked in recent years: accession should proceed on the basis of the country's own merits, independently of the timelines of other candidate states. At the same time, the text adopted in Strasbourg frames EU enlargement not merely as a technical process, but as a strategic investment in the Union's own security—formulation - that reflects how profoundly Brussels' perception of the Eastern Neighbourhood has changed since 2022.

What the Report Highlights

Members of the European Parliament welcome the opening of accession negotiations, the pace of the screening process, and the progress made in aligning national legislation with the EU acquis. Particular emphasis is placed on achievements in the energy sector, where the Republic of Moldova has gradually reduced its dependence on the Russian energy network and synchronised its electricity system with the European market, with significant technical support from Romania. The report also highlights judicial reform, the strengthening of the rule of law, the fight against corruption and the modernisation of public administration—areas in which tangible progress has been made, even though previous European Commission reports have identified them as among the most challenging areas of the accession process.

A Timeline That Puts Pressure on Chișinău but Also Commits Brussels

Setting a clear timeframe—provisionally concluding negotiations by early 2028 and achieving accession by 2030—changes the nature of the discussion. Until now, enlargement has risked remaining a vague prospect, repeatedly postponed by another year or two. A timeline endorsed by the European Parliament serves a dual purpose. It puts pressure on Chișinău to maintain the pace of reforms, particularly at a time when electoral fatigue or the appeal of populism could potentially weaken the pro-European coalition.

At the same time, it also requires the European institutions to deliver: by opening the negotiating clusters, providing technical and financial support, and, ultimately, securing the political will of all 27 Member States, without which no timeline can carry real weight.

Hybrid Attacks Presented as a Reality, Not a Hypothesis

The report strongly condemns hybrid attacks and the Russian Federation's attempts to undermine the Republic of Moldova's democratic institutions and European path. This is not merely a formulaic statement. The 2024 presidential election and the 2025 parliamentary elections revealed, — according to evidence documented by the Moldovan authorities and European partners—the scale of the alleged illicit financing of political structures, coordinated disinformation and economic pressure attributed to Moscow. By explicitly identifying this phenomenon rather than treating it as a contextual detail, the European Parliament signals that the Republic of Moldova's democratic resilience is regarded as a condition for accession—one that is considered alongside important as legislative alignment.

What This Vote Means for the Citizens of the Republic of Moldova

Beyond diplomacy, the report confirms something that citizens can already observe in their daily lives: the reforms undertaken in recent years are not merely bureaucratic exercises designed to satisfy Brussels, but measures intended to produce tangible results. These include the synchronisation of the electricity system, which has reduced Moldova's vulnerability to Russian disruptions in Russian energy supplies and trade liberalisation, which has made the European Union the main destination for Moldovan exports. However, the continued political, technical, and financial support envisaged by the report, including through the Resilience and Growth Plan, remains conditional on Chişinău's ability to bring reforms to completion rather than merely initiate them.

The Broader Stakes: Every Step Moldova Takes Narrows Russia's Room for Manoeuvre

For European security, the signal from Strasbourg reflects a shift in strategic thinking that developments across the region have reinforced over the past year. Competition between Russia and the EU over the Eastern Neighbourhood is no longer confined to the battlefield in Ukraine; it is also unfolding at the institutional level through accession timelines, negotiating chapters and reports adopted in plenary sessions. Every stage the Republic of Moldova completes without yielding to Moscow's pressure may reduce the scope for Russian influence⁴⁰ in the region. It also strengthens the increasingly compelling argument that the most effective way to defend the European Union's eastern flank is to transform its small and vulnerable neighbours into resilient states firmly anchored in European institutions.

From this perspective, today's vote is not merely an assessment of progress to date, but a strategic commitment that places expectations on Brussels to sustain its support for Moldova's European integration process.

What Remains to Be Done and Where the Real Risks Lie

The report confirmed that Moldova has made real progress but it did not eliminate the country's structural vulnerabilities. The first negotiation cluster, focused on the rule of law, is precisely the most challenging one: judicial reform, the fight against systemic corruption, and the strengthening of independent institutions are processes that take years and can be blocked or reversed by internal political shifts. Moldova has embraced a European path at the level of its current leadership, but societal cohesion around this goal remains a sensitive issue, vulnerable to externally funded disinformation narratives.

The Transnistrian issue remains an unresolved variable. The summit brought no new development on this matter, reflecting the reality that no current diplomatic format offers a solution in the near term. European integration is moving forward advancing, but

⁴⁰ Second EU-Moldova Summit. Von der Leyen: "A further 528 million is ready for Chişinău, subject to reforms"

<https://www.eunews.it/en/2026/06/22/second-eu-moldova-summit-von-der-leyen-a-further-528-million-is-ready-for-chisinau-subject-to-reforms/>

⁴⁵ Rezoluția comună a Parlamentului European privind consolidarea rezilienței Republicii Moldova în fața amenințărilor hibride și a ingerințelor ruse, adoptată în septembrie 2025, în contextul alegerilor parlamentare din 28 septembrie 2025. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-10-2025-0355_EN.html

⁴⁶ Planul de Reziliență și Creștere pentru Republica Moldova, în valoare de 1,9 miliarde de euro (2025-2027), aprobat prin regulamentul de instituire a Facilității de Reformă și Creștere. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-10-2025-0006_EN.html

doing so with a region of the country outside constitutional control, which raises practical questions about the application of the European acquis across the entire territory.

Finally, the pace of reforms cannot be taken for granted. Moldova impressed Brussels by completing 93% of reforms, but -external pressure from Russia, institutional fragility, and internal populist tendencies are real factors that could slow or disrupt the process. European support is conditional on the continuation of reforms, rather than guaranteed regardless of future developments.. Paradoxically, this conditionality is also a protective mechanism for Moldova: it forces the country to stay the course, even when internal pressures might tempt compromise.

The June 22, 2026 EU-Moldova Summit confirms that Moldova's European path is real, measurable, and recognized at the highest political level of the European Union. It is not a vague promise, but a process defined by verifiable figures, timelines, and commitments. For the security community, the key message is that European integration cannot be separated from security. It is the most solid resilience-building mechanism Moldova has at its disposal. Every accession negotiation cluster opened, every tranche of funds unlocked, every gradually integrated domain represents means one more step toward making this process irreversible



PHOTO: <https://www.magnific.com/>

OPINION



The EU Artificial Intelligence Act: Implications for Cyber and Information Security of the Republic of Moldova

 **Rodica Panța**

The implementation of the majority of provisions of the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act) from 2 August 2026 represents an important milestone in strengthening the European governance framework for emerging technologies.

As of August, the European framework has gained increased practical relevance, including through the application of transparency obligations for certain systems and content generated or manipulated using artificial intelligence^{47,48}. For the Republic of Moldova, the significance of the AI Act lies both in the legal harmonisation associated

⁴⁷ Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act) (Text with EEA relevance). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32024R1689>

⁴⁸ AI Act. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/regulatory-framework-ai>

accounts and contradictory messages distributed on social media platforms. The effects can simultaneously target the institution's technical operations and its credibility. For the Republic of Moldova, this development requires linking technical incident response mechanisms with monitoring of the information space and strategic communications. In this context, the speed of institutional communication becomes a component of the capacity to respond to hybrid threats.



Artificial intelligence broadens the traditional scope of cyber security. Alongside networks, systems and data, citizens' trust in information and in the institutions that provide it is becoming a strategic resource requiring protection. A cyber incident affecting a public institution can be amplified through synthetic videos, forged documents, cloned voices of officials, automated

The Republic of Moldova already has an institutional foundation for developing this approach through Law No. 48/2023 on Cyber Security⁵¹ and the work of the Cyber Security Agency.

Integrating AI-related risks into this architecture is a natural next step in the development of national cyber resilience capabilities. A relevant dimension is Article 50 of the AI Act, whose transparency obligations apply from 2 August 2026. It establishes transparency requirements for certain AI systems, as well as requirements

⁴⁷ Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act) (Text with EEA relevance). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32024R1689>

⁴⁸ Al Act. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/regulatory-framework-ai>

⁴⁹ ENISA Threat Landscape 2025. <https://www.enisa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2025-10/ENISA%20Threat%20Landscape%202025%20Booklet.pdf>

⁵⁰ Parteneriat de securitate și apărare dintre Republica Moldova și Uniunea Europeană.

https://old.gov.md/sites/default/files/security_and_defence_partnership_md-eu-2_-_ro_translation_1_2.pdf

⁵¹ Legea nr. 48 din 16 martie 2023 privind securitatea cibernetică, Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova, nr. 151–153, art. 225, 28 aprilie 2023.
https://www.leqis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=136732&lang=ro



or identifying artificially generated or manipulated content and deepfakes under the conditions set out in the Act. Deepfakes should be analysed as a potential instrument of influence operations. The image or voice of a political leader, a representative of a public institution, a journalist or an expert can be reproduced and placed in an artificial context⁵². Deepfakes should be analysed as a potential instrument of influence operations. The image or voice of a political leader,⁵³ a representative of a public institution, a journalist or an expert can be reproduced and placed in an artificial context. During elections or crises, the interval between the publication of false material and its verification can influence public perceptions and behaviour.

Generative AI also enables the creation of influence ecosystems: texts in Romanian and Russian, synthetic images, audiovisual material and networks of automated accounts. In the Republic of Moldova, developing capabilities to detect and verify manipulative synthetic content and communicate rapidly about it is becoming a priority.

Generative AI is also transforming social engineering. Phishing messages can become personalised and tailored to the institutional context, while voice cloning can turn a phone call into a credible tool for fraud, manipulation or obtaining sensitive information. This development is changing the relationship between technical security and the human factor.

For public institutions, staff training is becoming a component of organisational security. Artificial intelligence literacy - AI literacy - must also be treated as a form of security literacy. The AI Act establishes this dimension in Article 4, applicable since February 2025⁵⁴.

Another implication concerns critical infrastructure. The use of algorithms in energy, telecommunications, transport, finance, healthcare and public administration creates new interdependencies. Data quality, model security, access control, the technology provider and the capacity for human intervention are becoming elements of resilience. The issue of technological dependence also arises. Institutions in the Republic of Moldova may use AI models, cloud infrastructure and services developed or hosted in other states. The procurement of AI solutions for the public sector must include criteria for data protection, supply chain security, auditability, service continuity and human control.

From the perspective of European integration, the AI Act should be viewed as part of the convergence between digital transformation, cyber security, information security and the protection of fundamental rights.

The Republic of Moldova should focus on several areas:

- mapping the AI systems used by public institutions;
- classifying them by risk;
- integrating AI risks into the national cyber security framework;
- introducing security standards for the public procurement of AI technologies;
- developing capabilities to identify deepfakes;

⁵² Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act) (Text with EEA relevance). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32024R1689>

⁵³ În 2023 și 2024 au fost create mai multe Deep fake-uri cu președinta Maia Sandu. /VIDEO/ Deepfake-uri cu președinta nu conținesc! Noul video trucat prezintă un discurs fictiv după vizita la Timișoara. <https://tv8.md/2024/01/18/video-deepfake-urile-cu-presedinta-nu-continesc-noul-video-trucat-prezinta-un-discurs-fictiv-dupa-vizita-la-timisoara/249256>; Deepfake cu Maia Sandu de Revelion. <https://stopfals.md/ro/article/deepfake-cu-maia-sandu-de-revelion-181392>

⁵⁴ AI Literacy - Questions & Answers. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/faqs/ai-literacy-questions-answers>

- training civil servants;
- and strengthening cooperation between institutions responsible for cyber security, the information space, data protection and critical infrastructure.

The AI Act provides the Republic of Moldova with a regulatory model and a framework for rethinking digital security in an environment where technology, information and security are becoming deeply interdependent.

The strategic priority for the Republic of Moldova is to integrate artificial intelligence governance into the architecture of national security and democratic resilience. Gradual alignment with European standards can strengthen cyber security, the integrity of the information space, critical infrastructure protection and the capacity of public institutions to use artificial intelligence a secure, transparent, and accountable manner.

OPINION



Chapter 24: From the Opening of Negotiations to the Test of Implementation

✦ *Sanda Sandu⁵⁵, Ana Negru⁵⁶,
Irina Bogdan⁵⁷*

Opening the Negotiations Is Not the Real Test

As part of the negotiations on Chapter 24, the Republic of Moldova, in cooperation with the European Union, will assess its national framework and level of alignment with the EU acquis in the areas of justice, freedom and security. Chapter 24 is therefore one of the most complex chapters of the negotiations, as it encompasses 11 broad areas:

- the fight against organised crime;
- cooperation in the field of drugs;
- counterterrorism and the prevention of radicalisation;
- law enforcement cooperation and information exchange;
- state border management;
- asylum; migration;
- visas;
- judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters;

judicial cooperation in criminal matters; and anti-corruption measures.⁵⁸ Chapter 24 forms part of Cluster 1 – Fundamentals, which the EU opened for the Republic of Moldova on 15 June 2026.

Following its formal opening, the EU will assess implementation progress against the interim benchmarks established for Chapters 23 and 24. In the period ahead, the Republic of Moldova will need to provide solid evidence of progress in practical implementation and demonstrate the operational capacity of its national institutions.

The challenge for the Republic of Moldova is to demonstrate that it can change the prevailing approach in areas affected by systemic shortcomings, including the investigation, documentation and adjudication of criminal cases involving money laundering and organised crime.



PHOTO: <https://www.magnific.com/>

⁵⁵ A co-founder of the Platform for Security and Defense Initiatives and a program manager at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, she has over 8 years of experience in civil society and international organizations. A Wikimedia Fellow on Human Rights, she is an expert in anti-corruption, integrity, and security sector governance, and has published studies on information security and the coordination of foreign aid.

⁵⁶ Deputy Director of the Platform for Security and Defense Initiatives. Member of Working Group No. 24, established in connection with the Republic of Moldova's negotiations for accession to the European Union.

⁵⁷ She holds a bachelor's degree in law and a master's degree in international law, and works at the Platform for Security and Defense Initiatives. Her areas of interest include human rights and the Republic of Moldova's European integration process.

