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**Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States
of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)**

**Honouring of obligations and commitments by the Republic of
Moldova**

Information Note by the co-rapporteurs on their visit to Chisinau (26 to 28 May 2025)

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Pierre-Alain Fridez, Switzerland, Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group and Ms Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica, Latvia, Group of the European People's Party

1. Introduction

1. We paid a visit to Chisinau from 26 to 28 May 2025. This visit fell midway between the presidential elections and constitutional referendum of October and November 2024 and the next Parliamentary elections that have been called for 28 September 2025. As a result, the political agenda in the country has been dominated by these election cycles but the reform process has continued unabated.

2. During our visit we met with, inter alia: the Speaker of the Parliament; the Minister of Justice; the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs; the Presidential Administration; the Ombudsperson; the Chairperson and members of the Supreme Council of the Magistracy and the Superior Council of the Prosecutors; the Prosecutor General; the Head of the Security Service of the Republic of Moldova; the Chairperson of the Central Election Commission, the Chairperson of the Committee on legal affairs, appointments and immunities; the Chairperson of the Council for Promoting Investment Projects of National Importance; the Chairperson of the Audiovisual Council; the Chairperson and members of the Moldovan delegation to PACE; the leadership of the political factions in the Moldovan parliament; as well as representatives of civil society organisations and of the diplomatic community. The programme of our visit is attached to this note in Appendix.

3. We would like to thank the Moldovan Parliament and Moldovan delegation to PACE for the excellent programme and hospitality, and the Head of the Council of Europe Office in Chisinau and his staff for the support given to our delegation.

2. Election preparations and foreign interference

4. On 17 April 2025, the Moldovan parliament agreed that the next parliamentary elections would be held on Sunday 28 September 2025. The official election campaign will start not earlier than 30 days before the date of elections. However, in reality, the parties are already in full campaign mode.

5. According to the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM), of which our Assembly was a part, the 2024 Presidential Elections and Constitutional Referendum, were “well-managed and contestants campaigned freely in an environment characterised by concerns over illicit foreign interference and active disinformation efforts.” The IEOM noted that domestic campaign conditions as well as use of administrative resources had created an uneven playing field that favoured the incumbent authorities. The report of the PACE Election Observation ad hoc committee underscored the adequacy of the legal framework but noted that the

¹ Document declassified by the Monitoring Committee on 24 June 2025.

new election code that was adopted in 2022 had – at that time – already been amended eight times, including shortly before the official campaign period, which raised questions with regard to the principle of stability of election legislation.

6. The 2024 Presidential elections and Constitutional Referendum were characterised by unprecedented interference and disinformation campaigns by the Russian Federation. Given that the Republic of Moldova is a multi-party Parliamentary Republic, it is to be expected that interference and disinformation by the Russian Federation in the upcoming elections will be even more widespread. Indeed, we have been informed that Moldovan and allied security services, have already noted an increase in (Russian) activity in this respect.

7. During the Presidential Elections and Constitutional referendum, Russian interference focused on massive vote-buying schemes and on spreading disinformation and anti-European narratives with the purpose of stirring tensions within the Moldovan society. The tense relationship between the central authorities in Chisinau and the autonomous region of Gagauzia were an important vector for Russian interference in that respect. It is expected that the Russian Federation would again try to instrumentalise the relations between Chisinau and Comrat to interfere in the domestic political and election environment. The current Bashkan of Gagauzia, Ms Gutul, is, at the moment of writing, under house arrest on charges of electoral corruption. The Court is expected to deliver its judgment in her case by summer 2025.

8. The prospect of profound interference of the Russian Federation in the upcoming parliamentary elections, and continuing vulnerability of the country for such nefarious actions, are a point concern for the authorities, as well as international community. Unfortunately, also the Russian Federation is reportedly drawing its lessons from the previous elections and is adapting its strategies accordingly.

9. The Moldovan security services informed us that, in addition to its support for openly pro-Russian parties, the Russian Federation is diversifying its attention to supporting existing parties and setting up new parties that are nominally pro-European. In this manner they intend to split the pro-European vote in the country. The security services reported that the Russian Federation was also reviving and strengthening the vote buying and disinformation networks affiliated with Ilan Shor, as it has been doing during the Presidential elections.

10. A clear concern of the authorities is the risk of cyberattacks on the Republic of Moldova's information technology infrastructure with a view to creating chaos and public discontent before and in the process of the upcoming elections. The Security Services have noticed an increase in probing of the country's IT infrastructure by the Russian Federation and hacker groups affiliated to them, including of services that are essential for the conduct of the elections.

