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# The impact of European integration on the State consolidation of the Republic of Moldova

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## The theoretical approach

We are not going to all of the reflection on the origin of the State – origin that must be also considered under different points of view<sup>1</sup>: legal, philosophical, sociological, anthropological, political etc. We will not go back to different concepts and theories of the essence and the functioning of the modern State<sup>2</sup>. The concept of a consolidated State refers rather to the work of Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, who worked on issues of democratic transition and consolidation. These two authors find that a confrontation and deep and continuing ambivalence between the political elites and the majority of the population about democratic institutions, without any signs of adaptation to established institutions are certainly not conducive to peace-building. What makes the consolidation difficult is not just a disagreement as to the values of democracy, but also about its institutions. For Linz and Stepan a democracy is consolidated when it is considered as the only possible solution (*the only game in town*)<sup>3</sup>.

According to Daniel Mider, the consolidation of democracy corresponds roughly to a “functional adaptation and stabilisation of democratic structures, which thus acquire reliability, institutions, standards, values, relationships, procedures and behaviours between the political system and civil society and within each of them”<sup>4</sup>.

Linz and Stepan grasp the consolidation of democracy in three aspects: the behaviour, the attitude, and the constitution as fundamental law. From the point of view of behaviour, democracy becomes the only possible solution when no meaning political group trying to overthrow the democratic regime or to secede from the State. When the consolidation takes effect, the behaviour of the newly elected Government, is

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<sup>1</sup> G. Burdeau, *L'État. Nouvelle édition préfacée par Philippe Braud*, Paris, Seuil, 1970-2009, p. 29 sq.; J. Russ, *Les théories du pouvoir*, Paris, Poche, 1994, p. 68 sq.; Y. Déloye, *Sociologie historique du politique*, Paris, La Découverte, 1996, p. 29 sq.; C. Rivière, *Anthropologie politique*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2000, p. 65; M.N. Marčenko, *Teoria gosudarstva i prava*, Moskva, Prospekt, MGU, 2011, p. 97 sq.; B. Lacroix, “Genèse et constructions de l'État moderne”, in: A. Cohen, B. Lacroix, Ph. Riutort (eds.), *Nouveau manuel de science politique*, Paris, La Découverte, 2009, p. 52 sq.; H. Rae, *Identitatea și omogenizarea popoarelor statelor*, Chișinău, EPIGRAF, 2005, p. 31 sq.

<sup>2</sup> Ph. Braud, *Science politique 2. L'État*, Paris, Poche, 1997, p. 19 sq.; D. Colas, *Sociologie politique*, Paris, PUF, 1994-2006, p. 382 sq.; P. Dunleavy, B. O'Leary, *Teoriile statului. Politica democrației liberale*, Chișinău, EPIGRAF, 2002, p. 288 sq.; N. Frigoiu, *Antropologie politică*, București, Tritonic, 2009, p. 163 sq.

<sup>3</sup> Juan J. Linz, Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, part one, chapter I.

<sup>4</sup> D. Mider, “Wymiar społeczny konsolidacji w Polsce. Typologia postaw wobec systemu politycznego”, in: J. Garlicki (ed.), *Legitymizacja transformacji i systemu politycznego w Polsce*, Warszawa, Elipsa, 2014, p. 38-39.

more dominated by the desire to avoid a breakdown of democracy. From the point of view of attitude, democracy becomes the only alternative when facing severe political and economic crises, the overwhelming majority of the population is convinced that any change must occur in the context of democratic formulas. From the point of view of the constitution, democracy becomes the only possible solution when all stakeholders of the city have become accustomed to the fact that the political conflict will be resolved according to established standards and that violations of these standards are likely to be ineffective and costly. In short, with consolidation, democracy becomes routine and deeply internalized in the life social, institutional and even psychological, as well as in the calculations leading to a success<sup>5</sup>.

The grid proposed by Linz and Stepan is concerning the consolidation of democracy. However, a mutation of this grid allows applying it to researches on State-building and in particular for the Republic of Moldova<sup>6</sup>. Exactly like in the case of democracy, the independence of the Republic of Moldova appeared as a result of political decisions and the existence of this state, its borders shape, its nation idea, its domestic political values and foreign policy vectors have now to be accepted by the population at *the only game in town*. From this point of view state consolidation is something different than state modernisation, which means that a huge socio-economic change is preceding and eventually influencing a political change. Consolidation is also different than political transition which takes into consideration the (short or longer) period of change and all its factors. State consolidation is addressing the issues of acceptance, assimilation and recognition of the already made political changes and choices to create a State, by the population which is itself supposed to become a nation. In case of the Republic of Moldova, the ambiguous attitude of at least a part of its population does not make the existence of this State the *only game in town* for all its citizens<sup>7</sup>.

