

Editorial

Let's get back to the (de facto) irreversibility of the European course

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The so-called *twitter revolution* from April 2009 and, together with it, the liberation of the spirit of democracy allowed for the Republic of Moldova to orient its course towards a new development model, and namely that of the European Union. The civilization values, but also the quality of life, the degree of economic development and the business prospects in the community space, have burst then in the form of alluring lights at the end of a tunnel with a length of ... at least eight years of communist regime.

Meanwhile, another ten years have passed, a period when the irreversibility of the European path of the country has become a constantly and cyclically invoked subject at certain stages, either as a mobilizing factor or invoking its threat or prejudice. The reasons - or pretexts? - were different, the foreign threats prevailing each time. As a rule, the popularity of another direction was alluded, and namely the *Eurasian* one. And we have not even thought of or noticed the destructive octopus that was developing within the state.

More than that. It appears that with the liberalization of the visa regime and the signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union in 2014, the Moldovan authorities have seen their feet firmly and forever fixed on the European soil. As a result, the irreversibility of the European path was an increasingly rare subject in the public discourse, the general perception being that the window of opportunity was still open to our country, and we only have to make the decisive leap.

This state of mind was somehow justified by the enormous and almost unconditional support of the development partners offered to the official Chisinau immediately after 2009, as well as by the euphoria generated in November 2013 by the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit. A Summit that not only confirmed the subsequent signing of the

Association Agreement and the visa liberalization, but also gave our country the hope for the EU candidate member. The 2015 Riga Summit made it all the more disappointing when the European partners, confused by the undemocratic processes in the Republic of Moldova and by the big corruption cases, not only did not invoke the European perspective for Moldova, but even highlighted the association nature of the signed documents that do not involve accession to the European Union.

Although repeatedly requested, the European perspective has become an upsetting topic for the European circles and national institutions of member states. The 'deal' proposed by the Chisinau authorities has not convinced the European partners, who still don't understand how a state that doesn't make progress in terms of good governance and rule of law could be helped just by the introduction in the Constitution of the "European perspective" phrase.

Respectively, being more practical, the Europeans have continued to ask for progress in the key reforms and major issues such as the theft of the billion and high corruption in the vital sectors that jeopardize not only the Republic of Moldova but also the member states. Moreover, for the first time in the EU's relationship with the partner states, there has been introduced political conditionality for providing macro-financial assistance, but also the "more for more" principle. We all know the result: the 100 million Euro macro-financial assistance has been repeatedly suspended while the relationship between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union has reached maximum tensions in 2018.

This being the state of play, the situation we find ourselves is, at least, absurd. On the one hand, in Chişinău, the authorities strongly promote the inclusion in the Constitution of the phrase "European integration" as the main political vector, and I am convinced this could be one of the most viable ways of safeguarding the European path. On the other hand, the same authorities are flagrantly

violating the values and principles they committed to respect under the existent agreements, neglecting the warming signals coming from the Euro-Atlantic partners.

Brussels has repeatedly sent - through European officials and progress reports - clear diplomatic messages about the EU's concerns regarding the domestic developments in our country. Less diplomatic messages conveyed with the same firmness came through the European Parliament's resolution of July 5, 2018, following the invalidation of the local elections' results in Chisinau. Thus, there is no doubt that the formal declarations and decisions of the so-called pro-European ruling parties in Moldova no longer please the ears of anyone. An exception could only be those who can benefit from Moldova's failure to become a genuine democracy - and here I refer not only to external actors, but also to the internal ones.

And yet how do we translate the irreversibility of the European path into life? Perhaps, remembering Ovidius's words: "there is no need for words, put your hope in deeds ..." The irreversibility of the European path does not lie in declarations, but in actions with good faith in line with the commitments made by the Republic of Moldova, when it was entrusted with confidence by the European partners. The irreversibility of the European course means good governance, rule of law, freedom of speech and inviolability of human rights. It should be a major sacrifice of society, political elites, and each of us in order to change perceptions, fight stereotypes, and develop a culture of integrity.

Not even for the EU member-states is the European course irreversible

Iulian Groza, director of the Institute for European Policy and Reforms (IPRE)



October in Chisinau was politically controversial. Some opinion leaders have argued that given the pompous reception of the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan - but especially given the fact that the dialogue with the Ankara leader didn't address the thorny issue of the Turkish teachers expelled one month ago from Moldova - our country has definitely given up on the European values. Other opinion leaders, including the representatives of the political class, have shown that they are determined to continue promotion of the European direction and have put to vote the introduction of the phrase "European integration"

into the Constitution of the country as evidence. The proposal did not meet the necessary majority, but served instead as an unofficial start of the next parliamentary election ... In parallel, in Brussels, the clouds seem to be getting darker for the Republic of Moldova, and the well-informed mouths are saying that the question one can hear too often in the European institutions is not good for us: "What to do with Moldova?". It is also with this question that I started the discussion with Iulian Groza, former Deputy Foreign Minister and director of IPRE.

■ Mr. Groza, what about Moldova? Or what should our European partners do? The latest evaluation report on the implementation of the Association Agreement (AA), released a month ago, is also not too optimistic...

■ Indeed, the Third Alternative Report on the Implementation of the AA with the EU for the First Semester of 2018 reveals that, compared to 2017, our country is regressing. Even though the beginning of the year seemed to be a promising one, and we also had a few high-level visits to Brussels... Things have taken a different turn in the summer together with the