

PEACE AND SECURITY

ADAPTIVE PARTNERSHIP: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE PRESIDENTS OF UKRAINE AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA OF JANUARY 2021

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The agreements between the Presidents of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova of January 2021 declared the resumption of dialogue between the two states regarding strategic partnership and resolution of problematic issues at the highest level.



The implementation of some tasks stipulated in the agreements between Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Maia Sandu, such as the construction of a modern highway between Kyiv and Chisinau, was postponed due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, in general, the parties maintain an interest in deepening the partnership, which is very important for both states amid threats from the Kremlin.



The dialogue at the highest level between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, revived in January 2021, did not stop because of the Russian invasion. However, the strategic partnership between the two states needs adaptation to new political conditions, in particular, paying more attention to solving urgent issues of bilateral cooperation: in security, European integration and energy domains.

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Preface

The agreements between the Presidents of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, reached in January 2021, became a new page in the relations between the two states. By resuming the dialogue at the highest level, both sides emphasised their readiness to develop a strategic partnership. In general, in January 2021, Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Maia Sandu identified six priority tasks for the coming

years. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine created significant obstacles to their implementation, but amid this, the importance of deepening the partnership between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova has increased. Accordingly, the implementation of agreements should not be postponed but adjusted to new challenges.

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INTRODUCTION: THE CONTENT OF AGREEMENTS AND CONDITIONS FOR THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

The visit of the President of the Republic of Moldova Maia Sandu in January 2021 to Kyiv was significant. This was the first foreign trip of the Moldovan leader after her election to the highest position, which emphasized the importance of relations with Ukraine for her. In addition, that visit marked the revival of contacts between the two countries at the level of the Presidents since the previous head of the Republic of Moldova, Igor Dodon, was noted for his contacts with the Russian dictatorial regime and his refusal to support the territorial integrity of the Ukrainian state. With the arrival of Maia Sandu in Kyiv, cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova became full-fledged, including all levels of state administration. Thus, it was emphasized that developing relations between Chisinau and Kyiv is a strategic issue for both sides.

As a result of the meeting between Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Maia Sandu, a joint statement¹ of the two presidents was released. They noted the window of opportunity that had opened in the two countries after the last presidential elections, both for internal reforms and for establishing strategic cooperation within the framework of bilateral and multilateral contacts. The leaders identified the movement towards full EU membership as a key external priority. They also expressed interest in joining the Three Seas initiative. Maia Sandu emphasized² the importance of the fact that the Presidents of both countries agreed to bring the relations between the two countries to a new level – a strategic partnership.

At the bilateral level, the Presidents of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova identified the main tasks of giving new impetus to the work of the Joint Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation and other bilateral cooperation mechanisms, starting new infrastructure projects, facilitating transit and transportation of goods between the two countries, developing tourism and other areas. It also included joint work on effective environmental protection and cooperation in the energy sector in order to strengthen energy security in the region. They also emphasized that humanitarian and social coop-

eration will remain an important part of the bilateral agenda. According to the declaration, efforts in this direction will be focused on the development of people-to-people contacts, new initiatives in education, science, health care, sports and ensuring the educational and cultural rights of ethnic minorities without any discrimination. Based on the results of that meeting, the Presidents of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova decided to establish the Presidential Council as a new permanent format for a high-level dialogue and a mechanism for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of urgent cooperation tasks.

The considered agreements were not clearly described and explained in formal bilateral documents. The above declaration of the two Presidents contains general provisions for them. However, the deputy head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, Ihor Zhovkva, cleared³ the agreements' matters. According to him, the list contained six items. The first concerned establishing a permanent dialogue format between the Presidents of the states. The second item was devoted to mutual support in matters of regional security. Both Presidents supported the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova within internationally recognized borders. The third item was dedicated to creating a new highway between Kyiv and Chisinau, which involved the construction of a new bridge over the Dniester near the Ukrainian city of Yampil. In line with the fourth item, Ukraine declared its readiness to resume the export of its electricity to Moldova, and Moldova declared its readiness to accept it. According to the fifth item, the Presidents expressed their desire to eliminate the issue of the operation of the Dniester hydroelectric plant on the Ukrainian-Moldovan border as problematic. This involves solving the environmental aspect, property issues and border demarcation. Ihor Zhovkva emphasized that the Presidents reached a fundamental understanding on this issue – further settlement would be a matter of intergovernmental and expert cooperation. Finally, the sixth item was devoted to the fact that the linguistic and other rights of national minorities in both states would be settled on a parity basis.