11. The unresolved conflict over Transnistria was not fully instrumentalised massively as a vector for interference during the Presidential elections, possibly also due to a lack of appetite among the Transnistrian population and de facto authorities in Tiraspol, for an escalation of the tensions with Chisinau. However, given the strengthening by the Moldovan authorities of mechanisms to counter other avenues of interference by the Russian Federation, the authorities fear that the Transnistrian vector could be exploited during the upcoming elections, including through disruption of energy supplies. As a result, the Moldovan authorities, with the help of the European Union, have tried to drastically reduce their dependency, as well as that of Tiraspol, on Russian energy supplies.

12. Over the last months, the authorities have passed a number of amendments to the electoral legislation in order to counteract foreign interference and address the shortcomings noted during the Presidential elections. The stability of election legislation, especially after elections have been called, is an important European standard. Amendments to the electoral code to address shortcomings and hiatuses in existing legislation, especially when requested by the international community are considered acceptable by the Venice Commission, but the authorities should keep changes to the legal framework to a minimum.

13. On 30 April 2025, the parliament passed in second reading an amendment to counter electoral corruption (amendment 381) that aims to strengthen responsibility for vote-buying and illicit campaign financing. This amendment was criticised by the OSCE-ODIHR for the vagueness of some of its provisions that would make it vulnerable to abuse. On the same day, the parliament also passed in first reading amendment 152, that would make it, inter alia, possible to deregister electoral contestants that are part of fictitious electoral blocs. As deregistration of electoral contestants is per definition a sensitive issue., clear legal criteria should be established to identify such blocs, and a proper appeal process should be put in place, in order to ensure that this mechanism cannot be abused for political purposes. Similar questions have also been raised about recent amendments that regulate the deregistration of so-called successor parties of political parties that have been declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova.

14. The Republic of Moldova has a very sizable diaspora, with about 1/3 of its citizens living outside the country. During the Presidential elections in 2024, more than 15% of the votes were cast outside the country. As a result, the issue of diaspora voting is an important as well as a sensitive issue in the Republic of Moldova. This is compounded by the fact that the diaspora vote has had a decisive impact on the outcome of recent elections as well as the Constitutional referendum. The latter passed with 50,36% of the votes – a difference of only 10,564 votes – largely as a result of the diaspora vote which voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Republic of Moldova joining the European Union. Similarly, incumbent President Sandu won the second round of the Presidential elections with 55,35% of the votes as a result of her overwhelming support among the diaspora, while her opponent Mr Stoianoglo received the support of 51, 2 % of the population inside the Republic of Moldova itself. While the difference between the national and diaspora vote partly could be a reflection of the extent of vote buying and interference by the Russian Federation, the difference between the national and diaspora votes is a potential source of tension. This is especially of concern in the context of parliamentary elections where multiple parties compete and results can be close. It is therefore important that the diaspora voting is conducted in an as inclusive and transparent manner as possible in order not to turn this issue into a potential vector for foreign interference. The authorities informed us that they have reasons to believe that the Russian Federation will try to sabotage the work of the elections stations outside the country to reduce the impact of Diaspora votes.

15. The Moldovan authorities introduced postal voting on a trial basis for the last Presidential elections and constitutional referendum. During this trial phase, the number of countries where postal voting took place was limited to six: the United States, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland. The authorities have argued that the total number of voters in these countries amount to less than 10% of the diaspora votes, and that therefore the chance that the choice of these countries for postal voting could change the outcome of the elections would be slim. However, given the closeness of the results, the impact of the choice of countries where postal voting took place cannot be completely neglected.

16. In its opinion on the Law on Postal Voting, the Venice Commission highlighted that “*The limited territorial scope of this trial is acceptable due to its application to one vote only*” and that for future elections it should be introduced “*to all countries where postal voting is safe and reliable, to be identified by decisions of the Central Electoral Commission*”.

17. The Moldovan parliament, while agreeing to maintain postal voting for the upcoming parliamentary elections, decided to only introduce postal voting in two additional countries: Japan and Australia. This seems to be at variance with the Venice Commission recommendation and could lead to allegations of gerrymandering by the incumbent authorities, especially if the results are close. The Central Election Commission (CEC) informed us that it would not have the required administrative resources to conduct postal voting across the board. Australia and Japan were selected due to the considerable distance that voters are required to travel to vote in person in the polling stations in those countries. In other countries these distances, according to the CEC, are on the average considerably less.

18. While acknowledging the need for the authorities to counter foreign interference, several interlocutors raised concerns about allegations and instances of overreach by the authorities in doing so, including with regard to the closure of media outlets on the grounds that they were endangering national security. Without wishing to judge on the merits of these allegations, we note that they can harm to the public trust in the fairness of the democratic processes. In this context, it is important that any restrictions on media and election participation are in full compliance with European standards. The Venice Commission has provided important guidance in this respect.

