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NEWSLETTER

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Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates

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The last period was marked by several important events in Moldova.



Germany expressed hope that the political stability will be reinstalled and that the EU-oriented reforms in Moldova will continue. Speaking on Monday, 18 January, in Brussels, at a meeting of EU foreign ministers, the head of German diplomacy, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, said he hoped Moldovans would opt for a government able to implement the "necessary reforms" and cooperate with the EU and international creditors. The German minister also said that particularly, the resumption of the dialogue with the foreign financial institutions is "important for the survival of Moldova".



The European Parliament welcomed the inauguration of a new government in Moldova and urged it to solve rapidly the problems faced by the country. The call is contained in a resolution adopted by the EU Parliament on January 21st, marking the first anniversary of the ratification of the Association Agreements by Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The document states that in the first year of association with the EU, Moldova has increased its exports on the Community market by 62%.



The Moldovan government will ask the IMF to urgently send a mission to Moldova for a new agreement, announced Prime Minister, Pavel Filip, after the first meeting of the executive. The Finance Minister, Octavian Armașu, said that by May, a deficit of 4-5 billion lei is possible to accumulate and the payment of pensions and salaries could become a problem as early as February.



Pavel Filip's first foreign visit was to Bucharest and took place on January 31st. Filip discussed with the Romanian Prime Minister, Dacian Cioloș, about granting of a first tranche of the 150 million euros loan promised by Bucharest. Shortly after this visit, Bucharest has sent a letter formulating the conditions for issuing the money: the Filip government should make the Association agenda a clear priority, elect the new governor of the National Bank in a transparent way, invite the IMF mission to Chisinau, but also initiate legislative packages aimed at improving the banking system and business environment, reforming the judiciary system and fighting against corruption.

"These reforms represent not only implementation of the Association Agreement with the European Union, but also are the best guarantor of stability and prosperity for Moldovan citizens," reads the letter signed by Dacian Cioloș.



Government sworn into office against the background of protests and instability

Chronology of the Filip cabinet investiture



The year 2016 in Chisinau has started in a turbulent way. In the milieu of the street protests that have grown and got to meet both the pro-European Dignity and Truth Platform and the pro-Russian parties led by Igor Dodon and Renato Usatii, the political class has continued its attempts to appoint a prime minister. The position

remained vacant after the dismissal on October 29, 2015, of the cabinet led by one of the leaders of the Liberal Democratic Party, Valeriu Streleț.

The first candidature submitted by President Nicolae Timofti on December 21st, 2015, was that of Ion Sturza,



businessman and former prime minister in 1999. The MPs, though, did not turn up to the parliamentary session from January 4th, when Sturza was supposed to be voted. Thus, the first attempt of appointing a prime minister was considered exhausted.

For the second attempt, President Nicolae Timofti was forced by the Constitutional Court decision from December 29th, 2015, to consider the proposal of the parliamentary majority. Such a majority was formed under conditions assessed by many political analysts as non-transparent, through a statement signed on January 13th, by 56 MPs- the members of the Democratic Party and Liberal Party, 14 communist MPs that had quitted the Communist Party on December 21st, 2015, announcing formation of the Social Democratic Platform and 7 deputies of the Liberal Democratic Party.

The same day, the Democratic Party held a large rally to support its candidate for Prime Minister -Vladimir Plahotniuc. The head of state declined nomination of Plahotniuc, citing reasonable suspicion regarding the integrity of the candidate. Nicolae Timofti demanded submission of another candidate as well as reconfirmation of signatures on the original list of the parliamentary majority, after several PLDM signatories

had announced withdrawal of their signatures for the reason that they were not supporting Plahotniuc as candidate for prime minister.

On Thursday evening, January 14th, Nicolae Timofti appointed his advisor, Ion Păduraru, as candidate for prime minister, but on Friday, January 15th, the Democratic Party insisted that the list of deputies from the new parliamentary majority had been reconfirmed and submitted a new candidate – Pavel Filip, who is considered a close friend of Vlad Plahotniuc. In the evening of the same day, Ion Păduraru announced his candidacy withdrawal and in less than two hours, President Nicolae Timofti announced appointment of Pavel Filip for the premiership.