⁵⁸ Capitolul 24: Justiție, Libertate și Securitate

https://old.gov.md/sites/default/files/partea_narativa_cap_24_justitie_libertate_si_securitate_2.pdf



From Alignment to Results: The Real Challenge of Chapter 24

The Republic of Moldova has made considerable efforts to reach this stage, focusing on developing its national institutional framework. This remains important, but it is not sufficient. Meeting the targets and indicators established in the Reform Agenda—which determine the phased disbursement of payments under the Reform and Growth Facility—is essential for maintaining the pace of reform and supporting the country's development.

This shift becomes clearer when the issues previously identified by the European Commission are compared with the requirements now established through the interim benchmarks. Some of the vulnerabilities already identified in areas such as combating serious and organised crime, cybercrime, trafficking in human beings and firearms, cooperation in the field of drugs and counterterrorism are now framed as results that must be demonstrated. The existence of a strategy or institutional mechanism is no longer sufficient.

Montenegro's experience is relevant in this regard. After years of negotiations on Chapters 23 and 24, the European Union concluded in June 2024 that the interim benchmarks had, overall, been met. Even then, the emphasis remained on implementation and tangible results. For the Republic of Moldova, this precedent demonstrates that opening a chapter does not automatically mean that it will be closed quickly⁵⁹.

This results-oriented approach is also reflected in another instrument of the European integration process: the Reform and Growth Facility. Although distinct from the benchmarks established under the accession negotiations, the Facility makes payments conditional on completing measurable steps set out in the Reform Agenda. In March 2026, the positive assessment of 24 reform indicators enabled the disbursement of a new tranche of EUR 189 million. Implementation capacity therefore carries a dual significance: it is essential to the credibility of the country's progress in the accession process and, under the Growth Facility, directly determines access to part of the EU's financial support⁶⁰.

What Will Matter from Now On

From this point forward, the emphasis will be on practical results and completed processes that the Republic of Moldova can demonstrate. This shift places additional pressure on institutions to maintain functional processes and deliver results over time. One important factor is the shortage and turnover of personnel within public institutions⁶¹. These challenges may affect the stability and continuity of institutional processes, the accumulation and retention of expertise, and the ability to bring initiated processes to

⁵⁹ Commission Staff Working Document, Republic of Moldova 2025 Report, Accompanying the Document, Communication From The Commission To The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic And Social Committee And The Committee Of The Regions, 2025 Communication on EU enlargement policy, Brussels, 4.11.2025, SWD(2025) 758 final https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/moldova-report-2025_en

⁶⁰ Republica Moldova a realizat peste 90% din măsurile de reformă, planificate pentru prima jumătate a anului 2026. Rezultatele urmează să fie validate de Comisia Europeană, 10.07.2026

<https://gov.md/ro/comunicate-de-presa/republica-moldova-realizat-pest-90-din-masurile-de-reforma-planificate-pentru>

⁶¹ Moldova Report 2025. https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/moldova-report-2025_en

tangible conclusions. High staff turnover can also undermine the consistent application of established procedures and practices. This demonstrates that implementation must be understood as a system in which different components function together and reinforce one another. Another important factor for the next stage of negotiations is the capacity for interinstitutional coordination⁶², which requires a clear division of responsibilities, effective cooperation and information exchange. This does not mean that such cooperation mechanisms do not already exist. However, the inclusion of interinstitutional cooperation among the interim benchmarks demonstrates that what may initially appear to be a general recommendation is, in fact, an essential condition for the effective functioning of the system and the delivery of verifiable results. These results also matter domestically: “Assessments are not merely technical exercises; they show whether people experience the effects of change in their daily lives through a fairer justice system, greater security and stronger trust in the state”⁶³.

Reducing staff shortages and turnover, while strengthening cooperation among institutions, can create the conditions necessary for establishing consistent and effective practices rather than producing isolated results. Such continuity is essential for achieving sustained and demonstrable outcomes, including in areas such as combating serious and organised crime and the freezing and final confiscation of criminal assets, as provided for in the EU Common Position on Cluster 1.⁶⁴

CONCLUSION

Although the opening of negotiations on Cluster 1 – Fundamentals represents an important achievement⁶⁵, it is only the beginning. As the first cluster to be opened and the last to be closed in the accession process, progress within it will determine the overall pace of negotiations⁶⁶. Nevertheless, the process remains merit-based.

In this context, maintaining progress and ensuring that institutions can translate agreed reforms into functioning practices are essential. The Republic of Moldova must consolidate effective and sufficiently stable institutional practices while maintaining its determination to advance reforms.

This capacity is relevant both to the technical assessment conducted as part of the accession process and to the Republic of Moldova’s credibility among EU Member States. Candidate countries that demonstrate that reforms work in practice can help address the reservations of more sceptical Member States⁶⁷. In the context of Chapter 24, institutions capable of implementing reforms consistently also strengthen the state’s ability to respond to challenges in areas that are essential to internal security.



PHOTO: <https://www.magnific.com/>

⁶² Moldova Report 2025. https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/moldova-report-2025_en

⁶³ S-au desfășurat primele ședințe de monitorizare a progreselor înregistrate pe Capitolele 23 și 24. <https://old.gov.md/ro/content/s-au-desfasurat-primele-sedinte-de-monitorizare-progreselor-inregistrate-pe-capitolele-23-si>

⁶⁴ Conference on accession to the European Union – Republic of Moldova. European Union common position – Cluster 1: Fundamentals. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/AD-19-2026-INIT/en/pdf>

⁶⁵ Ukraine and Moldova launch EU accession negotiations. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2026-06-16/ukraine-and-moldova-launch-eu-accession-negotiations>

⁶⁶ Enlargement: EU and Moldova reach a milestone in accession talks with opening of the first negotiation cluster. https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/enlargement-eu-and-moldova-reach-milestone-accession-talks-opening-first-negotiation-cluster-2026-06-15_en

⁶⁷ Accelerate the accessions: Why faster is better in EU enlargement policy. <https://ecfr.eu/publication/accelerate-the-accessions-why-faster-is-better-in-eu-enlargement-policy>



Chapters 30 and 31: From Alignment to the Capacity to Act as an EU Member State

Rodica Panța

The opening of negotiations on 14 July 2026 for Cluster 6, “External relations”, which includes Chapter 30, “External relations”, and Chapter 31, “Foreign, security and defence policy”, represents an important milestone in the Republic of Moldova’s accession process to the European Union. The two chapters cover trade policy and international relations, as well as foreign, security and defence policy, including alignment with EU positions, sanctions and restrictive measures⁶⁸. Beyond the technical dimension, the opening of this cluster should be analysed through the lens of the transformations that accession entails for the way the Republic of Moldova defines and promotes its national interests. The negotiating position presented by Chisinau indicates its willingness to assume the obligations of a future member state, while the EU’s position emphasises alignment with and effective implementation of the *acquis*⁶⁹. The Council of the EU explicitly states that progress in alignment with and implementation of European standards will continue to be monitored throughout the negotiations⁷⁰.

Chapter 30 covers:

- the common commercial policy
- development cooperation

- and humanitarian aid

requiring the Republic of Moldova to align with EU legislation and external commitments⁷¹. In the current geopolitical context, it also has security implications, as investment, technology, critical infrastructure and supply chains can create strategic vulnerabilities.

For the Republic of Moldova, strengthening institutional capacity to screen foreign investment, control exports of dual-use items and assess economic dependencies is becoming a priority. At the same time, integration into the common commercial policy will require the country’s economic relations with third countries to be increasingly aligned with EU positions and interests, thereby strengthening the European geopolitical anchoring of the Republic of Moldova.



SOURCE: <https://www.zdg.md/stiri/viitorul-nostru-comun-incepe-acum-relatia-ue-r-moldova-etapa-negocierilor/>

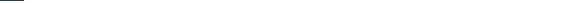
⁶⁸ Republica Moldova a deschis oficial negocierile pentru clusterul 6 – Relații externe. <https://old.gov.md/ro/content/republica-moldova-deschis-oficial-negocierile-pentru-clusterul-6-relatii-externe>

⁶⁹ Poziția comună a Uniunii Europene – Grupul tematic 6: Relații externe. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/AD-51-2026-INIT/ro/pdf>

⁷⁰ Ibidem, p. 12

⁷¹ Extindere: UE și Moldova încep negocierile privind politicile în domeniul relațiilor externe. https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/enlargement-eu-and-moldova-start-negotiations-external-relations-policies-2026-07-14_en?utm_source=chatgpt.com

The EU's assessment is favourable: the Republic of Moldova's foreign and security policy considered to be guided by its strategic choice to pursue accession, while preparations to implement the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) are considered "on track". At the same time, the EU's emphasis on strengthening institutional capacity shows that the focus is shifting from political alignment towards the effective capacity to implement the commitments undertaken⁷³. In this area, one of the main challenges is the gap between political alignment and operational capacity. Participation in the CFSP requires adopting and implementing common EU positions, including when they entail political, economic or diplomatic costs. In 2025, the Republic of Moldova recorded a 91% alignment rate with the High


[illegible]

Chapter 31 reopens the discussion on the relationship between constitutional neutrality and deeper cooperation with the EU in security and defence, demonstrating that the two can evolve in parallel. The EU highlights defence sector reform and the Republic of Moldova's gradual integration into the European security architecture, including through the Security and Defence Partnership and the European Peace Facility. This trend continued in July 2026 with the approval of a new EUR 120 million assistance measure to strengthen the Republic of Moldova's defence capabilities⁷⁵,

⁷⁵ Instrumentul european pentru pace: Consiliul adoptă o măsură de asistență pentru a sprijini capacitățile de apărare aeriană ale Republicii Moldova. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/press/press-releases/2026/07/13/european-peace-facility-council-adopts-assistance-measure-to-support-the-republic-of-moldova-s-air-defence-capabilities/>



PHOTO: <https://radiomoldova.md/p/26986/parlamentul-a-adoptat-strategia-securitatii-nationale-a-republicii-moldova>

intended to enhance the air defence capabilities of its Armed Forces. The measure funds a medium-range air defence system and brings total support provided to the Republic of Moldova through the European Peace Facility to EUR 317 million⁷⁶. From an analytical perspective, this development is gradually reshaping the terms of the debate on neutrality. Neutrality does not eliminate the need for effective institutions, critical infrastructure protection, cyber security, defence capabilities and preparedness for crisis management.



At the same time, European integration in the field of security is acquiring an increasingly pronounced operational dimension. The Republic of Moldova is already contributing to EU crisis management operations and missions under the Common Security and Defence Policy⁷⁷. One of the strategic implications of Chapter 31 is the gradual transformation of the Republic of Moldova's role in its security relationship with the EU. The logic of accession, however, introduces a second dimension: the Republic of Moldova's capacity to contribute to European security. The experience gained by the Republic of Moldova in managing energy crises, refugee

flows, information interference and other forms of hybrid pressure could -, in turn, become a source of relevant expertise for the EU.

This requirement confirms the overall logic of the negotiations: the EU will increasingly assess implementation capacity and tangible results, not merely the existence of a regulatory framework. Chapter 31 thus becomes a test of the Republic of Moldova's institutional maturity in the field of security. Political convergence between Chisinau and Brussels is already well advanced, however the negotiation stage requires it to be translated into institutional and operational convergence. From this perspective, negotiations on Chapter 31 forms part of a broader process of strengthening the state's capacity to anticipate risks, manage crises, protect the information space and critical infrastructure, and actively participate in the European security and defence architecture.

The opening of negotiations on Chapters 30 and 31 thus marks the transition to a stage in which the Republic of Moldova's progress will increasingly be assessed through its implementation capacity. Political convergence between Chisinau and Brussels is evident, but it must be translated into institutional and operational convergence. The Republic of Moldova must move from alignment to implementation, from establishing institutions to ensuring they function, and from being a recipient of European support to contributing to European security.



⁷⁶ Instrumentul european pentru pace: Consiliul adoptă o măsură de asistență pentru a sprijini capacitățile de apărare aeriană ale Republicii Moldova. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/press/press-releases/2026/07/13/european-peace-facility-council-adopts-assistance-measure-to-support-the-republic-of-moldova-s-air-defence-capabilities/>

⁷⁷ Rodica Panța. Colaborarea dintre Republica Moldova și Uniunea Europeană în sectorul de securitate și apărare: de la cooperare sectorială la parteneriat strategic. <https://pisa.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/COLABORAREA-DINTRE-REPUBLICA-MOLDOVA-SI-UNIUNEA-EUROPEANA-IN-SECTORUL-DE-SECURITATE-SI-APARARE-DE-LA-COOPERARE-SECTORIALA-LA-PARTENERIAT-STRATEGIC-1-2.pdf>



Risk and Impact Assessment

PHOTO: <https://www.magnific.com/>

ARTICLE



Poverty Weaponisation – from Orchestrating Illegal Migration in Spain’s Ceuta to Electoral Interference in Moldova

 *Denis Cenuşa*⁷⁸

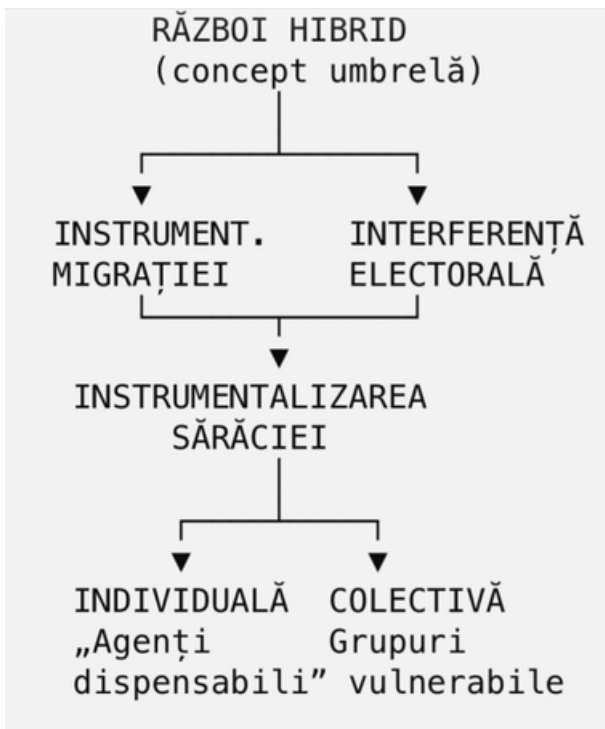
What was once a largely socio-economic phenomenon, ‘poverty’ entails an inherent security dimension that makes it an effective instrument for hybrid activity. The weaponisation of poverty manifests itself in non-Western societies, where the lower-income groups outnumber the middle class. Furthermore, higher social media penetration makes the socially vulnerable categories easier to reach during malign interference. Their poverty level turns them into determined high-risk takers, who are viewed as convenient ‘weaponisable assets’ because they belong to larger social categories, whose behaviour can ensure a continuous spiral effect in the political realm.