Linz and Stepan pose then three very relevant issues. They wonder why the existence of a sovereign State is a prerequisite for a modern democracy, why the construction of the State and the nation are process conceptually and historically different, and finally when the nation States and democracy are in complementary logic and what should be done to shape democracy if these logics were conflicting<sup>8</sup>.

Indeed, it is the question of national consolidation, analysed by Juan J. Linz in the context of the Spain, but also applicable to the Republic of Moldova, which seems to be one of the main corollaries of the State consolidation process. As noted by John Stuart Mill, "free institutions are almost impossible in a country made up of different nationalities. Within a free people's sense of belonging to a Community (*fellow-feeling*), especially if these people read and speak different languages, a unified public opinion necessary for functioning of a representative Government cannot exist"<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, for Ernest Gellner,

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<sup>5</sup> J.J. Linz, A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition...*, first part, chapter I.

<sup>6</sup> Other works already use the writings of Linz and Stepan in research on the Republic of Moldova. See: A. Johansson, *Disidența democrată. Națiune și democrație în Republica Moldova*, Chișinău, Editura ARC, 2013, p. 52; F. Parmentier, « État, politique et culture en Moldavie », *Revue internationale et stratégique*, n° 54, 2004/2, p. 159.

<sup>7</sup> See especially: M. Cazacu, N. Trifon, *Un État en quête de nation: la République de Moldavie*, Paris, Non-Lieu, 2010; J. Danero Iglesias, *Nationalisme et pouvoir en République de Moldavie*, Bruxelles, Éditions de l'ULB, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Idem, part one, chapter two.

<sup>9</sup> Cited by: M.-S. Darviche, W. Genieys, "Introduction: Building Democratic States on National Diversity", in: M.-S. Darviche, W. Genieys (eds.), *Multinational State Building. Considering and Continuing the Work of Juan Linz*, Montpellier, Pôle Sud, 2008, p. 1.

cited by Florent Parmentier, democracy (and the State as well) is “easier to implement in ethnically homogeneous countries”<sup>10</sup>. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan also tried to solve the dilemma of a not consolidated nation by proposing the concept of *state nation*<sup>11</sup>. The idea was, especially for Juan J. Linz to answer the question whether it was possible to maintain the integrity of a country ravaged by nationalism at its peripheries without resorting to authoritarian regimes.

Another approach, that of Rogers Brubaker spoke rather about *nationalizing state* which would be an ethnically heterogeneous State but imposing a dominant identity to the minorities<sup>12</sup>. However, in the case of the post-Soviet countries it would be rather matter of struggles between elites (considered as national) than between nations<sup>13</sup>. For Octavian Safransky (quoted by Matei Cazacu and Nicolas Trifon) in the Republic of Moldova there is maybe even a reverse perspective: “the ethno-political conflict in Moldova is not concerning the emancipation of minorities nor their rights to participate in politics and to be fairly represented. In the heart of the ethno-political conflict lays the emancipation of the cultural majority from the former dominant minority. The majority are Romanian-speaking Moldovans, while the minority – the Russian-speaking colonial bureaucracy”<sup>14</sup>. For Camille Roux, the Republic of Moldova would therefore be an example of “State nation”, unlike the concept of nation state<sup>15</sup>, then for Magdalena Dembińska post-Soviet Moldova “lacks of glue” and “its citizens’ civic loyalty is ambiguous. Moldovan political identity overlaps on the one hand the Russian, on the other the Romanian, thus preventing the strengthening of the shared political community”<sup>16</sup>.

In the case of the Republic of Moldova another element is considered as important for the process of State consolidation, e.g. the emergence of the rule of law. In a recent study Florent Parmentier, specialist of the Republic of Moldova, defines it as “competitive process aimed at the creation of a regulated and consistent policy framework for the management of Public Affairs”<sup>17</sup>. Or the Soviet regime – and the actual Republic of Moldova belongs to its heritage – was rightly characterized by the absence of rule of law. As it was very brilliantly proved by Dominique Colas, during “dozens of years” law was reduced to “manipulative techniques combined to violent repression (...)”. The Communist logic led to a marginalization of the right to the benefit of the administrative management of offences to the Soviet law”. The Soviet Union was to a “party-State” in which no margin of initiative or individual freedom was given

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<sup>10</sup> F. Parmentier, “État, politique et culture en Moldavie...”, p. 159.

