



TEXTS ADOPTED

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Annual implementing report on the EU association agreement with the Republic of Moldova

European Parliament resolution of 19 May 2022 on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with the Republic of Moldova (2021/2237(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 8 and to Title V, notably Articles 21, 22, 36 and 37, of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), as well as to Part Five of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter ‘Moldova’), of the other part (AA), which includes a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) and fully entered into force on 1 July 2016,
- having regard to the establishment of a visa-free regime for citizens of Moldova in March 2014, as a result of the amendments to Council Regulation No 539/2001¹ made by the European Parliament and the Council,
- having regard to its recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the Eastern Partnership, in the run-up to the June 2020 Summit,
- having regard to the Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS) joint staff working document on the Association Implementation Report on the Republic of Moldova of 13 October 2021 (SWD(2021)0295),
- having regard to the outcome of the sixth Association Council meeting between the EU and Moldova of 28 October 2021,
- having regard to the Joint Declarations of the Eastern Partnership Summits, most recently that of 15 December 2021 in Brussels,

¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 of 15 March 2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (OJ L 81, 21.3.2001, p. 1).

- having regard to the Commission and EEAS joint staff working document entitled ‘Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities’ of 2 July 2021 (SWD(2021)0186),
- having regard to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on Establishing Enhanced Cooperation on European Integration – the ‘Association Trio’, signed on 17 May 2021,
- having regard to the Joint Statement issued by the Heads of State/Government of Association Trio – Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine following the 6th Eastern Partnership Summit on 15 December 2021,
- having regard to Moldova’s application to join the European Union, submitted on 3 March 2022,
- having regard to the letter of the Prime Minister of Moldova to the President of the European Parliament, received on 16 March 2022, requesting increased Macro-Financial Assistance to Moldova,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council on the Republic of Moldova of 26 February 2018,
- having regard to the resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 26 January 2021 entitled ‘Judges in Poland and in the Republic of Moldova must remain independent’¹,
- having regard to the opinions and recommendations of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) and of the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission, in particular of 15 March 2018 on electoral reform in Moldova, of 24 June 2019, on the constitutional situation with particular reference to the possibility of dissolving parliament, of 14 October 2019 on the draft law on the reform of the Supreme Court of Justice and the Prosecutor’s Office, and of 13 December 2021 on the amendments of 24 August 2021 to the law on the prosecution service,
- having regard to the legal analysis on the Law on Amendment of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova, presented by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on 14 January 2022,
- having regard to the outcome of the 12th EU-Moldova Human Rights Dialogue held on 13 September 2021 by videoconference,
- having regard to the recommendations by and activities of the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Association Committee, the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, the EU-Moldova Civil Society Platform and other representatives of civil society in Moldova,

¹ Resolution 2359 (2021).

- having regard to the National Regional Development Strategy (SNDR) for 2022-2028 adopted by the Government of Moldova,
 - having regard to the new Government Action Plan for 2020-2023,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the European Parliament election observation mission to the early parliamentary elections of 11 July 2021 in Moldova, integrated in the international election observation mission led by the OSCE/ODIHR,
 - having regard to the statement by the High Representative Josep Borrell and Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi on the parliamentary elections, issued on 12 July 2021,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions relating to Moldova, in particular the previous resolution on the implementation of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement of 20 October 2020¹, and those of 5 July 2018 on the political crisis in Moldova following the invalidation of the mayoral elections in Chişinău², of 4 July 2017 on providing macro-financial assistance to the Republic of Moldova³, and of 21 January 2016 on Association Agreements / Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine⁴,
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure, as well as Article 1(1)(e) of, and Annex 3 to, the decision of the Conference of Presidents of 12 December 2002 on the procedure for granting authorisation to draw up own-initiative reports,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on International Trade,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A9-0143/2022),
- A. whereas the unprovoked, unjustified and illegal Russian war against Ukraine declared on 24 February 2022 has disproportionately affected Moldova as a neighbouring state, which received over 360 000 refugees from Ukraine in two weeks, of whom over 100 000 have stayed in the country, putting its resources under an enormous strain;
- B. whereas there have been concerns of potential false flag operations in Moldova since the beginning of Russia's war against Ukraine;
- C. whereas on 22 April 2022, Major General Rustam Minnekayev, deputy commander of Russia's central military district, stated that one of the goals of Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine is to create a land corridor to the Transnistrian region; whereas Major General Minnekayev also falsely claimed that acts of oppression of the Russian-speaking population had been observed in Transnistria;
- D. whereas the Eastern Partnership (EaP) summit acknowledged the European aspirations and the European choice of the partners concerned and encouraged the full implementation of the AAs and their DCFTAs;

¹ OJ C 404, 6.10.2021, p. 136.

² OJ C 118, 8.4.2020, p. 109.

³ OJ C 334, 19.9.2018, p. 199.

⁴ OJ C 11, 12.1.2018, p. 82.