3. Media

19. The Republic of Moldova has a well-developed and pluralist media environment. However, unprecedented foreign interference in the Republic of Moldova’s domestic politics has necessitated a coherent policy to counter disinformation, fake news and hate speech aimed at undermining the democratic security of the country. It is important that the need to protect the country from misinformation is balanced with the need to protect media freedom and pluralism. This has started a domestic debate on national security versus censorship of legitimate dissenting opinions on the country’s democratic and integration trajectories.

20. In its statement issued after the presidential elections and constitutional referendum, the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) noted that decisions to close media outlets were reportedly sometimes adopted in a hasty and non-transparent manner and not always based on the grounds that the content of broadcasts had violated Moldovan law. This remains a topical issue. Following the end of the State of

Emergency in the Republic of Moldova, the power to sanction media outlets for violations of the broadcasting legislation with regard to national security, rests with the “Council for Promoting Investment Projects of National Importance”. Recently the license of TVC 21 was suspended by this Council which has been criticised by media experts and civil society in the Republic of Moldova who questioned the justification for its closure.

21. The authorities have been preparing a comprehensive reform of the mass media regulation environment. This includes a new draft Law on Mass Media as well as draft amendments to the Audiovisual Media Services Code and the Law on Advertising. The authorities requested an opinion of the Venice Commission on these drafts.

22. A full analysis of this media package is beyond the scope of this information note. However, in its opinion on this legal package, adopted during its plenary on 13 and 14 June 2025, the Venice Commission noted that the aim of the package was to ensure a level playing field for media providers while providing stricter oversight for disinformation and hate speech and addressing concerns about the independence of regulatory bodies. The Venice Commission in this respect welcomed that its previous recommendations were partly implemented especially with regard to the need to more strictly define its criteria for prohibiting content. At the same time, the Venice Commission recommended that additional legal provisions be adopted to ensure transparency and procedural safeguards in order to mitigate the risk of political interference. In this context it recommended that the transparency requirements for media providers will be balanced in order to ensure that media pluralism is not undermined. Moreover, the Venice Commission called upon the authorities to clearly define the powers of the Media Council with regard to disinformation and media content in order to “*ensure legal predictability, prevent excessive discretion and safeguard freedom of expression by avoiding chilling effects*”

23. It is estimated that 11% to 15% of the population uses Russian as a first language and relies on Russian language media as their primary source of information. A large part of the Russian language media are either based in the Russian Federation or are controlled by economic interests supportive of the Russian leadership. During our previous visit, several interlocutors from the media and civil society expressed the need for the Republic of Moldova to start producing high quality information and entertainment programmes in the Russian language in order to decrease the dependency on Russian produced content. The authorities have proposed to create a third public television channel that would broadcast in the Russian Language. However, the Audiovisual Council halted this proposal as it would violate Moldovan broadcasting legislation that proscribes that a mandatory 25% Romanian-language content requirement for public broadcasters serving national minorities.

4. Judiciary and Fight Against Corruption

24. On 31 May 2024, the Superior Council of Prosecutors proposed acting prosecutor Ion Munteanu as a candidate for the post of Prosecutor General. President Sandu appointed him the next day, therewith fulfilling one of the key remaining conditions to start the EU accession negotiations. Mr Munteanu was appointed for a single non-renewable seven-year term. However, on 29 April 2025, Mr Munteanu applied for one of the vacant posts of judge at the Supreme court. On 15 May, he was selected by the Superior Council for Magistracy (SCM) as one of the candidates and appointed by President Sandu to serve on the Supreme Court. His appointment raises questions about possible conflicts of interest as he could be adjudicating on appeals brought before the Supreme Court on cases prosecuted under his responsibility as Prosecutor General. Given the time it took to appoint Mr Munteanu as Prosecutor General, we hope that a replacement will soon be selected to avoid that this important post will again be vacant for a considerable amount of time.

25. The authorities have proposed to merge the Prosecutor’s Office for Anti-Corruption with the Prosecutor’s Office for Combating Organized Crime and Special Cases into a new institution: the Prosecutor’s Office for Anti-Corruption and Combating Organized Crime (PACCO). Some interlocutors have expressed concern about the impact of such a merger on the ongoing cases.

26. The authorities have prepared a new Law on the Constitutional Court. According to the Moldovan Constitution, the Constitutional Court is the sole authority on constitutional jurisdiction. It is independent of other public authorities and is responsible for ensuring the supremacy of the Constitution as well as the adherence to the rule of law and human rights². The new Law on the Constitutional Court aims to unify the existing legislation in one text, but also introduces new measures with regard to, inter alia, *a priori* review of the constitutionality of international treaties, the accountability of individual Constitutional Court judges, as well as revised procedures for filling vacancies on the Court.

² [CDL-AD\(2025\)005](#), § 7.

