

Remarks by President Charles Michel at the press conference with President Maia Sandu in Chisinau



Madam President, I would like to thank you for your invitation to Moldova, so soon after your visit to Brussels, in January. It's a pleasure for me to be here.

This was a short first visit, but in my opinion an important one. I send a clear message of EU support to President Sandu's strong focus on reforms, strengthening the rule of law and tackling corruption.

Today, I would like to send two messages to you and the people of Moldova.

First, the EU is a reliable partner for Moldova. We are the biggest trading partner and market for Moldovan exports. During the last ten years, we have provided over one billion euros in grants. And more than one thousand projects have been implemented in the entire country.

And the European Investment Bank offers to finance important projects in the energy sector and for SMEs, and I'm pleased that Werner Hoyer is here with us today.

I also reiterated the EU's unwavering solidarity to help Moldova fight the COVID-19 crisis and deal with its socio-economic impact. The EU has mobilised 108 million euros to deliver protective equipment, to strengthen the healthcare system, and to support socio-economic recovery. Moldova has already benefitted from 50 million euros of EU emergency macro-financial assistance and another 50 million will come as the second tranche once mutually agreed conditions have been fulfilled.

We are now focused on speeding up vaccinations. Yesterday the first vaccines arrived from Romania with support from the EU. Moldova also benefits from vaccine distribution under the COVAX Facility, which Team Europe has strongly supported. We expect more vaccines to arrive in the next few days.

Our partners' preparedness to distribute vaccines is also key. To boost this, we are stepping up our support for the deployment of vaccines, with two WHO programmes. And indeed, I've just met with medical workers who are in the front lines of the fight against the pandemic, and I felt touched by their messages and experiences.

This brings me to my second point: our strong support goes hand in hand with the implementation of reforms.

Madam President, your election reflected people's expectations for a better life – without corruption and based on the rule of law and democratic norms. And it has opened a window of opportunity for enhanced EU-Moldova relations.

But how wide this window will open depends on the political will of our Moldovan partners. We are committed to strengthening Moldova's political association and economic integration. And as you know, our support is linked to strict conditionality on the rule of law and democratic standards.

Your efforts, your patient efforts, to address the lack of independence of the judiciary and prosecution and to move forward on investigating banking fraud and fighting corruption are crucial to avoid a spiral of stagnation. That's why those who have been implicated in activities outside the rule of law should have no say in Moldova's future.

We also discussed the prospects for early elections, as the best chance to deliver a Parliament ready to support the President's reforms. We expect all political actors to act in the best interests of the people of Moldova.

Madam President, Europe is on your side. Prosperity, stability and freedoms are our common goals, and we are ready to strengthen our partnership. You can count on us.