On Saturday, January 16th, the National Political Council of the Liberal Democratic Party decided to go into opposition.

Pavel Filip asked for the Parliament investiture vote on January 20th, which had been announced at a meeting the day before. The Legal Committee of Parliament endorsed the cabinet proposed by Pavel Filip in 7 minutes, while the investiture meeting in the Parliament lasted for 35 minutes. The Democratic Party leader, Marian Lupu, proposed to skip the hearing of the government programme and

the questions and answers session. 57 deputies, including PDM, PL, 14 former communists and 7 PLDM members, the latter having been subsequently expelled from the party, have given confidence vote to the Filip Government. The voting took place in a tense atmosphere, while the Socialist deputies tried to block the meeting and thousands of protesters in the streets surrounded the Parliament building.

The protests degenerated into violence, some protesters having broken into an annex of the Parliament building, destroying furniture, withdrawing equipment and dispossessing several hundred policemen of phones. Following the clashes several dozens of policemen and protesters were hospitalized.

The Filip Cabinet was sworn into office the night of the January 20th, around 23.30, without the ceremony having been publicly announced and with no media access.

Pavel Filip Government's priorities, announced shortly after swearing, are restoration of relations with the IMF and the European donors, the implementation of the Association Agreement with the EU, the relaunch of the justice reform, lowering of tariffs, and timely payment of pensions and salaries.

In a statement signed on January 22nd, the major civil society organizations condemned the rush and undemocratic manner in which the Filip government had been sworn into office and the way in which the politicians mimic and manipulate the consultations with the society. The signatories say the new cabinet members signed a declaration of integrity which is more vague than the one on which the civil society insisted upon, while the procedures were not transparent and therefore considers that the statement of integrity is not valid and the Filip Government is not trusted until it demonstrates the opposite.

Lina Grâu

Nicu Popescu: The current situation is not caused by the external factors, but by the corrupted domestic political class

Nicu Popescu, an expert with the European Institute for Security Studies based in Paris, said the new government and the new parliamentary majority does not inspire much hope they can push or accelerate reforms.

■ **Lina Grău:** How is the situation in Moldova seen from the EU? Things seem to be confusing even for some local observers.

■ **Nicu Popescu:** In fact, it is obvious that Moldova finds itself between the hammer and the anvil. On the one hand, the hammer is continuation of the status quo and methods of government from the past few years without doing reforms and doing nothing about corruption or even worsening of the situation and continuous capture of the state. In this sense, this alternative is pretty bad both for Moldova as a country and for the European stakes in Moldova and the regional situation, given that earlier there were hopes that Moldova could reform more successfully than other countries in the region.

On the other hand, the anvil is that early elections may not necessarily solve the problem, given the fact that the likelihood of accession to power of the leftist forces is quite high. And here, when we refer to the leftist forces, there are two elements. On the one hand, we speak about the pro-Russian element that is of concern to many people, but what is also worrying is the fact that regardless of the geo-political orientation, the leftist forces don't seem to have a bigger reformist potential than the forces in power now.

So in this respect, both the status quo is very bad and the early elections are



a pretty bad perspective. That is why the currently observed EU approach towards the situation of Moldova is obviously very different from the support it offered to the protests in Ukraine a few years ago and the moral support and sympathy it showed towards the Moldovan protesters in 2009.

On the other hand, maintaining the status quo and the current government which does not inspire much confidence as to the degree of reformism, may lead to a worsening of the economic and political situation in the near future. A year ago the incumbent Prime Minister was Iurie Leanca, half a year ago they were discussing about the prospects of Maia Sandu to become prime minister, and a few weeks ago, Ion Sturza was a potential prime minister. From the perspective of these candidates for

prime minister, the current government does not inspire any hope that it could push or accelerate reforms.