27. On 4 November 2024, the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Moldova requested an opinion of the Venice Commission on this draft law. The Venice Commission adopted its opinion³ during its plenary on 14 and 15 March 2025. In its opinion, the Venice Commission welcomed the new legislation which is in alignment with international standards and an improvement over current legislation. However, the Venice Commission suggested that the law could be strengthened by elevating it from the organic to the constitutional level. In addition, with regard to the *a priori* control for constitutionality of international treaties, the Venice Commission recommended that the law specifies that this control should take place before the treaty has been ratified by the parliament, and that an unconstitutional treaty cannot be ratified before its unconstitutionality has been resolved. In addition, it recommends that it should be made clear on the level of the Constitution that “*domestic law has to be brought in accordance with new international treaties before ratification at the international level.*”⁴

28. The law introduces a two 6-year term limit for the members of the Constitutional Court (currently there are no term limits) and sets a limit for the age (65 years) at the time of appointment of a judge. The Venice Commission noted that a longer single term limit would have been preferable to enhance the independence of the judges.

29. The Venice Commission welcomed that Constitutional Court Judges can no longer be dismissed by the President of the Republic, Parliament or other external (to the Constitutional Court) bodies of power, which should strengthen the independence of the Court.

30. Five of the six constitutional court seats are up for replacement before the term of the current parliament ends. The outgoing parliament will therefore have the power to cement the composition of the Constitutional Court for a considerable period of time after the next parliamentary elections. The authorities and current majority should therefore be encouraged to conduct an inclusive and transparent appointment process that would guarantee the impartiality in the eyes of the public of the new judges appointed.

31. We intend to return to the country following the next parliamentary elections.

³ [CDL-AD\(2025\)005](#).

⁴ Ibid § 125.

The honouring of obligations and commitments by the Republic of Moldova

Programme of the fact-finding visit to Chisinau (26 to 28 May 2025)

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Pierre-Alain FRIDEZ, Switzerland, Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group
Ms Zanda KALNIŅA-LUKAŠEVICA, Latvia, Group of the European People's Party

Secretariat: Mr Bas KLEIN, Deputy Head of Secretariat, Monitoring Committee

Main topics:

- Recent Political Developments and preparations for the 2025 Parliamentary Elections
- Judiciary reform and fight against corruption
- Human Rights
- Freedom of Expression and Media Freedom
- Parliamentary Oversight and Cooperation

Sunday, 25 May 2025

Afternoon: arrival of delegation.

Evening: informal working dinner with the Head of Council of Europe Office.

Monday, 26 May 2025

08:30	Working breakfast with Ms. Angelica CARAMAN, Chair of the Central Electoral Commission.
09:30	Civil society/expert roundtable on recent political developments election preparations. (*)
11:00	Civil Society/expert roundtable on Freedom of Expression and Media Freedom (*)
12:00	Civil Society/expert roundtable on Human Rights (Minorities, LGBTQI, Women and Children)
13:00	Lunch
15:30-16:15	Meeting with Ms Doina GHERMAN, Chair of the parliamentary faction of the Action and Solidarity Party and the members of the faction
16:30- 17:15	Meeting with Mr Vlad BATRÎNCEA, Chair of the parliamentary faction of the Bloc of communists and socialists and the members of the faction
19:00	Dinner hosted by Mr Ion GROZA, Chairperson of the Moldovan delegation to PACE with the participation of members of the Moldovan delegation to PACE

Tuesday, 27 May 2025

- 09:00 Meeting with the international community (*)
- 10:20-11:10 Meeting with Ms Olga ROȘCA, Adviser to the President of the Republic of Moldova for Foreign Policy and European Affairs and Mr. Stansilav SECRIERU, Adviser to the President of the Republic of Moldova on Defense and National Security, Secretary of Supreme Security Council
- 11:30-12:15 Meeting with Ms Veronica ROȘCA, Chair of the Committee on legal affairs, appointments and immunities and the members of the Committee
- 12:30-14:00 Working Lunch with the participation of members of the Moldovan delegation to PACE
- 14:15-15:00 Meeting with Mr Sergiu MIHOV, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova
- 15:15-16:00 Meeting with Ms. Veronica MIHAILOV-MORARU, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Moldova
- 16:15 - 17:00 Meeting with Mr Ion MUNTEANU, Prosecutor General
- 17:00-17:45 Meeting with Mr. Alexandru MUSTEAȚA, Head of the Security Service
- 18.00-18:45 Meeting with Mr Ceslav PANICO, People's Advocate (Ombudsman) (*)

Wednesday, 28 May 2025

- 09:50 Departure to the Office of the Council for Promoting Investment Projects of National Importance
- 10:00-10:45 Meeting with the members of the Council for Promoting Investment Projects of National Importance and the members of the Audiovisual Council
- Afternoon Departure of the delegation

(*) Meetings organised by Council of Europe Office in Chisinau