<sup>11</sup> M.-S. Darviche, W. Genieys, “Introduction...”, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> See: A. Wierzbicki, *Etniczność i narody w Europie i Azji Centralnej. Perspektywa teoretyczna i egzemplifikacyjna*, Warszawa, WDiNP UW, 2014, pp. 200-202.

<sup>13</sup> See: C. Zgureanu-Gurăgață, “Ce fel de discurs politic «naționalist» pentru Republica Moldova (1991-2005)?”, in: M. Heintz (ed.), *Stat slab, cetățenie incertă. Studii despre Republica Moldova*, București, Curtea Veche, 2007, p. 54-60. The author provides an interesting application of the model of Rogers Brubaker to the Republic of Moldova.

<sup>14</sup> See: M. Cazacu, N. Trifon, *Un État en quête de nation...*, p. 265. We also note the very evocative nature of the title of this book.

<sup>15</sup> C. Roux, “L’émergence d’identités nationales nouvelles. Le cas de la Moldavie et de la Transnistrie”, in: Y. Richard, A.-L. Sanguin (eds.), *L’Europe de l’Est quinze ans après la chute du mur*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 2004, p. 211.

<sup>16</sup> M. Dembińska, *Vivre ensemble dans la diversité culturelle. Europe centrale et orientale après 1989*, Rennes, PUR, 2012, p. 196, 199.

<sup>17</sup> F. Parmentier, *Les chemins de l’État de droit. La voie étroite des pays entre Europe et Russie*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2014, p. 12.

to citizens. This resulted in a “social rejection of the Law”<sup>18</sup>, which up to the present day creates an impressive lack of interest for the State and its functioning. This civic passivity, that we will also find a few lines later in the data collected on the ground, makes very difficult any desire of consolidation of the State and society.

## **Research**

In the current context of the Republic of Moldova there is a new variable: the European integration. Indeed, since 2007 the Republic of Moldova is a neighbouring country of the community. Subsequently the country was included in the program of the Eastern partnership which led on the signing of an agreement of association in June 2014. European integration is therefore one of the key elements of the contemporary evolution of the Republic of Moldova. Note that by “European integration” we mean any kind of political or economic rapprochement, without necessarily including an EU membership, even though a possible prospect of accession is already playing a significant role in Moldovan political discourse. Finally by “European Union” we mean not only the institutions and mechanisms of the EU, but also the attitude of its Member States.

It seems relevant to relate the variable of European integration with the process of State consolidation of the Republic of Moldova. Especially, our aim is to consider the expectations of the representatives of the Moldovan elite about the possible impact of European integration on the process of State consolidation of the Republic of Moldova. For this we conducted an investigation which consisted in interviews<sup>19</sup> with 20 Moldovan personalities from political, academic, journalistic and other areas. The choice of such a sample was responding to a desire of diversity and complementarity of approach. The interviews were organized in two stages: in March and September 2014, so prior to the elections scheduled for November 30 of the same year and after the annexation of Crimea by the Russia. The questions were both open-ended and close-ended<sup>20</sup>. The focused on the necessary changes for the State consolidation of the Republic of Moldova, on the image of the EU among respondents, then whether (0 – no impact, 5 – very considerable impact) and in what specific areas European integration could have an impact. Finally, respondents were invited to make a prognosis on the future of State consolidation of the Republic of Moldova in a horizon of a decade. The interviews were conducted in Romanian or Russian, according to the wish of the interviewee.

## **Internal needs**

A significant part of the interviewed people speaks of the need for further reforms to eradicate corruption, particularly within the elite and create a State of law. For the politician P2: *people would like that the law is respected. For now it is only for the masses, not the elites. No Member of Parliament, Minister or judge went to jail. There's only old uncle Ion that has made prison for stealing chickens.*

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<sup>18</sup> D. Colas, “Société civile, État, Nation”, in: D. Colas et alii (eds.), *L'Europe post-communiste*, Paris, PUF, 2002, pp. 64-65.

<sup>19</sup> F. Dieu, *Introduction à la méthode de la science politique*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2008, p. 102.

<sup>20</sup> Idem, p. 103.