It should be added that Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Maia Sandu invited each other for subsequent visits to Kyiv and

1 <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/spilna-zayava-prezidenta-ukrayini-volodimira-zelenskogo-i-pr-65993>

2 <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/volodimir-zelenskij-ta-majya-sandu-domovilisa-pro-virishenn-66005>

3 <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2021/01/12/7118426/>

Chisinau, respectively. Volodymyr Zelenskyi also noted that both countries sought to reach an agreement on the implementation of the so-called «package agreements» of 2011, which included issues of border demarcation, settlement of property issues on some areas of the border, and the creation of joint border control points.

Since the agreements between Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Maia Sandu touched on a wide range of issues and domains, they can be considered a declaration of both sides' intentions to build a strategic partnership. Bilateral cooperation had been the subject of a number of documents between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova before, but their implementation was often hampered by political disagreement at the highest level. The agreements between Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Maia Sandu in January 2021 can be considered an act of understanding, which should give impetus to the implementation of all previous documents and the resolution of problematic situations in bilateral relations.

In this context, it is important that both Presidents referred to the «package agreements» of 2011, which are the main list of the most difficult practical issues in relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. However, the implementation of the six agreements' items, which the two leaders talked about, had clearly favourable conditions only for a short time. The intimidation of Ukraine by Russia, which continued in 2021, and eventually the beginning of a full-scale invasion by Russian troops in 2022, made the political and economic background for the implementation of the tasks extremely unstable. However, in the new security situation (in which the Republic of Moldova is also under threat of aggression from the Kremlin), deepening the partnership between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova has become even more important: both in the trade and humanitarian domains. In this sense, the agreements between Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Maia Sandu have not lost their relevance but even gained additional impetus for implementation.

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MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGREEMENTS AND ANALYSIS OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED IT

Neither the Presidents of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, nor their representatives since January 2021, reported specifically on the implementation of the agreements reached. Probably, the reason for this was the fact that they were not formalized in the document – the leaders of both states sought, first of all, to demonstrate the achievement of political agreement on a number of issues and to stimulate more intensive joint work of the executive structures of the two countries. Despite this, both states have taken a number of steps after January 2021 on some points of agreements.

As for the work of the bilateral Presidential Council, after the first meeting between Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Maia Sandu, there was no information about its work from either side. However, in fact, both leaders maintained a constant dialogue both during 2021 and 2022. Maia Sandu attended the first summit of the Crimean Platform and the Independence Day of Ukraine in 2021. Volodymyr Zelenskyi also went to Chisinau to celebrate the Independence Day of Moldova, where he met with Maia Sandu, as well as with the Presidents of Poland and Romania. This is an important circumstance, given the intention of both leaders to integrate their states into the Three Seas Initiative, where the Polish and Romanian sides are active stakeholders. In December 2021, the Presidents of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova met within the framework of the sixth summit of the Eastern Partnership in Brussels. There, together with the Prime Minister of Georgia, they signed a joint declaration⁴ confirming their commitment to strengthening the political association and economic integration of the three states, in particular, they expressed their intention to coordinate the acquisition of the Copenhagen criteria for joining the EU. They also agreed that Kyiv, Chisinau and Tbilisi should jointly seek recognition by the European Union of the European perspective of the Associated Trio.

In the context of the dialogue between the two leaders and the item of agreements on mutual support in matters of regional security, it is worth mentioning that Maia Sandu came to Kyiv in June 2022, already after the start of the full-scale invasion of Russia. The President of Ukraine

then noted the significance of this visit not only in view of the support of official Chisinau in a difficult time for the Ukrainian state but also in the context of both countries' acquiring the status of candidates for EU membership. After all, a few days before the arrival of Maia Sandu, the European Council supported the formal beginning of the movement of two states to the EU and defined the first list of requirements for this. Volodymyr Zelenskyi emphasized that the joint path to United Europe would bring Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova even closer. He also stated that states should exchange experience and coordinate their activities within the framework of European integration. This is an important remark, given that the European Commission is considering the accession of both countries to the EU in a package. The creation of a Ukrainian-Moldovan intergovernmental working group to coordinate European integration between Kyiv and Chisinau can be considered a continuation of these words. This format of cooperation was created after the visit of the Administration of the President of the Republic of Moldova's Secretary General Cristina Gherasimov to Kyiv and the subsequent visit of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova Natalia Gavrilă to the capital of Ukraine.