Key concepts: the difference between “disposable agents” and “whole-of-society” poverty weaponisation

People experiencing acute economic vulnerability have traditionally been used to carry out hybrid activities, such as arson, acts of vandalism, and other sabotage operations, either acting either individually or in small groups to ensure undetectability and plausible deniability. When acting individually, people in difficult circumstances are treated as “disposable agents” or “low-level agents” who perform short-term tasks for quick money, with remuneration increasingly paid in cryptocurrency to avoid traceability that could lead to the ‘coordination room’. The large-scale involvement of poor individuals, usually in a disguised manner, differs fundamentally from poverty instrumentalisation, in which a whole-of-society approach prevails. Engaging socially vulnerable people in large numbers and in open-to-the-public activities causes higher, longer-term costs to the targeted country. Compared with individual

⁷⁸ Geostrateg, Associate Expert, Center for Geopolitical and Security Studies (Lithuania)

cases of poverty exploitation through “disposable agents”, the involvement of society’s large vulnerable groups in hybrid operations is more efficient at overwhelming state institutions, inflicting political and reputational damage with cascading security and broader geopolitical implications.



Source: Prepared based on the author's conceptualization, using artificial intelligence (AI) tools.

To expand the reflection on “poverty weaponisation”, this article examines two distinct cases to highlight the various ways in which hybrid warfare can exploit poverty: the orchestration of illegal migration in Ceuta, a Spanish in North Africa, and electoral interference in Moldova. These examples show that when poverty can be weaponised when it has the potential to influence political dynamics within a targeted country, as in the Moldovan case, or be exported from the country of origin to a neighbouring country to trigger a crisis, as in Ceuta. Therefore, when poverty is local and the strings are pulled from the outside, it can be used to manipulate voting behaviour to produce a preferable electoral outcome and reshape the country’s foreign orientation. Simultaneously, the same poverty, resulting from inherent socio-economic failures

serves as a precondition for actors aligned with the country from which poverty originates to manipulate vulnerable masses into engaging in illegal migration abroad. In both cases, once weaponised, poverty creates strategic advantages for the perpetrating side by causing a crisis at the periphery of the EU’s external borders or in its neighbourhood.

The Ceuta Case: Poverty Instrumentalisation through Illegal Migration Orchestration

On 30 and 31 July, more than 70,000 illegal migrants, most of them Moroccan nationals, entered Ceuta, a Spanish enclave in North Africa. The event was triggered by a combination of factors.



The Supreme Court of Spain’s 8 July decision, which ruled that those entering Ceuta illegally by swimming are not subject to immediate returns, was alleged to have had a “pull effect”. It was later reported that the influx from Morocco was due to social media manipulation⁷⁹. (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, etc.), involving both channels linked to Moroccan accounts and regional ones (Algeria, Tunisia, Spain, etc.). The illegal entry into Ceuta was organised through transport arranged from Moroccan cities near Ceuta.

⁷⁹ Así es el papel de las redes sociales en la entrada masiva de inmigrantes a Ceuta. <https://www.expansion.com/economia/politica/2026/07/31/6a6c53d1e5fdea584f8b4572.html>

The evidence showed that representatives of security agencies tolerated or even facilitated illegal crossings of their citizens, many of whom were youth, into Spanish territory⁸⁰. Despite the Moroccan authorities denying any involvement in the influx of illegal migrants, the mobilisation of more than 70,000 people (about 83% of Ceuta's population) bears similarities to the instrumentalisation of illegal migration previously seen in Muammar Gaddafi's Libya in 2010. A similar phenomenon is currently taking place on the EU's eastern flank, at the borders of Poland and the Baltic Countries, orchestrated by Belarus⁸¹.

The influx of Moroccan youth would not have been possible without the prevailing domestic conditions in Morocco. About 35% of of Morocco's 6 million young people are unemployed representing around 2 million individuals. The International Labour Organisation estimated that about 2.9 million young Moroccans fall into the category of those not integrated into education, employment, or training⁸². This situation has fuelled political instability for the government, as youth protests in the autumn of 2025 demanded jobs and investment in education, among other demands. Consequently, this age group of Moroccans is extremely vulnerable to social media manipulation about the possibility of improving their social status by emigrating to and obtaining legal residency in Spain via Ceuta⁸³. In the hands of malign actors this human capital can be exploited, inducing people to participate in weaponized irregular migration. Easy to mobilise, Morocco's youth population was drawn into illegal crossings into Ceuta, mainly because of their socio-economic vulnerability. Given the potential for the weaponization of poverty among young Moroccans, the use of



PHOTO: www.freepik.com

irregular migration as an instrument against Spain and Europe's external borders in North Africa is likely to recur.

Moldova: Poverty Weaponisation as a Means of Electoral Interference

The parliamentary legislative elections of September 2025 in Moldova illustrated that poverty was a door into vote manipulation by networks associated with Ilan Șor, a Moldovan businessman based in Moscow who was convicted in connection with the 2014 banking fraud. After attempting to alter the outcome of the presidential elections in October 2024, the pro-Russian political parties, united in a "Victory" Bloc and coordinated by Șor from Russia, were repurposed to manipulate the vote in the 2025 elections. The vulnerable population was the main target. Șor offered 3,000 US dollars for participation in anti-government protests, which never materialised because of the authorities' actions. Prior to that, Șor had built a network of patronage among the poor social categories by allowing them to benefit from social supermarkets – "Merisor" – first established in 2015, which allegedly sold foodstuffs 30% cheaper⁸⁴. Many of the beneficiaries were either retired people, whose pensions are about 100 US dollars monthly, or poor urban residents. According to some estimates, Șor's network comprised approximately 130,000 people, representing

⁸⁰ Gaddafi wants EU cash to stop African migrants. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-11139345>

⁸¹ Hybrid Warfare and Illegal Migration: The Belarus Case vs. the Ceuta Crisis. https://dioniscenusa.substack.com/p/hybrid-warfare-and-illegal-migration-483?r=tsv8f&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web

⁸² Migration crisis: 1 in 3 young Moroccans neither works nor studies. <https://efe.com/english/other-news/2026-08-01/moroccan-youth-unemployment-crisis/>

⁸³ More Than 1 Million Migrants Apply for Legal Status in Spain. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/06/30/world/europe/spain-migrants-legal-status.html>

⁸⁴ Șor închide magazinele „MeriȘor” și o acuză pe Sandu de genocid: Își urăște poporul. <https://stiri.md/article/politica/sor-inchide-magazinele-merisor-si-o-acuza-pe-sandu-de-genocid-isi-uraste-poporul>

up to 10% of the population that normally votes (1.5 million people)⁸⁵.

In the period leading up to the 2025 parliamentary elections, Shor went further with his strategy of weaponising vulnerable Moldovan voters by making transfers to Western-sanctioned Russian Promsvyazbank (PSB) accounts, which could be accessed through the PSB phone app. Moldovan police reported about 40 million euros in transfers from Russia to accounts belonging to Moldovan citizens in the two months before the elections⁸⁶. To download the application, they used Telegram. Later, Moldovan authorities claimed that another app, Taito⁸⁷, was used to make transfers to Shor's network to influence the vote, both on election day and beforehand through anti-government messaging on social media. Those involved in the social-media activity were paid 160 euros per month and trained to produce content for Facebook and Instagram, including using AI platforms, to promote narratives about alleged election falsification by the ruling party, the conditioning of EU accession on promoting the LGBTQ+ agenda, among others.

Electoral interference by Russia, exploiting disadvantaged Moldovans, will likely persist because of two structural issues. Firstly, about 35% of the population lives in absolute poverty, and this number will not decline until the country's economy begins to generate wealth. Secondly, the ailing economy and the increased taxes, including VAT, announced by the government to reduce the budget deficit as a precondition for accessing foreign loans, will inevitably lead to deterioration of living conditions. The prevalence of poverty makes the population vulnerable to corruption by geopolitical actors as a form of retaliation

against the government, which the socially vulnerable categories view as the main cause of worsening living standards. The instinct of survival prevails over prioritising the country's European orientation, which is countered through electoral interference, at the base of which is the instrumentalisation of widespread poverty.

PHOTO: www.freepik.com



CONCLUSIONS

Poverty weaponisation can occur when vulnerable groups are driven by economic incentives. For instance, social media that manipulated Moroccan youth promised a prosperous future in Ceuta, Spain, and/or in Europe. In the Moldovan case, poverty weaponisation included direct financial remuneration, also known as electoral bribery.

Furthermore, the aims of using poverty as an instrument can vary. It can facilitate illegal migration, which actors aligned with a state – the Moroccan case – can deploy to fuel revisionist claims against neighbours. The Ceuta migration crisis has brought to light assertions by Moroccan officials about Spanish sovereignty over its territories in North Africa.

⁸⁵ Moldovan Oligarch Offers Cash Bribes to Incite Protests Before Polls. <https://balkaninsight.com/2025/08/15/moldovan-oligarch-offers-cash-bribes-to-incite-protests-before-polls/bi/>

⁸⁶ Rusia a pompat peste 39 milioane de dolari în două luni pentru a schimba soarta alegerilor din Republica Moldova. <https://www.rfi.fr/ro/republica-moldova/20241024-rusia-a-pompat-pest-39-milioane-de-dolari-%C3%AEn-dou%C4%83-luni-pentru-a-schimba-soarta-alegerilor-din-republica-moldova>

⁸⁷ Russia accused of new vote-buying scheme in Moldova. <https://moldova1.md/p/56755/russia-accused-of-new-vote-buying-scheme-in-moldova>

⁸⁸ O rețea secretă, finanțată de Rusia, încearcă să influențeze alegerile parlamentare din Republica Moldova - Investigație BBC.

<https://romania.europalibera.org/a/retea-secreta-finantata-de-rusia-acuzata-ca-incearca-sa-influenceze-alegerile-din-moldova---investigatie-bbc/33536237.html>

Distinctively, poverty can be exploited in electoral-interference hybrid warfare, with the goal of shifting a country's geopolitical orientation by altering voting outcomes. In this sense, the bribery of socially vulnerable voters is aimed at influencing a state's foreign policy from a distance—as seen in Russia's interference in Moldova's 2025 elections. Among all types of hybrid warfare, migration orchestration and electoral interference are achievable when poverty reaches widespread levels.

Overall, its human dimension makes poverty an inherent feature of hybrid warfare in general, and also of the adjacent sub-level of cognitive and psychological warfare. Consequently, prolonged economic stagnation and uncontrolled inflation in the EU and its neighbourhood may create favourable conditions for the weaponisation of poverty, providing both established – such as Russia – and emerging threat actors with opportunities to exploit socioeconomic vulnerabilities for political and strategic purposes.

PHOTO: [Image created using AI](#)

Thematic Dossier

OPINION



The Transnistrian Region's Digital Integration into the Russian Information Space and the Risks to Human Rights



Sanda Sandu

The tendency of the de facto administration in Tiraspol to adapt so-called local legislation to the norms of the Russian Federation is acquiring on an increasingly pronounced digital dimension in 2026. The draft initiative concerning the presence of institutions and local administrations on social media platforms, the promotion of the Russian MAX app and encouragement to use the regional Matrix platform point to a process of closer alignment with Russian information infrastructure. Viewed from the perspective of the Republic of Moldova's security, this phenomenon extends beyond technological issues. It raises questions about control over citizens' data, privacy protection, freedom of expression and the long-term orientation of the information space on the left bank of the Dniester.

The draft examined by the so-called Supreme Soviet introduces the concept of an “official page” for the region's institutions and grants the de facto administration the authority to determine the platforms on which such pages will operate. The document explicitly draws on the Russian Federation's experience in regulating institutional communication through social media⁸⁹. In parallel, institutions in the region and channels affiliated with – the administration have begun to establish a presence on MAX, while the leader in Tiraspol has encouraged the use of Matrix, a product developed by Interdnestrcom. Radio Free Europe describes this trend as a form of “digital unification” with Russia.

From a human rights perspective, the key question concerns the conditions under which this digital migration is taking place.

⁸⁹ Проект закона Приднестровской Молдавской Республики «О внесении изменений и дополнений в Закон Приднестровской Молдавской Республики «Об обеспечении доступа к информации о деятельности органов государственной власти и органов местного самоуправления». <https://vspmr.org/legislation/bills/viii-soziv/proekt-zakona-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-o-vnesenii-izmeneniy-i-dopolneniy-v-zakon-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respubliki-ob-obespechenii-dostupa-k-informatsii-o-deyatelnosti-organov-gosudarstvennoy-vlasti-i-organov-mestnogo-samoupravleniya-.html>

Choosing a messaging app remains, in principle, an individual decision. The nature of this choice changes when the authorities move their official communications to particular platforms, public institutions systematically promote them, and access to information or interaction with the administration comes to depend on their use. In such circumstances, there is a risk that using these platforms becomes indirectly compulsory. Citizens may find themselves accepting to the processing of their data because doing so becomes the practical means of accessing information and services.

The Russian model provides grounds for such concern. Since September 2025, MAX has been included on the list of apps that must be pre-installed on phones and tablets sold in the Russian Federation. The app is developed by a company within the VK ecosystem and is integrated with Russian digital services⁹⁰. Its use in Transnistria would transfer a significant part of the region's digital lives of residents to technological and legal infrastructure located within the Russian Federation.



The MAX privacy policy, in its version updated on 18 May 2026, reveals the scope of the data that may be processed. The service collects names and phone numbers, IP addresses, device and operating system types, information about internet service providers and location, as well as data on users' activity within the app. Access to the phone's contact list is possible with the user's permission.

The platform may combine certain information with data available to affiliated entities to analyse the use of its services. The Data are processed and stored within the territory of the Russian Federation. The policy allows information to be disclosed to executive and judicial authorities upon a request made in accordance with Russian law⁹¹. These provisions must be analysed in light of the institutional environment in which the data is ultimately stored. In July 2026, the Council of the European Union stated, in its reasons for imposing restrictive measures, that MAX had been developed in accordance with requirements established under the supervision of Russia's Federal Security Service. The EU document mentions extensive monitoring capabilities and cases in which information obtained through the platform was used against citizens over content they had posted online⁹². These findings place the discussion of MAX in a context of security and fundamental rights that cannot be reduced to the standard privacy policy of a commercial app.