Scientist U3 goes in the same direction: *we need to create a rule of law, which is very difficult after so many years. We must all work in accordance with the law, the law is above all and that no one is above the law. It is a first step. (...) In Romania we see politicians or businessmen who are put in prison. In our country trials of this kind do not exist. There are at most substitutes with doctors accused of 50 lei [3 euros] bribes or a teacher accused of something else. We need above all a justice reform.* For G1, president of an important institution of the Republic of Moldova, corruption undermines the very foundations of the State: *all the discussion about the fight against corruption is not enough if there is no real change. (...) A State cannot function if it doesn't have the confidence of its citizens.* A similar argument is underlined by the civil servant F2: *it is very important to see how is transmitted the message of the majority that governs the country and how it is explained to the citizens. But it can be explained only if it has facts and behaviours that confirm this.* For the politician P1, a change should primarily concern: *institutions guaranteeing the rule of law. It is the secret services which operate here under a system created during the Soviet period. We have therefore missed twenty years and it is for this reason that we are where we are.*

Scientific U4 perhaps best sums up the State of mind of a large part of the population: *I would like the citizens of the Republic of Moldova are not earning their salaries in envelopes, they pay taxes, and they have points of view that we are a State. Unfortunately very often we have very, very different points of view.* A first step according to U4 would be an: *adjustment of legislation to the European and international standards.* However, this is not enough because: *we have several laws passed, but the question concerning their application remains.*

For the interviewees, one of the ways to consolidate the State could be education, including elites and society. It is not to teach basic elements but rather to learn a new way of thinking. For the local politician L1: *there is a need of education for politicians of different levels, local and central, to try to find a common language in key situations for the country. (...) And it is impossible to find a compromise because the culture of looking for compromise is very little developed in the Republic of Moldova.* U2 scientist follows him: *we probably still need a period of training of the population, so that it can resist the manipulation. Even Europe is unable to make three steps forward without ours [officials] are two steps back.* U4 postulates an effort both on the mentality of the people and on that the academic system. In this context: *it is not enough to complain that an embargo has been imposed against a product. It is necessary to ask how to change the quality of this product to become competitive.* This cannot make abstraction of education in itself: *I would consider a consolidation of the standards of internal efforts for the fight against corruption and for a moral integrity and integrity in the broad sense, i.e. the payment of taxes, involvement in social life and education, the rejection of what is socially intolerable, so everything what we call "socially undesirable behaviours".*

One of the challenges of consolidation – as is appears from the responses – is the identity cleavage existing among the citizens of the Republic of Moldova. The proposed solutions put forward the need for practical efforts, more than to have an ideological debate on the notion of national identity. As noted the politician P3: *a State, a nation are not going to be built in a few years. It is useless to hope that all will declare themselves Moldovans and that we will then build a nation. (...) That is why we consider that the*

*identity problems should be abandoned in favour of practical, economic, social etc. What is detrimental to the positive developments should be left in the background. We should not discuss identity problems because this doesn't help too much. It is the same for Transnistria and Gagauzia. "Practical problems" also include the Romanian language which is still not fully spoken by the population. This issue, which looks to be a technical one, turns quickly into a political challenge. According to journalist A3: there is no problem concerning Russian-speaking people. They also want to be able to move freely and have a better standard of living. The problem comes from the way in which these people are manipulated by a part of the political elite, which presents all kinds of threats. Before the arrival of the Party of Communists to power in 2001 Russian-speakers were sending their children to schools with tuition in Romanian language, people made an effort to integrate. Now Russian-speaking media excepted, these people have no other source of information.*

The politician P4 confirms this analysis: *the problem is that in 22 years we have not had clear policy to motivate them [non-Romanians] or help them to learn Romanian. One who does not speak Romanian and has not made studies does not know where to go, there's no website that could help him. We should simply work with these people.* According to P4, the aim is not to eradicate the non-Romanians but to invite them – keeping their mother tongue – to make an effort of integration: *there are 30% of the society who speak Russian and these people will not disappear or evaporate. They must have an opportunity to use their language and at the same time the opportunity to learn Romanian. Struggles are conducted for symbols. We must then be very tolerant with regard to symbols.* P1 regrets that the question of Romanian may remain unresolved for a long time: *we missed the moment when in the early 1990s the mastery of the official language of the State became mandatory. There was a law, there was an authority dealing with the implementation of written Romanian language. Courses were organized. Russian-speaking citizens showed interest in learning the language. They accepted the fact that they needed to learn Romanian. Non-application of this law led to the actual situation, where it is very difficult to find a sense of respect for the Romanian language. But it is always possible to create situations that force people to learn the language.* P1 emphasizes the importance of media: *first of all we need to minimize the importance of Russian television channels. This can be done through the law, requiring channels that broadcast Russian to leave more space for the local production. Initially a minimum quota would be of the order of 30%, then up to 50%. (...) We must therefore replace the Russian product with a product of the Republic of Moldova, the latter available also for speakers of Russian. We are unable to totally prohibit the presence of the Russian language.*

