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Moldova, Enclave of Eastern Europe: A Political Safety Risk of the EU

Both the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the enlargement of the European Union have essentially rearranged the political map of Eastern Europe. As a result of this process, Moldova has become an independent state and, with Romania's EU membership, one of the countries neighboring the European Union. Prior to conducting my research, I would have described the country as one of the poorest European states, but my personal experience has led me to believe that the state is more controversial than it is poor. Here is a state in which a configuration that is not acknowledged by anyone operates (Transnistria). The river Dniester is controlled by Moldovan and Russian peacekeeping forces; transit traffic is checked by customs and police. Moldovan citizens drive western cars with Transnistrian number plates because of high registration fees, yet the 100–200 Euro per month is the lowest average European income compared with those in Europe. (Moldovan statistical data is usually far from reliable. More than one million citizens live and work abroad.) Unlike in the Soviet era, motor vehicles are mainly of western make and most of them are expensive Jeeps. This contradicts the country's great poverty – one cannot fail to notice the marked difference. (During my 150-kilometer-long journey from the border to the capital, there was public lighting only every once in a while.) The same discrepancy is underscored again when the traditional modest country houses with their nice flowery gates, the blue walls and the ornamental wells are juxtaposed with the houses, cottages that are being built around Kishinev. Another thing also leads one

to stop and reflect: the shops in the big cities and those in the capital. There are a wide selection of goods and a large number of costumers; The Metro department store is highly popular, and it seems that every other building on the main road exchanges currency. It is easy to assume that the money sent home by the numerous Moldovan citizens living in foreign countries must eminently account for these scenes.

In order to apply for a job, Moldovan nationals must enter and stay in the European Union and the CIS legally, but quite frequently, they attempt to enter these states illegally. Moldovans were caught along the Hungarian border several times.

The aforementioned things motivated me to examine Moldova as a migration-issuing country, to analyze her border-connections and relationships as well as experiences of illegal migration. In order to do so, it is essential to present both the conditions that led to this situation and – due to the fact that the country is less well-known – a geographical analysis of Moldovan society.¹

The events in Moldovan political life are diverse and rapidly changing. As a country that has recently gained its independence, Moldova has to face the problems of young nation-states. Most notably, it has to deal with the economic difficulties of Soviet succession states and with the “spying” attention of its Russian and Romanian “Big Brothers.” Based on population and area, Moldova can be called a small state, but because of the Transnistrian problems, it is of outstanding geopolitical importance. At the beginning of the third millennium, Moldovan political leaders have been thinking about political transformation, and they seem to be oriented toward the EU and the USA. At the same time, Moldova knows its dependence on Russia determines its political position.

Because of economic decline and the low standard of living, the majority of Moldovan citizens search for and find jobs in foreign countries. This process accounts for the significant differences found in statistical surveys’ data. According to a population census, there are over 4 million inhabitants; a household survey examining town-village inhabitants showed only 3.5 million people.

¹ See: APPENDIX

Natural conditions

Moldova is situated on the south-western edge of the Eastern European plain. Its main border-rivers are the Dniester and the Prut. The republic can be divided into three main natural zones: forests, a wooded steppe, and a steppe. Three quarters of its surface is hilly; the hill-country is strongly broken up by rivers and streams. Its highest peak is 429 meters. Moldova's weather is influenced by the Carpathians. Due to this, winters are cold; summers are warm and dry, so plants that require large amounts of sunshine and heat can grow here with great success. The river water is used for irrigation. Grape cultivation and wine production are significant for Moldova.



Figure 1. Moldova's Socio-Geography²

Table 1

| Total area | | Agriculture | | Forest | | Nature reserve | | Others | |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|------|-----------------|------|-----------------|-----|-----------------|------|
| km ² | | km ² | % | km ² | % | km ² | % | km ² | % |
| 33,851 | | 25,557 | 75.5 | 4,229 | 12.5 | 664.5 | 2.0 | 3,450 | 10.0 |

Industrial conditions

Owing to the weather and favorable soil, Moldova is an agricultural country. Currently GDP per person is 2,100 USD while GNI is 2.6 billion.

² Rúdli József: *A Szovjetunió utódállamainak földrajza*. Budapest-Pécs: Dialóg Campus, 1999. 189–196.

23.4% of the GDP is produced by the agrarian sector, 21.4% by industry, and 55.2% by the service sector. Annual economic growth is approximately 6% of the GDP.³ Agricultural fields can be found between the rivers Dniester and Prut while industrial units are mostly situated east of the Dniester. Industrial units aim to satisfy agricultural demands, and their dual-heat power stations operate on Ukrainian coal and Russian gas.

The Moldovan economy is influenced by the fact that the country used to produce for Soviet markets (more specifically, for Russian markets) and was, therefore, provided energy by these markets. It is difficult for the country to sell their tobacco, grape and wine in EU markets.

Population

Moldova is a multi-ethnic state. Within Moldova, there are 30 nationalities; the most significant ones are: Moldovans, Russians, Gagauzs, and Jews. The present population is about 4.45 million. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, important changes have taken place in the populations' ethnic structure.

Table 2

| <i>Nationality</i> | <i>1989⁴</i> | <i>2004⁵</i> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Moldovan(Romanian) | 64.5% | 78.2% |
| Ukrainian | 13.8% | 8.4% |
| Russian | 13.0% | 5.8% |
| Gagauz | 3.5% | 4.4% |
| Other (Turkish, Bulgarian, Jewish...) | 3.8% | 3.2% |
| Total population | 4,335,360 | 4,455,421 |

Unlike European trends, this chart demonstrates that the Moldovan population continues to grow and, at the same time, that its ethnic structure continues to change. The reasons for this are: the civil war along the

³ Rácz András: Végtelen történet – a Moldova-Transznyisztria konfliktus. In Marton Péter (ed.): *Államok és államkudarcok a globalizálódó világban*. Budapest: TLI-KTK, 2006. 148.

⁴ The last Soviet census statistics

⁵ Since the competence of the first Moldovan census in 2004 could not be validated on Transnistrian territories, this is estimated data.

territories on the Dniester and its consequences, deportations and emigrations. Another reason is that people have changed nationalities according to their interests. It has become “fashionable” to be a Moldovan.