Before Maia Sandu's visit to Kyiv in June and after it in 2022, both Presidents expressed support for the territorial integrity of both countries. In particular, the leader of the Republic of Moldova emphasized⁵ this position while speaking in the European Parliament in the spring of this year. Volodymyr Zelenskyi also underlined⁶ this in December 2022. In this context, it should be added that the Republic of Moldova supports some restrictions against Russia in response to the Kremlin's aggression. In particular, the state closed the Moldovan airspace for Russian aircraft. At the same time, Maia Sandu also emphasized⁷ in

⁴ <https://www.euointegration.com.ua/articles/2021/12/15/7131622/>

⁵ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220517IPR29930/moldova-belongs-in-the-european-union-says-president-maia-sandu>

⁶ <https://detector.media/infospace/article/205907/2022-12-12-zelenskyi-v-intervyu-dlya-netflix-yakshcho-putin-pomre-viynazakinchytysya/>

⁷ <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/valentina-ursu-%C3%AEndialog-cu-pre%C8%99edinta-maia-sandu-radio-europaliber%C4%83/31781432.html>

April that her country could not introduce tough sanctions against Russia because it had a problematic situation in the energy sector. In particular, it depends on the supply of Russian gas and the generation of electricity at the Moldovan State District Power Plant (Moldovan SDPP), located in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, which the Kremlin controls. At the same time, the country's parliament passed⁸ a law banning the broadcasting of Russian channels. In addition, the Republic of Moldova has repeatedly provided⁹ humanitarian aid to Ukraine and sheltered¹⁰ more than 80,000 Ukrainian refugees.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Russia, the Republic of Moldova has not provided military assistance to Ukraine in any form. Obviously, Chisinau is unable to support Ukraine militarily due to its neutral status and small army capabilities. Moreover, the Republic of Moldova is just beginning¹¹ to review its defence potential with the support of Western partners. At the same time, the state is ready¹² to assist Ukraine in demining liberated territories. Also, the Republic of Moldova formally joined¹³ the Ramstein global coalition to support the defence of Ukraine. In addition, the Moldovan Information and Security Service monitors the processes in the Transnistrian region, helping the Ukrainian side to prevent threats from this direction (according¹⁴ to the agency, the danger from Russian troops and their proxies also exists for the Republic of Moldova itself). At the same time, during the aforementioned speech in the European Parliament, Maia Sandu said¹⁵ that she saw only a diplomatic way to reintegrate the Transnistrian region, although she called on the international community to help withdraw Russian troops from there. Finally, in December 2022, after several cases of Russian missiles launched at Ukraine flying over Moldovan airspace and falling on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, the heads of the two states' governments agreed¹⁶ to cooperate in air defence and maintain a dialogue on peace and security in the Transnistrian region.

In the context of the next item of agreements between Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Maia Sandu, it should be mentioned that in 2021, the construction of a new highway between Kyiv and Chisinau was started. In August 2021, the nation-

al Ukrainian road operator Ukravtodor announced¹⁷ the start of preparatory work for the construction of a bridge across the Dniester, as well as the start of repair work on the Mohyliv-Podilskyi – Yampil – Bershada – Uman approach road. At that time, the company said the bridge would be completed by the end of 2022. In February 2022, literally a week before the start of a full-scale invasion of Russia, Ukravtodor announced¹⁸ the actual start of construction of the bridge. At the same time, a new deadline for the completion of the works was mentioned – 2 years. The start of a full-scale war postponed the implementation of this project – there were no continuation of it and information about completing the work in 2023. However, both states did not abandon the initiative in general.

At a meeting in December 2022, the Prime Ministers of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova concluded¹⁹, in particular, that an intergovernmental agreement on the construction of a bridge across the Dniester would be signed by the middle of 2023. Considering the fact that work on the construction of the object on the Ukrainian side started in 2021, the formal conclusion of the document on the bridge two years later seems to be a fact of the uncoordinated positions of the two states on this issue. However, certainly, in December 2022, Kyiv and Chisinau showed interest in this project and took an important step towards its implementation. Although the Republic of Moldova has not taken steps to build a highway between the two capitals on Moldovan territory since January 2021. It is important to add that in the future, both states should coordinate the joint development of logistics connections within the framework of EU integration, as well as the transformation of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), announced by the European Commission and supported by the European Council.

