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# NEWSLETTER

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## Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates


### TOPICS OF THE EDITION:


1. Speaker of the Moldovan Parliament, **Igor Corman**, speaks about the European agenda of the Parliament and about the domestic reforms in the context of the initialling of the Association Agreement in Vilnius.
2. Advisor to the Romanian president, **Iulian Chifu**, speaks about the messages delivered by Traian Basescu during his visit to Chisinau.
3. The political analyst **Igor Botan**: European integration versus Eurasian integration. Arguments in favour of the European course.


#### The latest political developments in the Republic of Moldova.


 The Republic of Moldova- European Union Cooperation Council from June 26<sup>th</sup>, has confirmed the completion of the negotiations on the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with EU. Initialling of the document will take place at the Eastern Partnership reunion in Vilnius.

 On July 1<sup>st</sup>, Croatia became the 28<sup>th</sup> member state of the European Union.

 On the same date, Lithuania took over rotating presidency of EU. During its presidency, on November 28<sup>th</sup>, Lithuania will host the third Eastern Partnership Summit.

 During a visit paid to Chisinau on July 9<sup>th</sup>, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, stated that the Vilnius Summit will be a celebration occasion in the relations between the Republic of Moldova and European Union. The official has mentioned that the "integration of the Republic of Moldova in the EU is a real perspective", but the authorities have to work hard to eradicate corruption and ensure the economic growth.

 On July 11<sup>th</sup>, in Chisinau, the 3<sup>rd</sup> summit of the European Popular Party of the heads of state and government within the Eastern Partnership took place. The summit was attended by the Georgian president Mihail Saakashvili, the Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan. The chairman of the European Popular Party Wilfried Martens, who was present at the event has stated that „Moldova can become EU member if wishes so and applies adequate policies”.

 The Romanian President Traian Basescu paid an official visit to Chisinau on July 17<sup>th</sup>. The head of the Romanian state spoke about „maturity of relations” between the Republic of Moldova and Romania and about a „blood partnership” which should be strengthened through concrete projects such as Iasi-Chisinau gas pipeline, high tension power lines, bridges over the Prut and through increasing the number of scholarships provided to the Moldovan youth.

### **Igor Corman: Moldova will be anchored definitively in the European space if it is efficient with the reforms and the next government is pro-European**



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**Lina Grau:** After having overcome the political crisis this spring and having vested the new pro-European government, the political summer has been rich in external events. Several important visits of high ranking European officials took place in Chisinau as well as visits by Moldovan officials to Brussels and other

European capitals. An important event was the announcement regarding the finalisation of the negotiations on the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union made on June 26<sup>th</sup> in Luxemburg. Given the progress in the

relations with EU, the promise was made that at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, the Republic of Moldova could obtain an important advancement in the European integration process and a recommendation on the visa liberalisation regime with EU.

I have asked the speaker of Parliament, Igor Corman, if these developments mark a qualitative change for the Republic of Moldova on the foreign policy agenda as well as for the domestic evolutions and if these could mean a definitive anchorage of the Republic of Moldova in the European vector.

**Igor Corman:** Despite the political crisis and all that happened in the Republic of Moldova we have kept the dialogue with the European Union on the foreign agenda. This is mainly due to the work of the negotiators. The negotiations have been completed and now the procedures within the European Union will take some time. Mention should be made that we have been faster with this process than the other EP countries and this has been noted by the European officials.

Our expectations from the Eastern Partnership in Vilnius are that we will initial the Association Agreement. It is simpler with the political chapters while with the DCFTA it is more complicated as contains about 1000 pages and there is need for more time for the technical procedures. And it does not matter if each page is initialled or only part of it. This will be a strong signal that Moldova has practically completed the Agreement so that next year the technical procedures continue and we get the Association Agreement signed by next year.

This goal is a realistic one provided there are no situations similar to the ones from the beginning of this year and there is political stability. Additionally, we should continue working on the commitments towards EU. We should continue with the reforms and send positive signals to the Europeans. There are several issues to be solved- fighting against corruption, justice reform and others.

As far as visa issues is concerned, we have practically the positive signal. The progress reports are good and we are moving well with the implementation of the second phase of the Action Plan with EU. In September we are expecting another evaluation mission, the last one, which will produce a progress report. In Vilnius we are expecting that the European



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Commission announces that Moldova, in the opinion of the Commission, has completed the second phase of the Action Plan. In parallel, we are expecting that the European Commission comes up with a recommendation towards the European Parliament and European Council that they take the political decision on withdrawal of Moldova from the list of countries that need visa for the European Union.