Conditions of environment and soil

Environmental protection conditions in Moldova are similar to those in other post-Soviet countries. More problematic areas and situations arise every day. Polluted institutions are not recorded. Seed protectives are often used. With official permits, the country exports 10 thousand tons of seed protective and inorganic artificial fertilizer. Another 6 thousand tons of seed protective are imported illegally. The usage of seed protective has been reduced over the past few years. Every year, stock-breeders produce about 8.5 tons of waste, and their influence on the surrounding environment is not yet clear.

In 1994, Moldova’s communal waste was 1.6 million m³; Kishinev on its own produced 862 thousand m³. The amount of liquid communal waste can be estimated at 500,000 m³. Using the average volume weight to calculate, 800,000 tons of solid communal waste (SDR) is produced in the country, and in Kishinev, this number is 300,000 tons – which means 400kg per person.

Moldova’s main natural resources are represented by the soil. 80% of Moldovan land is covered with chernozem, 11.4% by brown and grey forest soil, and 8.6% by meadow soil. Because of the deterioration of the soil between 1960 and 1980, its agricultural area was reduced from 70% to 65% in the northern part of the country and from 65–70% to 50% in the middle. Eroded territories increased from 30% to 35% in the north and from 30–35% to 35–50% in the middle and the south. Soil productivity is primarily reduced by erosion. The size of eroded territories is 1,205 thousand hectares (i.e. 80%) of arable lands while 780,000 hectares are covered with moderately and strongly eroded soil.

The borders of Moldova and her border protection

During the Soviet era, border protection was carried out by the Soviet Union Border Guard that was subordinate to the KGB. Attention was focused on the Soviet Union’s external borders while the borders between Soviet Union member states were neglected – these borders were not even

marked. (This does not highly problematic even today, as is evidenced by Ukrainian-Russian relations.) After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, young states that had just gained their independence paid outstanding attention to the designation and protection of their ex-common borders as well as to the arrangement of their border traffic control.

Moldova borders Romania in the west and the Ukraine to the north-east. The Romanian border is 68 kilometers long; the Ukrainian is 1,222 kilometers – half being a land border, the other half being a water border. The inviolability of the borders is protected every day by 500–600 Moldovan border guards while its air-space is defended by the anti-aircraft of the Ministry of Defense. The Moldovan peculiarity, the Transnistrian Moldovan interest-zone is 453.4 kilometers long and is mainly located on the Dniester river. From Moldova, we first come across a Moldovan customs and police check; at the river's bridges, we encounter first a Moldovan and then a Russian peace-keeping patrol. On the other side of the river, another peace-keeping patrol is on duty. Cars heading for Transnistria can enter freely while those traveling to Moldova must undergo a customs check. Moldova takes care not to have any border guards in this area since it would mean that this interest-zone is understood as a state border.

The Chief Administration of the Border Guard led by Brigadier General Igor Kolenov,⁶ an ex-KGB officer, is directly subordinate to the government. It is responsible for state border protection as well as for observance of the laws and international treaties involving borders. The Border Guard consists of approximately 5,000 troops – two-thirds of which are conscripts and one-third that is contractual professional soldiers. This proportion is due to the following: after the collapse of the Soviet Union, KGB border-guard troops that had been stationed in external territory were withdrawn from the newly independent states, including Moldova. The armament, the buildings, the equipment and other service objects left behind were taken over by the states concerned. Every fifth professional border guard of the ex-Soviet Union agreed to work in some stations and border crossings regulated by the Moldovan Border Guards, which had been established in 1992. At several border crossings, all service tasks and all responsibility of border defense is undertaken by one or two ensigns. In 1993, illegal goods totaling more than 20 million Rubles were found.

⁶ <http://www.granicer.moldova.md/>

Since there were no laws determining the exact rights and duties of the Border Guard, border protection was even more difficult. A Moldovan law about state borders was passed in 1994, and the following year, the president presented a regimental standard to the Border Guard. In 1995 more than 5,000 border-violations were prevented. The Moldovan Border Guard was reorganized into the Chief Administration of the Border Guard, and a year later, it was seceded from the Ministry of National Security and became an independent organization. The protection of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border⁷ started in 2001. Although agreed upon in theory, the Ukrainian-Moldovan border was unable to be designated because of financial difficulties.

After the Ukrainian “Orange” revolution, Moldova also reviewed its relationship with Moscow and sought ties with the European Union. As a result, EU-assisted training projects that aimed at border defense were launched. Hungarian experts⁸ also have a role in these projects, and under the supervision of Iurie Renita – the manager of the “Development of the Moldovan Border Check System” program – some Moldovan border guards and customs officers were able to participate in study-tours of Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia.⁹

A characteristic feature of the Moldovan maintenance of order is that illegal trespassers, refugees and alien smugglers are dealt with not only by Border Guards but also by the police, the Office of Migration and the Centre of Trafficking in Human Beings – all of which is directly subordinate to the government.

Moldovan-Ukrainian, Moldovan-Romanian and Moldovan-Russian relations

Moldovan-Ukrainian relations

Ukraine borders Moldova in a semicircular arch along Moldova’s northern and eastern borders. Both historic and more recent events have left their marks on this relationship. The fact that they used to belong

⁷ Dr. József Deák’s kind communication.

⁸ Today: Otto Ritter – the Hungarian border guard colonel, member of the Euro-Atlantic Advisory Council, and a consultant of the GUAM program – contributes to the modernization of Georgia’s, Ukraine’s, Azebaidzhan’s and Moldova’s border protection programs.

⁹ The program means the development of the border control system.

to one community and that their independence is a consequence of the Soviet Union's dissolution has determined the scope of both countries' foreign policies and internal affairs. After the example of the Baltic States, the Ukrainian "Orange" revolution provided Moldova a model for loosening Russia's influence. At the same time, both parties could experience Russian retaliation through its weapon of choice, energy. Additionally, the border defense of both countries is being re-organized with EU funds. All of these developments place Moldova and Ukraine in comparable (and compatible) situations.

Since there are many Ukrainians living there, the issue of Transnistria plays a dominant role in relationship between Moldova and Ukraine. Many people in Transnistria trade illegally¹⁰ for a living, and a focal point in the fight against organized crime and corruption¹¹ is the common border and the area surrounding Odessa.