As for the export of Ukrainian electricity to Moldova, in the summer of 2022, the Ukrainian company Energoatom announced²⁰ the start of supplies to the neighbouring country. This was important for the Republic of Moldova in the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine, as well as Russia's blackmail of Chisinau due to gas supply interruptions and the use of captured Moldovan energy facilities on the left bank of the Dniester. However, this cooperation was made difficult, if not impossible, due to the massive missile attacks on Ukrainian energy facilities by the Russian army. From October 2022, Ukraine stopped exporting electricity. The Republic of Moldova also had problems with balancing its electricity grid due to mass disconnections of consumers in Ukraine caused by Russian airstrikes. Finally, in December 2022, the Moldovan energy operator

8 <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/06/20/moldova-bans-russian-media-to-counter-propaganda-over-ukraine/>

9 <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2022/05/19/7139667/>

10 <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3628874-moldova-i-nadali-garantuvati-bezpeku-i-dobrobut-dla-ponad-80-tisac-ukrainciv-premer.html>

11 <https://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/moldova-poluchit-ot-evropeyskogo-oboronnogo-fonda-e40-mln-na-uvichelichenie-voennogo-byudzhet/>

12 <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2022/05/4/7138895/>

13 <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2022/06/15/7141330/>

14 <https://tvr.moldova.md/article/a35b0916fd4f7829/ultima-ora-federatia-rusa-ar-avea-in-plan-sa-invadeze-si-r-moldova-la-inceputul-anului-2023.html#.Y6BJM8KHP20.facebook>

15 <https://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/political/833185.html>

16 <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/ukraina-ta-moldova-domovylysia-spivpratsiuvaty-v-pytniakh-ppo-ta-pokrashchyty-trykordonnyi-kontrol-dens-shmyhal>

17 <https://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2021/08/16/676934/>

18 <https://vn.20minut.ua/Podii/mist-cherez-dniester-u-yampoli-buduyut-tsilodobovo-uzhe-zminili-chas-v-11519854.html>

19 <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/ukraina-ta-moldova-domovylysia-spivpratsiuvaty-v-pytniakh-ppo-ta-pokrashchyty-trykordonnyi-kontrol-dens-shmyhal>

20 <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-economy/3498960-ukraina-vidzavtra-pocne-postacati-elektriku-u-moldovu.html>

Energocom signed²¹ an agreement to supply electricity from the Moldovan SDPP. Also in this context, Romania increased²² electricity exports to the Republic of Moldova. Amid Russian attacks and a critical situation with the generation and supply of electricity in Ukraine, cooperation between Kyiv and Chisinau in this component has been put on hold. However, the very fact of agreements between Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Maia Sandu regarding this area of bilateral relations had great political significance. This demonstrated the desire of the Moldovan authorities to get rid of energy dependence on Russia and Russian proxies and the readiness of the Ukrainian side to help its partners in this. And even despite the difficult situation, in the summer of 2022, the parties were able to take practical steps in this direction.

According to the fifth item of the agreements between Maia Sandu and Volodymyr Zelenskyi – to resolve the contradictions surrounding the operation of the Dniester hydroelectric plant on the Ukrainian-Moldovan border – there was no noticeable progress in 2021 and 2022. The parties did not report on the meetings of specialists on the environmental aspect of this issue and did not complete the demarcation of the border and agreement on property rights on the border. This aspect of the dialogue between the two Presidents directly concerns the “package agreements” from 2011, the implementation of which also did not make any significant changes in 2021 and 2022.

In the spring of 2021, the lack of a final decision on these issues almost led to an unpleasant incident at the local level. After completing the administrative and territorial reform in Ukraine, the Reni City Council in Odesa Oblast of Ukraine announced²³ that according to its general plan, part of the Danube coastline near the port of Giurgiulești belongs to it. This territory was transferred to the Republic of Moldova in 1992 in exchange for Ukraine’s ability to use the road in the area of the Moldovan village of Palanka. This situation did not lead to a conflict between the two states – after that, the Reni City Council had not expressed its position on this issue anymore. However, the two states need to complete border delimitation and settle ownership issues to avoid similar disputed situations in the future.

Although it is worth noting that in some components of the “package agreements” there have been positive steps in recent years. In particular, the reconstruction of the checkpoints on the Ukrainian-Moldovan border “Kuchurgan – Pervomaisk” and “Reni – Giurgiulești” was completed. Traffic is currently suspended at the first of them due to the threat of Russian troops invading Ukraine from the territory of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. It is also worth adding that at the meeting in December, Prime

Ministers Denys Shmyhal and Natalia Gavrilița agreed²⁴ to continue removing administrative and procedural barriers for the free movement of people and goods between the two countries. This will not be possible without improving mutual border services.