It is very important now that we do not slacken off after the Vilnius summit. We should not forget that starting with May 2014, the European Parliament will start the elections campaign. Until 2014 we should maintain the relations with the political groups from the European Parliament and with the chairman of the European Parliament which I intend to do personally so that Moldova is on the agenda until the elections. We should make sure that not because of the ill will but rather because of the too complicated agenda with many priorities, Moldova's case is not neglected. If they enter elections, the process will take until the structures of the new Parliament are created and the risk is that the process will be running for a time.

In parallel, the European Commission mandate is valid until November 2014. Until then a

decision should be taken by the European Council that there should be a consensus in all the member-states and the issue is rather sensitive. The role of the Government, of the Moldovan diplomacy and the parliamentary dimension is extremely important. We should work towards promoting the image of the country and create conditions so that until the end of the 2014 the final decision is taken. The target is realistic but we have to work hard.

As to the parliamentary dimension, apart from the relations with the European Parliament that I mentioned about that we should give special attention and assign priority immediately after the Vilnius summit and until May 2014, we should keep contacts at all levels – from the speakers of Parliament to the standing committees – and with the most important member-states of the European Union such as Germany, France, and the Netherlands, the latter being pretty sensitive to this issue. In the near future, on September 2, the speaker of the Swedish parliament will visit the Republic of Moldova and we know that Sweden is one of the two countries alongside Poland which initiated the Eastern Partnership. I have been invited to Poland I will definitely go there. I will visit by all means Lithuania, the country which hosts the Eastern Partnership Summit in November. And after the Summit we should

activate our relations with the parliaments of the states that set the tone within the European Union.

■ **Lina Grau:** To your opinion, is the European course of the Republic of Moldova irreversible?

■ **Igor Corman:** Signing of the Association Agreement does not mean the completion of the European course of the Republic of Moldova but rather its beginning. It is very important for us to sign this Agreement as this way we anchor Moldova in the European space and new perspectives open. We will need to ensure an excellent implementation of our commitments in the first year and after that we will be able to submit an adherence application which will take approximately one year to examine. If our governance is efficient and pro-European, the perspectives are very good and Moldova will benefit from new programmes, including financial ones. This way we will change the situation and we will be able to say that we made the process irreversible.

In order to make the process irreversible, apart from signing the Association Agreement and the visa liberalisation regime, it is important that during the next elections, the people vote for pro-European parties and a pro-European governance. Here I can see a risk as the people will not feel the impact of the Association Agreement immediately. As to the visas, the people will feel some changes but in order to be able to travel they will need to have money in the pocket. And given the problems that we had, we have discouraged the people through our inconsiderate actions.

What we have to do during the next one year and a half until the next elections, we should regain the people's confidence and convince them that we are on the right track and have concrete results. And if at the next elections the pro-European parties continue its way, I think that the process will really become irreversible.

■ **Lina Grau:** The series of external visits to Chisinau have continued. This week we had the Romanian president Traian Basescu visiting Chisinau, a visit which is considered important by the public opinion. I know that you had a meeting with the head of the Romanian state. What do you think about the present relations between the Republic of Moldova and Romania? This relation has passed through different phases – from a glacial one during

the communist government period to warmer relations but still with certain reserves, in the first year of the European Integration Alliance.

■ **Igor Corman:** After the meeting with Traian Basescu, I got a clearer picture of our relations with Romania which I consider normal and I really think both sides have become more mature. As you mentioned, there was a glacial period in our relations and even close to war in 2009. There had been sensitive discussions on the Border Treaty and there was always the impression that there is a hidden agenda and that the message from Bucharest is not totally sincere and that Chisinau is rather reluctant.

But Basescu's visit and the message he sent not only at our meeting but also at the public meeting, strengthen my belief in the sense that the attitude in Bucharest has changed. I really want to believe that we entered a new phase of normal relations.

Who if not Romania should play an active role in supporting the Republic of Moldova on its European Integration way? This has happened in other cases: Germany with Poland, now Poland with Ukraine, or Bulgaria and Macedonia. It is a normal thing or even a moral duty of Romania to support the Republic of Moldova.

We should take advantage of all the possibilities and not only on the European agenda. There are also other important projects – a strategic project with the Iasi-Ungheni gas pipeline, other energy projects on the construction of high tension power lines and bridges over the Prut. The bilateral priorities and the European agenda show us how important this relation is.