Not only does Ukraine have a direct economic and political relationship with Moldova, but along with Georgia, Uzbekistan and Azerbaidzhan it is also attempting to revive GUAM.¹²

The Ukrainian-Moldovan border connections are determined by the 2005 customs co-operation agreement, which came into force on 1st

¹⁰ The Border Guard of Moldova, a country situated in the south-eastern part of Europe. The EU and the Development Program of the United Nations assist this program by providing 2.5 million dollars in funds. The deputy leader of the EU mission in Odessa said the following about illegal trade: *"weapon and ammunition business showing good returns in the mid-nineties has come to an end. It is well-known that weapons and component parts are still produced in the Dniester region, but their delivery would be especially hazardous with the border European Union monitoring service being present in the area. Illegal chicken trade may bring an enormous profit and criminals consider fruit and vegetable smuggling remunerative. Local authorities are also involved. Frozen poultry is imported legally by people along the Dniester region, mainly from the USA and Brazil. One ton of frozen meat costs 150 Euros. Then it is smuggled into Ukraine, where one tons costs 900 Euros. According to mission calculations, smuggling this huge meat surplus imported into Transnistria brings a profit of 5 million Euros thus causing Ukraine a damage of more than 40 million Euros. With the aid of the mission, Ukrainian authorities were able to confiscate more than 200 tons of chicken meat in the border lane."*

¹¹ According to a 2005 International survey, only Byelorussia, Macedonia, Russia, Serbia-Montenegro and Ukraine are ahead of Moldova in Europe in terms of corruption.

¹² GUAM stands for Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaidzan, and Moldova. In 2002, the leaders of GUAM states signed the first official document that determined the two main trends of formal co-operation. One is the development of trade and transport; the other is the fight against cross-border organized crime.

January 2006 and became effective in practice two or three months later. The essence of this agreement is that goods transported by rail or by road from Transnistria to Ukraine can leave Moldova only in the case of Moldovan control and with a customs stamp. In order to enforce the agreement, Transnistrian firms have – if a bit reluctantly – begun to register in Kishinev.

Romanian-Moldovan relations

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Romania has expressed its intention to unite with Moldova several times. This, however, has been rejected by a Moldovan referendum. During the war in Transnistria, Romanians actively assisted¹³ Moldovans; they then withdrew because of Russian- Moldovan differences. Moldovan politicians did not view these Romanian efforts as unification but rather as annexation. At the same time, many Moldovans (approximately 4,000–6,000 people)¹⁴ have dual citizenship.¹⁵ The exact number with dual citizenship is next to impossible to determine because those who are able to do so (e.g. the Romanian Ministry of the Interior) remain silent.¹⁶ Therefore, only rough estimates based on indirect publications can be made. During my research in Romanian and Moldovan areas, I was not able to acquire either clear or definite data nor was I able to obtain information about issuance of dual citizenship – which ultimately gave rise to doubt.¹⁷

There is a series of events that definitely illustrate how the present situation arose. The question is the following: when Romania ascends to the EU and then to Schengen, what future do these two states imagine for themselves? Romania would like to participate in the area's political

¹³ Orvos Jenő: Kis ország nagy geopolitikai jelentőséggel: Moldova. *Hallgatói Közlemények*, Vol. IX, Nr. 1–2. 2006.18.

¹⁴ Orvos, 18.

¹⁵ During border traffic control, the Border Guard of Romania checks both the Romanian and the Moldovan passports of the Moldovan citizens, but it stamps only the Romanian passport so people having a dual citizenship can save the EU visa.

¹⁶ Exact data would make it more difficult for Romania to end the discussion.

¹⁷ To address its internal and justice affairs during the EU accession respectively, Moldovans were allowed to apply for a Romanian passport in Bucharest since a Romanian passport allows them to enter the EU without a visa; they can be employed within Romania, and afterwards, they simply forget to return home. (The author's own source and experience)

rearrangement, as proved by its intention to be present at the resolution of Transnistrian conflict.

The identification of Moldovan-Romanian dual citizenship is simplified by a person's birth place and, in case of motor vehicle travel, by the registration document's data. In the latter case, a Transnistrian plate can be very disturbing. (Moldovans especially like to use Transnistrian plates because of the area's reduced registration fees.)