■ **Lina Grău:** In this situation, we've seen the positions taken by the European and US officials and that part of the Moldovan society received them quite contradictorily. How do you explain their position in support of a government vis-à-vis whom there exist reasonable suspicions regarding the integrity of some members and of the factors influencing this government from the backstage?

■ **Nicu Popescu:** First of all, it is not the responsibility of Americans or Europeans to comment every move of the Moldovan politics. This government obtained the support of a parliamentary majority and of the President who had nominated the prime minister. So, given that there is a clear majority in Parliament, all Moldovan institutions - the Constitutional

Court, Parliament and President - had acted legally and in unison to ensure this government. It is a bit unfair to expect that the European Union or the United States should play this bastion of political alternatives, in the conditions when all the procedures have been observed by the Moldovan players who ensured this new government.

So the claims against the United States and the European Union are exaggerated. The claims can be of moral nature, but, ultimately, the international actors have to do with a political consensus of the legal institutions of the Republic of Moldova and they can only take note of the situation.

A second element is the fact that the international partners of Moldova are aware of the prospects of the early elections, not only in terms of the geo-political East-West orientation. They are not confident that the leftist forces are able and willing to resolve the fundamental underlying economic problems related to the corruption in the Republic of Moldova.

Hence the reluctance towards early elections at this stage. In addition, there is also hope that if early elections took place later, in half a year or a year, the centre-right forces would be more prepared for this election than they are now. There is this calculation in Europe, though not everywhere in Europe and the United States, but among certain partners of Moldova that have had a relationship close enough with the centre-right political forces in Moldova in recent years.

■ **Lina Grău:** What, in your opinion, would trigger elections in six months or a year, since by then the president will have been elected if 61 votes are found and since there is a Government? What would be the premises?

■ **Nicu Popescu:** The premise should be the real situation in the country. There were no formal triggers for the

April or September 2015 protests. The trigger could occur rapidly, given that the government has low legitimacy and that the political forces forming the parliamentary majority enjoy virtually no trust by a substantial number of citizens. Moreover, an absolute majority of citizens seem not to admit the legitimacy of this government. There are a lot of factors that could cause a reset of the Government and even of the Parliament.

■ **Lina Grău:** The international press, particularly France Press, headlined in the recent days that Moldova is moving towards a crisis which seems to have no end. It's like *zugzwang* in chess, when any movement takes you into a worse situation than the current one. How do you see things evolving in the near future?

■ **Nicu Popescu:** There is a political gridlock in Moldova- it is in a situation in which maintaining the status quo is disastrous, but also the likely exit from this status quo by means of early elections can be potentially disastrous too. So, in that sense, yes, Moldova is in such a situation. And this is primarily a failure at the level of the entire spectrum of political class - the government, the opposition, the centre, right and left political forces.

However, the state of mind and political preferences of citizens inspire certain optimism. In the last six months in particular, they no longer associate Europe and the European integration with PLDM, PD and PL. The public opinion, if we look at the polls and at the public reaction to the political events of recent weeks, seems to suggest that the public is ready for a new generation of politicians - both on the left and right political spectrum. It remains to be seen to what extent this new generation of politicians and parties will be able to occupy the political spectrum dominated so far by PLDM, PD and LP.

As societal momentum, I believe that Moldovan citizens appear to show

a degree of political judgment if not perfect, much better than that of the political class, the latter becoming too exhausted by its own corruption scandals, moral compromises that discredited the Moldovan government among its citizens, but also outside the country.

■ **Lina Grău:** From the point of view of regional security, how does the Republic of Moldova look like? How vulnerable is it to different challenges?

■ **Nicu Popescu:** Obviously, such a situation creates lots of opportunities to destabilize the situation in Moldova by potential external forces. But this situation has not so much external, but internal reasons. And these internal reasons do with the way Moldova has been governed lately, the unresolved problem of corruption, the worsening of the situation in recent years, the situation of the state capture, the increasing deficit of political pluralism, the domination of the Moldovan politics by a political force that, if we look at the polls, is one of the least popular in Moldova. All these internal fractures and cleavages between what people want and voted for and the way this political class managed the situation are the main sources of the country destabilization. The external factors are secondary in this situation.