For residents of the Transnistrian region, the risk is amplified by the existing human rights situation in the territory. Monitoring organisations have documented restrictions on civic space, pressure on critical voices and the strengthening of surveillance mechanisms. There have been cases of individuals being convicted for views expressed on social media, including criticism of the administration in Tiraspol or the Russian Federation. In 2026, Promo LEG reported a continued deterioration in the human rights situation and the expansion of mechanisms for controlling the population.

In such an environment, metadata can become just as relevant as the messages themselves. Phone numbers, location, contact lists, connection times and

⁹⁰ Распоряжение Правительства Российской Федерации от 19 августа 2025 г. № 2240-р.

https://storage.consultant.ru/site20/202508/21/pr_210825-2240.pdf

⁹¹ Политика конфиденциальности сервиса «MAX». <https://legal.max.ru/pp>

⁹² Council Decision CFSP 2026/1709 of 13 July 2026 amending Decision CFSP 2024/1484 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Russia, Official Journal of the European Union, 2026. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2026/1709/oj/ron/pdf>

communication patterns make it possible to reconstruct a person's social networks. For a journalist, activist, public official, lawyer or citizen who communicates with institutions on the right bank, such information can reveal relationships and patterns of behaviour without requiring access to the content of every individual conversation. The consequence may be self-censorship. People who perceive a risk of monitoring gradually may change their behaviour, avoid certain contacts and become less willing to express sensitive opinions.

The legal dimension deserves particular attention. On 21 May 2026, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in the case of V.I. v. the Republic of Moldova and Russia, which specifically concerned personal data protection in the Transnistrian region. The Court found that the disclosure of confidential medical data by de facto authorities constituted an interference with the right to respect for private life. The judges reiterated that so-called Transnistrian legislation cannot provide a legal basis compatible with the Convention for interference with fundamental rights and noted the absence of an effective judicial remedy in the region⁹³.

This case law provides an important reference point for analysing the use of MAX. The issue not limited to the amount of data collected. What matters is who controls it, under which rules it can be accessed, what safeguards exist against arbitrary use and where citizens can challenge an interference with their rights. When a resident of the Republic of Moldova has their data processed within a Russian digital ecosystem while living in a territory where access to independent remedies is limited, legal safeguards become considerably weaker. The contrast with developments on the right bank is significant.

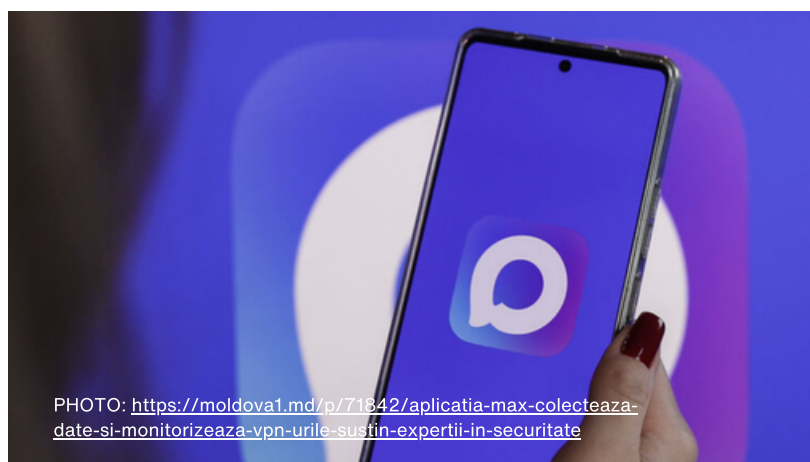
⁹³ Curtea Europeană a Drepturilor Omului. V.I. v. the Republic of Moldova and Russia, cererea nr. 63750/17, hotărârea din 21 mai 2026. <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22%3A%5B%22001-250154%22%5D%7D>

⁹⁴ Parlamentul Republicii Moldova. Legea nr. 195 din 25 iulie 2024 privind protecția datelor cu caracter personal, Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova, nr. 367–369 din 23 august 2024.

On 23 August 2026, the new Law No. 195 on Personal Data Protection entered into force, incorporating European standards in this field and strengthening individuals' rights over their own data⁹⁴. The Republic of Moldova is thus moving closer to the European model of data protection, while the Transnistrian region risks becoming increasingly integrated into the Russian digital model. Over time, this divergence could create a new dimension of the Transnistrian issue: the existence of two incompatible digital regimes within the territory of the same state.

For Chisinau, an appropriate response must start with protecting citizens. The authorities can document the impact of platforms used in the region, inform the population about how data is processed and incorporate data protection into dialogue on human rights and the Transnistrian settlement. Access to secure communication channels and information from diverse sources must be preserved for residents on the left bank of the Dniester. Civil society organisations, the media and national data protection institutions can contribute through digital education and by informing users about the permissions granted to applications

Digital integration has long-term strategic consequences. The platforms through which people communicate, receive information and interact with the the authorities create institutional dependencies and shape the relationship between citizens and those in power. The expansion of MAX in the Transnistrian region must be viewed from this perspective. At stake are citizens' informational autonomy, privacy protection and the Republic of Moldova's capacity to maintain a common legal framework for fundamental rights throughout its territory.



“Unification” as a FIMI Instrument in the Kremlin’s Toolkit

Mihai Isac⁹⁵

The reunification of the Republic of Moldova with Romania is a legitimate political topic that can be supported or opposed within a democratic framework. It becomes, however, an instrument of information manipulation when it is detached from legal and political reality, presented as a secret plan for annexation and amplified in a coordinated manner by foreign actors, media outlets and local intermediaries. In European Union terminology, FIMI refers not merely to false content, but to intentional and coordinated behaviour capable of affecting values, procedures and political processes⁹⁶.

For the Kremlin, this theme is useful because it simultaneously touches upon identity, sovereignty, historical memory and the fear of war. The central narrative claims that the Republic of Moldova no longer makes its own decisions: closer ties with the European

Union, cooperation with Romania, recognition of the Romanian language and stronger security ties are portrayed as stages in the disappearance of the Moldovan state⁹⁷. Romania is cast as an imperialist, invading power, while Russia is presented as the protector of sovereignty, Russian-speaking minorities, Gagauzia and the Transnistrian region.

This strategy does not invent the issue of unification, but instrumentalizes - it. FIMI actors start from real facts, such as the existence of the unionist movement, dual citizenship, joint projects and Romanian financial support, and link them to unsubstantiated conclusions. Aid is portrayed as the purchase of loyalty, educational projects as a means of Romanianisation, European integration as the elimination of statehood, and any military exercise or movement of military equipment can be presented as preparation for the occupation of the territory⁹⁸. NATO StratCom analyses have identified the narrative “Romania and NATO threaten peace” among the hostile messages that exploit vulnerabilities within Moldovan society⁹⁹. Today, it serves as a bridging narrative, linking the identity issue to NATO, the war in Ukraine, Transnistria and the alleged loss of neutrality. The aim is not necessarily to convince everyone that unification is imminent. It is enough to sow suspicion that the authorities in Chisinau are concealing something and that Bucharest is pursuing a territorial agenda¹⁰⁰.



PHOTO: www.freepik.com

⁹⁵ Journalist and political analyst; senior editor at the Karadeniz Press news agency. He specializes in the dynamics of the broader Black Sea region and the former Soviet space, collaborating with media outlets in Romania, the Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria, and other countries. His areas of interest include combating disinformation, security developments, analysis of regional political developments, and the study of interethnic and interreligious relations.

⁹⁶ Serviciul European de Acțiune Externă, „Information Integrity and Countering Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference”. EEAS definește FIMI prin caracterul manipulator, intenționat și coordonat al comportamentului, care poate implica actori statali, nestatali și intermediari.

⁹⁷ Consiliul Uniunii Europene, „Foreign information manipulation and interference: Council approves conclusions stepping up EU’s engagement and ability to respond”. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/07/18/foreign-information-manipulation-and-interference-council-approves-conclusions-stepping-up-eu-s-engagement-and-ability-to-respond/>

⁹⁸ Hybrid CoE, Trend Report 9, 2023, p. 23–24. <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/publicationtype/trend-report/>. Raportul descrie utilizarea de către Rusia a identităților etnice, religioase și culturale pentru strategia „divide et impera”, polarizare și instrumentalizarea istoriei. Raportul descrie utilizarea de către Rusia a identităților etnice, religioase și culturale pentru strategia „divide et impera”, polarizare și instrumentalizarea istoriei.

⁹⁹ Moldovan Information Environment, Hostile Narratives, and Other Ramifications. <https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/the-moldovan-information-environment-hostile-narratives-and-other-ramifications/185>

¹⁰⁰ EUvsDisinfo, „Moldova’s accession to the EU is a cover for country’s annexation to Romania”. <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/moldovas-accession-to-the-eu-is-a-cover-for-countrys-annexation-to-romania/>

Annexation à la russe

A case study emerged in June 2026. A bill initiated by MPs from the S.O.S. România party provided for “the unification of Romania with the Republic of Moldova”. It was deemed have been tacitly adopted by the Chamber of Deputies after the constitutional deadline expired, without debate or a vote, and was due to proceed to the Senate. The Government and two parliamentary committees had issued negative opinions¹⁰¹.

The case illustrates the mechanism through which the narrative spreads. A political actor in Romania, known for its pro-Russian views, introduces a provocative initiative. A procedural failure gives it the appearance of a parliamentary act, local intermediaries turn it into an alarmist message, the Russian media cite local reactions, and Russian diplomacy turns them into a geopolitical accusation. In FIMI, coordination can also be observed through the allocation of roles, synchronised repetition and the use of the same amplification infrastructure¹⁰².

The distinction between procedure and political decision was erased. Pro-Russian politicians in the Republic of Moldova, anonymous Telegram channels, Facebook pages and Russian media outlets described the event as official approval of a territorial annexation. StopFals documented the spread of similar messages, predominantly in Russian, from Moldovan politicians to channels in Gagauzia, Transnistria and the Russian media¹⁰³. The spokesperson for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs subsequently used the term “annexation” to describe the intentions attributed to Romania¹⁰⁴.

The narrative is tailored to different audiences. In the Republic of Moldova, the message is that the state will disappear and that the pro-European authorities are agents of Bucharest and Brussels. For Gagauz people and residents of the Transnistrian region, unification is associated with the loss of autonomy, Romanianisation and NATO membership. In Romania, propaganda can fuel more radical unionist rhetoric or increase fatigue with the Republic of Moldova, which is portrayed as a source of costs.

The same pattern was used in claims that NATO was pushing Romania to annex the Republic of Moldova, including through video footage allegedly showing Romanian military equipment heading towards Moldova. The Romanian Ministry of Defence clarified that the footage showed movements within Romania¹⁰⁵.



Real facts, such as military vehicle movements, were retained, but the location, destination and intent were fabricated.

Strategic Objectives

The unification narrative seeks more than to reduce sympathy for Romania and the Republic of Moldova. The first objective is to obstruct European integration by spreading conspiracy theories, such as equating EU accession with occupation by Bucharest¹⁰⁶. The second is to delegitimise the leadership in Chişinău. Thus, if the government is preparing for the state’s disappearance, any reform can be portrayed as treason.

¹⁰¹ Camera Deputaţilor, proiectul de lege privind unirea României cu Republica Moldova, PL-x 305/2026; Digi24, „Proiectul depus de S.O.S. România privind unirea cu Republica Moldova a fost adoptat tacit”, 24 iunie 2026. <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/politica/proiectul-depus-de-s-o-s-romania-privind-unirea-cu-republica-moldova-a-fost-adoptat-tacit-de-camera-deputatilor-si-merge-la-senat-3830123>

Adoptarea tacită s-a produs prin expirarea termenului, fără dezbateri şi fără vot, iar Guvernul şi comisiile de specialitate emisesează avize negative.

¹⁰² 4th EEAS Annual Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/4th-eeas-annual-report-foreign-information-manipulation-and-interference-threats_en

¹⁰³ „România anexează Moldova. Mobilizare propagandistică după adoptarea tacită a unui proiect”. <https://stopfals.md/ro/article/romania-anexeaza-moldova-mobilizare-propagandistica-dupa-adoptarea-tacita-a-unui-proiect-initiat-de-partidul-pro-rus-al-diane-sosoaca-181494>

¹⁰⁴ „Russia advises West to apply term ‘annexation’ to Romania trying to absorb Moldova”. <https://tass.com/politics/2151655>

¹⁰⁵ EUvsDisinfo, „Fear for independence”, 27 august 2022, secţiunea „Romania is going to take over Moldova”. <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/fear-for-independence/>

¹⁰⁶ EUvsDisinfo, „Kremlin disinformation on Moldova’s referendum”. <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/kremlin-disinformation-on-moldovas-referendum/>



PHOTO: www.freepik.com

The third is to discredit Romania as a partner by presenting investment, scholarships, energy interconnections or diplomatic support as instruments of territorial expansion¹⁰⁷.

An important component is the narrative of forced Romanianisation. Recognition of the scientific and legal designation of the Romanian language is portrayed as the forced elimination of Moldovan identity and a preliminary step towards unification¹⁰⁸. A historical dispute is thus turned into an immediate threat. The message reactivates divisions entrenched during the Soviet period and enables any form of cultural rapprochement to be used as evidence of a conspiracy.

The operation does not rely solely on television. SIS reported the existence of Russian infrastructure that systematically distributed pro-Kremlin narratives on Telegram, TikTok and YouTube during the 2024 elections¹⁰⁹. In 2025, civil society identified a network of hundreds of accounts across five platforms, comprising fake accounts, bots and pages that amplified pro-Russian politicians and attacked European integration; researchers observed thematic connections with the Romanian information space¹¹⁰.

These findings help explain how quickly a local incident can develop into a cross-border campaign. An effective response must avoid two pitfalls. The first is labelling every supporter or opponent of unification as a foreign agent. Democratic debate must be protected; otherwise, the authorities reinforce the narrative of repression. The second is countering falsehoods without investigating the networks, funding and coordination behind them. FIMI is identified through behavior. More specifically, it is necessary to examine who launches the message, how it is picked up and amplified, what context is omitted and which audiences are targeted.