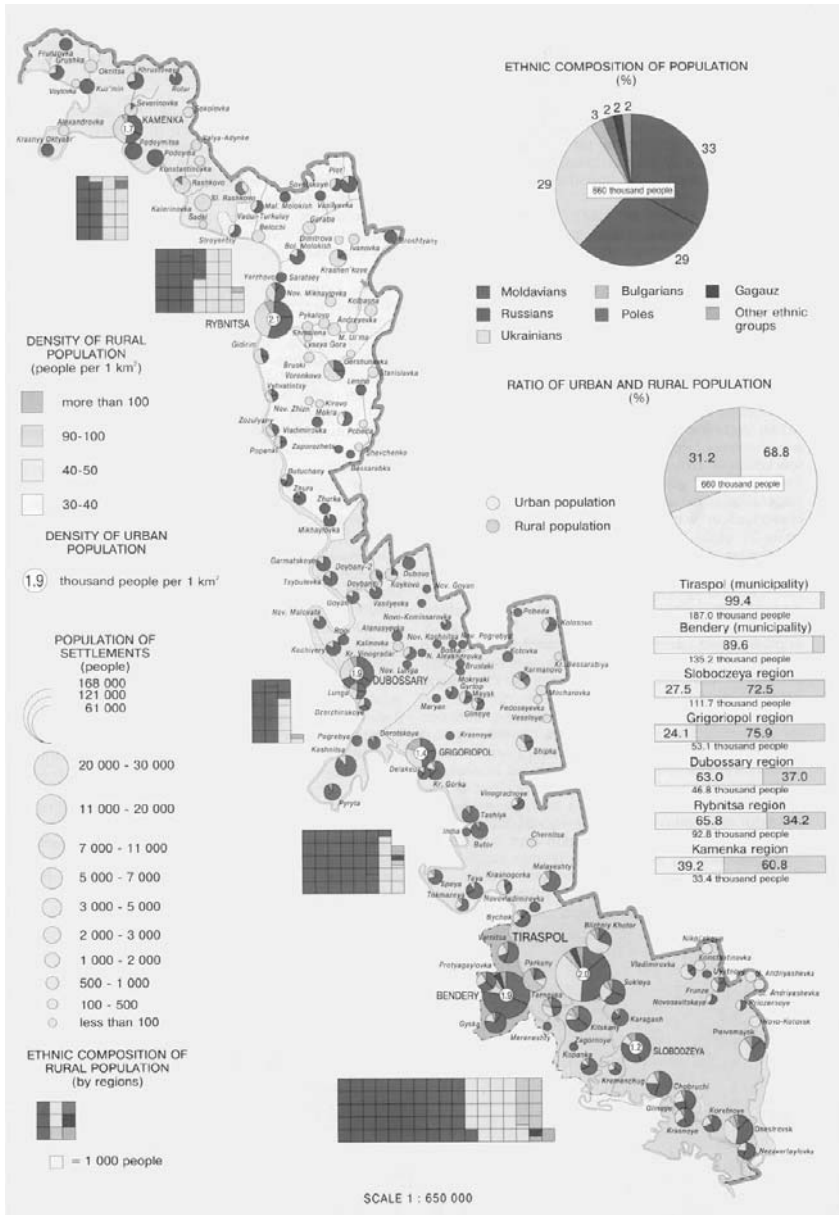
Moldovan-Russian relations



Since 1990, the Transnistrian conflicts have played a dominant political role. Russians had promised to withdraw from the Dniester area, but they have stayed on and have, thus, clarified their intentions for all. Their response to Moldova's steps towards the EU and the USA (i.e. playing the energy card) might also be expected. Now that Transnistria lies under the Customs stamp blockade, I believe that sooner or

later the two countries will resolve their conflict. At the same time, one should not have any illusions about Russian foreign policy relinquishing one of its most westerly bastions so easily.

Brigadier Ferenc Bánfi, leader of the EU mission, said the following about the region: "It is undoubtedly true that one of the most important weapons and ammunition magazines of the 14th Soviet Army was left in the Dniester region with about 40 thousand tons of ammunition and weaponry, 19–20,000 tons of which is still there. It would be difficult to



say what has happened to those 20,000 tons disappearing meanwhile – and I do not feel like speculating. But one cannot help noticing that during 16 years organized crime became stronger; made a profit of immeasurable quantity and this profit keeps looking for its way.

Organized crime is similar to that all over the world, i.e. one part of the acquired profit is re-invested into illegal activity, another part is tried to be made legal. Let me tell you some examples reinforcing this: privatization; formation of legal business and socialized organized crime, which, because of the EU mission present in the area, means that being involved in the illegal weapons trade is the same as suicide considering the existing customs system. I am absolutely sure about one thing: if the illegal weapons trade was going on in bulk, we would track it down, so this kind of activity simply does not exist at the moment. At the same time, criminals' hunger for profit obviously has not changed, so they keep looking for new, less risky chances that have the same profit rate. Nowadays this field seems to be represented mostly by food and some industrial product smuggling activities. Drug trade also works, of course.”

Moldovans and illegal trade

In the preceding pages, I introduced the geographical, historical, social, economic and political relations of Moldova and its surroundings. All this demonstrated that in the hope of a better life – in order to solve their bread and butter worries – Moldovans look to both the west and the east to exploit their opportunities or illegally cross the borders to achieve their aims.

Today, Moldova does not directly border the EU, so Moldovans arrive in our country from Ukraine and Romania. Data from the recent past demonstrates that statistics can be made to speak in multiple directions. Official reports distinguish a difference between Moldovan and Romanian citizens, but at the same time, it is uncertain whether or not a Romanian perpetrator is a Romanian citizen living in Romania. This is why I do think it would be a good practice to ask Romanian citizens their place of residence. (Table 3)

The Romanian-Moldovan dominance can be well understood from the above chart, which is thought-provoking in both cases. It is more than a simple concern that several thousand Romanian citizens have been sent back from the border in the two years following the introduction of a visa

exemption. Statistics demonstrate an increase in the number of Moldovan citizens, with whom one must also reckon later. (Table 4.)

Table 3. The primary citizenship categories of those sent back from the border¹⁸

| <i>Citizen ship</i> | <i>01.01. 2004 – 30.10. 2004</i> | <i>If total = 100%</i> | <i>01.01.2005 – 31.10.2005</i> | <i>If total = 100%</i> | <i>Change</i> | <i>Change in percentage</i> |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------|--|------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Romanian | 6,646 | 31% | 6,067 | 36% | -579 | -9% |
| Ukrainian | 4,145 | 19% | 4,084 | 24% | -61 | -1% |
| Serbia- Montenegrin | 3,889 | 18% | 1,787 | 11% | -2,102 | -54% |
| Moldovan | 616 | 3% | 758 | 5% | 142 | 23% |
| Bosnian | 813 | 4% | 560 | 3% | -253 | -31% |
| Turkish | 586 | 3% | 476 | 3% | -110 | -19% |
| Stateless | 567 | 3% | 432 | 3% | -135 | -24% |
| Bulgarian | 462 | 2% | 340 | 2% | -122 | -26% |
| Russian | 455 | 2% | 336 | 2% | -119 | -26% |
| Unknown | 183 | 1% | 280 | 2% | 97 | 53% |
| Other | 3,327 | 15% | 1,671 | 10% | -1,656 | -50% |
| Total | 21,689 | | 16,791 | | -4,898 | -23% |

When compared to the same period in the previous year, it is possible to see that migration activities have increased by 90% on the EU external Hungarian borders whereas it has decreased by 8% on its internal borders. Due to the efficient growth of depth-migration, the net number of activities revealed in the depth of the country, mainly in Budapest, has remarkably increased (by 39%). The majority of these cases were alien-policing, petty offences. Cases on the external-borders have already remarkably and permanently exceeded those on the internal-borders.

¹⁸ Data base of the Border Guard

Table 4. The citizenship categories of those committing illegal migration¹⁹

| <i>Citizen ship</i> | <i>01.01. 2004 – 30.10. 2004</i> | <i>If total = 100%</i> | <i>01.01.2005 – 31.10.2005</i> | <i>If total = 100%</i> | <i>Change</i> | <i>Change in percentage</i> |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------|--|------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Romanian | 3,892 | 36% | 6,841 | 47 | 2,949 | 76% |
| Ukrainian | 1,769 | 16% | 4,228 | 29 | 2.459 | 139% |
| Serbia- Montenegrin | 762 | 7% | 840 | 6 | 78 | 10% |
| Moldovan | 1,608 | 15% | 650 | 4 | -958 | -60% |
| Hungarian | 311 | 3% | 368 | 3 | 57 | 18% |
| Turkish | 262 | 2% | 220 | 2 | -42 | -16% |
| Bulgarian | 122 | 1% | 110 | 1 | -12 | -10% |
| Bangladeshi | 13 | 0% | 105 | 1 | 92 | 708% |
| Unknown | 99 | 1% | 102 | 1% | 3 | 3% |
| Georgian | 314 | 3% | 97 | 1% | -217 | -69% |
| Other | 1,599 | 15% | 925 | 6% | -674 | -42% |
| Total | 10,751 | | 14,486 | | 3,735 | 35% |

Examining the nationality of those involved in illegal activities and primarily referring to illegal migration, one must take notice of the dominance of Moldovan and Romanian citizens; this reinforces the experience described above. (Table 5)

As far as smuggling is concerned, Moldovan citizens have an even greater number. The region's situation is well-demonstrated by the fact that Ukrainians, who are in a similarly difficult position, are the first listed in the tableau. It would be worth an overall study to examine why those small buses leaving periodically on Thursday afternoons cross the Ukrainian-Hungarian border at Záhony, at Beregsurány and at the other western-eastern border crossing points.