In the field of parity regulation of language and other rights of national minorities, which was the sixth item of the agreements between Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Maia Sandu, a contradictory situation has developed. In December 2022, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a new law on national minorities (communities). The draft of this regulatory act was discussed by the public and experts as early as 2021. In June 2022, the European Commission, together with a recommendation to grant Ukraine the status of a candidate for EU accession, presented a list of requirements for the state, fulfilling which it could move to the next stage of accession. Among them was the adoption of the law on national minorities. At that time, representatives of Hungary demanded such actions.

When the law was passed by the Ukrainian parliament in December 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania opposed it. Official Bucharest stated²⁵ that the law does not meet the recommendations of the Venice Commission, does not take into account a number of aspects of ensuring the rights of national minorities, and that it was adopted without consultation with representatives of the Romanian community in Ukraine. There were no statements from the Republic of Moldova regarding the document. At the same time, the Moldovan parliament did not adopt or discuss any normative acts regarding national minorities in 2021 and 2022, although this was foreseen by the agreements of Maia Sandu and Volodymyr Zelenskyi.

De facto, Romania is a party to the dialogue between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova regarding the rights of national minorities. And the Romanian ethnolinguistic community also affects the relations of the Ukrainian authorities with the Moldovan community in Ukraine. Having ratified the European Charter for Regional and Minorities Languages in 2005, the Ukrainian state undertook the obligations²⁶ to protect the linguistic rights of the Romanian and Moldovan communities in particular. In this way, the authorities of Ukraine recognized the existence of the languages of both communities. For a long time, the Romanian state insists that the Moldovan language does not exist, and the Romanian language is spoken in the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, in Chisinau itself, there was an ambiguous position on this issue during the last decades. However, after the ascension of Maia Sandu to the post of President, the Moldo-

21 <https://suspilne.media/331108-moldova-pidpisala-kontrakt-pro-postacanna-elektroenergii-z-neviznanogo-pridnistrova/>

22 <https://suspilne.media/324462-rumunia-zaavila-pro-gotovnist-nadali-postacati-moldovi-elektroenergii/>

23 <https://izbirkom.org.ua/news/politika-8/2021/meriya-reni-gotyetsya-visunuti-pretenziyi-moldovi/>

24 <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/ukraina-ta-moldova-domovylysia-spivpratsiuvaty-v-pytanniakh-ppo-ta-pokrashchyty-prykordonnyi-kontrol-denyshmyhal>

25 <https://www.mae.ro/node/60649>

26 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=declarations-by-treaty&numSte=148&codeNature=10&codePays=U>

van authorities began to demonstrate that they want to achieve clarity on this issue and resolve the dispute with Romania regarding it.

At the same time, Ukraine unwittingly becomes a participant in the conversation between Bucharest and Chisinau about language and identity. In particular, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Bogdan Aurescu, has repeatedly stated²⁷ to his Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Kuleba in recent years that official Kyiv should recognize the Moldovan language does not exist. In the fall of 2022, the Romanian official once again emphasized²⁸ this request to the Ukrainian side, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, Nicu Popescu, noted that the spoken language in his country is Romanian.

This dispute has a practical dimension for the Ukrainian state. After the adoption of the law on education in 2017, schools teaching in the languages of national minorities in Ukraine had to increase the percentage of teaching in the Ukrainian language. Soon, the Ministry of Education and Science made a temporary exception (until 2023) for schools in which education takes place in EU languages. Their list includes Romanian, but not the so-called Moldovan. In Odesa Oblast, there were many schools in which representatives of the Moldovan national minority study and which the Ukrainian state considers “Moldovan-speaking”. They were supposed to increase the percentage of teaching in Ukrainian faster than Romanian-language schools. In the spring of 2021, this collision became the reason for some organizations of the Romanian national minority to file²⁹ a lawsuit against the Ministry of Education and Science.