Romania and the Republic of Moldova need joint responses to incidents along with legal explanations in Romanian, Russian and Ukrainian, as well as transparency regarding bilateral projects and visibility into the amplification chain. The issue of unification should not be removed from public debate. It can, however, be separated from falsehoods about annexation, occupation and war. The Kremlin's objective is not to win a historical debate, but to turn identity into a fault line, weaken trust between Bucharest and Chişinău and reduce the Republic of Moldova's freedom to choose its future¹¹¹.

¹⁰³ EUvsDisinfo, „Fear for independence”, 27 august 2022, secţiunea „Romania is going to take over Moldova”. <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/fear-for-independence/>

¹⁰⁴ EUvsDisinfo, „Kremlin disinformation on Moldova's referendum”. <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/kremlin-disinformation-on-moldovas-referendum/>

¹⁰⁵ EUvsDisinfo, „Romania wants to deprive Moldova of state sovereignty”. <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/romania-wants-to-deprive-moldova-of-state-sovereignty/>

¹⁰⁶ Veridica, „The government in Chisinau wants to eliminate the Moldovan language because it is preparing the union”. <https://www.veridica.ro/en/fake-news-disinformation-propaganda/disinformation-the-government-in-chisinau-wants-to-eliminate-the-moldovan-language-because-it-is-preparing-the-union>

¹⁰⁷ Serviciul de Informaţii şi Securitate al Republicii Moldova, „Imixtiunea externă în procesele electorale din Republica Moldova”. <https://sis.md/ro/content/imixtiunea-extern%C4%83-%C3%AE-n-procesele-electorale-din-republica-moldova>

¹⁰⁸ Andrei Rusu, Andrei Curăraru, Eugen Muravski, „The Russian Disinformation Network in Moldova: Anatomy of a Social Media Operation”. <https://watchdog.md/en/studies/208525/reteaua-rusa-de-dezinformare-in-moldova-anatomia-unei-operatiuni-pe-retelele-de-socializare/>

¹⁰⁹ OSCE/ODIHR, Republic of Moldova — Presidential Election and Constitutional Referendum, 20 October 2024: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, 21 octombrie 2024. <https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/elections/moldova/578815>



Security Sector Reform

ARTICLE



Security Sector Reform in the Republic of Moldova in the Context of the War in Ukraine and European Integration

*Iurie Pîntea*¹¹²

The war of aggression launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine in February 2022 has fundamentally changed the security environment in which the Republic of Moldova operates. Whereas the risk of a conventional military conflict in the country's immediate vicinity could previously be regarded as a relatively unlikely scenario, the war in the neighbouring state has demonstrated that the use of military force to achieve political and territorial objectives has once again become a reality of European security. For the Republic of Moldova, this change is particularly significant given its small territory, limited resources, unresolved Transnistrian conflict and the illegal presence of Russian troops on its territory. The effects of the war have extended far beyond the strictly military dimension. Airspace incidents, fragments of drone and missile landing on the Republic of Moldova's territory, energy pressures, cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns and destabilisation efforts have demonstrated the multidimensional nature of contemporary threats. At the same time, these developments have highlighted that political, economic and institutional resilience

cannot be separated from the state's capacity to protect its territory, critical infrastructure and institutions, including through military instruments means.

The war in Ukraine did not create the concern for modernising the National Army from scratch. The Gavrilița Government's 2021¹¹³ programme had already referred to strengthening national defence capacity, developing military capabilities and ensuring an "operational deterrent capability".

¹¹² Independent researcher

¹¹³ Programul de activitate al Guvernului „Moldova vremurilor bune”.
https://gov.md/sites/default/files/media/documents/2025-03/programul_de_activitate_al_guvernului_moldova_vremurilor_b



However, the programme largely reflected the traditional approach to defence policy before February 2022: broadly formulated objectives, gradual modernisation, professionalisation, external cooperation and adjustments to policy documents, without measurable operational objectives or a sufficiently clear link between threats, capabilities and resources. The 2021 programme is therefore useful primarily as a reference point for understanding the shift that followed.

From managing the sector to building an effective defence capacity

The first substantial shift emerged in the Recean Government's 2023 programme¹¹⁴, developed under the direct impact of the war in Ukraine. The emphasis shifted from general sector reform towards "modernising and transforming the National Army's military capabilities". The programme refers to modernising infrastructure, weapons and military equipment, developing military education and, importantly, improving the planning, programming, budgeting and evaluation system.

¹¹⁴ Programul de activitate al Guvernului „Moldova prosperă, sigură, europeană”, aprobat prin Hotărârea Parlamentului nr. 28 din 16 februarie 2023.
https://gov.md/sites/default/files/media/documents/2025-03/program_de_guv-final_ro.pdf

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

— The Tofan Government: Priorities and Objectives for 2026 – 2029 —

Laurențiu Pleșca

On Tuesday, 21 July, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova passed a vote of confidence in the government led by Vasile Tofan, an entrepreneur who had been nominated as Prime Minister by President Maia Sandu following the resignation of Alexandru Munteanu. The government was approved with the support of all 53 Members of Parliament representing the Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS), while the opposition voted against it or abstained.

The investiture proceedings, which involved nearly ten hours of debate, were accompanied by a government programme presented as being structured around performance indicators rather than broad commitments—a departure from the format of previous government programmes. In practice, each major policy area includes a measurable target and, in many cases, a specific deadline, turning the programme into an instrument against which the government's performance can subsequently be assessed using concrete indicators. The structure presented to Parliament comprises five pillars: economic growth; state efficiency; European integration; security and justice; and education, healthcare and social protection.

1. Economic Growth

Tofan identified economic recovery as the central priority of his government, arguing that the country's "old engines"—traditional agriculture, the automotive wiring industry and exports to Eastern markets—can no longer sustain growth on their own. The proposed alternative focuses on technology, services, agri-food processing, energy, tourism, and the creative industries, sectors described as still "operating well below their full potential". Specifically, the programme provides for a minimum wage of MDL 10,000, the creation of approximately 100,000 jobs and investments of MDL 7 billion in agriculture, alongside a package of more than MDL 600 million for tourism.

2. State Efficiency

The second pillar focuses on public administration through institutional audits, the digitalisation of public services, the reduction of bureaucracy and the elimination of redundant structures. The government also plans to conduct an inventory of public property and a systematic review of budget expenditure, which Tofan described as exercises undertaken "not for reporting purposes, but to inform real decisions". Inspections of businesses are to be limited and shifted towards a risk-based model. This change in approach is intended to support the stated objective of making Moldova "the simplest and most predictable European jurisdiction" for entrepreneurs.

3. European Integration

In this area, the government has set its most demanding timetable: opening all six negotiating clusters with the European Union in 2026 and achieving an implementation rate of more than 90%, with the ultimate objective of preparing for the signing of the Treaty of Accession by the end of 2028.

Unlike the first target, which counts largely on the control of the government in Chişinău, signing the Treaty also depends on the negotiating timetable established in Brussels and the unanimous support of all 27 Member States—factors that lie beyond the full control of any Moldovan government.

4. Security and Justice

The programme maintains justice reform as a distinct priority alongside the security component. Regarding the Transnistrian issue, Tofan stated that closer ties between the two banks of the Dniester must be pursued “peacefully, gradually and without escalating tensions. One concrete measure announced for the region is the Convergence Fund, which would introduce an additional tax obligations for businesses operating on the left bank of the Dniester and is expected to become operational on 1 January 2027.

5. Education, Healthcare and Social Protection

The final pillar provides for MDL 6 billion in funding for education, including higher salaries for teachers and measures to narrow the gap between rural and urban schools. It also covers the modernisation of the healthcare system and the creation of approximately 3,000 new nursery places. The government programme covers the period through 2029.

Tax Reform: The Government's Second Major Test

Although it is not presented as a separate pillar, tax reform was one of the most closely scrutinised aspects of the speech, as it was also linked indirectly to the preceding political crisis. Munteanu resigned shortly after the Ministry of Finance presented a widely criticised budgetary and fiscal reform, which included a new system of wage taxation scheduled to take effect in 2027 and subsequently withdrawn from the draft. President Sandu publicly acknowledged that the tax policy “could have been better developed, consulted and explained/” Tofan did not promise unconditional tax stability. He stated explicitly that it would be “unserious and irresponsible” to claim that taxes would remain unchanged. However, he announced a change in approach: a new tax policy framework for 2027 will be submitted for public consultation before being translated into specific tax rates. Structurally, the debate will focus on the four revenue categories that account for more than 95% of budget revenue—labour, excise duties, consumption and other adjustments—with the stated aim of reducing the tax burden on labour and offsetting the resulting revenue shortfall elsewhere. The finance portfolio has also changed hands, with Victoria Belous taking office as one of four new ministers in the Tofan government, alongside the incoming ministers responsible for agriculture, healthcare and culture.

What Comes Next

The government has set a 100-day deadline for delivering its first verifiable results: presenting the tax policy framework for 2027, launching the public administration audit, and initiating the projects identified as priorities. Through this timetable, the government is voluntarily subjecting itself to assessment based on measurable results rather than declarations of intent—precisely the approach Tofan has pledged to bring to government.

This development must be analysed alongside the changes to the strategic framework between 2023 and 2025. The update of the National Security Strategy¹¹⁵, the approval of the National Defence Strategy¹¹⁶, the revision of defence planning documents and, subsequently, the adoption of the Military Strategy for 2025–2035 began to establish a clearer link between regional threats, the National Army's missions and the need to develop appropriate capabilities. Reform is thus beginning to move beyond managing an underfunded army towards planning defence based on actual risks. The 2025 Munteanu Government's¹¹⁷, programme marks a new stage by introducing the concept of “capable defence”. The army is described as modern, professional and well equipped, while investment in personnel

¹¹⁵ Hotărârea nr. 391 din 15 decembrie 2023 privind aprobarea Strategiei securităţii naţionale a Republicii Moldova. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=141253&lang=ro

¹¹⁶ Hotărârea nr. 319 din 26 decembrie 2024 pentru aprobarea Strategiei naţionale de apărare a Republicii Moldova pentru anii 2024–2034. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=146655&lang=ro

¹¹⁷ Guvernul Republicii Moldova, Programul de activitate al Guvernului „UE, pace, dezvoltare”. <https://gov.md/sites/default/files/media/documents/2026-02/Program%20de%20Guvernare%202025.pdf>

and equipment is linked to building national resilience. The programme explicitly introduces the need to respond to conventional and hybrid threats and emphasises the “defense mindset”, citizen engagement and strengthening the security culture.

This component deserves particular attention. Building a national defence culture means more than increasing the Army's visibility. It requires institutions and society to better understand the nature of security risks, the roles of different authorities in crisis situations, citizens' responsibilities and the need to prepare for emergencies.

In practice, this involves security and defence education, reserve training, interinstitutional exercises, responsible public information and stronger ties between military institutions, public authorities and communities. A functional defence culture does not seek to militarise society, but to strengthen its capacity to understand, prevent and absorb the effects of a crisis.

The 2026 Tofan Government's¹¹⁸ programme takes this logic much further. Its sectoral vision is built around a “credible defence capacity”, and the National Army is described as professional, mobile, robust and interoperable. For the first time, priority capabilities are precisely identified: surveillance and early warning, air and counter-drone defence, secure communications, mobility, logistics, cyber protection, and command- and- control systems.

The evolution of government programmes thus reflects a clear qualitative shift: from sector reform to capability transformation, then to capable defence and national resilience, and, at the current stage, toward building an integrated and measurable defence system.

Defence Investment – from a Budgetary Necessity to a Ssecurity Imperative

The main structural vulnerability of the defence sector remains the underfunding accumulated over several decades.. An army can maintain certain structures and equipment with limited resources, but it cannot achieve technological and operational transformation without sustained and predictable investment.

At the same time, simply increasing the budget does not guarantee the development of defence capacity. The relevant criterion is the operational outcome generated by the investment. The acquisition of modern equipment does not, in itself, constitute a capability without trained personnel, infrastructure, communications, ammunition, maintenance and the resources required to operate it.

The 2026 programme¹¹⁹ articulates this approach more maturely than previous documents, providing for the development of “complete and sustainable capabilities”, in which equipment, personnel, infrastructure, training and maintenance are developed together. It also provides for predictable funding aligned with capability objectives and the full life-cycle costs of equipment.

For the Republic of Moldova, prioritising investment is essential. Available resources do not allow for the development of all the components of a large conventional army. For this reason, Investment must be directed towards the areas that reduce the most significant vulnerabilities and strengthen the state's response capacity.

Airspace defence provides a relevant example. The experience of recent years has demonstrated the need to develop radar and early warning systems, air defence assets and, in particular, capabilities to detect and neutralise drones. The 2026 programme explicitly includes these objectives, alongside

¹¹⁸ Programul de activitate al Guvernului. „Economie europeană, stat eficient”. <https://gov.md/sites/default/files/media/documents/2026-07/Program%20de%20activitate%20al%20Guvernului%202026.pdf>

¹¹⁹ Ibidem

the modernisation of communications, military information systems, command and control, mobility and logistics.



Lessons from Ukraine: Preparedness, Adaptation and Resilience

Ukraine's experience offers the Republic of Moldova at least three major lessons. The first is that preparation before a crisis can decisively influence a state's ability to withstand its effects once the crisis begins. The reforms Ukraine initiated after 2014, force training, changes to the command system, cooperation with Western partners and doctrinal adaptation created an indispensable foundation for its response in 2022.

The second lesson concerns the speed of technological transformation. Drones, electronic warfare, digital communications, the integration of information from multiple sources and the use of precision-strike systems have profoundly changed the nature of warfare. For the Republic of Moldova, the solution lies not in replicating the Ukrainian model on a smaller scale, but rather in identifying the technologies and capabilities that offer a favourable balance between cost, survivability and operational effect.

The third lesson concerns society's capacity to function under crisis conditions. A relatively small army cannot constitute the entire national defence system on its own.

For this reason, the 2026 programme extends the logic of reform to the reserve, mobilisation, the registration of defence resources, critical infrastructure and public preparedness. It provides for the modernisation of the mobilisation system, the digitalisation of defence resource records and the regular organisation of interinstitutional exercises.

This approach reinforces the idea that national defence is not solely the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, but a function of the state as a whole and, to a certain extent, of society as a whole.