¹⁹ Data base of the Border Guard

Table 5. Smuggled people's main citizenship categories²⁰

| <i>Citizen- ship</i> | <i>01.01.2004 – 30.10.2004</i> | <i>If total = 100%</i> | <i>01.01.2005 – 31.10.2005</i> | <i>If total = 100%</i> | <i>Change</i> | <i>Change in percentage</i> |
|--------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|----------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Ukrainian | 209 | 26% | 267 | 36% | 58 | 28% |
| Moldovan | 286 | 35% | 183 | 24% | -103 | -36% |
| Serbia- Montenegrin | 94 | 11% | 145 | 19% | 51 | 54% |
| Turkish | 114 | 14% | 50 | 7% | -64 | -56% |
| Indian | 12 | 1.5% | 26 | 3% | 14 | 117% |
| Other | 103 | 13% | 79 | 11% | -24 | -23% |
| Total | 818 | | 750 | | -68 | -8% |

According to the experience of the Border Guard of Hungary, Moldovan citizens²¹ usually want to go to Portugal, Spain, Italy and

²⁰ Data base of the Border Guard

²¹ The Moldovan situation can be illustrated by the following example: "At home I don't have a job so I decided to go to my friend living in Ferrara, Italy. I'll try to look for a job there. One cannot travel there legally with a visa – it is impossible to get an Italian visa. I knew the only way to get there is to go illegally. My friend helped me become acquainted with a man whose job it is to arrange getting to Italy illegally. He lives in Kishinev. There, at the Moscow motion picture theatre, I met one of his men. I could speak to the organizer only on the phone. He told me he would have me taken to Italy illegally by car; I had to pay 1,500 Euros for this. With his help and directions I met one of his men at Moscow cinema at the beginning of January. I was to give the money to this man. The man took the money and told me he would inform me when and from where I would leave on the telephone number given by me. I was fed with promises several times. They phoned me asking to travel to Kishinev as we were to leave, but departure was cancelled twice. On 25th January it was the third time I had gone to the capital. The man told me to take a bus there and travel to Romania. I was told I would be met at the bus station of Bucharest by people who will help me on. He asked me to be patient and do everything I was told or else I wouldn't get to Italy. At the bus station in Bucharest, no one was waiting for me. There were 9 of us travelling together from Kishinev. We were waiting there at the bus station for his men to come. On 28th January a man did come for us. He took us to a parking lot for juggernaut lorries at the edge of the town. We went on foot. In the parking lot all 9 of us got into the storage space of a lorry. It was dark at night when we got in. There were bricks with

Germany illegally; they travel mostly with the intention to find work. Their ability to find their way into the EU is made easier by the fact that, for example, in Italy it is easy to get a work permit.

The situation's rapid changes are illustrated by the fact that Italian diplomats have written about transit visas in connection with work permits in August while since 1 September 2006 Hungary has been acting on the decisions listed below on the basis of decisions made by the Government of the Hungarian Republic:²²

1. 895/2006/EK European Parliament and Council decision of 14 June 2006. It addresses the introduction of a simplified system of document checks and is based on the idea that at external-borders certain documents should be unilaterally recognized as equal to the national

a horizontal, long window of wire glass. Because of the wire glass we could not even look out. In the house there was one door painted yellowish. The house consisted of one room; there was neither a toilet nor a kitchen in it. We had no drinking water – it was brought to us every day by the man who took us there. We could only light with the aid of a candle. There were no beds in the building – we had to lie on the carpets and blankets on the cushion. We were allowed to go out in to the court toilet. It was about 10 metres from the house, and the lorry was parked in an unlit place next to the forest. I did not see what kind of lorry it was. I do not know what goods it was transporting either. We were travelling by the lorry about one night and one day. When we got out of the storage space, it was dark at night again. We stopped at a wooded part, on a gravelled road, if I remember well. All of us got out there. A man was already waiting for us. He was our guide in the forest. He took us to an empty, I would call uninhabited house. It could be found about 20 metres off the road. The area belonging to the house seemed to be taken good care of – the grass was mowed. The house was a rectangular building made of brick. We were told by the man that we could only leave the house to go to the toilet and not to go out in the street. He came to us every other day or three days and brought us some food and some drink. There was a phone in the house. We were told that the phone was there so that we could be contacted and told the orders. 9 of us lived in the house – those who are now here. Last night a man fetched us. He was young but I cannot say anything else about him since it was very dark. We were going on foot. We were going for about an hour, were going through a forest and across a road. Then we were waiting along a busy road in the forest. We were waiting for a juggernaut lorry to arrive. An hour later it did arrive. It drew aside. It was farther away from us. During the journey, I think, we stopped twice for a longer time. Before getting on the lorry, the man who had taken us there asked us to be quiet in the lorry. He also said he would take us to Italy. We had been travelling by the lorry from last night to the time we were caught.

²² Government Decree No. 178 of 23 August 2006, on the modification of the Decree on entry and residence of foreigners in Hungary.

visas of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia that are issued for transit journeys across their territories.

2. 896/2006/EK European Parliament and council decision of 14 June 2006. It is about the introduction of a simplified document check based on the fact that at external-borders certain residence permits and those issued by Switzerland and Lichtenstein for the purpose of transit journeys across their territories should be unilaterally recognized by the member states.

Due to the aforementioned decision, visa-free travel across the new EU member states – therefore, across Hungary as well – must also be made possible for Moldovan citizens who have a valid Schengen visa or a residence permit that is valid for the Schengen area, provided their transit journey is 5 days or less.

Those having a visa valid for a single entry must be permitted a visa-free transit journey, even when returning through new member state. News of this decision must have spread very quickly in Moldova since in a letter dated 6 September a Romanian police chief said that a large number of people not having transit visas want to cross the Romanian-Moldovan border continue to reference the above decision.