There is this press wave saying that the Russian Federation is allegedly trying to feed and support these protests. This is likely, but, ultimately, we must not forget the fact that it is not the Russian Federation that is primarily responsible for the failures of the government when it comes to corruption and even the abuse of the European integration message, as behind the "Europe" slogans a lot of abuses have been committed. So, it is the local elites alone that are responsible for this situation and not Europe or Russia, or the United States. Therefore, both the failure and the potential solution to the political destabilization in Moldova is first and foremost within the country.

Corneliu Ciurea: The need for stabilization was considered a priority, being temporarily preferred to combating corruption

The political analyst, Corneliu Ciurea, says the new cabinet of Pavel Filip is forced to produce positive results very rapidly in order to calm down the spirits in the society and that it cannot renounce the implementation of the Association Agreement, which would provide it with the support of the Western partners.

■ **Lina Grău:** The people protesting in the square say that the Government was vested with big question marks and that it includes people suspected of lacking integrity. On the other hand, also the foreign partners say that Moldova needs a government, although there are certainly suspicions as to the integrity of governance and decision-making process. What is your opinion about the situation faced by Moldova and how to get out of this situation?

■ **Corneliu Ciurea:** It is true that the Republic of Moldova is experiencing a persistent political crisis - a confrontation between a pro-European government that has to sustain the attacks of the intransigent opposition that has joined efforts lately. Both the leftist pro-Russia and the right-wing pro-European parties have been organizing massive protests. On the one hand, the government is pleading for the need to stabilize the situation and calm down the spirits and for the need to redress the economic situation and return to normality. On the other hand, the opposition sets the objective of fighting against corruption as a priority and believes that good things can happen in Moldova only after cleaning the political class. Such a debate in the society which often exceeds the limits of civilized discussions, was brought to absurd, so that at some point, the colliding parties don't seem to be able to reach an agreement. Hence all these clashes, including the ones in the street that we've seen lately.



We have to admit that early this year, the Western partners gave positive signals after the Filip government had been sworn into office. Though reserved as to the quality of the Moldovan political class, they are of the opinion that the need for stabilization is a priority, preferring it temporarily to the fight against corruption, and thereby giving green light to the Filip Government, legitimizing it in part by statements of support. This somewhat puzzled the civil society in our country and even some Western ambassadors, who interpreted this support as a kind of betrayal.

However, further developments of events seem to justify both the Democratic Party and the fairly dubious formed absolute majority, and Western partners, because in the recent days we have been witnessing a strange fusion of the pro-Russian and pro-Western opposition that seem to admit the idea of blocking the pro-European course of the country.

In conclusion, we can say that we are witnessing further geopolitical confrontation between East and West.

Most of the key players have clearly positioned on either one side or the other of the barricade. And even if the fighting against corruption is an important objective, the rules of the geopolitical confrontation force the players to ignore this issue.

There is still a section of the civil society that is reluctant to take a geopolitical position, because it believes that the fight against oligarchy is a supreme goal. But I think this will not last for long and that the Filip government will have a chance, as such a position would weaken and reduce the pressure exerted on the Filip Government, giving it some breathing space.

■ **Lina Grău:** How do you rate the chance of the Filip's Cabinet life? Given the recent experience of the Republic of Moldova, we could estimate the chance of life at three to six months – at least that was the maximum term of the last governments.

■ **Corneliu Ciurea:** For the moment, we cannot give many chances to the Filip Government. However, we should note



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that the fierce clashes we've been seeing lately and the enormous pressure put on the Filip Government obliges the latter to take urgent measures in order to improve the situation.

I saw its clearly expressed intention to reduce the prices for electricity and fuel. The Minister of Economy has formulated some clear objectives aiming at improving the business situation in Moldova. It also seeks to improve the situation in the field of taxation and customs. If the Filip Government is forced - I emphasize this - and constrained by unfortunate circumstances, to take such measures of force majeure that have not been taken in Moldova yet, and obtains certain notable success, including the de-blocking of the relations with foreign donors, then we could talk about this government's chance to exist for more than half a year.