The Risks of Insufficient Modernisation

Delaying reform creates several categories of risk. The first is operational risk: outdated equipment, insufficient surveillance and communications capabilities, and the lack of a trained reserve reduce the state's response time and limit its available response options. The second is technological risk. With military innovation advancing rapidly, capacity gaps widen quickly. A lack of investment in drones, counter-drone systems, electronic warfare, secure communications, and command and control can turn a quantitative disadvantage into a far more serious technological and operational one.

A third risk is excessive dependence on external assistance. Support from the European Union and strategic partners is essential, but it must complement national investment, rather than replace it. Without national priorities, multiannual planning and maintenance capacity, isolated purchases and donations can create a fragmented system that is difficult to sustain over the long term.

Finally, there is a risk to strategic credibility. If security documents identify serious threats but budgetary policy does not provide the resources needed to reduce the identified vulnerabilities, a discrepancy emerges between the risk assessment and the state's actual capacity to respond.

European Integration as an Accelerator of Defence Reform

The second major force shaping the transformation of the defence sector is European integration. The evolution of government programmes is also relevant from this perspective. In 2021, the European Union was presented primarily as a partner for cooperation under the Common Security and Defence Policy, alongside cooperation with NATO. By 2025, the government programme was already referring to “gradual integration into the European security architecture”.

The 2026 programme goes further, defining accession to the European Union and integration into the European security and defence architecture as the main framework for modernising the sector. The Republic of Moldova-European Union Security and Defence Partnership is directly linked to capability development, training, resilience, cyber security and countering hybrid threats.

At the same time, reform is beginning to extend beyond military procurement. The 2026 programme provides for the gradual development of elements of the defence technological and industrial base, including software, secure communications, sensors, counter-drone systems, maintenance and logistics, as well as connecting Moldovan companies and researchers to European projects.

CONCLUSIONS

Between 2021 and 2026, defence reform in the Republic of Moldova evolved from a traditional, predominantly declaratory and institution-focused approach towards a much more concrete one built around capabilities, investment, resilience and measurable results. The war in Ukraine was the main catalyst accelerator for this transformation, while the European integration process now provides an additional institutional and financial framework.

This change is also evident in the introduction of concrete performance indicators in the 2026 programme, including objectives relating to the modernisation of the core defence system, counter-drone protection, radar capabilities, the reserve, interoperability and military infrastructure. Thus, reform is increasingly being assessed not merely by the number of documents adopted or purchases made, but by the development of genuinely operational capabilities.

For the Republic of Moldova, the realistic objective cannot be to build an army quantitatively comparable to the armed forces of larger states. The priority must be to develop a professional, mobile, technologically capable and interoperable defence system, supported by a functioning reserve and a resilient society. In the current regional security environment, investment in defence is not an alternative to economic development and European integration. It is one of the necessary conditions for protecting the state's sovereignty, its institutions and, ultimately its own path towards European integration.



ARTICLE



Power, Control and Trust: The New Balance of Security Sector Governance in Moldova

The Consolidation of the President's Role, Parliamentary Oversight and European Integration

 **Vadim Enicov**¹²⁰

The Unfinished Part of the Reform

The reform of Moldova's security sector contains an apparent paradox: the more concentrated and capable of action the sector's leadership becomes, the greater the need for stronger democratic oversight. Recent years have brought the most far-reaching transformation of security governance since independence – a new legal framework for the intelligence service, a modern national strategy and a framework law on national security.

The war in the neighbourhood and hybrid threats have demanded faster coordination among previously fragmented institutions, and the response has been the consolidation of the presidential role. The question that remains open is whether the architecture of control and accountability has developed at the same pace. The thesis of this article is that the reform must be understood as a dual consolidation: a stronger presidential leadership and a Parliament more capable of overseeing it are not antagonistic directions, but complementary components of the same institutional construction.

A Reform in Three Stages: From Separate Institutions to an Integrated System

The starting point was an outdated and fragmented legal framework, focused more on the protection of the state than on the rights and security of the individual. The first stage of the reform addressed the framework of the intelligence service: the laws of 2023 separated police-type functions from intelligence activity, reformed the judicial authorization of intrusive measures and expressly enshrined parliamentary control over the Security and Intelligence Service (SIS)¹²¹. This was followed, in December 2023, by the adoption of the National Security Strategy, which introduced a comprehensive approach to security, grounded in human rights and the rule of law¹²². The consolidation stage came in 2025, with Law No. 249/2025 on national security¹²³, accompanied by the reorganization of the National Security Council and the amendments concerning the Centre for Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation. The rationale of this initial phase was to build capacity and reduce fragmentation: institutions must be able to anticipate risks, coordinate policies

¹²⁰ Doctor of Law, expert in security sector governance. The views expressed are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the position of any organization with which the author is affiliated. Generative AI tools were used to support the drafting and editing process, including source verification and referencing; the concept, analysis, interpretations, conclusions and recommendations are solely the author's, who assumes full responsibility for the content.

¹²¹ Legea nr. 136 din 01.06.2023 cu privire la Serviciul de Informații și Securitate al Republicii Moldova; Legea nr. 179 din 07.07.2023 privind activitatea de contrainformații și de informații externe. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=150626&lang=ro

¹²² Hotărârea Parlamentului nr. 391 din 15.12.2023 privind aprobarea Strategiei securității naționale a Republicii Moldova. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=141253&lang=ro

¹²³ Legea nr. 249 din 10.07.2025 privind securitatea națională a Republicii Moldova. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=150559&lang=ro

and react coherently. It is precisely this newly developed capacity that raises the question of the next stage: what democratic mechanisms must accompany it?

The New Legislative Architecture and the Consolidation of the Presidential Centre

A rigorous analysis must distinguish three different situations. First, continuity: previous legislation had already recognized the President's general leadership in the field of state security¹²⁴. Second, development: Law No. 249/2025 operationalizes this role – the President exercises the general leadership of national security activity, strategic direction and the initiation of policies, coordinates the activity of the SIS and chairs the National Security Council. Parliament retains essential powers over the legislative framework, the approval of strategies, budgets and democratic control, while the Government is responsible for implementing policies and leading the public administration in the field¹²⁵.

This institutional framework has, however, a precise constitutional limit. The Constitution provided the legislator with the necessary scope to operationalize the President's role in the security domain through expressly established powers: Article 87 allows the President, as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, to take "other measures" to ensure national security, but "within the limits and under the conditions prescribed by law"¹²⁷.

Article 77 does not constitute a general empowerment: the Constitutional Court has held that the function of "guarantor" does not allow the President to act outside the powers expressly established by the Constitution and by law¹²⁸. Any new power therefore requires a specific legislative basis, not an automatic constitutional justification. The sociological dimension must be interpreted with equal precision. Public opinion data reveal a significant asymmetry: in September 2025, trust in the President stood at approximately 44%, compared with 32% in

Third, there are explicit institutional redistributions: the clearest example is the transfer of the Centre for Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation under the authority of the President, who appoints its director and evaluates its activity¹²⁶.

Parliament, and in October 2024 almost half of respondents believed that the President should be granted more powers¹²⁹. These data may explain the political rationale behind reform; they do not, however, constitute the legal foundation for the exercise of those powers.

¹²² Hotărârea Parlamentului nr. 391 din 15.12.2023 privind aprobarea Strategiei securității naționale a Republicii Moldova.

https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=141253&lang=ro

¹²³ Legea nr. 249 din 10.07.2025 privind securitatea națională a Republicii Moldova. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=150559&lang=ro

¹²⁴ Legea nr. 618-XIII din 31.10.1995 privind securitatea statului, abrogată prin Legea nr. 249/2025. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=142091&lang=ro

¹²⁵ Legea nr. 249/2025, art. 12–15.

¹²⁶ Legea nr. 247 din 10.07.2025 pentru modificarea unor acte normative (aspecte referitoare la activitatea Centrului pentru Comunicare Strategică și Contracurarea a Dezinformării). https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=150136&lang=ro

¹²⁷ Constituția Republicii Moldova, adoptată la 29.07.1994, republicată. În: Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova, 2024, nr. 466, art. 635 – articolele 77 și 87. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=145723&lang=ro

¹²⁸ Curtea Constituțională a Republicii Moldova. Decizia nr. 96 din 06.08.2020 de inadmisibilitate a sesizării nr. 31b/2020 privind interpretarea unor prevederi ale articolelor 77 și 86 din Constituție, §§ 17, 33 și 54. <https://constcourt.md/ccdocview.php?tip=decizii&docid=846&l=ro>

¹²⁹ Institutul de Politici Publice. Barometrul Opiniei Publice despre evoluția situației politice în Republica Moldova în perioada 2020–2025. Chișinău, 2025. <https://ipp.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/BOP-2020-2025.pdf>

From Personalized Trust to Institutional Trust

Higher trust in a directly elected President brings tangible benefits: it facilitates reforms, provides a clear point of leadership, increases the coherence and visibility of decisions and reduces the perception of state fragmentation. Yet the architecture of the security sector must function independently of the identity of the officeholder. A system built around trust in a particular person risks depending excessively on that person's popularity, becoming vulnerable when the office holder changes, generating suspicions of politicization and transferring the fluctuations in of political competition to state institutions. The available data do not demonstrate an absolute opposition between trust "in the person" and trust "in institutions"; what they show is a personalization of trust and a constant gap between the presidential institution and the legislative one. The conclusion follows naturally personal trust can open the window of opportunity for a reform, but only democratically accountable institutions can ensure its continuity. This conversion does not happen automatically -: it requires predictable procedures, regular reporting and institutions that demonstrate their usefulness beyond a single electoral cycle. Transforming personalized trust into institutional trust is, in fact, the sustainability test of the entire reform.

Parliamentary Oversight: The Second Pillar of the Reform

Parliament is the representative forum in which the majority, the opposition and different segments of society come together through the democratic process. Its strengthening is not a reaction against the President, but the logical consequence of the consolidation of executive capacity: the more important the powers of leadership and coordination, the clearer the obligations to report on, explain and justify decisions must be.

The relevant parliamentary functions are well established verifying compliance with the legal framework, examining the implementation of the National Security Strategy, controlling budgets and the use of resources, hearing the leadership of institutions, overseeing the SIS, the ex-post evaluation of the effects of legislation and the pluralist representation of public interests.

Practice, however, continues to lag behind regulation. Although the legislation of 2023 established parliamentary control over the SIS, the mechanism of the specialized subcommittee never became functional, and the initiative for a new concept of parliamentary control, launched in 2024, has not been followed up sufficiently¹³⁰. The current debate on the new Code on the Organization and Functioning of Parliament provides the opportunity to turn principle into practice: a direct and explicit responsibility of the competent standing committee for overseeing the SIS, clear rules on access to classified information, permanent staff with legal, budgetary and security expertise, the effective participation of the opposition, public reports in unclassified versions, the follow-up of the implementation of parliamentary recommendations and cooperation with the Court of Accounts, the Ombudsman, the data protection authority and civil society. The distinction between oversight and operational interference must be strictly maintained: Parliament does not conduct operations and does not substitute itself for the management of the services; it scrutinizes legality, effectiveness and institutional accountability.



PHOTO: <https://old.parlament.md/>

¹³⁰ European Commission. Republic of Moldova 2025 Report, SWD(2025) 758 final. Brussels, 4.11.2025, secțiunea 2.1.1 („Civilian oversight of the security and intelligence sector”). https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/23fa6af0-89b3-4532-a3d9-d1638727d14c_en?filename=moldova-report-2025.pdf

Good Governance as the Bridge between Security and Trust

The principles of good governance – legality, accountability, effectiveness, transparency, participation, integrity and democratic civilian control – serve as the link between the two components of the reform¹³¹. The confidentiality required for security activity cannot mean the absence of oversight. Transparency in this field is differentiated: operational information may remain classified, while objectives, aggregate budgets, results and accountability mechanisms must be capable of being explained publicly. A system able to tell citizens what it is pursuing, how much it costs and who is accountable does not compromise its effectiveness – it legitimizes it. In this way, good governance turns institutional performance into public legitimacy and provides the concrete mechanism through which personalized trust becomes trust in the state.

European Integration: Not Just Security, but Democratic Security

For the Republic of Moldova, the European dimension of the reform operates at three levels: democratic institutions, the rule of law and control mechanisms; the state's capacity to protect information, institutions and democratic processes; and its credibility as a future member state and security partner. The European Commission's 2025 Report explicitly notes the incipient stage of parliamentary oversight of the security and intelligence sector and finds that the initiative for a new concept of control over the SIS has not been followed by concrete steps¹³². Democratic control over the intelligence services is, in the logic of the accession process, part of the fundamental rule-of-law criteria, not an optional element of the technical chapters. The message is clear: the European Union does not ask for the “presidentialization” of the sector, but for institutions that are capable, lawful, controllable and resilient to political change.

European integration does not only mean that the Republic of Moldova should become more secure, but that it should become secure in a democratic way.

CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR ACTION

The reform of the security sector should not be halted or reversed, but completed. The priorities of the next stage are identifiable: the exact mapping of the powers of the President, the National Security Council, Parliament, the Government and the SIS; the adoption of a specialized framework for parliamentary oversight of the SIS, including in the new Code of Parliament; the establishment of a regular reporting relationship between the National Security Council and Parliament; strengthening of Parliament's own expertise and resources; the publication of an accessible annual report on the implementation of the National Security Strategy; and the correlation of these mechanisms with the criteria of the EU accession process.

A strong Presidency can give the security sector direction and coherence. A strong Parliament provides it with democratic legitimacy and continuity. Together, acting within the limits of the law, they can turn trust in an individual into durable trust in the state.