Possessing a residence permit allows one to enter at an external border-crossing. By the time a work or residence permit's validity is discovered, a Moldovan citizen can already on EU territory.

The Moldovan migration route characteristically enters Hungary from Romania, then crosses Budapest, moves towards the western border, and usually wants to exit the country at Hegyeshalom or in the general vicinity. In most cases, people entering Hungary legally possess a valid entry visa and travel by small buses or motor vehicles.

Illegal border crossings are arranged, technically speaking, in a peculiar way:

- Moldovan citizens enter Hungary with a valid visa. When leaving the country the driver, who generally has Hungarian citizenship, places the original passport of Moldovan migrants under his own passport and in the EU lane on the border presents the passports like this. If passports are checked, the Hungarian driver can go

- on and Moldovans who do not have a Schengen visa are simply turned back. Forerunners check the border control, and then in the second and third cars following them, there are 1–2 migrants.
- Foreigners are supplied with false passports valid for the Schengen territory of the EU. A known method of transporting is that legally arriving migrants are given false Spanish passports; they then cross the border on a ship that runs from Budapest at regular intervals. They travel as far as Vienna. From here, a Romanian citizen living in Vienna drives them towards Italy.
 - In Moldova, people wanting to travel to Schengen countries illegally are “gathered.” They are taken to Hungary through legal, organized, travel agency journeys and receive accommodation in Budapest or in its neighborhood. After a period, they are given false passports; alternatively, they must provide a photo and are then supplied with false passports with a substitution photo. These fake documents are usually Hungarian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Spanish or Polish. In official document forgery committed by Moldovan citizens, impostures and documents containing a substitute photo prevail.
 - Moldovan citizens can rest in workers’ hostels in Budapest; illegal border-crossing takes place on both green borders and at official border-crossings near Austria. In the latter case, they are hidden in the boots/trunks of motor vehicles, (sometimes in minibuses and lorries) or in a train’s buffet-car bunks.
 - The most recent method is that Moldovan citizens come to Hungary illegally. First, they travel legally through Romania; then in groups of 15–20, they are taken in minibuses from the Hungarian-Romanian border towards the Hungarian-Austrian border. In this type of transportation, Roma groups from Zala County also took part. According to their statements,²³ the Hungarian border is usually crossed on foot, sweeps round the border crossing points, and is primarily done on their own.
 - Moldovan citizens wishing to enter the EU illegally are quite often deceived by human-traffickers. Several interrogation reports can also prove this. The statement below illustrates this point:

²³ An internal publication of the Border Guard, 2005

“I found an advert in a newspaper, in which a man advertised himself as someone who can get visas for Moldovan citizens. I called the number. A person introducing himself as Ion told me to travel to Cluj since he could get me a visa in that city. When we got to Tirgu Mures, Ion phoned me once more telling me we were to go back to Cluj as the plan had been changed, adding that we could still go back to Cluj and meet so both of us went back. Then, as we could find no accommodation in a hotel, a taxi driver helped us to find a place to sleep. We spent two or three days there, and afterwards, because of Ion’s call we went to the bus station. Soon a white microbus arrived and we got in. When getting off a big man, who must have been the driver of the juggernaut, was waiting for us. On the way we stopped once to fill up our tank, but I do not know what happened at the petrol station. The sum was to have been paid in Italy by my elder sister.”

Illegal migrants leave Moldova through the following routes:

1. The most well-known is the Romanian route; this route is chosen when a person has a Moldovan or, because of a dual citizenship, a Romanian passport and can continue from Romania, either legally or illegally, in the direction of the EU.
2. The second most popular route is through Ukraine, Slovakia and Poland. They enter legally with Moldovan documents, and then with false documents made here, they turn towards the EU and attempt to enter.
3. The third route is directed towards the Baltic States. Here, they receive easily forgeable documents, and with the aid of these false documents, they try to obtain a job and stay in the EU.
4. The fourth route leads to Finland or across Russia to the Karelin Peninsula, from where they can go to an EU country.
5. The fifth route “specializes” in white-slave trafficking. It goes through Odessa to Turkey or the United Arab Emirates.

In Moldova, the Centre of Human Traffick²⁴ deals with human-smuggling cases. It was created with the assistance from the USA. The task of this centre is to investigate those who are involved in human trafficking as well as to discover their methods and document the cases. The modification of the Moldovan Penal Code ratified on 30 March qualifies

²⁴ 30 cases were revealed over the course of nine months.

human trafficking and illegal migration as crime and threatens imprisonment to those involved with them.

The Moldovan State has developed a national plan to reduce human trafficking and illegal migration. It involved police, customs, national security, border guard and attorney co-operators and other experts fighting against organized crime. The organization's efficiency is hindered by a lack of infrastructure.²⁵

It seems to be a Moldovan specialty that the Migration Center created in May 2006 deals not only with human trafficking but with migration, refugee²⁶ and expulsion cases as well.

Forces, devices on the banks of the Dniester

In the final days of the Soviet Union, Moldovan independence efforts increased as centralized power became weaker. In June 1990, the Moldovan Soviet Republic declared its sovereignty; this move relied on a majority of the population (then 64.5%) whose mother tongue was Romanian. Though Moscow denied the decision, elections were held. This step prompted an adverse reaction among Ukrainian and Russian ethnic groups, which at the time comprised 26% of Moldova's inhabitants and represented the majority of the urban population. They were afraid that an independent Moldova might wish to join Romania. By the middle of 1989 in the areas to the east of the Dniester, the first political and self-defense organizations for people of Russian origin had already been formed. The Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic declared its sovereignty in June 1990, and on 2 September 1990, the regions to the east of the Dniester established the Soviet Socialist Republic over the Dni-

²⁵ When visiting the Centre of Trafficking with Human Beings and the Police Academy, I could not help but notice the lack of heating and internet. It must be very difficult to keep up with criminals, to fight against organized crime and trafficking groups that possess the most modern amenities. It seems impossible to effectively combat these groups while sitting in cold offices, wearing thick coats, and being unable to use the internet.

²⁶ During nine months, 4,800 proceedings were opened because of the violation of the rules of residence. 899 people were expelled. In addition to this, 244 refugees were registered, and 77 procedures are currently being conducted. The most descriptive case was that of nine Chinese men who entered Transnistria illegally; they remained there, and their stay was paid for by the Chinese Embassy. Later, they were able to travel to Moldova with the aid of the Red Cross.

ester. This was followed by a civil war. The most important peace keeping stage was established on 23 March 1992. In a Helsinki meeting of Russian, Moldovan, Romanian and Ukrainian foreign ministers agreed on the establishment of a quadrilateral consultation mechanism; however, this failed due to the continuing conflicts, which ended because of the 14th Russian army's intervention. The conflicts have been suspended since that time. Russians promised to withdraw their troops but as of yet have failed to honor the agreement.