In the discussion with Basescu I touched upon the Border Regime Treaty that we ratified in Chisinau and the president Basescu assured us that he would give green light in Cotroceni so that it is also ratified by the Parliament. This way we will close this highly politicised subject in our bilateral relations. This will be an example that we act in a European way and we look ahead leaving the historians to speak about the history of our relations.

The members of parliament should bring their contribution to the implementation of the European agenda. And we should look where we can take advantage of our colleagues in Bucharest. If you refer to the acquis communautaire, two years ago, Tutus Corlatean

gave us the Romanian electronic version.

I think we can use the Romanian expertise in other domains. Many times when we speak about adoption of laws of European relevancy we draw on the experience of our colleagues in the Baltic states and other European states, while our colleagues in the Romanian parliament have passed through the same processes. We can bring several concrete examples referring to the experience in fighting against corruption and reforming of the Prosecutor's office. If we refer to the National Integrity Commission that we created and need to consolidate, we could take over the experience of the Romanian National Integrity Commission. We should not invent the wheel but rather see what Romania and other countries have done and adapt the experience to the Moldovan realities. I think that such a close cooperation between the members of Parliament in Chisinau and Bucharest will facilitate substantially the legislative activity regarding the harmonisation of our legal framework with the European one.

■ **Lina Grau:** In the context of the completion of the negotiations within the Association Agreement, I would like to tackle another subject. It may be a mere coincidence but immediately after the completion of the negotiations when it was clear that in Vilnius the Republic of Moldova could progress considerably in its relation with EU, serious problems appeared in the Transnistrian region. Some political analysts and experts qualify them as provocations and things staged including to jeopardise a positive scenario for Vilnius. How do you evaluate the situation on the Transnistrian issue?

■ **Igor Corman:** I would not hurry to point to where these provocations come from and who is behind them. But there are certainly political forces which are not happy at all that we overcame the political crisis and accelerated our European course. All these concerted actions are not accidental – signatures are being collected in Transnistria and Gagauzia and certain people are trying to perturb things collecting signatures for certain purposes and even some priests are not doing what we, christeners, expect them to do, but get involved into politics. On the other hand, there are political forces in Chisinau which support such actions and this is an evident and well-known fact. This is the reality. I believe it depends very much on us how we manage this situation. It is

important that we do not fall into this trap nor feed this state of mind with new arguments.

Therefore I insisted very much that the opposition gets involved into the process when we debated the issue regarding the situation in Transnistria during those two sessions behind the closed doors. It took us longer and it was not easy but we found a compromise and we voted together with the opposition- the Communist Party- this declaration. And I think it was a good thing. In the same context, at the last parliamentary session, I withdrew the draft law no.250 on the amendments to the Law on the regime of the foreigners regarding the activity of the points registering the migration's or foreign citizens' flows. And this is because I would like to get the opposition involved so that we have common position as I felt there were question marks regarding the implementation mechanism of this law, on the way the public opinion and people are informed. Even if the law is good, if the people are not informed and certain forces try to manipulate the people, misinforming them, we will not get what we are aiming at. In order to avoid all these things, after having discussed with the EU Delegation and the authors of the draft law, we withdrew it so that we do not create conditions for certain forces that try to strain the situation. We are planning to take our time until autumn and get the opposition involved into this process, inform the people, improve the implementation mechanism, and discuss it again in autumn without any rush.

I am sure that in the moment when we have overcome this uneasy situation for us and we have the Association Agreement with EU signed, it will be easier in the relations with our eastern partners. The things will calm down. It is important now that we act in an intelligent way and do not limit ourselves to the European agenda. It is very important that we maintain our dialogue with Ukraine, the Russian Federation. It is very important that we communicate, have dialogue, and convince the eastern partners that what we are aiming at- to Europeanise the Republic of Moldova- does not come in contradiction with the traditional relations with the Russian Federation that we would like to have. The Republic of Moldova is obliged to maintain this healthy equilibrium in our relations with both eastern and western partners.



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## **Romania – the Republic of Moldova: a “blood partnership” and maturity of relations**

The series of external visits to Chisinau has finalised this week with the official visit of the Romanian president Traian Basescu. The head of state spoke about the „maturity of relations” between the Republic of Moldova and Romania and about a „blood partnership” which should be strengthened through concrete projects such as construction of the Iasi-Ungheni gas pipeline and of the high tension power lines, reconstruction of the bridges over the Prut and increase in the number of scholarships offered by the Romanian state to the Moldovan youth.

