



COMMUNICATION STRATEGY ON THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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1. Introduction

On December 29, 2007 the Government approved the Communication Strategy on the European Integration of the Republic of Moldova (CSEIRM) and the Action Plan on implementation of this strategy in 2008 [1]. The draft CSEIRM was launched for public debates in the 1st quarter of 2007 and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration (MFAEI) introduced the document in early February 2008 at two meetings with the participation of diplomatic corps, international organisations, journalists and civil society. This article contains an overview on the CSEIRM, reveals certain shortcomings of the document and recommends some solutions to remedy them.

2. CSEIRM

The CSEIRM aims to ensure an adequate and systematic dissemination of information about the European Union (EU), the access of the public to more information sources about the EU, and to provide Moldovan citizens with the opportunity to participate in the European integration process more actively.

In the first chapter the CSEIRM reveals key progresses in the process of European integration of Moldova and the greatest achievements in implementing the EU-Moldova Action Plan (EUMAP).

The CSEIRM was thought out by following two important challenges faced by Moldova: informing European citizens about Moldova and informing Moldovan citizens about the EU. Hence, the need of a foreign communication strategy and an internal communication strategy. At the same time, the CSEIRM recommends a special attention toward informing people from the Transnistrian region about the process of European integration of Moldova.

2.1 Foreign Communication Strategy

The Foreign Communication Strategy (FCS) is a chapter of the CSEIRM which establishes basic references of the future FCS. The latter will detail generalities from the CSEIRM and will establish the implementation terms and the necessary budget.

The central goal of the FCS is to raise awareness of EU institutions and population over Moldova in general and to introduce Moldova as an attractive European state which aspires to meet all criteria needed to

join the EU in particular. The operational objectives of the FCS will be planned on different terms:

- a) On a short term (2008-2011) – the fulfilment of commitments needed for the formal EU recognition of Moldova’s European perspective;
- b) On a medium term (2008/11-2013) – the development of the EU-Moldova relations at a new quality level, which would ensure a gradual integration of Moldova into European institutions, in order to gradually gain the four EU freedoms of move;
- c) On a long term (after 2013) – the start of the EU joining process, which shall finally lead to Moldova’s accession to this community.

Given the experience of Central and East European Countries (CEEC), which needed approximately 10 years to join the EU after this process was launched, it could be assumed that Moldova’s adherence to the EU it is possible presumed by 2023.

The target groups referred in by the FCS will be the following: EU institutions, EU member and candidate states, Brussels politicians, interest and lobby groups, international media, European business community, the public and specific target groups of European citizens.

The following will be the message of the FCS: Moldova is a European state by excellence and its plenary comeback to the European family is the recovery of a historical truth. This way, the FCS message will be like the one promoted by CEEC. This message, according to discourse analysis scholars, has induced a path-dependency that put the EU in a situation to respect European integration promises given to CEEC. The similitude of the FCS message with that transmitted in the European integration process of CEEC reveals among others that a foreign expertise was used to elaborate the CSEIRM.

Also, the CSEIRM indicates the participants in general actions and stipulates the finding of international partners of Moldova to implement the FCS.

2.2 Internal Communication Strategy

The goal of the Internal Communication Strategy (ICS) is to provide information about Moldova-EU dialogue and its implications for Moldova, while the “primordial” objective of this document is to ensure a better information on the implementation of Moldova-EU documents. Also, the ICS presents its (information, education, explicative, cognitive and multi-aspectual) characteristics and “general objectives”, formulates the need of finding partners to implement it and indicates the target groups concerned.

The ICS stipulates a series of actions including surveys (*Omnibus*, interviews, etc.); elaboration of the logo and slogan of the strategy; consolidation of media services of central public institutions (Government, MFAEI, and others); training seminars for public functionaries, journalists, teachers; media monitoring and contextual analysis; meetings and thematic debates; experience exchange visits to the EU; promotional campaigns; radio and TV programmes, etc.

Building an integrated information infrastructure on the EU is an important aspect of the ICS, and it shall include a website on the EU; European interactive or information centres; an EU information dissemination system; a free telephone line; a European newsletter and a database of news and experts of European affairs. The integrated EU information system was generally inspired from Denmark, Finland, Slovene and the Czech Republic.

2.3 CSEIRM implementation and evaluation mechanism

The MFAEI will coordinate the CSEIRM implementation under the supervision of a deputy minister of foreign affairs and European integration. The MFAEI will be assisted by an advisory commission, which will be created as part of this ministry and will bring together representatives of all competent public institutions, other relevant parties and an expert group. The latter will be made of journalists, representatives of competent NGO, political parties, Parliament, business environments, academia, and other interested groups.

The CSEIRM will be implemented on basis of allocations from the state budget and with the support of domestic and foreign donors. The funds will be used to support individual projects proposed by public and private organisations but chosen by a selection committee. It will be made of 10 members, including 3 alternates representing the advisory commission and independent organisations.

The findings of the CSEIRM assessments will be discussed by the advisory commission and reported to the Moldovan Government every year.

3. Shortcomings of CSEIRM

Although the CSEIRM is unquestionably a very necessary, ambitious and high-quality document, there are a series of shortcomings that should be revealed.

