

# EU-Moldova Human Rights Dialogue



On 23 September 2020, the European Union and the Republic of Moldova held by videoconference the eleventh round of their annual Human Rights Dialogue. Ahead of the meeting, the European Union consulted representatives of Moldovan and international civil society organisations. Representatives of EU Member States along with civil society representatives attended the Dialogue as observers.

The Dialogue reaffirmed the importance of common values, in particular the full respect for democratic principles, the rule of law, good governance, human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are also founding principles of the Association Agreement to which the EU and Moldova have committed.

Reviewing developments since the previous Dialogue in 2019, discussions took place on a wide range of issues, from the main developments in the EU's human rights policy, to democracy and electoral rights, human rights in the justice system (pre-trial detention, detention conditions, the fight against torture and ill-treatment), media freedom, rights of the child rights and gender equality, anti-discrimination policy and multilateral cooperation.

The EU emphasised in particular that transparent, inclusive and credible elections remain key for democracy and the rule of law and in this regard underlined its expectations of the Moldovan authorities to ensure that the presidential elections on 1 November are conducted in full respect of these principles. The EU called on Moldova to fully address the outstanding recommendations of the Council of Europe Venice Commission and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) and adopt without further delay the corresponding legislative changes after an inclusive and consultative process. The EU also stressed the importance of implementing the current electoral legal framework in such a way that ensures a level playing field among all electoral candidates.

Particular attention was also paid to the need to ensure freedom of expression and plurality of media as fundamental elements of democracy and human rights. The EU emphasised the need for comprehensive reform to further

enhance transparency and competition in the media sector, with a view to addressing the concentration of media ownership and guaranteeing media freedom and pluralism.

The EU and Moldova acknowledged the particular challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic to international human rights protection and agreed that emergency measures to address the health crisis are not to be taken at the expense of fundamental principles and values.

The EU delegation was led by Mr Richard Tibbels, Head of Division for Eastern Partnership bilateral relations in the European External Action Service, while the Moldovan delegation was headed by Mr Radu Foltea, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Justice. The Dialogue took place back-to-back with the Justice, Freedom and Security Subcommittee meeting on 24 September.

The next Human Rights Dialogue between the EU and Moldova is scheduled to take place in Chisinau in 2021.