²⁷ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2021/11/5/7313007/>

²⁸ <https://dumskaya.net/news/zustrich-shistoh-ministriv-v-odesi-spilnopracy-168750/ua/>

²⁹ <https://suspilne.media/120451-sud-vidkriv-provadzenna-u-spravi-pro-rumunsku-movu-v-skolah-odesini/>

3

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TWO PRESIDENTS REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2021 AGREEMENTS

The Russian invasion of Ukraine complicated the implementation of several agreements between Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Maia Sandu of January 2021. However, the realities of 2022 have not cancelled but emphasized that strategic and trusting relations between Kyiv and Chisinau should be preserved and developed. During the last year, both states have confirmed that even amid significant challenges, they are interested in new joint initiatives. Considering that the agreements between the Presidents of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova in 2021 gave new impetus to bilateral relations, intensive dialogue between the two leaders should be maintained. However, it is worth considering some points that could improve the quality of cooperation at the highest level and adapt it to new security and political conditions:

- In the dialogue between the two Presidents, the list of priorities for bilateral cooperation should be adjusted. At the moment, the main common interests of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova in the short term are the implementation of reforms for joining the European Union (in the field of justice, the quality of work of which remained a problem for both states, as well as others determined by the European Commission) and the creation of new regional security mechanisms. Both Presidents could be more active in joint communication in the international arena regarding the need for accelerated accession of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to the EU (not only at the level of European institutions but also at the level of advocating interests with the member states) and regarding broad international initiatives that would give new security instruments to both countries.
- Given the level of understanding reached between the institutions of the Presidents of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, it is expedient for the leaders of the two states to jointly encourage international players to more actively participate in ensuring regional security and pressure Russia to withdraw its troops from Ukraine and the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, taking into account the limited capabilities of official Chisinau in security matters and the unpreparedness of the current Moldovan authorities to take radical steps in resolving the Transnistrian threat, official Kyiv should remain a proactive actor in the dialogue regarding security and peace in/from the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova.
- Comprehensive transport and energy initiatives should be the subject of new agreements between the Presidents of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. Such projects should ensure the development of bilateral relations and common prosperity in the long term. Today, when both countries are jointly moving towards the EU, they need a unified vision of the goals and methods of renewing the transport infrastructure, which is of common interest. It is not just about updating a single highway, but about a comprehensive approach to project planning. It is also important in view of the prospect of access to more European funding instruments for initiatives. In the same way, both countries need a common vision of creating a new energy network (primarily electric) and rethinking the old one (such as the Trans-Balkan gas transport corridor). The presidents of both countries are not responsible for the development of such projects, but they can give political impetus to their creation and implementation.
- Considering the previous two points, the Presidents of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova could become political guarantors of the development of a list of priority projects, the implementation of which could be financed by international investment instruments (primarily within the framework of the EU, but not only). In the future, state leaders could be lobbyists for similar projects in the international arena. The future reconstruction of Ukraine should also be coordinated with joint Ukrainian-Moldovan projects.
- The presidents of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova need to give new impetus to the implementation of the agreements of 2021 and the “package agreements” of 2011 between the governments of the two countries, at least to prevent their implementation from being stopped by security challenges. The two previous years have demonstrated that understanding between Kyiv and Chisinau at the highest level is a prerequisite for the intensification of bilateral cooperation. It is necessary to use the current level of trust between the heads of both

states in order to create stable mechanisms for effective cooperation in various fields.

- Decisions in the field of national minorities' rights, which were the subject of agreements of January 2021, should be mutual. Since the Ukrainian side is reforming its ethnopolitical legislation in accordance with the recommendations of the European Commission, it

should coordinate its activities with its Moldovan partners. Official Chisinau, for its part, should also take appropriate steps in this area. At the same time, the Moldovan side should reach a final compromise with Romania regarding language and identity so that Ukraine does not become a party to the conceptual dispute between Bucharest and Chisinau.

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ADAPTIVE PARTNERSHIP: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE PRESIDENTS OF UKRAINE AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA OF JANUARY 2021



The agreements between the Presidents of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova of January 2021 declared the resumption of dialogue between the two states regarding strategic partnership and resolution of problematic issues at the highest level.



The implementation of some tasks stipulated in the agreements between Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Maia Sandu, such as the construction of a modern highway between Kyiv and Chisinau, was postponed due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, in general, the parties maintain an interest in deepening the partnership, which is very important for both states amid threats from the Kremlin.



The dialogue at the highest level between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, revived in January 2021, did not stop because of the Russian invasion. However, the strategic partnership between the two states needs adaptation to new political conditions, in particular, paying more attention to solving urgent issues of bilateral cooperation: in security, European integration and energy domains.