- E. whereas after a period of political instability and democratic backsliding Maia Sandu won the presidential election with 57,75 % of the vote on 15 November 2020 and the Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS) received 52,8 % of the vote and won 63 of the 101 seats in the Parliament of Moldova in the early parliamentary elections on 11 July 2021, thereby demonstrating the strong commitment of the people of Moldova to democracy, the rule of law and the European future of their country and giving the PAS a strong mandate for an ambitious programme of reforms;
- F. whereas the AA/DCFTA is based on the common values on which the EU is built – namely democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law – and these values also lie at the heart of political association and economic integration as envisaged in the AA/DCFTA Agreement;
- G. whereas according to recent opinion polls, 71,6 % of the citizens of Moldova support the objective of their country's European integration;
- H. whereas participants in the 11th meeting of the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Association Committee (PAC) held on 6 and 7 April 2022 took note of the resolve of Moldova's President, government and parliamentary majority to implement the EU-Moldova Association Agenda thoroughly, thus bringing tangible improvements to Moldovan citizens' lives;
- I. whereas the concrete outcomes of the sixth EU-Moldova Association Council held on 28 October 2021 give new impetus for closer and enhanced cooperation on key areas;
- J. whereas the Economic Recovery Plan for Moldova was proposed as part of the renewed agenda for recovery, resilience and reform for the EaP countries, underpinned by an Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) for post-COVID-19 socio-economic recovery and long-term resilience, under the motto 'build back better'; whereas the EIP flagship initiatives for Moldova envisage investments in energy efficiency, infrastructure and connectivity, but not in the clean energy transition;
- K. whereas the current emergency COVID-19 EU Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) programme for Moldova has been completed, with the first tranche of EUR 50 million disbursed in November 2020 and a second EUR 50 million instalment on 7 October 2021, following significant progress made in fulfilling the policy conditions of the Memorandum of Understanding;
- L. whereas Moldova ranks 105th out of 180 countries in the 2021 Corruption Perception Index (up from 115th in 2020) and, despite the changes in government, the lack of significant improvements in the fight against corruption is of great concern, as for years corruption has seriously affected the state apparatus, stunted economic growth and modernisation, and undermined democracy;
- M. whereas the new government still needs to tackle the critical deficiencies in the justice sector and the rule of law that continue to hamper democratic governance in Moldova;
- N. whereas Moldova ranks 89th out of 180 countries in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index (up by two places compared to the previous year) and concerns remain over the concentration of media ownership, the monopolisation of the advertising market, the

lack of editorial independence, and the control that economic and political groups have over media institutions;

- O. whereas civil society organisations continue to call for increased transparency in decision-making in Parliament and other public authorities, reiterating their proposals submitted in 2016 and 2017 regarding the legislative framework on access to information;
- P. whereas cooperation between public authorities and civil society remains sporadic and largely not institutionalised;
- Q. whereas in its latest implementation report, the Commission identified key problems in relation to the right to access to healthcare and information of public interest, the right to work and a decent life, freedom of movement and freedom of expression;
- R. whereas women continue to face gender inequality and their involvement in decision-making is limited owing to gender stereotypes and norms;
- S. whereas the legal framework no longer prohibits access to certain professions, yet its implementation remains slow and women continue to face de facto obstacles, such as a lack of access to affordable care services;
- T. whereas hate speech remains an issue of concern and is mainly targeted at women and LGBTI persons;
- U. whereas in its implementation report, the Commission points to serious issues such as infant mortality, child labour, including links to trafficking and sexual exploitation, the particular situation of Roma children and children left behind by their parents, the stagnating number of babies and children with disabilities in institutional care facilities, and the insufficient quality of social services to support families in vulnerable situations;
- V. whereas Moldova imports around 80 % of its energy, and wind, solar and small hydro only account for around 1 % of Moldova's energy mix;
- W. whereas biomass is Moldova's only significant domestic energy source, contributing 19 % of the total energy supply;
- X. whereas under the Paris Agreement, Moldova is committed to reducing emissions by 70 % in 2030 compared to 1990;

Common values and general principles

1. Welcomes the historic results of the presidential election in 2020 and the parliamentary elections in 2021, whereby the people of Moldova gave an overwhelming majority to pro-reform and pro-European political forces, which are now fully responsible for the state; encourages the EU institutions and the political leadership of Moldova to seize this unique opportunity to work together for the implementation of long-overdue reforms and to advance Moldova's European integration based on the shared values of democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law;

2. Welcomes Moldova's submission of its application to join the EU on 3 March 2022, confirming its chosen European path; notes that this step further underscores the need for an intensified high-level political dialogue with the Moldovan authorities in order to achieve tangible and sustainable progress in the implementation of the key reforms; calls for the EU institutions to grant EU candidate status to Moldova, along with Ukraine and Georgia, in line with Article 49 TEU and on the basis of merit, and, in the meantime, to continue working towards its integration into the EU single market; calls on the Commission and the EEAS to further increase their engagement with their Moldovan counterparts and to maximise their political, technical and financial support to Moldova during this crucial time in order to give further impetus to progress and to ensure adequate absorption capacity for EU assistance; stresses the need to look into ways to consolidate and enhance the capacity of Moldovan public institutions in this regard, including a joint EU-Moldova project to set up a higher-education institution for the training of human resources for Moldovan public administration, ensuring maximum transparency of the selection and promotion procedure and providing EU assistance for the necessary top-ups of the salaries of civil servants in Moldova's government working in key areas of European integration reforms;
3. Points out that the European Union should be more strategic in its support and calls for the establishment, at the level of the Commission, of a Support Group for the Republic of Moldova based on the model of the Support Group for Ukraine (SGUA), as envisaged in the SGUA's original mandate; underlines that such a group could play a pivotal role in better streamlining EU financial and technical support, and providing multifaceted assistance to the Moldovan authorities in advancing reforms in the key areas of justice, the fight against corruption and public administration, implementing the EIPs for EaP countries and the Economic Recovery Plan for Moldova, as well as assisting Moldova in preparing for future accession negotiations;
4. Calls on the Commission to assist Moldova in preparing a credible pre-accession strategy for EU membership; reiterates its call for the Commission to adopt regular annual comprehensive reports assessing the implementation of reforms on the basis of clear benchmarks and using the same methodology as applied to the Western Balkan countries;
5. Stresses that the applications for EU membership of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia have opened a new chapter in their European integration, which should be characterised by reinforced efforts to implement the relevant AAs/DCFTAs and a more strategic EU approach to supporting these countries;
6. Welcomes the results of the sixth EaP summit held on 15 December 2021, which reaffirmed the significant achievements of cooperation in this format and charted an ambitious course for future cooperation based on shared values and focusing on recovery, resilience and reform;
7. Welcomes the fact that the summit acknowledged the initiative by Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine to enhance their cooperation as the three associated partners of the EU ('Associated Trio') and their European aspirations and European choice; encourages the three countries to work together towards their stated goal of EU membership by further advancing the reform agenda and exchanging best practices on good governance and the implementation of AAs/DCFTAs as the basis for merit-based future accession to the EU; calls on the Commission to assess Moldova's EU accession application and, in the

meantime, to respond to the interest of the associated countries in deepening sectoral cooperation with the EU in areas of mutual interest, while maintaining the principle of inclusivity;