But these results must be produced immediately. The Filip government, if our prediction proves true and the protest movements decrease in intensity, has no more than one month and a half to produce results.

Lina Grău: The next thing that can produce maximum tension in Moldova is the expiry of President's Timofti mandate and the need to elect a new president, which would require 61 votes in Parliament. We've already seen a majority of 57 deputies. Do you think they will be able to find the four "golden" votes to elect the president? There have been speculations about Plahotniuc's candidacy for

this position. How do you see the things developing in this respect?

Corneliu Ciurea: From my point of view, there is a majority of votes necessary to elect the new president of the country. I believe that additional votes can come from both the Liberal Democrats and the Communists who remained in Voronin's boat.

Regarding Plahotniuc's candidacy for president, I believe that the future candidacy for President with chances to be voted has not been decided yet. But the Democratic Party will find it difficult, I would even say extremely risky, to further promote the candidacy of Mr Plahotniuc, because the price for a relative stabilization of the country was very high. And now, it is extremely dangerous to shake things by promoting Mr Plahotniuc.

So from my point of view, both Mr Plahotniuc and other important politicians of our society, as Mr Ghimpu and Mr Voronin, will not be among the candidates for president. I do not rule out that there will be a neutral candidate, one that will not be hostile to the Democratic Party and I should stress the latter.

Lina Grău: How do you see the things developing further? There are voices saying that the early elections might take place in half a year, after the election of the president. Other voices are saying this Parliament will keep its mandate until the end. You spoke about a fairly radical position in the Moldovan

society with two camps that suggests a confrontation. What will be the mood in the next period in Moldova?

Corneliu Ciurea: Many opponents, especially among pro Europeans and civil society, believe lately that early elections would not be an acceptable solution, primarily, because the law does not really allows for it, and secondly, because there is a danger of the pro-Russian camp coming to power. However, they do not totally exclude the idea of early elections in the next future. For example, a solution would be having early elections in autumn.

However, such a solution would be an additional chance for the Filip Government, because, as I said before, it gives it some breathing space, a period of exercise of the governance in which the Filip Government could strengthen.

So I think that it is not so much the threat of early elections that is dangerous for the Filip Government that the effectiveness of the governance. I think that only if the Filip Government resists for two-three months, and survives the presidential elections, can we say that the likelihood of early elections is very low.

Lina Grău: Someone was comparing recently Moldova with Italy of the 60s, when mafia was consolidating in the country. Can we speak about Moldova in these terms or it's an exaggeration?

Corneliu Ciurea: Lately, they have been talking about

oligarhisation of Moldova, state capture by a semi-economic, semi-political elite and even about existence of oligarchy, which means total domination of one clan led by one of the Democratic Party leaders, Vlad Plahotniuc.

From my point of view, the society is at the stage of becoming aware and understanding the mutations that occur in the society, because we are in a process of deviation from an oligarchic regime in which several oligarchs were into a more or less pluralistic fight and of democratic power compare to the situation where one single oligarch rules. Therefore, they use more frequently the term "oligarch" than "oligarchy".

This total domination of Mr Plahotniuc over the political and economic life that they have been speaking insistently about in the society, in my view, must be proved. Basically, in the justice sector, Mr. Plahotniuc has enormous influence and also in certain economic areas. However, we can observe that in the society there is a certain resistance to that and that there are economic areas that are not covered by Mr Plahotniuc, but by other businessmen and oligarchs in Moldova. So this net domination that they speak frequently in the society about is not sustained by convincing evidence.

What we can clearly say, however, is that Mr. Plahotniuc's influence over politics in Moldova has skyrocketed lately. This bothers, by the way, not just

the civil society in Moldova, but also the Western partners, as it seems that certain political equilibrium was broken in the country.

But there is also a positive aspect in all this - there is now a person or a group of persons who want to assume responsibility for stabilizing the situation in the country. So Mr Plahotniuc has entered a very dangerous game, which forces him to be more sensitive to the wishes of the population and deliver real results. If he fails to capitalize on this opportunity, he will be practically condemned from the political point of view.