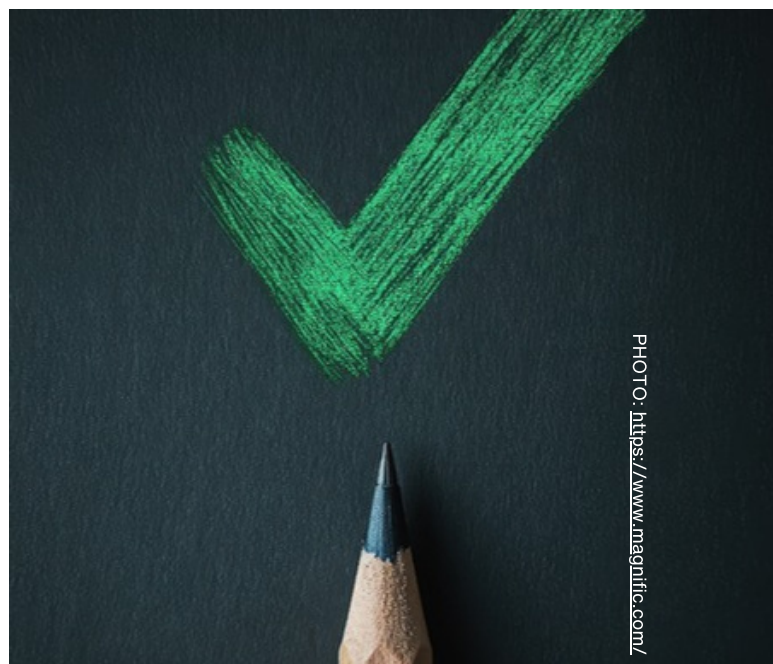


PHOTO: <https://www.magnific.com/>

¹³¹ DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. Independent Report – Security Sector Governance in Moldova. Geneva, 2024.

<https://www.dcaf.ch/independent-report-security-sector-governance-moldova>

¹³² Republic of Moldova 2025 Report, op. cit.



Information Security and Disinformation

OPINION



Information Security in Summer 2026: Pressure on Public Trust and Consolidation of National Resilience

 *Sanda Sandu*

The experience of the Republic of Moldova between June and August 2026 reveals persistent information activities aimed at shaping public perceptions, exploiting sensitive issues and undermining trust in state institutions. Isolated falsehoods, manipulative messages and distorted interpretations of certain political or institutional decisions sought to reinforce the perception of a vulnerable state, incapable of protecting its sovereignty and independently managing its security policy.

Assessments by the Centre for Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation confirm the adaptive nature of these activities. The institution's reports highlight the use of information infrastructure, platforms, accounts and themes tailored to different audience groups, exploiting existing social and political vulnerabilities¹³³. The intended effect is achieved through the gradual accumulation of distrust, the intensification of polarisation and the weakening institutions' ability to communicate credibly with society.

The waves of information activity observed in summer 2026 simultaneously exploited administrative, identity-related geopolitical and security-related issues. Local public administration reform was associated with the disappearance of localities and reduced

access to public services. Developments concerning Gagauz autonomy were portrayed as attempts to diminish or "eliminate" it. A marginal legislative initiative in Romania fuelled messages about the alleged "annexation" of the Republic of Moldova. The modernisation of the National Army and cooperation with Western partners were incorporated into narratives about the country's "militarisation" and its alleged preparations for involvement in a regional conflict.

The diversity of these themes may create the impression of separate information episodes. At the strategic level, however, they follow the same logic: undermining trust in the state's ability to make legitimate decisions and portraying public policies as actions imposed from outside or directed against citizens' interests. The topics change rapidly, but the underlying message remains relatively constant: the Republic of Moldova supposedly lacks autonomy in decision-making, its institutions allegedly act against society, and closer ties with European partners are portrayed as generating insecurity.

The defence sector remains particularly vulnerable to such interpretations. External support for developing military capabilities and investment in modernising the National Army are frequently presented in an alarmist terms.

¹³³ Raport pentru conștientizare publică a manipulării informaționale. TTP-uri și cazuri documentate în perioada ianuarie-mai 2026, Chișinău, 2026.

The approval, on 13 July 2026, of a EUR 120 million assistance measure under the European Peace Facility intended to develop the Republic of Moldova's air defence capabilities provided a new pretext for promoting claims about the country's alleged "militarisation"¹³⁴.

This type of discourse exploits the sensitivity of part of society to the neutral status of the Republic of Moldova. From a security policy perspective, constitutional neutrality does not remove the state's responsibility to invest in its own defence capabilities. The National Defence Strategy for 2024–2034 provides for the development of a modern defence system adapted to the current security environment, in which hybrid threats, airspace violations and the effects of the war in Ukraine have become direct risk factors¹³⁵. Under these circumstances, public communication on defence modernisation becomes an integral part of the process of strengthening resilience.

The preparations for the military parade on 27 August represented a relevant test in this regard. The movement of military equipment and the training exercises conducted ahead of the event could easily fuel alarmist messages online. Indeed, claims emerged that the Republic of Moldova was "preparing for war", along with false information about the participation of Romanian F-16 aircraft in the event.

The Ministry of Defence managed this situation through timely clear and predictable communication. The institution publicly informed citizens about rehearsals, the movement of military and specialised equipment, the nature of planned activities and possible traffic restrictions. Citizens were encouraged to consult official sources, and the false information about the

presence of F-16 aircraft was promptly refuted. Such an approach reduces uncertainty and limits the scope for authentic footage from the ground will be taken out of context and reinterpreted for manipulative purposes.

The military parade on 27 August can therefore be assessed as a relevant exercise in strategic communications. More than 2,000 military personnel and representatives of institutions within the national security and defence system, 150 veterans, military personnel from partner states and over 100 units of military and specialised equipment took part in the event. The presence of more than 7,000 citizens in the Great National Assembly Square gave the event a significant public dimension¹³⁶.

The event provided society with a tangible picture of the National Army's modernisation. Artillery systems, air defence assets, equipment for monitoring and protecting airspace, and counter-drone capabilities illustrated the investments made to strengthen defence capacity. The relevance of these investments was confirmed precisely in the context of 27 August, when the authorities reported five unauthorised flights through the airspace of the Republic of Moldova amid Russian Federation attacks on Ukraine. This incident highlighted the tangible nature of the security risks facing the state.

¹³⁴ European Peace Facility: Council adopts assistance measure to support the Republic of Moldova's air defence capabilities, 13 iulie 2026.

¹³⁵ Hotărârea nr. 319 din 26 decembrie 2024 privind aprobarea Strategiei naţionale de apărare a Republicii Moldova pentru anii 2024–2034, Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova, 3 ianuarie 2025.

¹³⁶ Paradă militară în PMAN: Peste 2.000 de militari au defilat, iar tehnica modernă a impresionat spectatorii. <https://tv8.md/2026/08/27/video-parada-militara-in-pman-peste-2-000-de-militari-au-defilat-iar-tehnica-moderna-a-impresionat-spectatorii/308083>



The symbolic dimension of the parade is also of strategic significance. Holding the event on Independence Day under the theme “Independence unites us” placed defence modernisation within a framework associated with sovereignty, state responsibility and social solidarity. For a society constantly exposed to messages about division, institutional weakness and an inability to defend itself, the visibility of functioning institutions can contribute to strengthening public trust.

The parade thus served as a source of national pride and an instrument for strengthening social cohesion around the country’s security. The relationship between society and defence institutions is essential in a strategic environment dominated by uncertainty and hostile information influence. Public trust enhances the state’s capacity to implement reforms, explain the need for investment in security and maintain society’s support for the measures needed to protect sovereignty.

The experience of summer 2026 shows that information resilience is built by anticipating vulnerabilities, explaining public decisions and maintaining regular communication with citizens. A rapid response to falsehoods remains necessary, but long-term effectiveness depends on institutions’ ability to fill the information space with credible, accessible information before manipulative interpretations become entrenched.

The Ministry of Defence’s experience in preparing and holding the parade on 27 August provides a relevant example of practice for the entire national security system. Anticipatory communication, transparency regarding institutional activities and clear explanations of modernisation objectives can strengthen the relationship between state and society. In the current security environment, this relationship is one of the main sources of the Republic of Moldova’s resilience. Defence capacity, public trust and social cohesion must be viewed as interconnected elements of the same effort to protect the state’s independence and sovereignty.



Strategic Communication

OPINION



Strategic Communications in Latvia: From Countering Disinformation to Building Resilience. Lessons for the Republic of Moldova

Elena Mârzac, Rodica Panța

Latvia's experience is relevant to the Republic of Moldova both as a model that can be adapted and because it shows how strategic communications can evolve from a predominantly reactive function into an instrument of governance, security and the strengthening of societal resilience. The two countries have different contexts but face a number of similar vulnerabilities: proximity to a regional security environment dominated by Russia's aggression, long-term exposure to Russian propaganda, a fragmented information space and the need to strengthen citizens' trust in state institutions. In Latvia, information threats and influence operations are explicitly addressed as part of the risks to national security and societal resilience¹³⁷.

In this regard, we could highlight several distinctive features of strategic communications in Latvia. Strategic communications are not limited to countering falsehoods or conventional institutional communication. "The National Concept on Strategic Communication and Security of the Information Space 2023–2027" examines the security of the information space through three interdependent pillars: effective

communication between central and local institutions and their audiences; a strong, high-quality media environment; and a society capable of identifying and resisting information manipulation¹³⁸. This approach changes the logic of intervention: the objective is to reduce the vulnerabilities that make society susceptible to manipulation.

The second distinctive feature is the existence of a **clearly defined coordination architecture**. The State Chancellery provides strategic coordination and plans narratives and priorities over the medium and long term, while central and local institutions implement communication at the operational and tactical levels. The Public Administration Communication Coordination Group, coordinated by the State Chancellery's StratCom unit, meets at least weekly to exchange information, identify communication challenges and coordinate approaches. A separate coordination mechanism operates to ensure the security of the information space, while local government, civil society, academia and the private sector are involved at the operational level as needed¹³⁹.

¹³⁷ The National Concept on Strategic Communication and Security of the Information Space 2023–2027. <https://www.mk.gov.lv/en/valsts-strategiskas-komunikacijas-un-informativas-telpas-drosibas-koncepcija>

¹³⁸ Ibidem

¹³⁹ The National Concept on Strategic Communication and Security of the Information Space 2023–2027. <https://www.mk.gov.lv/en/media/15446/download?attachment=>

This is, we believe, one of the most important lessons for Moldova: centralised coordination must not be confused with the centralization of all communication. A single institution cannot communicate on behalf of the entire state. The role of the central structure should be to ensure analysis of the information environment, the coherence of objectives and narratives, methodologies, professional training and coordination in complex situations. Responsibility for communicating policies, however, must remain with the institutions that develop and implement them. It is precisely this combination of strategic coordination and sectoral responsibility that is important in the Latvian model¹⁴⁰.

A particularly strong element of the Latvian model is the link between communication, identity and a sense of belonging. Discussions in Latvia brought out several seemingly simple but meaningful formulations: Latvia defines itself as a state that “was under occupation”, not as a “former Soviet country”; it builds its narrative around the continuity of the state, its culture, language and European belonging¹⁴¹.

This approach is also supported by strategic documents. The State Defence Concept 2023–2027 explicitly links Latvia’s development and security to societal unity and a shared set of values that shape national identity: the independent state, its historical development, culture, language and citizens’ participation in defending these values. The defence of statehood and independence is defined as a shared responsibility of society as a whole¹⁴².

There is a sensitive but essential lesson here for the Republic of Moldova. Information resilience cannot be built without a positive narrative about who we are, what we want to protect and where we want to go.

Communication about Europe, communication about security and efforts to counter disinformation cannot function separately from discussions about identity, language, history, independence, democracy and the country’s future. At the same time, strengthening national identity must be inclusive. Russian speakers and members of minorities must not be turned into a risk category; vulnerabilities must be defined in terms of behaviours, sources and mechanisms of influence, not ethnic or linguistic affiliation.

Equally relevant is the idea that “narrative is always tested” (“the narrative is always tested”) and that the narrative must be accompanied by action. The credibility of strategic communications is not built through slogans. If institutions speak about security but citizens see no capacity to respond; about transparency but citizens receive no information; about being closer to citizens but public services remain inaccessible, the narrative is undermined. Strategic communications must therefore be connected to policy development and implementation, rather than added after a decision has been made.

Another lesson from Latvia concerns preparing society before crises occur. Protection of the information space is integrated into the broader concept of Comprehensive State Defence (comprehensive defence of the state), built on the premise that defence and resilience are responsibilities shared by society as a whole, from the individual to the national level¹⁴³. The Ministry of Defence has also developed practical tools for the public. The brochure What to Do in a Crisis explains what to do in the first 72 hours, how to prepare the family for emergencies and how to access reliable information during a crisis¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴⁰ Strategic Communication and Security of the Information Space. <https://www.mk.gov.lv/en/stratcom>

¹⁴¹ Strategic Communication Factfinding Trip to Helsinki and Riga, April 2026. <https://www.kas.de/de/web/medien-europa/veranstaltungsberichte/detail/-/content/strategic-communication-factfinding-trip-to-helsinki-and-riga-april-2026>

¹⁴² The state defence concept. <https://www.mod.gov.lv/sites/mod/files/document/The%20State%20Defence%20Concept%202023-2027.pdf>

¹⁴³ Comprehensive State Defence.

<https://www.mod.gov.lv/en/nozares-politika/comprehensive-state-defence>

¹⁴⁴ Brochure “What to do in case of crisis”.

<https://www.sargs.lv/lv/brochure-what-to-do-in-case-of-crisis>

Since 1 September 2024, National Defence Education has been a compulsory course in Latvian secondary schools. Beyond its specific defence-related dimension, this mechanism helps develop young people's civic responsibility, preparedness and capacity to act in crisis situations¹⁴⁵.

The message is important: an informed, prepared citizen who understands his/her role in a crisis becomes part of national resilience. Crisis communication begins long before crises arise. For Moldova, this means integrating strategic communications into crisis management exercises, preparing local authorities, developing mechanisms for cooperation with the media and civil society, and explaining in peacetime how the population is expected to act.

At the same time, communication must focus on where audiences can actually be reached. Latvia's experience emphasises the use of TikTok, tailoring messages to each platform, choosing the right influencers for different audiences and even using humour where appropriate. The basic principle is therefore that audiences must be reached where they consume information, and the state must understand these spaces and patterns of information consumption.

The Latvian concept institutionalises this approach through centralised monitoring of the information space, sociological research, cooperation with national and international partners, and the use of analytical findings to adapt institutions' communication and actions. Moreover, the document sets a target for at least 75% of Latvia's adult population to have at least a basic level of media and information literacy by 2027¹⁴⁶.



For the Republic of Moldova, this means moving beyond counting the number of posts, views or press releases to assessing the effect of communication on knowledge, perceptions, trust and behaviour. It means meaningful audience segmentation, testing messages before campaigns, using trusted local voices, tailoring communication to young people, regions, minorities and the diaspora, and having the capacity to anticipate how hostile actors will exploit a particular issue.