8. Welcomes Moldova's constructive contribution to cooperation within the EaP, especially within the framework of the associated countries, and expresses hope that the statements on the country's ambitious agenda and sectoral integration in transport, energy and other fields will become concrete decisions and actions, from the side of both the Moldovan authorities and the Union;
9. Calls for the EU institutions to analyse the possibility of including Moldova as an observer in the proceedings of the committees established pursuant to Article 291 TFEU and Regulation (EU) No 182/2011¹, as well as in the meetings of the Council working groups and committees, in order to show the EU's commitment to further integration and to strengthening the countries' reform orientation and administrative know-how;
10. Recognises that the war in Ukraine has disproportionately affected Moldova's economy as a result of lost import and export opportunities, higher transportation costs, rapidly increasing energy prices and the need to deal with a critical humanitarian situation owing to the large numbers of refugees arriving from Ukraine; praises the Moldovan people and state institutions for their extraordinary engagement in dealing with the high number of refugees from Ukraine entering the country, which has resulted in Moldova being the country with the highest number of refugees from Ukraine per capita; stresses that this means that Moldova's needs have also dramatically risen in terms of economic support, including Macro-Financial Assistance; calls for the EU and other international partners of Moldova to urgently review their policies accordingly and to increase their support for the country in order to stabilise its socio-economic situation and ensure its continued development;
11. Welcomes the decisive action by the EU and its Member States as 'Team Europe' in mitigating the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through vaccine donations and financial support; calls on the EEAS to assist the Moldovan authorities, through the East StratCom Task Force and the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova, in combating misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines and fostering a social dialogue with the aim of reaching the target of vaccinating a minimum of 70 % of the population;
12. Stresses that the Economic Recovery Plan for the Republic of Moldova, worth up to EUR 600 million, is a key element in Moldova's recovery, which presents a unique opportunity to accelerate structural reforms, restructure the economy, fight poverty and social inequalities, boost the green and digital transformation and prepare the country for other future challenges; welcomes the first disbursement of a EUR 36,4 million grant for Moldova, as part of the Economic Recovery Package, to continue supporting police reform and the country's fight against COVID-19;

¹ Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 February 2011 laying down the rules and general principles concerning mechanisms for control by Member States of the Commission's exercise of implementing powers (OJ L 55, 28.2.2011, p. 13).

13. Welcomes Moldova's new economic reform programme, approved by the International Monetary Fund in December 2021, opening the way for the Commission's new proposal for a MFA package for Moldova worth up to EUR 150 million; welcomes the rapid adoption of the new MFA by Parliament and the Council; underlines the crucial importance of strict conditionality primarily linked to democratic reforms rather than economic factors, which also applies to all other EU funding to its partners; calls on the Commission to ensure that technical assistance is available to the Moldovan authorities in adequately implementing the agreed reforms in the context of MFA;

Reforms and institutional framework

14. Welcomes the unprecedented ambitious reform agenda of the government of Natalia Gavriluța and the initial progress already achieved in its implementation, in particular on the fight against corruption, growing transparency in public governance, the advancement of reforms in the field of the rule of law and digitalisation, improving the living standards of the most vulnerable population groups and improving the business climate in the country; reiterates that sufficient progress in implementing agreed reforms is a key condition for continued EU financial support and the application of the 'more for more' principle;
15. Strongly encourages the Government of Moldova to continue its work to irreversibly align the country with the European Union; urges both the authorities and the opposition to work together constructively towards transforming their country into a functioning state able to offer opportunities to its citizens and bring about improvements in all areas for which it is responsible, as this will have a positive impact on living standards in Moldova and in persuading Moldovans living abroad to return to their homeland;
16. Stresses that the high expectations of the people of Moldova need to be fulfilled by making a tangible improvement in their livelihoods, restoring their trust in state institutions, and fighting corruption and oligarchic structures;
17. Notes that while the presidential and the early parliamentary elections were well managed and competitive, the election campaign was divisive and conducted in a negative way, involving intolerant rhetoric and personal attacks; underlines that the remaining shortcomings need to be addressed by implementing the recommendations of the Council of Europe Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR, including enhancing the electoral legal framework in line with OSCE commitments and other international standards, promptly and thoroughly investigating credible allegations of vote-buying and the illegal inducement of voters, tackling the misuse of state resources, enhancing the transparency and accountability of campaign finance, more strictly enforcing the existing provisions of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services on impartial coverage during campaigns, and providing better guarantees to ensure that courts enjoy freedom from political pressures and remain fully impartial in the handling of election-related cases; urges the Moldovan Government to put in place all the measures necessary to ensure that the citizens of Moldova living outside the country can participate in elections in an inclusive, transparent and fair way, free from foreign interference;

Energy security and resilience

18. Welcomes the Commission's decision to provide Moldova with EUR 60 million through a new budget support programme in order to deal with a gas supply crisis

artificially created by Gazprom and to mitigate the impact of the rising prices on the most vulnerable people; welcomes the efforts of Poland, Romania and Ukraine, among others, to swiftly provide alternative gas supplies; points out that energy is the most important resource for Russia's budget, military and social programmes, and that Gazprom is used as a tool in advancing the Kremlin's economic and geopolitical interests abroad; welcomes the fact that, as a complement to the assistance already provided by the EU in the context of the energy crisis, the EU Delegation in Chişinău has mobilised EUR 5 million to provide support to the vulnerable groups most affected by the rise in energy prices; recognises, nevertheless, that more substantial support is needed in view of the continuously rising energy prices;