Table 6. According to some 2004 information, power relations are the following:²⁷

| <i>Armed forces</i> | <i>PMR</i> ²⁸ | <i>OGRF</i> ²⁹ | <i>PMR +OGRF</i> | <i>Moldovan</i> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| number | 7,200 | 3,100 | 10,300 | 6,800/15,200 |
| Tank (T-64) | 18 | 117 | 135 | 0 |
| BMP | | | | |
| BTR 60, 70, 80 | | | | |
| BRDM | 84 | 207 | 256 | 209/227 |
| TAB71 | | | | |
| 100mm artillery device | 38 | 96 | 134 | 79 |
| mortar | 75 | 32 | 107 | 115 |
| anti-tank gun | 17 | 0 | 16 | 36 |
| armor-piercing rocket | 30 | at least 105 | at least 135 | 131 |
| anti-aircraft artillery gun | 45 | na. | 49 | 23/29 |
| anti-aircraft rocket | 42 | na. | 42 | 69 |
| MIG 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| JAK 50, 52 | 12 | – | 12 | 0 |
| helicopter | 8 | na. | 8 | 12 |
| air-carrier | 5 | 0 | 5 | – |
| patrol ship | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0/2 |

The maintenance of the abovementioned weaponry represents a serious challenge for Moldova as it is a country with a poor economic standing. This is why there are hardly any resources for training and renewal; the burden is only increased by the costs of border control that have been caused by the existence of Transnistria.

²⁷ Rácz, 151.

The table above shows that Moldovan Republic over the Dniester maintains armed forces disproportionate to its size and strength, thus demanding the support of the Russian troops stationed in the region.

All this indicates that the region is not yet peaceful. An armed conflict might erupt at any moment and might result in larger collisions that would threaten Europe's eastern peace.

Conclusions

Due to its geo-political and economic situation, Moldova will be one of Europe's poorest states, and in order to make both ends meet and live in safety, its inhabitants will continue to seek jobs and residency in EU member states.

Based on previous experience, Moldova's political leaders have oriented their foreign policy towards the EU, but Moldova's accession to the EU is far from being a reality.

Due to its geological features, Moldova is an agricultural country, and this represents its primary problems for the future. Because Moldova has difficulty selling its goods to the EU, it remains at the mercy of the ex-Soviet states. Currently, it is unable to satisfy the environment protection expectations of the EU because of industrial-development policy and environmental pollution of the Soviet era. Moldova must create an independent foreign policy in the shadow of two great, neighboring powers – one of which significantly influences Moldova's territory, even as it seeks to cooperate more and more with the EU.

Owing to demographical as well as protection-political and bread-and-butter problems of the region, people will continue to illegally migrate from Moldova towards the EU. One must deal with Moldovan citizens entering Hungary or the EU legally with a Romanian passport but working or settling there illegally. Moldovans' movements towards the EU usually occur in high concentration on the Romanian border, but occasionally, Ukrainian borders are also involved. They wish to leave Hungary by crossing the Austrian and Slovenian borders.

Human trafficking exploits people's naivety and their dire life-circumstance. Equipped with the most modern technological equipment,

²⁸ Transnistrian Armed Forces

²⁹ Russian "peacekeeping" forces

traffickers do everything they can to produce higher profits; this often entails attempting to smuggle more and more Moldovan citizens into EU territory.

According to current theories, the EU would like to have an office that issues Schengen visas in Moldova. Since of Moldovan citizens tend to have ambitions to migrate, it is also deemed a good idea to reinforce this office with Hungarian border police experts. The Moldovan-Transnistrian conflict represents a *serious safety challenge on several fields for both the Eastern European region (Hungary among others) and for the whole of Europe*. The split-republic – with its own structure, with violent organizations and political leadership intertwined, with a complete lack of international control – seems to be an ideal place for organized crime to flourish at the state level.

As a result of EU enlargement, Romania may soon become an EU member possessing full authority. This means Hungary will be bordered by another EU member that has provided several thousand dual citizenship certificates to Moldovan citizens so they may easily enter the EU by crossing the Romanian-Moldovan border (while even using a Romanian passport). Thus, these Moldovan citizens who possess Romanian citizenship will be able to travel as far as the Atlantic Ocean.

The risk of illegal migration from Moldova is increased by the fact that those crossing the Ukrainian border (traveling from the Ukrainian-Transnistrian border) can also enter Moldova without border traffic control.

Epilogue

In June 2007, the next expedition brought new dangers and conclusions. Just beyond the Romanian-Moldovan border station, a horse carriage without a driver blocked the road; the horse was peacefully meandering along the road. Going back at night, this happened again, only this time there was no carriage; nor were there road signs, traffic lights or the dividing lines on the asphalt. Along the Ukrainian-Moldovan border, painted trees replaced signs as a means to demarcate the border along the Moldovan bank of the Dniester river. As crossed the river Dniester by boat, I realized that security along the Ukrainian-Moldovan borders is only partially solved. This is why illegal migrants who have reached Ukraine and wish to continue to Romania via Moldova are not

detained. I sensed the same on the roads from Transnistria to Moldova. For political reasons, the presence of border guards is undesirable, and borders are controlled only by the policemen and customs officers. The border station and the road that leads to Odessa are much stranger as it is combined with pelage transit as well. as for outward bound the border transport, Moldovan border guards control people by holding them up while, at the same border station, there is a road open to Ukrainian citizens, since some Ukrainian areas and settlements can only be reached via this route.

In Odessa, which is inhabited by more than one million people, the smuggling of goods and refugees from East to West is significant. The training of younger Ukrainian passport officers needs to be improved because they do not have enough experience to differentiate between real documents and those that have been professionally forged. The employees of EUBAM who are within the region make great efforts to discover false Schengen visas. Furthermore, customs authorities must face serious difficulties every day because of these smugglers. Since smugglers attempt to transport many goods to Ukraine via the sea, it mainly is false customs papers cross into Ukraine via the road.