Therefore we cannot talk about a comfortable situation for the dominance enjoyed by Mr. Plahotniuc, for that throne on which he sits is on the edge of a precipice. So you cannot talk about a man that would be the all-powerful under the conditions that the government he installed and propelled, is likely to collapse soon.

In conclusion, from my point of view, the omnipotence of Plahotniuc is exaggerated and Mr Plahotniuc through his government, is bound by the population, protesters and the civil society to perform and deliver immediate results. So he is under enormous social pressure that does not allow him practically making mistakes.

Lina Grău: Formally, the Republic of Moldova has an Association Agreement

with the European Union. In practical terms, are we still on that way?

■ **Corneliu Ciurea:** I think nothing was cancelled, only the implementation of the Association Agreement has been stopped temporarily in the absence of a real government. So, the Filip Government has announced that the implementation of the Association Agreement remains a priority for our country and I believe that the need to resume funding for Moldova will compel the Government to be extremely responsible and responsive to the wishes of the foreign partners, and primarily of the EU.

We understand from the statements that the judicial reform will be addressed as a priority by the Filip Government. It remains to be seen to what extent those in power will be sincere in the implementation of their policies.

But, again, the situation is that the Filip Government has no choice but implement the Association Agreement. If it doesn't, it will lose the only possible ally – the West. Withdrawal of such support, makes the Democratic Party an easy victim in front of a formidable opposition consisting of two most influential political parties in Moldova today – the pro-Russian Dodon's Socialists Party and Usatii's Our Party. Mr. Plahotniuc, in these conditions, cannot take a pro-Russian orientation and cannot change the development partners.

Anneli Ute Gabanyi: *It would be a big mistake to imagine that a political class can be changed overnight*



Anneli Ute Gabanyi, German political science researcher says that in the current political situation in Chisinau the Western partners backed not so much the current government, rather the idea of supporting a stable government in times of maximum instability. The interpretation according to which specific individuals are being supported is not quite right.

■ **Lina Grău:** In recent years, Moldova has often been called the “EU success story”, and now the country has reached a situation of instability, poverty, and lack of



prospects. What has actually happened?

■ **Anneli Ute Gabanyi:**

I believe that also the country's image of a "success story" that has prevailed until recently, was not quite right, as the Westerners have overlooked evident drawbacks in the internal politics of the country. However, I believe that in terms of implementing European policies, Moldova was indeed a success story, at least compared with other countries of the Eastern Partnership.

On the other hand, the uncertainty that has always dominated the composition of government, the defective collaboration of various parties within the government have clearly demonstrated it that they blocked the normal functioning of political life. It was clearly seen that the personal interests of enrichment of various politicians, unfortunately, very often through corruption, prevailed over the interest of reforming the Republic of Moldova and the national interest represented by the European integration objective.

■ **Lina Grâu:** Lately there have been more and more discussions about the fact that both the economic and political

flows have increasingly concentrated around one single party and even one single person. I heard a comment saying that the situation in Moldova has now started resembling that of Italy in 1960s, a period characterized by the consolidation of mafia structures. Do you see a danger that the situation in Moldova can escalate to such a scenario – of the total, undemocratic and non-transparent control?

■ **Anneli Ute Gabanyi:** Yes, indeed, these developments give food for thought and the comparison of Italy is not totally wrong. These people, and I am referring to Mr. Plahotniuc, want to come out of the shadow in order to openly control the political and state institutions and capture the state of Moldova. But even this situation is not without remedy. It is important that the State powers, particularly the Parliament and representatives of other parties, react prudently and courageously to prevent these developments from derailing even more.

■ **Lina Grâu:** Moldova is a country that has signed an Association Agreement with the EU on one hand, and on the other hand, there are extremely serious problems related to corruption, non-transparency of governance etc. The Western partners were put into a position

to support a government that has problems with the integrity of its members or stakeholders behind it, in order to give a chance to the European integration of the country. It is not without surprise that the people in Chisinau have perceived it. Why do you think the decision was to continue supporting the current government?