19. Notes that Russia's war against Ukraine and its use of energy resources as a weapon further underscores the geostrategic importance of undertaking reforms in the energy sector, which would eliminate reliance on Russian gas and boost the diversification of energy supplies and routes, building long-term resilience through a transition to renewable energy sources and investing in upgrading existing and creating new infrastructure and energy efficiency, including in the energy production, transport and household sectors, and thereby improving connectivity while ensuring environmental sustainability; notes that this could also help to build resilience against any potential efforts by third parties to use energy as a geopolitical lever;
20. Stresses the inadmissibility of the weaponisation of the gas supply from Russia in order to put political pressure on the Government of Moldova to change its geopolitical orientation and refrain from living up to the legitimate desires of the Moldovan electorate; urges the Commission and the EEAS to include Moldova in the EU plans to seek energy supply independence from Russia and to increase EU financial and technical support to Moldova, which is necessary to ensure its resilience against such external interference and reduce its heavy dependence on Russian energy; asks the EU to show stronger energy solidarity with Moldova, in accordance with the AA, by increasing energy infrastructure interlinkages between the EU and the countries in the region; underscores the importance of implementing without delay all necessary investments and the maintenance of the European energy infrastructure so that EU Member States' storage facilities and interconnectors can enable gas transmission on a sufficient scale from the EU to partner countries; calls on the Moldovan authorities, in the long-term, to maintain the country's commitment as a member of the Energy Community to implementing the EU's Third Energy Package, in particular the unbundling of gas and electricity transmission and distribution;
21. Underlines the need to increase power generation capacity in Moldova, which is currently 80 % reliant on electricity produced in the Transnistria region; welcomes the successful synchronisation of the electricity grids of Moldova and Ukraine with the Continental European Grid on 16 March 2022, which will help to ensure their stability and security of supply; commends the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity (ENTSO-E) on its work in achieving this milestone under extraordinary circumstances; requests that the Commission continue to support Moldova's and Ukraine's integration with the European continental power grid and urgently set up a dedicated structure within its administration for this purpose; welcomes the steps taken to interconnect the electricity system of Moldova with the EU via Romania; calls on all the authorities to fulfil the objective of connecting Moldova with Romania's power grid by 2024 with the support of the EU; invites the Commission to include Moldova in the stress tests conducted for the internal energy market; notes

that supporting and promoting EU enhanced cooperation with associated countries in the EaP in these sectors will also create economic growth and strengthen the energy resilience of the region;

22. Welcomes the launch of the EU-Moldova High-Level Dialogue on Energy in the context of the emergency situation in Moldova's gas sector; encourages the Commission to consider launching similar high-level dialogues with the EU to strengthen cooperation in other fields, such as justice or the climate/the Green Deal, which would contribute to reaching objectives within the AA/DCFTA;
23. Calls for Moldova and the EU to improve the connectivity of Moldova within the Black Sea basin and the Carpathian region, to advance work on the Moldovan sections of the extended Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) for EaP countries, to support the railway sector reforms and to explore possibilities, together with Member States and international financial institutions, for upgrading EU-Moldova rail connections, while ensuring environmental sustainability; encourages Moldova to make progress in implementing the relevant acquis, and calls for increased cooperation and the gradual integration of Moldova into the EU transport market and Transport Community;
24. Invites the EU to provide an investment planning platform for Moldova to implement a large-scale infrastructure connectivity agenda, in particular by increasing Moldova's absorption capacity and providing the necessary technical assistance, as done for the Western Balkan countries under the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF), a capacity assistance platform administered by the Commission;
25. Welcomes and supports the interest of Moldova in advancing cooperation with the EU in the area of digitalisation and telecommunications; urges the EU and Moldova to mutually abolish roaming tariffs between Moldova and the EU;
26. Welcomes the efforts and continuing progress made by the Moldovan authorities towards further improving Moldova's safety oversight system and implementing international aviation safety standards, which has resulted in the removal of all air carriers certified in Moldova from the EU Air Safety List, and calls on the Moldovan authorities to ensure the implementation of the EU-Moldova Common Aviation Area Agreement;

Cooperation in the field of common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and progress on resolving the Transnistria conflict

27. Welcomes the agreement between the EU and Moldova on launching a High-Level Political and Security Dialogue and the renewed engagement on security and CSDP through bilateral political staff-to-staff consultations; encourages the EEAS and Moldova to make full use of these platforms in order to advance cooperation on matters such as, but not limited to, combating hybrid threats, enhancing resilience, strengthening cybersecurity and the protection of critical infrastructure, and enhancing strategic communication; invites Moldova to continue aligning its positions with those of CFSP and to continue and enhance its contribution to common security and defence policy (CSDP) and its missions; encourages the EU and Moldova to identify ways to expand this cooperation, in particular given the volatile security situation in the Eastern neighbourhood;