- a) The first problem is linked to the possibility to implement the CSEIRM. The document is too ambitious to be implemented well for three key reasons. Firstly, it shall be implemented in a relatively short term – by 2010. Secondly, there are too many tasks to be fulfilled in this relatively short term, and thirdly, the funds for a plenary implementation of the CSEIRM are unavailable and certain actions will be failed given this shortage. CSEIRM developers did not include the three aspects in the list of potential risks of the implementation process.

The document is not very clear to be implemented by 2010, since it let those interested to guess whether the term refers to the CSEIRM or ICS. This fact should be made clear. Although the ICS is concerned, the remark regarding the short-term implementation is effective. Even more, a communication strategy on the European integration of Moldova, a country which is not credited so far with an accession perspective, should cover a longer period. Some CEEC needed to explain and report their success and problems related to their accession to the EU in the post-accession period as well. But Moldova has to cross a long way until then and it is unclear why the CSEIRM stops in 2010.

The number of tasks stipulated by the CSEIRM will complicate the implementation of this document in the due term. Also, the CSEIRM indicates documents that should be elaborated throughout the implementation of the strategy. The CSEIRM establishes only certain references for the FCS, which shall be additionally elaborated. In addition, the following shall be drafted: strategies on individual communication with partners chosen to implement the FCS; “special guides” to use the logo of the strategy; a communication concept which shall provide a vision on development of media services of competent central public institutions; a strategy on training of public functionaries regarding European issues; a programme on training of the public service; public relation strategies which will be elaborated and implemented depending on the media monitoring and contextual analysis; strategies targeting at the national mass media; methodologies and instructions to allow teachers to efficiently approach EU matters, etc. At least one year will be needed to elaborate all these documents.

Also, the CSEIRM recommends the elaboration of a special strategy to inform population from the Transnistrian region about the process of European integration of Moldova.

- b) Surveys will play an important role in implementing the CSEIRM. Planning appropriate actions was absolutely necessary. However, conducting surveys on European issues should be very useful before the adoption of the CSEIRM. The CSEIRM could be strongly built on findings of such surveys and it would have established the target groups concerned with more accuracy. The target groups of the ICS do not include graduates from secondary or professional education and representatives of national minorities, which accordingly to the findings of the POB commissioned by the IPP[2], are among most “Euro-sceptical” categories of Moldovan citizens[3].
- c) Some target groups of the FCS are too generic or it is hard to clearly identify them. Some examples of such groups identified by the FCS are the following: Brussels politicians; lobbyists and opinion builders; European business community; the general public and specific target groups of European citizens. The formulation used for the latter is confusing.
- d) The ICS indicates some actions unstipulated by the 2008 Action Plan on implementation of the CSEIRM. For example, the ICS stipulates a systematic survey called *Omnibus*. According to the strategy, the *Omnibus* should be “conducted every month on a representative group of 900 persons elder than 15 years.” On the other hand, the 2008 Action Plan does not stipulate such a survey, as well as other actions foreseen by the CSEIRM.
- e) According to the 2008 Action Plan, the European newsletter by the MFAEI shall be published in continuation. But it stipulates a term between February and September 2008, though such a newsletter should be constantly published inclusively after an eventual accession of Moldova to the EU.
- f) The CSEIRM is a document looking forward future but perpetuating clichés of the past. Leaving out the sensibility of the linguistic identity issue, the CSEIRM forces the appearance of the Moldovan language glotonym (pp. 2.2.4.7.1; 2.2.4.7.4). A neutral formulation would have been better, as an ample social support will be needed to implement the CSEIRM.
- g) The ICS is inappropriately juggling with terms such as goal, specific objectives, primordial objective, general objectives, operative objectives, which introduce a dose of confusion.

4. Conclusions

The CSEIRM is unquestionably a very opportune document for Moldova which has a good quality in general. However, it contains inconsistency which shall be remedied on the first occasion.

First of all, the implementation term of the CSEIRM shall be extended. It will be impossible to implement this strategy by 2010 because of the big number of tasks and unavailable funds for this purpose. Also, implementation priorities shall be clearly established and the target groups concerned shall be exactly identified. The list of strategies, plans and documents foreseen by the CSEIRM shall be optimised. Further, the disparity between the CSEIRM and the 2008 Action Plan shall be remedied. Not the last, the CSEIRM shall be cleaned off signs of identity disputes. The CSEIRM shall not be used as a platform to perpetuate

some anachronisms. A good communication strategy does not obstruct the... communication.

Notes:

- [1] GD # 1524 from 29.12.2007 concerning approval of the Communication Strategy on the European Integration of the Republic of Moldova, *Monitorul Oficial* # 11-12/66 from 18.01.2008.
- [2] Institute of Public Policies (2000-2007), *Public Opinion Barometer*, <http://www.ipp.md/barometru.php?l=ro>.
- [3] Buscaneanu, S. (2007), „Evolution of the European option in Moldova (2000-2007),” *Governance and Democracy in Moldova*, year V, issue 96, 16-31 May, <http://www.e-democracy.md/comments/political/200705311>. Elderly would be another “Euro-sceptical” category of Moldovan citizens.

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ADEPT is an independent centre of analysis and consultation on the decision-making, political, electoral and socio-economic processes in the Republic of Moldova and in the wider region.

ADEPT's mission is to promote the democratic values and support citizen active participation in public affairs.

Strategic Objectives

- Contribute to the efficient implementation of the governmental strategies aimed at the socio-economic development and democratization of Moldova;
- Promote and consolidate the democratic institutions and procedures;
- Encourage and facilitate citizen participation in the decision-making and governance processes.

