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The Action Plan on visa liberalisation for Moldova

In Moldova on 24 January, the European Commissioner for internal affairs, Cecilia Malmström, officially presented Prime Minister Vlad Filat with an Action Plan on visa liberalisation. The EU Commissioner's visit is a symbolic expression of support from the EU for the pro-European coalition, which retained power following the elections of last 28 November. Implementing the plan will require the fundamental reform of a range of institutions.

The Action Plan given to Moldova calls for a fundamental reform of the entire security sector (in particular, the demilitarisation and professionalisation of the border guard service), raising the level of their technical supplies, developing the migration services' institutions and infrastructure, significantly reducing corruption, and so on. This will require time and considerable funding. The problems caused by the lack of Moldovan government control over the long section of the border with Ukraine, along the unrecognised quasi-state of Transnistria, will be particularly difficult to solve.

It is therefore very doubtful that the Moldovan authorities will manage to implement the plan within 18 months, as they have declared they will do. Meanwhile, the matter of obtaining a visa-free regime in relations with the EU has to a great degree become a question of the credibility of the entire pro-European camp in Moldova. So if over the next few years the plan cannot be implemented, or its implementation does not bring the abolition of visas to the EU, as most Moldovans wish, the consequence will be a significant drop in support for the pro-European parties, and Moldovan citizens' increased interest in obtaining Romanian citizenship. <wrod>