Another challenge is the *economic development* which for scientist U1: *will be a factor of consolidation.* For the civil servant F1, this would have played a role of attraction on the separatist regions: *a consolidated state is a State which thinks about development, in the sense of support provided to every citizen. (...) But it is up to us to be an attractive example for those on the left bank of the Dniester River. (...) It is up to us to promote neither more nor less than the State called Republic of Moldova.* For U2, one of the possible paths could be the decentralization of the country: *it is clear that the administrative decentralization would have played a very important role in the consolidation of the State and this because*

*with decentralization people see on-site people, those who are involved. People see on the spot that they can do something. They would not wait, as during the Communist period, someone to tell them what to do. (...) When someone tells you what to do, you incur no responsibility, nor must suffer the consequences. You just know that you're an executant. If such decentralisation actually occurs in the Republic of Moldova, then probably the spirit of initiative would grow up. Finally, it is another scientific (U4) who offers a basic solution: I am absolutely convinced that any change begins at home and that no external factors can induce a change without effort, without a constant effort that would come from the inside. What is decisive is the own efforts.*

### **The European Union – a promised land?**

Among the population of the Republic of Moldova there is no clear attitude concerning the European integration. As summarized by F2: *unfortunately there are – both on the right and on the left – political forces who are rather thinking about the Customs Union [Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan], or even about a union with Romania. (...) From my point of view the Republic of Moldova should be a neutral State and engage in an intelligent policy. A small country should have an intelligent policy. A consolidated state is one who thinks about the development, in the sense of support provided to each citizen, and who is committed to European integration.*

Since 2009, the European integration has become the basic element of the policy pursued by successive Governments. This objective was already proposed in the 2000s by the Communist president Vladimir Voronin, although it was only after the “twitter revolution” of April 2009, which saw the arrival of the Europeanists to the power, the integration of the Republic of Moldova with the European Union has intensified and an association agreement was signed in June 2014. As explained very clearly by the journalist A1: *the Republic of Moldova found itself in the magnetic field of the European Union. Indeed, in 2007 the Republic of Moldova has become a neighbouring country of the EU, which exerts an influence on Chişinău, but at the same time the Republic of Moldova would be an ideal candidate for a “success story” that the European Union would need. In any case it is the European integration – understood in the wide sense – which could have – according to interviewees – a considerable impact on the degree of State consolidation of the Republic of Moldova. A1 grants the EU, and also the United States, with a crucial influence: while addressing our leaders [they] should more strongly promote a policy of compliance with the conditions. That is a policy of the carrot and the stick. There must be very concrete action plans and their implementation should not depend on the whims and the degree of corruption of our elected officials. This is called external governance. I'm cynical, but if you ask me what is the most effective method, then this is as I see it. U5 will even regret that it is only the impulse of the EU which obliges the political elites in the Republic of Moldova to deliver: with regret we can see that 90% of our reforms are passed under pressure from the EU. Inside there are few changes: at the level of attitudes, mechanisms of power with post-Communist elements, there is still the phenomenon of clientelism. Only the reforms imposed by the EU resulted in some modifications.*