■ **Anneli Ute Gabanyi:** I think it is not so much about supporting the current government, but rather the idea of supporting a government that is stable in times of maximum instability.

The West doesn't always look at the people who are in certain positions, but more at the functions and at the effect they have on the country's stability. I think that was the reason and the interpretation that certain people are being supported was not always correct. But of course, the situation is unpleasing.

■ **Lina Grâu:** What mechanisms do you see to keep Moldova in a somewhat predictable zone and give hope of a European future to a totally corrupt government and to a doubtful and compromised political class?

■ **Anneli Ute Gabanyi:** To me, the crucial problem is that the Moldova-EU

association relationship doesn't give the EU enough tools to condition the behaviour of the policy makers in Moldova into a certain direction.

We could see it very plainly that in the countries with a clear integration perspective it was able to use both the "carrot" and the "stick" for non-performance. If the case of this Association Agreement there is no such conditionality. The fact that Moldova and its people do not have an EU membership perspective seems to me the biggest mistake. It is a proven fact - you cannot force a country to make specific reforms unless this country and its decision makers see there is light at the end of the tunnel.

I still think that Moldova is an exception among the other Eastern Partnership countries and that it can again become a positive example, a success story of this policy.

But without at least a *prospect of a perspective*, as I call it, the power of attraction of the EU is too weak to be able to fight all the trends that we observe - corruption, negligence and lack of confidence. We can see it very clearly that the Moldovan people, those who still live there, ordinary people have lost hope and confidence after so many elections and so many tricks

played by the so-called pro-European parties in power. The situation is almost tragicomic.

■ **Lina Grâu:** It is hard to imagine that Moldova could again become the success story of the EU without changing the political class. And in this context, do you see any chances for the centre-right parties that have practically been shattered by the corruption scandals? What are the chances for a new Moldovan political class that could reinvent this success story of the EU?

■ **Anneli Ute Gabanyi:** It would be a big mistake to imagine that a political class can change overnight. And even if we changed the people with young men, educated in the West, we would still be very disappointed. And we saw it very clearly that this is not the way.

Changing the political class takes some time, requiring lots of effort

and perseverance. I think, for me at least, the most convincing example throughout Europe is the one of Romania -Klaus Johannis- as it is shown in his presidential programme, "Romania of the well-done job." It shows it very clearly that a good result can be obtained only through actions within parties, a sort of recreation in electing the leaders that the parties can build around in the future, changing the laws on party funding and functioning of the Parliament. Under the influence of these changes, during elections, the people will be encouraged to choose only those representatives who they believe will not only make promises and coming to power will become corrupt and work to the detriment of the national interest. This is the only path that can lead in the right direction.

So, these things are very difficult to resolve, in my opinion. It is unrealistic to expect a complete change immediately.

But in Moldova there do exist honest politicians, only they need to be given a chance in the political context. And we, in the West, must be careful whom we support, because sometimes, we support those people, who according to the mass media, are not at all that clean as they pretend to be.

Lina Grâu: What should be the attitude of the West in order to facilitate the conversion of Moldova?

Anneli Ute Gabanyi: The threats are coming from many sides. We need to act rapidly. Good people should not lose confidence in the European vector and must realize that the European integration will step by step bring stability and welfare. We need hope, confidence and, of course, material help for poor people, because they are the ones who remained in the country.

We in the West should support the government not only based on political

families – the Social-Democrats support only the Social-Democrats and the European Popular Parties support only those affiliated to the European Popular family. No, we need to give support for the European interests over our parties, to the Moldovan Government.

The country should overcome this crisis, because I fear, there will be not so many occasions from now on where the elected bodies of the Republic of Moldova will be able to assert themselves against the movement in the street, which is rather transparent. It is clear that Russia has an interest in destabilizing the politics of Moldova and the parliamentary system through anarchic forces of the street, extra-parliamentary opposition and all sorts of media campaigns. And we know it very well that Russia has great influence in the media consumed in Moldova and even in Germany.

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