28. Expresses serious concern about the recent developments on the territory of the Transnistrian region and condemns them as dangerous acts of provocation undertaken in a highly volatile security situation; calls for calm in order to preserve the security and well-being of the people living on both sides of the Nistru river and in the neighbouring countries; welcomes, in this regard, the calm and restrained reaction of the authorities in Chişinău;
29. Rejects and expresses concern over the 3 March 2022 statement of the authorities in the occupied Transnistria region of Moldova, announcing an end to the settlement process and issuing a renewed call for the recognition of the so-called independence of Transnistria; reiterates its support for a comprehensive and peaceful settlement of the Transnistria conflict through the 5+2 negotiation process, based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova, within its internationally recognised borders, with a special status for the Transnistrian region within a viable Moldovan state; underlines that any resolution to the Transnistrian issue must respect Moldova's sovereign right to choose its own defence and foreign policy orientation; supports efforts to extend the benefits of the DCFTA and the visa-free regime to the Transnistrian region, which would enable significant growth in mobility and trade with the region;
30. Notes that the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine plays a very important role in harmonising border management and customs regimes with that of the Union, also with regard to fighting organised crime and smuggling and contributing to the peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian issue through confidence-building measures and as a monitoring presence at the Transnistrian segment of the Moldova-Ukraine border; encourages the Moldovan Government to continue promoting an environment favourable to the settlement of conflicts and supporting activities that increase confidence and people-to-people contacts across conflict-divided communities; believes that a constructive conclusion to the Transnistrian issue will bring stability and prosperity not only to Moldova, but also to the wider area;
31. Calls on Moldova, the Russian Federation, the EU Member States and other international partners to cooperate on the total removal and destruction of about 20 000 tonnes of old Soviet-era ammunition stored at the Cobasna ammunition depot, which represents a grave danger for the security of people and the environment on both banks of the Dniester river, given that it is well past its expiry date; expresses its concern over the numerous military exercises conducted by the Russian military forces in Transnistria and calls on the Russian Federation to completely and unconditionally withdraw its military forces and armaments from the Transnistria region in an orderly manner, in accordance with the repeated requests of the Moldovan authorities and with respect for Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity;
32. Expresses its concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in the Transnistrian region, notably the persecution of persons critical of the de facto administration and the deployment of the Russian army, and restrictions on the public assemblies and activities of local NGOs; reminds the Russian Federation of the responsibility it has regarding respect for human rights in the Transnistria region, as confirmed by several rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR); calls on the Russian authorities to execute all ECtHR judgments relating to violations of human rights and the right to freedom and security in the Transnistria region;

33. Praises the Moldovan authorities for the support offered to the Transnistria region in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, including through the donation of 10 % of its vaccine supply, the training of medical staff and the processing of COVID-19 tests;
34. Welcomes the Council decision to provide EUR 7 million in assistance under the European Peace Facility to the Armed Forces of Moldova for the acquisition of medical and explosive ordnance disposal equipment; encourages the EEAS and the Council to further extend areas of cooperation with Moldova and support the strengthening of the capacity of the defence sector through assistance measures under this instrument;
35. Encourages the Moldovan authorities to make further use of potential European Peace Facility assistance in subsequent annual programmes in order to consolidate its capacity to counter cyber and hybrid threats; calls for the EU institutions to include Moldova in new formats of cooperation on cybersecurity, hybrid threats and cybercrime investigations, including by involving the new European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre in these efforts;

Rule of law and good governance

36. Reiterates the fundamental importance of justice reform, in particular strengthening the independence and competences of the judiciary, and the fight against corruption; recognises the magnitude of the challenge faced by the authorities and encourages them to focus on established priorities; notes the commitment of President Maia Sandu and the government of Natalia Gavriluța to base their policies on rulings of the Moldovan Constitutional Court; calls for the acceleration of the ongoing justice reform, including the implementation of the amendments to the Constitution's provisions on justice voted on by the Moldovan Parliament on 23 September 2021, as well as of the Strategy for Ensuring the Independence and Integrity of the Justice Sector 2022-2025;
37. Stresses that the EU must offer more support, including increased financial allocations, for the complex reform of the justice system in Moldova; recognises the need for deep reforms of the judiciary system aimed at achieving the efficiency and full and real independence of the judiciary, regaining public trust in the judiciary and public administration system, cutting the links with post-communist informal networks and oligarchs, and fighting corruption and money laundering also on the highest political and business levels; strongly supports the objective of removing from the justice system persons whose integrity is in question and bringing about comprehensive changes that would build strong foundations for the rule of law in the country;
38. Underlines the importance of ensuring a merit-based and transparent selection process for judicial appointments; calls on the Moldovan authorities to continue cooperation with the Council of Europe and the European Union on justice reform, including on initiatives related to the extraordinary evaluation of judges and prosecutors (vetting) and the evaluation of the integrity of candidates for the position of members of the Superior Council of Magistracy and the Superior Council of Prosecutors (pre-vetting); reiterates the importance of consulting and implementing the recommendations of the Venice Commission within the framework of the judicial reform process;
39. Is convinced that large-scale corruption is one of the main problems impeding Moldova's progress; calls on the Moldovan Government to increase the effectiveness of the legal and institutional anti-corruption infrastructure; welcomes the creation of the

Anticorruption Independent Consultative Committee, which will investigate corruption in the country's financial and banking sectors and its state institutions;

40. Calls on the Moldovan Government to increase transparency, democratic oversight and accountability across decision-making processes and to closely cooperate with civil society, in order to allow for adequate public scrutiny of and inclusive input into these processes; reiterates the importance of ensuring sustainable funding for civil society, in particular given the significant budget cuts during the pandemic; stresses the general importance of the government's active open dialogue with civil society organisations, trade unions, business associations, and the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition, to ensure an inclusive and participatory decision-making process;
41. Notes the steps taken by the authorities and urges them to continue their efforts to address the issue of unfounded asylum applications and the alignment of Moldova's visa policy with the EU lists of non-EU countries for which visas are required;
42. Calls on the Moldovan Government to continue efforts to depoliticise law enforcement agencies and public anti-corruption institutions and to invest in building increased trust between citizens and law enforcement agencies;
43. Calls for the decisive implementation of the police reform; welcomes the increase in the number of women on the police force; calls for increased cooperation between the judicial authorities and the enforcement agencies of Moldova and the Member States in order to reduce cross-border crime, particularly trafficking in illegal drugs and human beings, as Moldova unfortunately remains a source of trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation and labour purposes, perpetrated by both Moldovan and international criminal networks; welcomes the signature of the agreement between the EU and Moldova on operational activities carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) in Moldova and the deployment of Frontex staff to support the Moldovan authorities in border management activities; calls for enhanced cooperation with Europol, Interpol and customs organisations such as the World Customs Organization and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Anti-Corruption Networks;
44. Calls on the Commission and the Moldovan authorities to cooperate, coordinate and take urgent measures to protect the refugees from Ukraine hosted in or transiting through Moldova, especially women and children, who are at risk of trafficking and who represent the majority of refugees from Ukraine;
45. Calls on the authorities to guarantee the right to a fair trial and respect for human rights in detention facilities, including by addressing inadequate healthcare provisions, as well as to avoid administering selective and politically motivated justice; underlines the need to eradicate torture and ill-treatment and to investigate allegations of torture and other human rights violations committed by police and other law enforcement officers;
46. Stresses the importance of tackling financial fraud, money laundering and organised crime through comprehensive legislation and effective implementation; welcomes the plans to enact legal changes in the Parliament of Moldova aimed at improving the legal framework to make it possible to implement the mechanism of extended confiscation of assets accumulated through corruption;