Given the importance accorded by representatives of the elite of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union it would be interesting, before going further, to study the image they have of the latter. Indeed, respondents were among others invited to name three elements with which they associate the concept of European Union. In the majority of responses proposed associations have a very positive connotation and mostly refer to the area of law. The EU is perceived as a place where the principles of law are respected. Other associations mostly concern the standard of living and opportunities for personal development – features closely related to the respect for the law: *I associate the EU with the rule of law, human freedom and the possibility of progressing if you have a potential, if you know to work, if you are smart, if you have skills. Here such things are missing, maybe not completely but there is a relative lack. Here are therefore three elements: legality, freedom and the ability to develop yourself (U3). The first thing in the EU is of course the rule of law, which – I want to believe – works well in the European Union, even if probably there are some nuances. Then comes respect for rights, starting with the rights of ethnic minorities, the rights of everyone. The EU is also thinking about a higher standard of living, as well as a freedom to make broader choices (U2). In the European rights and duties are clearly defined. The EU means advanced social, economic and political values. It also means a more developed democracy and less corruption, less bureaucracy artificially created to ask for bribes. Another element that I associate with the EU is the well-being and also clearly defined rules (U5). For me the EU means legislation that works, which here is not clear at the moment. Secondly, in Europe the State cares about people. It is the human person, the citizen who is at the centre of attention. With us it is the opposite (F1). The EU means: jobs, standard of living, and existence of the order (P2). The EU means an open space for goods and citizens, clear principles of justice, democracy and finally our own security (P3). First of all the European Union means for me the functioning of the rule of law, laws that are applied equally for all citizens. Secondly, the EU means for me clear rules of the game and thirdly – but the list is not exhaustive – the well-being of citizens, the development of the middle class, who can emerge with a reform of the model of justice, with efficient use of European funds, with economic development etc. (P1). First I associate the European Union with education and culture, then with the dictatorship of the law, and I wish to have a such “dictatorship” with the law in the middle of the table, and then thirdly I associate the EU with the welfare, because we must realize that well-being in the EU is at a much higher level than elsewhere (L1). The European Union means a return home, to the civilization of which I am a part. Beyond the intellectual discourse there is a discourse for the population as a whole. In this context the European Union means to be free, to have freedom granted, to have opportunities for development, to progress for yourself, for the family and for the loved ones. Finally, EU means a return to a world which we have been repeatedly brutally yanked from in modern history (journalist A2). The EU is an area of security and democracy with income significantly more attractive than in the Republic of Moldova. The EU is a “civilized”, place where you can see beautiful things, a zone of stability and security. The attractiveness of the EU comes from its standard of living, of its economic, political and social security, as well as of its freedom of movement (A3).*

However some voices are reluctant to participate in the European integration. For the journalist A4: *the EU means a surplus of soft security, homosexuals (from our point of view it is a negative element)*

and a tower of Babel. Politicians P6 and P5 are even very critical. For P6: *the European Union is a neo-liberal project, a capitalist system, unrestrained capitalism, a rusted mechanism that squeaks, groans and is too complicated to operate in an efficient manner.* As for P5, it challenges first the notion of European values: *European values appeared in Europe by historical coincidence. If they had appeared in Africa, they would then be called African values or even Australian.* Then P5 offers a combination for the least surprising: *for me the European Union unfortunately means the International Monetary Fund [sic], double standards, the murder of the State existence of the Republic of Moldova. I associate these elements less with the EU than with the policy of the current leaders of the EU. I'm not against the EU as a union of States. The EU was created according to the model of the Soviet Union [sic]. But the current leaders, including [the Commissioner] Ștefan Füle and other Commissioners have a policy of double standards which categorically does not suit me.*

### **European integration – what impact on the State consolidation of the Republic of Moldova?**

As the Union European is often perceived as a haven of rule of law, European integration is also seen as a mean to eradicate corruption and the subjective system policy of the Republic of Moldova. In other words, European integration should enable – according to the responses of interviewees – to strengthen the integrity of the Moldovan State institutions: *integration will contribute to eradicating corruption, strengthening the State institutions and reinforce the State itself (A3). From a point of view of the institutions of the State it is sure that European integration will have a considerable impact on the fight against corruption (U5). Yes, European integration will strengthen the Republic of Moldova, including the fight against corruption and the building of the rule of law (P3). European integration could have an influence on the field of justice, because the European Union takes care of the functioning of justice, without derogations or corruption (U3). The most important is not how EU legislation is binding, but how it is coherent and based on principles (F2). P4: the country is of recent creation. We often changed direction. Due to this inconsistency in the model of development of the Republic of Moldova, its institutions remained weak. On the other hand, taking the European standards as a point of reference that requires a mode of operation, we could strengthen the institutions of the State.*