In spite of the groups of people which protested against Traian’s Basescu visit in Chisinau, the head of the Romanian state did not hesitate to come out in the crowd in order to greet his supporters.

I spoke with Iulian Chifu, the advisor to the president on security issues, about the main conclusions of Train’s Basescu visit and his main messages delivered in Chisinau.

## ***Julian Chifu: We witness a unique opportunity in the Republic of Moldova, which can bring the present politicians into the history***

■ **Julian Chifu:** A prime message was evidently the perspective of the Vilnius Summit, that is initialling and later signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union, of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement as well as the perspective for the visa liberalisation and everything that the latter implies.

The president has underlined that in the case of Romania, signing in 1993-1994 of these agreements indicated clearly the strategic way the country was to follow even though at that time there was no formal commitment on the part of EU.

The same thing is happening now in Chisinau. At the moment of signing of these agreements and commitments to reforms, the path of the Republic of Moldova is clearly determined towards the European Union. There is openness in this direction and considerable steps have been made, not to mention the fact that these agreements are de facto about this.

This means that the Moldovan citizens and the companies enter practically the European Union market and respectively can move freely in EU. This is an extremely important step and the president Basescu has tried to deliver this message. The president has underlined that the Republic of Moldova is ahead of the other EP states and that it is more advanced in all the negotiations, having passed to the second phase of the visa liberalisation. We hope it will finalise the second phase of the negotiations successfully and as soon as possible.

Additionally, the Republic of Moldova benefits from a fantastic support from Romania- it has already the entire Acquis translated not to mention the *know-how* transfer component, lessons learned,



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good practices that Romania can pass to Moldova and support it in the negotiations and later on in the completion of the adherence.

We are on this way and this has been the main message delivered by the president Traian Basescu, evidently expressing thanks and congratulating the Moldovan citizens and politicians who contributed to this success. This success has been possible due to the substantial efforts of the political class and Moldovan citizens as it will not be able to complete the European course without the support of these two categories of people.

This happened despite the events from the beginning of the year that I would refer to as „growing pains” in the functioning of certain young democracies under coalition conditions. And here I think the lessons have been learned –the Republic of Moldova has succeeded with internal

resources in rebuilding the pro-European alliance. The sustainability of this pro-European force is extremely important.

■ **Lina Grau:** What signals did you get during this visit- from the political class, from the politicians whom you met and from the ordinary people? What is the general impression?

■ **Julian Chifu:** This has been an extremely warm meeting which has revalidated one more time the chemistry between the Romanian president Traian Basescu and the Moldovan population. There have been three or four occasions during which the president has walked in the centre of people, took pictures and had discussions as close as possible with the people. This has been the most emotional component of the entire visit.

It is also important that all the political forces present in the coalition be aware of

the opportunity they have. This is a unique opportunity which can make it possible for this coalition and the people that follow this logic to get into the history.

■ **Lina Grau:** President Basescu has mentioned about maturity in the relations between Romania and the Republic of Moldova. What is this maturity about? We all know that there was a glacial period during the communist government followed by a certain improvement in the relations but still certain things did not work. What does this maturity that we seem to have reached mean?

■ **Iulie Chifu:** First of all, it is about the confidence which has been built and which is evident. There is no longer a problem or suspicions, except for marginal cases, that Romania may want to swallow up or cut-off etc. So, this kind of confidence has been built in the relations between Bucharest and Chisinau.

In fact, there are several layers which added all the time substance to the sophistication degree and maturity of this relation. At the origin, we have a common identity which nobody can deny. The evidence is that no matter how much you want to avoid it, it is obvious. The second layer is the fact that we are two neighbouring states. We are two neighbouring states having the same people, the same language, the same culture, the same history, but still two neighbouring states. This neighbourhood idea succeeded in reconnecting extremely deeply these two states in time. And let's not forget that after the proclamation of independence by the Republic of Moldova, Romania has been the first state which recognised its independence the next day.

And a third layer has engaged over. It is about Romania as a state in pre-adherence and now a member state of the European Union. And next to it- a member state of the Eastern Neighbourhood Policy and later on of the Eastern Partnership and very soon- an associated state to the European Union. So this is the process that follows the pre-adherence logic. This type of relations does not do but an extremely profound change and a legal and

institutional adjustment in the Republic of Moldova. On one hand, this fact leads to the strengthening of the Moldovan state and on the other hand – to juxtaposition and extremely close relations of the institutions inside the country with the European Union counterpart institutions. As we all know very well, the border of the European Union is with Romania and thus, it represents an extremely close interface between the Republic of Moldova and Romania.