However, Latvia's experience should not be idealised. Latvian strategic documents themselves identify vulnerabilities related to trust in institutions and the media, institutional capacities and resources, and the need to integrate strategic communications more effectively into governance processes. This recognition is precisely what makes the experience useful for Moldova: strategic communications are a continuous institutional process, an outcome of the ongoing work of structures and the implementation of adopted documents¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴⁵ National Defence Training.

<https://www.mod.gov.lv/en/nozares-politika/comprehensive-state-defence/public-awareness/national-defence-training>

¹⁴⁶ The National Concept on Strategic Communication and Security of the Information Space 2023–2027.

<https://www.mk.gov.lv/en/valsts-strategiskas-komunikacijas-un-informativas-telpas-drosibas-koncepcija>

¹⁴⁷ Ibidem

The Republic of Moldova already has an important institutional foundation through Law No. 242/2023 on the Centre for Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation¹⁴⁸ and Parliament Decision No. 416/2023 approving the Concept for Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation, Information Manipulation and Foreign Interference for 2024–2028¹⁴⁹. The next stage should be to translate these provisions into a shared institutional culture of StratCom, in which communication is integrated into policymaking and into security and crisis management mechanisms.

From this perspective, the main Latvian lesson for Moldova concerns, above all, how institutions and public communication function, not merely a particular structure or campaign. It is about a paradigm shift: from communication about security to communication as an integral part of security; from reacting to falsehoods to reducing vulnerabilities; from separate institutional messages to shared objectives and narratives; from treating the public as a recipient to treating citizens as participants in national resilience. At the same time, Latvia's experience confirms that a strategic narrative rests on action. Credible communication is built on credible policies and the state's ability to demonstrate, through its actions, the values and direction it communicates.

¹⁴⁸ Legea nr. 242 din 31 iulie 2023 privind Centrul pentru Comunicare Strategică și Contracurarea a Dezinformării și privind modificarea unor acte normative.
https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=150159&lang=ro

¹⁴⁹ Hotărârea Parlamentului nr. 416 din 22 decembrie 2023 privind aprobarea Concepției de comunicare strategică și contracurarea a dezinformării, a acțiunilor de manipulare a informației și a ingerințelor străine pentru anii 2024–2028.
https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=141254





PHOTO: <https://www.pisa.md/>

Women, Peace and Security

OPINION



The Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia and the Localisation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Community Resilience, Regional Vulnerabilities and Inclusive Security

Implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda throughout the territory of the Republic of Moldova is becoming increasingly important in the current regional security context. Developments arising from the war in Ukraine, the intensification of hybrid risks, information polarisation, and socio-economic pressures have changed the way security is understood, including in the Republic of Moldova. In this new context, security extends beyond the traditional focus on defence and law enforcement institutions to encompass community resilience, social cohesion, trust in institutions and society's capacity to manage complex crises. From this perspective, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda is becoming an important instrument for strengthening human security and promoting a more inclusive approach to security sector governance.

In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has taken important steps to integrate the WPS Agenda into national policies, including through the National Programme for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 for 2023–2027. The current National Programme reflects an important shift in approach: its focus extends beyond integrating a gender perspective into the security sector to strengthening societal resilience, expanding

community participation, and localising the WPS Agenda. This approach is particularly important for the Republic of Moldova, where regional differences significantly influence perceptions of security, relations between citizens and institutions, and the capacity to implement public policies.

In this context, the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia represents one of the most relevant examples of the need to localise the WPS Agenda.

The region simultaneously faces economic vulnerabilities, identity-related sensitivities, information pressures and challenges to social cohesion—all of which directly affect community security and regional resilience. The autonomy's distinct context stems from the combination of its special political status, specific ethnolinguistic profile and heightened exposure to geopolitical polarisation and disinformation.

Under these circumstances, implementing the WPS Agenda cannot rely exclusively on standardised policies developed at the central level. Local realities require mechanisms adapted to the regional context and capable of addressing the community's specific social, cultural, and information-related characteristics. This particular dimension is also highlighted in the study *The Role of Women in Peace Processes: Needs and Perspectives for the Autonomous*

Territorial Unit of Gagauzia”¹⁵⁰, developed as part of the Gagauzia Dialogue initiative implemented by the Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation (CMI). The launch of the study is particularly significant in fostering broader dialogue on inclusive security and community resilience in the south of the Republic of Moldova.



STUDIU

ROLUL FEMEILOR ÎN PROCESELE DE PACE: NECESITĂȚI ȘI PERSPECTIVE PENTRU UTA GĂGĂUZIA

ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ

РОЛЬ ЖЕНЩИН В МИРНЫХ ПРОЦЕССАХ: ПОТРЕБНОСТИ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ ДЛЯ АТО ГАГАУЗИЯ



The document analyses regional vulnerabilities and highlights how the WPS Agenda can contribute to strengthening social cohesion and developing local mechanisms for participation and dialogue.

One of the key conclusions emerging from the analysis of the situation in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia is that perceptions of security are strongly influenced by socio-economic and information-related factors.

For a significant proportion of the population, insecurity is primarily associated with poverty, limited economic opportunities, underdeveloped infrastructure, migration, deteriorating public services, and low levels of trust in institutions.

At the same time, the regional information environment is characterised by extensive exposure to polarising narratives and external media sources, which influence perceptions of security, relations with the central authorities, and the role of women in public life. In this context, the WPS Agenda is also relevant as an instrument for strengthening information resilience and developing local strategic communication mechanisms.

The study also highlights a gap between women's actual contributions to their communities and their level of participation in formal decision-making processes. Women are actively involved in education, social assistance, civic initiatives and efforts to maintain community cohesion, yet their influence in areas related to security and strategic leadership remains limited. This reflects the persistence of social stereotypes and an institutional culture that continues to associate security and decision-making with traditional models of authority. At the same time, the regional information environment reinforces conservative perceptions of gender roles, further affecting women's participation in public and political life.

From a national security perspective, localising the WPS Agenda in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia has important implications for strengthening state resilience. The region clearly demonstrates that contemporary security is closely linked to the level of trust between communities and institutions, the quality of public communication, and the authorities' ability to reflect regional diversity in public policy. In the absence of effective mechanisms for cooperation and dialogue among central

¹⁵⁰ Elena Mârzac, Natalia Albu, Rodica Panța. Rolul femeilor în procesele de pace: necesități și perspective pentru UTA Găgăuzia”. Chișinău: Imprint Plus), 2026 ISBN 978-5-86654-835-4. <https://gagauziadialogue.md/ro/studiu-rolul-femeilor-in-procesele-de-pace-necesitati-si-perspective-pentru-utu-gagauzia/>

authorities, regional authorities and civil society, social and information-related vulnerabilities may contribute to additional tensions and weaken crisis-response capacity.

In this respect, localising the Women, Peace and Security Agenda should be viewed as part of a broader process of adapting security policies to local community realities.

The Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia demonstrates that sustainable security increasingly depends on participation, inclusion, social cohesion, and information resilience. Women's involvement in community processes, local dialogue and decision-making mechanisms can make a significant contribution to strengthening stability and fostering communities that are more resilient to contemporary risks.

EVENTS



PHOTO: <https://securityforum.md/>

Moldova Security Forum – A Regional Platform for Security Dialogue

Since 2024, the Moldova Security Forum (MSF) has developed into a regional platform connecting the Republic of Moldova's national security agenda with regional, European, and Euro-Atlantic developments. The Forum's relevance stems from its ability to bring together decision-makers, representatives of international organisations, diplomats, experts, academics, civil society representatives and the media professionals, while addressing security from a multidimensional perspective. The themes covered by the MSF agenda—including hybrid threats, democratic resilience, cybersecurity and energy security, information manipulation, crisis management and regional cooperation—reflect the transformation of the security environment and underscore the importance of coordinated responses at both the institutional and societal levels.

FOTO: www.msf.com

The first edition of the Moldova Security Forum, held in Chişinău on 19–20 November 2024, brought together more than 500 participants from 28 countries.

The event positioned the Republic of Moldova within an international dialogue on the transformation of the European security environment and its implications for states exposed to hybrid threats.

Discussions on disinformation, cybersecurity, the impact of artificial intelligence, cooperation with NATO, and the role of the European Union reflected the Republic of Moldova's specific context, shaped by its proximity to the war in Ukraine, progress in the European integration process, and exposure to external information and political pressures. The Forum thus provided a framework for examining the Republic of Moldova's experience in relation to broader transformations in European security.

The second edition, held on 18–19 November 2025, strengthened the Forum's international dimension, bringing together more than 450 participants from 32 countries and 66 speakers. Under the theme “Democratic Resilience: Strengthening Security and Unity in the Face of Hybrid Threats”, the agenda placed greater emphasis on the relationship between security, resilience, and the functioning of democratic institutions.

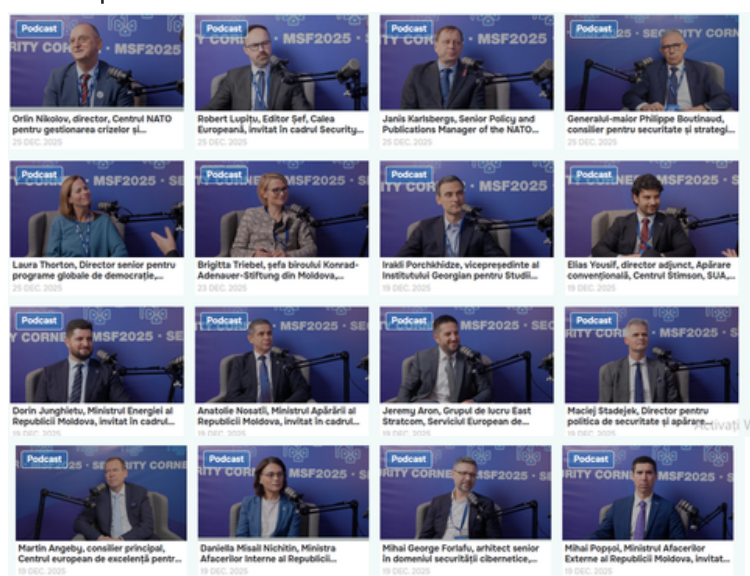
Foreign interference in electoral processes, information manipulation, energy security, cybersecurity, crisis management, and regional cooperation were examined as interconnected dimensions of state resilience. This approach highlighted the cross-cutting nature of hybrid threats and their capacity to affect simultaneously public trust, electoral processes, institutional functioning and social cohesion.

The evolution of the first two editions demonstrates the thematic consolidation and growing maturity of the Moldova Security Forum. Its initial focus on identifying and understanding threats has gradually expanded to examining the capacity of institutions and society to anticipate risks, develop response mechanisms, and strengthen democratic resilience. The MSF thus contributes to creating a space for dialogue in which the security of the Republic of Moldova is considered in relation to the European and

Euro-Atlantic security architecture and the experiences of international partners.

The Platform for Security and Defence Initiatives (PISA) has been among the partners of the Moldova Security Forum since its first edition in 2024, alongside national and international institutions and organisations. PISA's participation contributes to integrating the expertise of civil society and the research community into security debates. It also supports an approach to resilience based on cooperation among public institutions, experts, academia, civil society organisations, and international partners.

A distinct component of PISA's participation in the Moldova Security Forum is the **Security Corner**, conceived as a means of exploring in greater depth and making effective use of the expertise brought together at the Forum. This format creates a space for direct dialogue with experts, officials, and representatives of international organisations, allowing topics raised during MSF sessions to be examined further. Through interviews and video podcasts, specialised expertise is transformed into clear and accessible content, facilitating the exchange of ideas between the security community and the wider public.



SOURCE: Video materials produced as part of Security Corner 2025 can be found on the PISA website: www.pisa.md

The Security Corner – Moldova Security Forum 2025 addressed topics including integrated crisis management, democratic resilience, strategic communication, countering information manipulation and foreign interference, energy security, cybersecurity, international cooperation, and the role of civil society in strengthening security. The diversity of these topics reflects an integrated understanding of security in which institutional capacity, societal resilience, the quality of public communication, and international cooperation are interdependent components.

The Security Corner also ensures continuity beyond the Moldova Security Forum itself. Its interviews and video podcasts preserve and build on the expertise generated during the event, facilitating its subsequent use in information, research, educational and communication activities. For PISA, the format serves as a means of connecting the security community with wider society, helping to explain complex phenomena and foster a deeper understanding of risks, policies and response mechanisms.

This evolution will continue with the third edition of the Moldova Security Forum, scheduled to take place in Chişinău on 8–9 October 2026 under the theme “Enhancing

European security and seeks to strengthen the strategic and multilateral dimensions of the dialogue. The announced themes for the 2026 edition include democratic resilience and good governance, strategic communication, crisis management and continuity of government, defence cooperation, cybersecurity and infrastructure protection, energy security, media resilience, social cohesion, human rights, and institutional reform. The organisers expect more than 500 representatives from public institutions, the diplomatic and military communities, academia and the expert community, civil society, the media and international organisations to participate.

Taken together, the three editions illustrate the evolution of the Moldova Security Forum from an international dialogue initiative into a regional platform connecting expertise, policies and key security stakeholders. The thematic continuity across the editions reflects a shift from identifying threats to strengthening response capacity, while the growing emphasis on democratic resilience highlights the direct relationship between security, institutional effectiveness, social cohesion and public trust.

Within this framework, PISA’s participation and the development of the Security Corner strengthen the Forum’s societal and communication dimensions. PISA helps connect public institutions with civil society and the expert community, while the Security Corner ensures that the expertise generated during the MSF is disseminated and effectively utilised. The Moldova Security Forum thus serves as a platform for strategic dialogue, international engagement and the consolidation of the security community, helping to integrate the Republic of Moldova’s experience into European and Euro-Atlantic debates on security and resilience.



Democratic Resilience and Security through Strategic Vision and Multilateral Cooperation”. The agenda places democratic resilience at the heart of the relationship between national, regional, and



The Platform for Security and Defense Initiatives (PISA) is a nongovernmental organization that supports civil society engagement in oversight of the security sector and builds bridges for dialogue between citizens, nongovernmental organizations, and public institutions in the field.

PISA contributes to strengthening the democratic resilience of the Republic of Moldova by providing independent expertise and promoting good governance in the security and defense sector.

SECURITY NEXUS

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