Integration European could also bring a solution for the national identity cleavage. For P4 European integration would be the “victory” of which the population of the Republic of Moldova would need to strengthen its national pride: *I think that European integration will contribute to resolve the identity dilemma. (...) The idea of being a Moldovan will finally have a concrete meaning. In a discussion with young people, I noticed that the lifting of visas will make them proud of their country and their passports. A common identity is created thanks to a powerful emotional confluence, a powerful emotion of belonging to a country, to a common cultural area. And these emotions appear when the country in question wins some victories. When a country has won no victory but records only failures for twenty years, it is very difficult to build this identity. As in ancient Greece where when during periods of peace, the cities invented sports to have a feeling of victory. The Republic of Moldova in its 23 years of existence had no sense of victory. She*

suffered only failures. So the EU, at least by its symbolism, counts a lot. It would allow the country's victory. And people begin to think and say that they come from Moldova. Before they said they came from Romania or Russia, they were a space somewhere between Romania and Ukraine. The Republic of Moldova becomes visible, it is the subject of articles in the international press, even if some of these articles share negative opinions about the country. In other words: the EU is the victory needed to build and consolidate the identity. For other people, further European integration is the only objective around which can articulate a compromise both at the national and the political level. For P2: *for the moment the European integration is the only possible aim so we focus upon him.*

In addition to the economic benefits, respondents also highlight the influence that could have European integration on the daily life of individuals and especially at the level of freedom of movement: *the benefits of integration of the Republic of Moldova with the EU are primarily concerning the possibility to move freely in Europe without having to apply for a visa, even if some might abuse to work in black (A3). Direct and immediate European integration benefits for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova are especially free movement encompassing also the opportunity to work abroad (P2). This opportunity will allow our citizens who work in the East to return and go elsewhere (P3). I believe that the EU is above all freedom of movement, so we will no longer wait in queues to get a visa. Without the visa I can go whenever I want (F2).* Other relativize the impact of European integration on the freedom of movement of persons: *the argument concerning the free movement of persons, especially to find a job, is not so important because all those who wanted to go abroad for work have already had this opportunity and are already working (A4, idea shared by P4).*

For F2: *the European space ensures the psychological and moral comfort.* It would also increase the possibility to obtain consumer goods, or services at lower cost: *If you look closely, some food products are cheaper there than at home, in the Republic of Moldova. It is the same for clothes. (...) The EU offers the possibility to make purchases and in addition to enjoy a more varied offer. There is also the opportunity to spend the summer holidays in EU.* Often the expectations for European integration crystallize on the basis of distrust of Russia and of the Soviet legacy. According to F1: *areas in which European integration can influence the degree of State consolidation of the Republic of Moldova are multiple. In each area we see that the situation is better in the EU: relations between people, the development of cultural values, spiritual area etc. In Russia, if you're not in the big cities but in small, the image is that of degradation. People have no future. In Europe however, it is not important whether it is a small town or a village or a big city, everything is better, everything grows.* F1 also underlines that in the EU – again unlike in Russia – *at the centre of attention is peace.*

Respondents were invited to estimate on a scale of 0 to 5, of the impact of European integration on the degree of State consolidation of the Republic of Moldova. The results give a very important role to the European integration and demonstrate the variety of expectations: *with regard to the impact of the EU, on a scale of 0 to 5 this impact is of the order of 5 (A1). Concerning the impact of integration on the degree of State consolidation I would give even note 5 (F2). For what is the influence of integration on the degree of State consolidation I think that it is at the level of 4 (F1). If people are supported for two, three years,*

during their entry into the European market, so I'm sure that the impact of European integration will be of the order of 4. If such a formula is not applied then this impact will only reach the level of 1 (L1). On a scale of 0 to 5, I would give even 3 (U2). I think we can estimate the impact of integration at the level of 4 on a scale of 0 to 5 (U3). In the case of the Republic of Moldova this impact is of the order of 4 (U5). European integration will have a strong influence (note: 5) on the degree of State consolidation of the Republic of Moldova (P1). I would give the score of 4 (U4).

However, the voices of P5 and P6 are very pessimistic. For P6, EU is a structure in crisis: *I would not mention any benefit resulting from integration with the European Union. (...) The EU is in economic, institutional, cultural, civilizational crisis. Therefore integration with a structure in crisis is not the best solution.* P6 also criticizes the possible loss of sovereignty by the Republic of Moldova: *the association with the EU will force the Republic of Moldova to accept a series of EU directives, while the Republic of Moldova has no influence on the development of these guidelines. (...) The country will therefore become a colony, which has transferred a part of its sovereignty to Brussels.* The European integration will not have any positive impact on the efficiency of Moldovan State institutions: *integration with the EU will not strengthen democracy in Republic of Moldova. It is the rule of law or the fight against corruption. The experience of recent years clearly demonstrated this. We have no rule of law and corruption is growing despite relations more and more in-depth with the EU. It seems that we are a "success story", but the principle of "more for more" turns into "more for less" or "more money for more of corruption" (P6). European integration in no way strengthens democracy, or the rule of law, or the fight against corruption. It has been shown more than once that one of the leaders of the ruling coalition participated in a cigarette smuggling. There cannot be economic development issue because prices are rising, wages do not increase, people lose their jobs and life is becoming more and more difficult (P5).*