■ **Lina Grâu:** Mr Chifu, do you support the prognosis of the president Basescu of Moldova's adherence to the EU in about 10-12 years?

■ **Iulian Chifu:** I do not make prognosis but this is a realistic calculation and it is based on the Romanian experience and on the distance between the moment when Romania signed the Association Agreement and when it entered the European Union. We signed the Association Agreement in 1993-1994. The negotiations for adherence started in 1999 and in 2007 Romania was already EU member, though it could be earlier on in 2004. If we consider this time interval and adjust to less or more, we could reach a margin between 10 and 12 years. Provided one essential condition though –the Republic of Moldova should continue the pro-European reforms doubling its efforts. It should build a larger coalition, consensus and support on its European path from the society.

■ **Lina Grâu:** Mr Chifu, being an expert in security issues, could you tell us what is happening in the Transnistrian regulation? There have been several important meetings from Moscow to Bucharest and vice versa and there is an impression that something is happening in this area. So what is happening on the Transnistrian dimension? Can we expect developments in the near future?

■ **Iulian Chifu:** We can evidently expect developments but we should look at the reality. On one hand, the European Union as well as the Russian Federation supports the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the Republic of Moldova.

On the other hand - a special status for the Transnistrian separatist region. We know that we are facing a situation of a relative blockage which I think it is a blockage caused by the adjustment of policies to the new realities linked with the signing of the three agreements with the EU which connects in very closely the Republic of Moldova with the European Union reality.

It is evident that as following steps, the Republic of Moldova should do several extremely important things for the institutional and normative construction in the region under the legitimate control of Chisinau. On the other hand, Chisinau should start building its own instruments for territorial reintegration.

The construction of these elements takes time and has a very sophisticated degree, implying an extremely elaborated strategy. From this point of view, the European Union offers a set of instruments which I have already mentioned about. We should not forget that all the Moldovan citizens from both sides of the river Nistru will be embraced by this agreement starting with the moment of the visa liberalisation. All the companies from the left and right banks that observe the rules of the Agreement can have free access to the European market.

We should not forget that there exist a big number of companies on the left bank of the Nistru that benefit today from the trade tariff preferential agreement. Just think that this agreement disappears together with the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement and the new rules enter into force. And these rules are observed by all the companies in order to benefit from all the advantages.

These are extremely powerful tools. I think that the Republic of Moldova, all the authorities at all levels will have to be more responsible in assuming their part on the way towards the European Integration and territorial reintegration.



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## **Igor Boțan: The Republic of Moldova can move towards EU without antagonizing the Eastern partners**

■ **Lina Grâu:** The political analyst Igor Botan and the executive director of the Association for Participatory Democracy (ADEPT) thinks that the completion of the negotiations on the Association Agreement with EU is just a stage in the European Integration process of the Republic of Moldova and the problems that Chisinau should overcome in this process are related both to the relations with Russia and the Transnistrian problem.

■ **Igor Botan:** There are more stages to pass through and I think that the Vilnius Summit is just a point from among other stations on the way towards the European integration. In order to have a development plan of the Republic of Moldova, we should at least attain this objective. So, it is very important to sign this Association Agreement which can place us on the second level of economic integration with EU through DCFTA.

There is an important difference between EU and CIS. EU contributes financially to the modernisation of the Republic of Moldova and has a substantial

contribution. Many of the strategic objectives of the Republic of Moldova are based on the EU financial support. The second very important factor is related to the solution of the Transnistrian issue. And here if the Republic of Moldova gets closer to the Eastern space, it runs the risk of being influenced for a long time by the solutions provided by the Russian Federation which has a project of remaking the post-soviet space into a union which will be called Eurasian.

We should not forget that according to the Marxist theory, it is the economic base that determines the ideological and political superstructure. That is if in the Customs Union there are three authoritarian states and the Republic of Moldova joins this space, we can easily imagine that the economic base of the Customs Union will imminently generate an authoritarian political structure in the Republic of Moldova. And I think that the Republic of Moldova cannot afford this thing. There are other arguments of this type – for instance, we do not know how Russia will develop after an eventual

completion of Putin's mandate, or Belorussia after Lukasenka, or Kazakhstan after Nazarbaev. We do not know how these countries will develop when time comes and these leaders are changed. How will the leaders be changed? This type of questions by definition does not exist in the EU space where all the people understand that what counts is the political, economic and democratic system and not the personalities.