47. Calls for a clear and effective policy in the area of recovering embezzled funds and fraudulent assets by establishing international cooperation, with a focus on better liaison with Europol and Eurojust; encourages the Moldovan authorities to build a framework dedicated to strategic collaboration with the European Public Prosecutor's Office for better management of fraud and anti-corruption investigations;
48. Encourages ongoing and close cooperation between the General Prosecutor's Office in Chişinău and the Eurojust office, including the regular secondment of Moldovan representatives to the Eurojust office as a preparatory step in building a task force dedicated to recovering embezzled funds and fraudulent assets;
49. Stresses the urgent need to accelerate the investigation into the bank fraud exposed in 2014, which has still not yielded significant results in terms of bringing those responsible to justice and recovering lost assets; stresses that this lack of progress has a serious negative effect on Moldova's international reputation and, in particular, the credibility of the justice system in the eyes not only of the people of Moldova, but also of the country's international partners; calls for the intensification of the process of completing criminal cases against persons involved in the Russian Laundromat scheme and bank fraud; calls, in this regard, for strengthened cooperation between the EU Member States and the Moldovan authorities in investigating the bank fraud, to ensure the timely recovery of stolen assets;
50. Reiterates its call for the expansion of the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime (the EU Magnitsky Act) to include corruption as a sanctioned offence, which would allow for the sanctioning of those responsible for the 2014 bank fraud and deter similar crimes of corruption;

Human rights and fundamental freedoms

51. Welcomes the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) by the Parliament of Moldova on 14 October 2021; notes the issuance of a legal brief on the constitutional implications of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the Venice Commission on 10 and 11 December 2021 at the request of the Constitutional Court of Moldova; calls for the effective implementation of the Istanbul Convention to be ensured at all levels in order to improve the situation of women and girls, and for further efforts to be made to progress towards achieving gender equality, in particular in improving women's access to the labour market, tackling the gender pay gap, age-based discrimination and women's representation, and ensuring equal treatment at all levels of political and societal life;
52. Underlines the importance of further strengthening the legal framework for equality and non-discrimination, in particular by closing the existing legislative gaps in order to address discrimination in employment, effectively counteract hate crimes and hate speech and further protect the rights of minorities, including Roma, LGBTI persons and immigrants; calls on Moldova to abolish the constitutional ban on same-sex marriage put in place in 1994 and to establish anti-discrimination measures for LGBTI persons;
53. Requests that the Commission and the EEAS mainstream gender equality in all their policies, programmes and activities relating to Moldova; calls on the Moldovan Government to accelerate the adoption and implementation of human rights and anti-

discrimination legislation, aligned to EU standards, and to enable the fulfilment of these rights through properly functioning and independent courts of law;

54. Calls on the Moldovan Government, in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to put a special emphasis on countering the gender inequality, gender-based violence, and discrimination against marginalised groups exacerbated by the pandemic; urges the authorities to address the increase in violence against children and in child poverty as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to control it;

Trade and economic cooperation

55. Reiterates the importance of the effective implementation of the reforms needed to fully benefit from the DCFTA, to achieve progress in further economic integration with the EU's internal market and to increase the diversification and the competitiveness of the Moldovan economy, particularly of added value goods; calls on Moldova to fully implement the DCFTA Trade and Sustainable Development chapter and to respect its international commitments, in particular the Paris Agreement and the World Trade Organization (WTO) rules; calls for the rectification of the domestic trade law that runs contrary to Moldovan commitments under the DCFTA and the WTO provisions;
56. Highlights the positive effect of the EU-Moldova DCFTA on trade between the two sides, with a more than 33 % increase in total trade between 2015 and 2020, over 61 % of Moldovan exports going to the EU market and over 70 % of Moldovan companies engaged in export activities exporting to the EU market; notes that the EU market is bound to become even more important for Moldova owing to the trade disruptions caused by Russia's war against Ukraine; welcomes the fact that the Union is the largest investor in the country; encourages further progress in areas such as the customs code, the protection of intellectual property rights, the improvement of sanitary and phytosanitary standards, the improvement of market conditions in the field of energy, public procurement and access to finance for SMEs;
57. Emphasises that Moldova's exports could increase through expanded production, reprioritising exports and adjusting quality standards; reiterates that the main categories of goods for export remain animal and vegetable products, which are the least profitable products that Moldova can offer to Member States; calls on the Commission to support Moldova in diversifying its exports to the EU, including through a better fulfilment of its tariff quotas for high-profit products;
58. Calls on the Commission to begin the process of integrating the EaP countries into the European single market by taking the first step through analysing their alignment from a legal, economic and technical perspective, and developing regulations and standards aimed at preparing partner countries for economic integration into a common market;
59. Notes China's increased interest in investing in the Moldovan economy, inter alia in the energy, telecommunications and pharmaceutical sectors; recalls China's intention to construct substantial transport infrastructure in Moldova as a component of its wider Belt and Road Initiative; reiterates that the Belt and Road Initiative is at the centre of China's foreign policy and is by nature a geopolitical project;
60. Commends the pro-democratic reforms already enacted by the Government of Moldova; calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide and stimulate

enhanced EU investment in Moldova on the basis of the ‘more-for-more’ principle and to encourage Moldova to be proactive in approaching the EU and European financial institutions;