### **In conclusion: what future?**

Invited to make a prognosis on the future of State consolidation of the Republic of Moldova in a horizon of a decade, the interviewees were far from any over-enthusiasm. For the majority of the respondents, the consolidation process can lead to a success but only if changes occur. Therefore, if things were to remain in the State, the perspective for consolidation would be rather uncertain. L1 remains quite sceptical: *I think that the chances of consolidation are quite reduced. People will remain between the EU and the Customs Union. There is a chance but only if we find a common language about employment in the Republic of Moldova. The first who will therefore open a production line and will employ people will be more credible. And it is only after the economic factor that will come the State consolidation itself. If Russia opens its market, I am convinced that a large portion of the people will turn away from the European Union.* For U4: *I would appreciate a change in the economic area. Very many are those who leave the Republic of Moldova due to the lack of jobs. (...) A change, it seems to me, would have brought back home people who for the last ten years have accumulated experience in European countries. I think that this is a crucial question, otherwise the Moldovan villages, which are a distinctive feature of this country, which is an agrarian one, will become deserted villages, so completely different ones than villages*

*in which I was born – with their culinary traditions, popular customs, but also with many, many children and schools full of children. (...) But we also need a political vision of another socio-economic situation of the country.*

State consolidation would occur at a triple condition: the evolution of the ruling elite, the pursuit of European integration and economic recovery. These arguments are found in responses: *EU is a cultural model, a model of civilizational values. The change in the Republic of Moldova will happen when the elite will accept this cultural model (G1). Consolidation could occur if the political class was more accountable to its electorate. (...) However, we cannot change our geographical location. On one side we are perhaps fortunate because we are on the border of the European Union and we see what is happening on the other side. (...) We also have the Eastern side with a neighbour or rather our neighbour's neighbour. For this reason, the Republic of Moldova has a chance to compare things. (...) The chances of consolidation are probably great, provided you have the will. It would be not so difficult to change or develop what is located here if reforms had been implemented in a logical manner (U2).* According to P1: *in the future, the most important factor will be the political one. Everything depends on the parties that are going to lead the Republic of Moldova. (...) We must therefore keep a certain stability regarding our goals. Among them is the accession to the European Union. (...) I believe that with time even the citizens of Transnistria will realize the benefits of a rapprochement with the European Union and this will also bring more stability and promote the consolidation of the State (P1). I hope that there will be cohesion even in the political arena. It is important that the political class has this cohesion as it will strengthen the State. As I said, each goes in his direction with corruption. The State therefore becomes very febrile, is not acting as it should and the people have no confidence in themselves. Similarly, the State does not provide what he should, i.e. freedom, righteousness, prosperity etc. (U3).*

At the end it is perhaps F1 who gives the most pertinent forecast, although with irony. He focuses on the slow and evolving nature of the process of State consolidation of the Republic of Moldova – process in which each small step is not to neglect: *concerning the future I think that it is mainly young people who have interest in seeing a rapprochement with Europe. The number of supporters of the Federation of Russia is smaller and 90% of them are retirees. It is therefore a natural process: today these people are alive, tomorrow not. So, I think that without efforts within 10 years there will be a change in the number of people who are in favour of Europe. On the other hand, whether we like it or not, the situation has improved. New routes have emerged, which is a powerful argument. Whether we like it or not, the welfare of the people has also increased. At the same time in the media we have pessimistic information, because journalists think only about broadcasting news with scandals. We also have positive examples. Our citizens have returned from Europe and have opened their own businesses, which have created development opportunities. A positive information provides each day changes in the attitude of the people. I note that an information work has been undertaken by the State since 2013. It is clear that we have accumulated a delay, but better late than never. Today we are witnessing a development of all types of relations between enterprises, physical and legal persons, the institutions of the State, etc. In parallel improves the financial situation. Ordinary citizens will be happy. Everyone will have bread, meat, peace, a roof above his head, a*

*family at his side, relatives who have not gone to work in Moscow. And then with a quiet soul this citizen will support all the policies of the State, if he sees that these policies are in favour of him. Again, it is the human person who should be at the centre of attention. We need to convince people with practical results and not with speeches on values. The person should see what the State has done for it. I am convinced that we are going in the right direction.*