The sixth meeting of the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Association Committee (PAC) was held in Chisinau on 5 April 2018 and was co-chaired by Andi Cristea, on behalf of the European Parliament, and Eugen Carpov, on behalf of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter ‘Moldova’).

The Parliamentary Association Committee, having considered the state of play of EU-Moldova relations and of implementation of the Association Agreement, agreed on the following final statement and recommendations.

The Parliamentary Association Committee:

On EU-Moldova relations and the implementation of the AA/DCFTA

1. Welcomes the Council conclusions on the Republic of Moldova adopted on 26 February 2018; encourages the Moldovan institutions to work cooperatively and focus on tangible reforms which aim to bring about concrete improvements in Moldovan citizens’ lives, including increased prosperity and strengthening the rule of law; stresses the need to continue to focus on the implementation of the Association Agreement / Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (AA/DCFTA) in all areas in order to realise the full potential of the agreement, inter alia through the 13 key priorities set out in the 2017-2019 Association Agenda adopted in August 2017; welcomes the recent creation of the post of Vice Prime-Minister in charge of European integration, and expresses its expectations as to a positive impact on the coordination of the European agenda;

2. Expresses its satisfaction at the continually increasing volume of trade between the EU and Moldova, as a result of the implementation of the DCFTA; encourages further progress in areas such as the customs code, the protection of intellectual property rights including geographical indications, and improvement of sanitary and phytosanitary standards;

3. Commends the role played by Moldovan civil society in fostering participation in the political debate, and calls on the Moldovan authorities to protect and strengthen
the activism of Moldovan civil society by providing a sound legal framework and avoiding unnecessary and intrusive regulations or investigations liable to hamper the work of some organisations; reaffirms that Moldovan civil society has a key role to play in monitoring the implementation of the Association Agreement and of the reform agenda; encourages the Government and Parliament to continue cooperation with the EU-Moldova Civil Society Platform, which was set up within the framework of the Association Agreement for this purpose; welcomes the adoption of the Strategy on Development of Civil Society adopted on 23 March 2018 by the Moldovan Parliament; reiterates that the engagement with civil society should be systematic and continuous, and calls for the application of best practice as implemented by other Eastern Partnership countries in this area;

4. Commends the positive contribution made by Moldova to the Eastern partnership summit of 24 November 2017; takes the view that additional opportunities to deepen the relations between the EU and those partners that have made substantial progress in implementing AA/DCFTA-related reforms should be worked out, in order to provide sustained momentum in the relationship, in line with the ‘EaP+’ model advocated by the European Parliament; welcomes in this respect the establishment of the Euronest working group on Association Agreements, the Como communiqué by the parliaments of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, and the co-organised conference on ‘Eastern Partnership and current security challenges’, held in Chisinau on 2 March 2018;

5. Reiterates that pursuant to Article 49 of the TEU, Moldova – like any other European state – has a European perspective and may apply to become a member of the European Union provided it adheres to the principles of democracy and respects fundamental freedoms and minority rights and the rule of law; underlines that the European perspective of Moldova must be rooted first and foremost in an adherence to the values which underpin the EU;

6. Highlights that Moldova’s deepening relationship with the EU does not preclude it from maintaining and pursuing closer political and economic relations with third countries insofar as they respect the mutually agreed values of democracy, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; considers that Moldova’s opening to new markets will render its economy more competitive, increase its attractiveness for investment and result in higher purchasing power for its citizens;
7. Welcomes the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group’s decision to maintain Moldova as a priority country for cooperation in 2018, as a sign of the strategic importance of the Parliament of Moldova;

*On the upcoming elections and the reform process in Moldova*

8. Calls on all stakeholders to ensure that the upcoming parliamentary elections comply with international obligations and standards for democratic elections and take into consideration the recommendations of the previous international election observation missions; insists in particular on the importance of the development of a truly multi-party system; regrets that the new electoral law did not address some key recommendations of the joint opinion of the Venice Commission/OSCE/ODIHR of 19 June 2017, while respecting the principle of the sovereign right of the state to choose the electoral system; takes note of the new opinion and recommendations of the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR on the electoral system in the Republic of Moldova of 16 March 2018; welcomes the opinion of the Venice Commission/OSCE/ODIHR of 11 December 2017 on the funding of political parties, and encourages the Moldovan authorities to follow the suggestions contained therein;

9. Welcomes the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding on Macrofinancial Assistance, the Loan Facility Agreement and the Grant Agreement on 24 November 2017, and their ratification by the Moldovan Parliament on 15 December 2017; recalls the Joint Statement by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission (Annex II) on the decision to provide macrofinancial assistance, which defined respect for effective democratic mechanisms, including a multi-party parliamentary system, the rule of law and respect for human rights as preconditions for granting macrofinancial assistance; calls on the Moldovan authorities to take the necessary steps in this respect in order to ensure the disbursement of this assistance;

10. Underlines the importance of living up to the high expectations of the citizens of Moldova and the EU with respect to the eradication of corruption, and reiterates that depoliticised state institutions and eradication of corruption at all levels are required for the reform process to have credibility in the eyes of the public; takes notes of the Commission’s First Report under the Visa Suspension Mechanism from December 2017, which finds that the implementation of the fight against corruption (in particular high-level corruption) and money laundering is ‘seriously lagging behind’ and points to the attempts to undermine the anti-corruption framework, the limitations in the scope of action of the asset recovery office and the delays in
implementation of the Law on National Integrity Authorities, as well as in the alignment of the anti-money laundering legislation with the 4th EU Anti-Money Laundering Directive; calls on all relevant stakeholders to take the necessary steps before the parliamentary elections in order to address these concerns;

11. Underlines, in addition, that the adoption of a code of conduct for MPs by the Moldovan Parliament would represent an important sign from all political parties that they recognise the need to tackle corruption in order to restore public trust and confidence in the Parliament;

12. Stresses, furthermore, the importance of an impartial and well-functioning judiciary; recalls that the EU has withdrawn its budget support owing to the lack of progress on judicial reform; encourages the authorities to ensure that the new justice strategy for 2018-2020 draws on the lessons of the previous strategy, addresses the existing shortcomings and is designed in a transparent way, with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including from civil society; underlines in particular the need to enhance transparency and impartiality in the appointment of judges and prosecutors;

13. Recalls the citizens’ high expectations regarding the judicial proceedings related to banking fraud, as well as the need to bring all those responsible to justice; expresses, therefore, its disappointment at the lack of progress in the prosecution of cases following the publication of the results of the Kroll investigation; stresses that all trials should be held in line with international standards and should be transparent;

14. Welcomes the reform of the central public administration, and recalls the importance of an accountable, transparent and merit-based civil service;

15. Recalls the importance of ensuring media pluralism, including a plurality of TV channels, protection of independent media and freedom of expression, and of reforming the national broadcaster; in this respect, welcomes the progress made towards the adoption of a new audiovisual code which would enhance transparency and competition in this sector and transpose the 2010 EU Media Services Directive;

16. Calls for continued efforts in the strengthening of independent banking supervision, improvement of transparency in ownership and management, and stabilisation of the banking sector, so as to increase confidence in the Moldovan
financial sector and avoid the repetition of the Moldovan 2014 bank scandal and of money-laundering cases;

17. Calls on the Moldovan Government to reform the energy sector in order to increase transparency in costs and contracts in the sector, and to improve energy independence and efficiency, particularly by strengthening the independence of the energy regulator, increasing energy interconnections with the EU, and diversifying energy sources, including renewable energy and a reduction in dependence on fossil fuels.