61. Calls for continued efforts to build a genuine digital market economy, including progress on open data development, broadening access to conditional access systems for digital television and virtual network services, increasing the number of electronic communication services for citizens and of public registers; supports the process of the digitalisation of economic processes and the development of special mechanisms for IT companies, especially innovation companies and start-ups that have problems finding sources of financing and as a result are unable to support their transition and growth processes; highlights that further work must be done to ensure that the rights and needs of Moldovan citizens using the internet are protected and to fully implement the digital single market requirements;
62. Welcomes the approximation of 499 (of which 152 partially) out of 681 EU *acquis* into Moldovan national legislation provided by the AA/DCFTA and underlines the importance of continuous reforms in the public administration, the banking system and to ensure the independence of the judiciary; calls on Moldova to continue its regulatory approximation with the EU *acquis*; calls on the Commission and the Member States to support Moldova’s institutions and its public administration with the necessary expertise and technical and financial help; calls on the Moldovan authorities to progress more rapidly on approximation to the AA/DCFTA;
63. Encourages the harmonisation of national quality standards with those of the EU; underlines the disadvantage for Moldovan entrepreneurs and businesses resulting from the large number of different standards they need to meet for exports into the Member States and emphasises the need for a policy of excluding standards that are non-aligned or are in direct conflict with European standards;
64. Is of the opinion that by guaranteeing tariff-free access to EU markets for Transnistrian businesses registered on the west bank of the Dniester and subject to customs checks by Moldovan officials, the DCFTA has resulted in a massive swing in the direction of trade from the Eurasian Economic Union to the EU; encourages the Moldovan authorities to further advance towards trade and engagement with EU markets in order to enhance market access, transparency and good business practices, and to reduce oligarchs’ capacity for market manipulation and monopolisation;
65. Welcomes the EU’s support to the economic recovery of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs); calls on the responsible EU and Moldovan institutions to ensure that this technical and financial support is tailored to the needs of Moldovan MSMEs, is of nationwide coverage, including the Transnistrian region, and strengthens both the capacities of MSMEs and their participation in the EU internal market;
66. Welcomes the new regulations in the field of public procurement, but emphasises the need for public monitoring of procurement processes and the importance of clearer and permanent reports to the general public; encourages the simplification of the mechanisms by which civil society representatives can be part of procurement processes and emphasises the need to replace bureaucratic processes with transparent ones that remove barriers and restore confidence in the allocation and use of public budgets;

67. Acknowledges the commitment of Moldova to pursue approximation with EU agricultural legislation in order to increase exports to the EU and open up new commercial opportunities for local communities; calls on the Moldovan authorities to progress more rapidly on approximation to the AA/DCFTA in terms of animal health and food safety;
68. Highlights the importance of modernising the national laboratories responsible for sanitary and phytosanitary requirements, enabling the export of products of animal origin and tackling the shortage of qualified laboratory staff;
69. Stresses the need for greater transparency regarding the results of the audit missions of the Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety and emphasises the need to grow and strengthen the network of laboratories for sanitary and phytosanitary analysis, while stepping up the training of the inspectors and specialists working in these laboratories in order to achieve better implementation of the regulations in the field of phytosanitary and food safety;
70. Encourages Moldova to make full use of the preferential export opportunities into the EU through more efficient and sustainable cultivation of farmlands, as well as more democratic access to and use of land, thereby generating agricultural products that amplify Moldova's relative agricultural advantages;
71. Urges Moldova to increase its infrastructure cooperation with the EU and countries in the region, and to implement deep structural reforms in the energy sector, including by diversifying energy supplies, increasing energy efficiency, attracting investment into renewable energies and improving connectivity, while ensuring environmental sustainability; calls on Moldova to fully implement its commitments under the Energy Community Treaty;
72. Calls on the EU institutions to give concrete support to Moldova to meet all the necessary requirements to join the Single Euro Payments Area;
73. Calls on the Moldovan Government also to focus on the social dimension of trade and sustainable development by respecting and enforcing labour standards, ratifying and fully implementing all International Labour Organization conventions, and eliminating the remaining deficiencies in the labour inspection system;
74. Notes the use of biomass and hydropower in Moldova's diversification efforts, but recalls the need to ensure their sustainability, efficiency and the relevant environmental requirements; stresses that the development of renewable energy sources is a crucial component of the efforts towards both the transition to clean energy and energy independence, while also contributing to local job creation, air quality and citizens' health;
75. Underlines the important role of regional cooperation in modernising the country and in increasing capacities in the efforts to implement the AA; calls for the enhancement of regional cooperation, both between the different regions of Moldova and between Moldovan and EU regions; calls on the Commission and the respective EU agencies to facilitate this process in strong cooperation with the Moldovan Government;

76. Welcomes the approval of the National Strategy for Regional Development for the years 2022-2028 and calls for administrative-territorial reform focused on boosting competitiveness and sustainable development; underlines the necessity of balanced social and economic growth in all regions of Moldova and the efficient implementation of national policies of regional development;
77. Calls on the Moldovan authorities to uphold the principles of local democracy and local autonomy, in accordance with the European Charter of Local Self-Government, providing proper powers and sufficient funding for local governments and assuring their effective functioning, including through further improvements in respect for the rule of law and the implementation of good governance principles at all levels;
78. Calls on the Moldovan authorities to make further efforts to ensure that the opportunities provided by the AA/DCFTA and EU assistance and programmes reach local level, including the remote parts of the country, and in particular rural areas, so as to enable inhabitants to push for positive changes; calls for increased and better communicated EU support for development projects in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia;

