

**Priority question for written answer P-001944/2021
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Progress in the international investigation into Moldova's USD 1 billion bank theft

Moldova's new president has vowed to prioritise the investigation into the 2014 theft of USD 1 billion from the country's largest banks. The investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators and the recovery of assets have been dragging on for years.

The legacy of oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc and former General Prosecutor Eduard Harunjen in the Moldovan judiciary has put effective accountability at risk, as exemplified by the cases of Igor Vornicescu and Serghei Lebediuc, two Justices of the Peace exempted from criminal liability due to time limitations, and the case of former judge Ghenadie Bîrnaz, the first judge acquitted in the 'Russian Laundromat' case on the basis of a lack of evidence and procedural mistakes.

Moreover, the Kroll 2 report states that a considerable amount of the stolen funds flowed into EU territory. The Moldova-EU Association Agreement determines the EU's potential involvement in the recovery process. According to the Moldovan authorities, a joint investigation team has been set up together with EUROJUST to obtain evidence and conduct an investigation both in Moldova and abroad. In relation to the bank fraud scandal:

1. Are the Commission or other EU bodies involved in or considering supporting an international investigation task force?
2. What progress has the joint investigation team made?