

Moldova's pro-European course: progress in negotiations, but no real reforms

Negotiators from both sides have noted rapid progress in the negotiations on the Moldova-EU Association Agreement, the sixth round of which was held on 11 April in Chisinau. However, the progress in the negotiations stands in contrast with the increasingly apparent delays in implementing the pro-European reforms announced by the current government.

Chisinau has announced the provisional conclusion of negotiations which partially concern political dialogue and people-to-people contacts. The section concerning the administration of justice, civil liberties and internal security is close to completion; in the economic section, 21 of the 24 sections have been agreed upon, with the exception of those concerning transport, environment and taxes.

However, even if the next round of negotiations in June leads to the conclusion of the remaining chapters of the agreement, its signature will have to wait for the completion of negotiations on a free trade zone. Meanwhile, the lack of progress in implementing the promised pro-European reforms is increasingly apparent. Relations between Chisinau and the European Union are approaching the moment when the Moldovan government will have to stop merely making declarations and promises, and start taking real action. The pro-European coalition government in Moldova, which has already been in power for more than two years, has not yet been able to carry out any major reforms to the system. This is because of both the inefficiency of the state administration and effective resistance from industry and state-administrative lobbies (such as the justice and police departments), which the government lacks the political will to confront. As a result, it may soon transpire that, as with the government of the former president and Communist leader Vladimir Voronin, the current cabinet will also simply imitate a policy of bringing Moldova closer to the EU.