Therefore, it is evident that the Republic of Moldova has to strive towards an economic space which generates a political and an ideologically-democratic superstructure which is based on values and not personalities. And the choice of the Republic of Moldova is not a caprice or a Russian-phobia attitude that some people insist on. Sure, we should keep the best relations with the Russian Federation as it is an important space from the economic, cultural and scientific point of view. But this does not mean we are not able to choose our way without antagonising Russia. And this should be done in an intelligent way by the Moldovan political class.

■ **Lina Grâu:** Speaking about the Transnistrian situation that you mentioned about, we realise that together with the finalisation of the negotiations on the Association Agreement and the positive perspectives at the Vilnius Summit, problems have appeared in the Transnistrian region. The impression is that something is being planned to compromise the positive scenario in Vilnius. Some commentators have even said that the Republic of Moldova could move easier towards the European Union without Transnistria.

■ **Igor Botan:** I think it is an illusion that the Republic of Moldova can separate from Transnistria. Everybody should understand that the Republic of Moldova can separate from Moldova only in one case – if Transnistria was recognised by Russia or Ukraine. Thus, the Republic of Moldova cannot renounce its eastern region. Any political force which tries to tackle this problem in a serious way will immediately die.

In general, it should be clear to everybody that the entire 5+2 negotiation process and other things happening are simple manoeuvres in a profoundly frozen process. This freeze was institutionalised on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2005 when the Law on Transnistria was adopted. It is clear that this law has one single vocation – not to allow any of the political forces in Chisinau which comes to power to try and solve this conflict without the opposition. Secondly, the Russian Federation has stated it very clearly that it will not allow any solution within a unitary state and insists on federalisation or confederalisation.

The federative solution would be a good one if the Republic of Moldova had the intelligence or capacity to administer a federative state. In principle, the solution is good but we are not mature enough for such a solution.

The second problem associated with an eventual federalisation is related to the fact that Transnistria is very deeply anchored by the Russian Federation and in that case the federalisation could mean the transnistrianization of the Republic of Moldova. If we take into account the fact that about 500.000 or 400.000 people add to our electorate, the entire electoral landscape will change, which will have a clear orientation towards the Russian Federation and eastern project. I think the political class in Chisinau cannot simply afford this thing.

The confederalisation is another option. Confederation would be a better option in my opinion for an eventual solution. Confederalization would mean that they develop as they can and we develop as we can, having in common as much

as we can afford and it does not cost much in order to ruin us. The good side for Chisinau is that in this scenario Transnistria could be left as a lizard's tail in case the transnistrianization threat emerges.

Neither this solution is a happy one as we will probably never be able to draw the border between the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria because of Bender and many other things. Moreover, the Transnistrians may not want this thing –we have already seen their reaction when several migration points were installed. It was for the first time that they started crying: „How can the Republic of Moldova separate from us without even asking us!” So, none of these solutions can be taken seriously. This would also imply amendments to the Constitutions and drawing the border, determining the status for Bender and many other things for which we have neither capacity nor will.

That is why, what we have is a status quo, a frozen conflict, and a European integration process of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine and we seem to move with small steps in the positive direction. The Transnistrians should not be antagonised. They should be involved into this process and I think that after many, many years, a solution could be found through regionalisation. Other solutions seem unrealistic to me and all those who come up with all kinds of solutions and recommendations such as to leave Transnistria, are simply beating about the bush and do not understand what they are speaking about.

■ **Lina Grău:** From the series of external visits to Chisinau, one of the most visible was the visit of the president

Basescu. After the glacial period during the communist government and an improvement in the relations of the two countries in the first years of the European Integration Alliance, do you think a political maturity has been reached in the relations between the Republic of Moldova and Romania?

■ **Igor Boțan:** We can at least be happy that the bilateral relations are in ascension and the „soul things” as the president Basescu name them, are grounded by pragmatic actions such as infrastructure, energy security projects and support to the Moldovan youth who wish to study for free at better universities than the ones in the Republic of Moldova. We should all understand that this support deserves recognition on part of the Republic of Moldova and its citizens to Romania.

These are really the things which deserve to be supported as well as the economic component. As far as the cultural component is concerned, the soul one, this cannot be erased and if we are able to have a common vibrant cultural space, the people would choose what is beautiful and attractive from the spiritual point of view without exercising pressure and without ideological and propagandistic things.

I am glad our relations got at this level and I think that we can really state, as the president Basescu said, that we are reaching maturity in our relations. From an infantile romanticism here and there we can reach a relation that really deserves to be appreciated.