Sectoral cooperation

79. Is encouraged by Moldova's association to Horizon Europe, the EU research and innovation programme, for 2021-2027, which opens up new opportunities for its science and innovation community to forge partnerships with their counterparts in the EU, as well as Moldova's participation in the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme;
80. Calls for better cooperation between all EU institutions, the Member States and the Moldovan authorities when communicating the benefits of the AA/DCFTA and of EU assistance to the citizens of Moldova; stresses the importance of an institutional framework and a consistent set of public policies to fight disinformation, including anti-EU disinformation, information manipulation, fake news and propaganda, as well as any malign foreign interference, in particular through strategic communication and resilience against disinformation and information manipulation by domestic and foreign actors, online and offline; calls on the Moldovan authorities and the Commission to cooperate on programmes and reforms promoting media and information literacy in the context of the current digital age, as well as to upgrade sectoral cooperation in the digital economy;
81. Reiterates that strengthening media pluralism and independence should be a priority for both the Union and Moldova; calls on the Commission to increase its support to the independent media, including outside the capital, and the efforts to deliver credible information to the citizens of Moldova in all parts of the country; calls on the European Endowment for Democracy to further support such efforts;
82. Urges Moldova to further support free and independent media by building a national media development programme to review the legal framework in order to tackle the concentration of media ownership, the monopolisation of the advertising market, the lack of editorial independence and the control of media institutions by economic and political groups, and the barriers to access to information, as well as attacks on and the intimidation of journalists;

83. Calls on the Commission to closely monitor the media sector in Moldova; hopes that the reconstituted Television and Radio Broadcasting Council will effectively carry out its tasks as an independent media watchdog and address the long-standing shortcomings of the media landscape, including the issue of the political independence of the public broadcasting company; reiterates the importance of ensuring the full implementation of the Audiovisual Code;

Institutional provisions

84. Welcomes the signature on 29 November 2021 of the Memorandum of Understanding between the European Parliament and the Parliament of Moldova on a joint framework for parliamentary democracy support, which opens up opportunities for strengthening its institutional capacity and thereby parliamentary democracy in Moldova through closer bilateral institutional ties;
85. Invites the Parliament of Moldova to implement the full range of democracy support activities available to it, including a Jean Monnet Dialogue and a Simone Veil programme, on the basis of a mutually agreed roadmap;
86. Points out the important role played by the EU-Republic of Moldova Parliamentary Association Committee and the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly in terms of fostering bilateral and regional cooperation with the EU and exchanges of experiences and good practices with Moldovan parliamentarians; calls for the structural cooperation between Members of the European Parliament and Members of the Parliament of Moldova to be deepened in order to work together to support reforms and monitor their implementation;
87. Reiterates its support for the involvement of civil society, including trade unions, in decision-making processes in order to increase the public scrutiny of reforms and promote their transparency and social acceptability; underlines the added value that various organisations provide on important issues of public interest in Moldova; is concerned about the relatively modest cooperation that exists between the public authorities and civil society despite the existence of a strategy and action plan for the development of civil society; is also concerned about the 17 % decrease in grants to civil society organisations;
88. Calls for the EU and Moldova to further improve people-to-people contacts and exchanges in order to build mutually positive images of each other among their respective populations through joint projects developed at civil society level, including by providing support for young students and professionals to participate in EU education and training programmes such as Erasmus+; requests the Commission to explore the possibility of expanding certain EU programmes to include the citizens of Moldova and other EaP countries; stresses that expansion of programmes such as ‘DiscoverEU’ into Moldova could further strengthen pro-European sentiment in the country;

Social rights

89. Notes that underemployment and precarious employment remain high in Moldova and that the working-age population is vulnerable to economic shocks; calls for the adoption

of a recovery strategy that meets the needs of the population and incorporates the green transition and sustainable development;

90. Is concerned by the large-scale emigration of Moldovan citizens, which accentuates negative demographic trends and represents a serious threat to Moldova's future; encourages the Moldovan Government to implement further measures to prevent and counter this phenomenon, in particular by creating opportunities and improving conditions and wages for young workers;
91. Calls on the government to pay the utmost attention to the Moldovan Ombudsman's requests for improvement regarding access to healthcare, the right to work and freedom of movement and of expression;
92. Calls on the Moldovan Government to strengthen the healthcare system, tackle the labour shortages that are weakening it and improve sanitation standards, especially in hospitals; urges the Commission, the Member States and Moldova to increase cooperation on public health resilience, to exchange best practices and to work with civil society on establishing epidemic strategies focusing on the most vulnerable groups in society;
93. Supports continued cooperation between Moldova and the EU on addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences, as well as enhancing long-term cooperation in the field of public health; urges the Moldovan authorities to seize the opportunity and employ the COVID-19 recovery funds to modernise hospitals and improve the quality and accessibility of medical services, especially in the regions;
94. Welcomes the Commission's adoption of the decision of equivalence of the COVID-19 certificates issued by Moldova to the EU Digital COVID Certificate, and encourages the Member States to continue to ensure its application;
95. Notes that the shortcomings in labour law are bringing about abusive practices, in particular daily working hours that are excessive in some instances, low pay and partially undocumented employment relationships; is concerned about the partial application of the rules intended to prevent such practices;
96. Notes that social dialogue has deteriorated in recent years and has been completely suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic; calls on the government to ensure that a genuine social dialogue is set up and results in the involvement of all social partners in the post-pandemic recovery process;
97. Welcomes the progress made by Moldova in the process of deinstitutionalising the childcare system and the steps taken to develop a new Child Protection Programme and Action Plan for 2022-2026;
98. Welcomes Moldova's commitments in the field of the environment and climate change; calls on Moldova to further enhance its engagement in the fight against climate change, and on the Commission to facilitate Moldova's participation in the European Green Deal and to ensure that the DCFTA does not contradict the environmental objectives and initiatives set out therein;
99. Supports a better policy of integrating environmental policies into the various economic sectors and the broader participation of citizens in the process of elaborating

environmental protection policies; calls for a more intensive approach to partnerships with civil society to ensure the better functioning of waste collection and recycling activity, as well as greater attention for land afforestation, the reduction of soil degradation and the improvement of water quality;

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100. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and to the President, government and parliament of the Republic of Moldova.