Transnistria, where industrial companies are still active, is the most remarkable settlement within this region. Energy suppliers and weapon factories are the most important industries here, and I was unable to discover two things about them. First, how are these continuously productive factories provided with raw material? Second, how are (il)legally finished products exiting the Russian puppet state? Russian, Ukrainian and Moldovan co-operation is possible. There is no other way that vehicles could transport cargo to its destination. The other regional problems are illegal migration and human (prostitution) trade. The size of Ukrainian and Russian territories and the fact that their Eastern borders remain the traditional, unguarded channels of human trade still plays a decisive role in providing new “supplies” for the East-West migration routes. It is not accidental that there are direct flights from Odessa to the EU, via Budapest and Warsaw. The Black Sea makes human trade in the direction of Turkey and other Arabic areas also possible. Every hour of every day, local TV-networks are luring new victims into the prostitution trade.

The situation of Moldovan provincial settlements is practically hopeless; therefore, more than one million Moldovan citizens work in the EU, Russia and Ukraine, and they send home their remittances.

The Hungarian Consulate in Moldova is a novelty. Since April 2007, it has been possible to apply for visas to Denmark, Austria, Slovenia and Switzerland there; this consulate is responsible for the information, administration and communication pertaining to visas to other EU-member states. In a majority of cases, Moldovan citizens exploit this opportunity in the majority of the cases. This has been proven by the large number of applicants with whom I was usually able to personally consult. Moldovan citizens are pleased with the initiative, and as a first step, they solicit the Hungarian Consulate for visas so that they may be employed in the EU. Perhaps it would be better if Hungarian citizens visiting the Consulate with their problems were also appropriately aided. One of the obstacles is that Hungarian citizens turning to the Consulate are admitted by Moldovan or Russian-speaking officials.

It is our experience that the Hungarian official who runs the Consulate (probably having lived in Khisinev for several months) could not even inform me which police force of Khisinev is responsible for a lost driver's license or where it might be located. Fortunately, a driver of a typical Moldovan transport vehicle – a so-called direction taxi – was able to tell me for a small fee.

As a matter of fact, the Moldovan policeman was “Eastern in a friendly way,” so to speak: I spent four hours in a broken-down police station in order to receive a document necessary for travel. The official's work was hampered by the fact that he had no internet access and had to clarify some information. As I was waiting for a signature for another, it is fair to say that the document cost one hour per line.

I visited the Romanian Embassy. The Embassy's building is easy to find because of a long queue of Moldovan citizens, most of which had been waiting since the previous night hour. Because of Romanian-Moldovan dual citizenship, it is well-known that Moldovan citizens can usually obtain a Romanian identity card and passport as well. Since 1st January 2007, these documents have allowed Moldovan citizens to freely travel within the EU, and while they are there, many look for employment opportunities. As indicated by Romanian publications, their current number is estimated to be 600–900,000. Moreover, a large number of these people are stopped and/or arrested in Hungary for having entered the EU illegally.

To balance the facts presented above, this situation was also evaluated by the FRONTEX organization; between January and March 2007,

17 Moldovan citizens were arrested along the EU's external borderlines for having attempted to cross the border with false Romanian documents. The FRONTEX report indicated the following itinerary for illegal migration: *Schuleni-Nadlak-Ártánd-Hegyeshalom*.

In conclusion, Moldova, as a new neighbor to the EU, is involved in a very specific situation. It has traditional economic and political contacts with ex-Soviet states; however, its relationship with Romania has become very controversial. Because of their homeland's hopeless economic situation, Moldovan citizens are searching for employment and existence opportunities. Because of its earlier criminal-geographical situation, Moldova produces illegal migration and, at the same time, is one of its transit channels. In the near future, it will be necessary to prepare for more Moldovan citizens to attempt to illegally cross EU-borders. The Moldovan prostitution trade is especially remarkable within the area, since it provides a market for some EU-member States, Turkey and Little-Asia.

APPENDIX

Chronological History of Moldova

The history of Moldova seems insignificant when compared to its neighbors Russia, Ukraine, and to Romania (with which it also shares a common history). It is mainly concentrated in the 20th century. Primary developmental stages for the present situation are listed below:

- 1436 Foundation of the city of Kishinev
- 1478 The Moldovan Principality becomes a Turkish satellite
- 1708 Beginning of Moldovan writing
- 1712 In alliance with the Moldovan Prince, Peter the Great expels the Turks from the area between the rivers Dniester and Prut (today Moldova).
- 1918 Moldovan Democratic Republic
- 1919 Moldova becomes an area under the jurisdiction of Romania.
- 1924 Moscow creates Moldovan autonomy on the Dniester River's left bank. In 1940, this provides a basis for the annexation of Bessarabia.

- 1940 The Soviet occupation of Moldova and Bessarabia.³⁰ As a result, the Moldovan Soviet Republic is formed (33.7 thousand square kilometers, 2.468.0 thousand inhabitants). Cyrillic writing is introduced, and approximately 390 thousand Romanian residents (14.6% of the population) are deported, mostly to Kazakhstan.
- 1986 “Four strokes on Moldova”³¹: dryness, an earthquake, a ban on alcohol by Gorbachev, forgery of plans.
- 1989
- The new language law makes Moldovan the state language.
 - Gagauz minority declare their autonomy³²
- 1990
- Referendum along the Dniester, which results in the population’s backing of an independent state over the Dniester (with 96% approval).
 - A Romanian consulate in Kishinev and a Moldovan general consulate in Iași are established; a simplified border-crossing is introduced.³³
 - “Limba Noastră” i.e. language day is first celebrated.
 - Ștefan cel Mare Police Academy is opened.
- 1991
- 27th August Moldova becomes independent³⁴.
 - Referendum along the Dniester, secession from Moldova.
 - Armed confrontations
- 1992
- Armed confrontations on the Eastern bank of the Dniester are followed by an armistice agreement, but the peace process

³⁰ A consequence of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

³¹ Pálfi András: *Egyre távolabb Moszkvától*. Budapest: Belvárosi Könyvkiadó, 1996. 395–369.

³² Approximately 150,000 people

³³ When they could first go freely from Moldova into Romania, people became disenchanted in no time. Their Romanian experiences made them lose their faith in the unification of the two states.

³⁴ In the same year in the Eastern (over-the-Dniester) parts of Moldova, the Transnistrian Republic (4.1 thousand square kilometres, 546.4 thousand inhabitants) and the Gagauz Republic were founded. (The centres of these two republics are Tiraspol and Komrat.) In the former, Russian troops also intervened in the armed conflicts under the pretext of making order.

- has been stuck since. (Even at present, Russian and Moldovan peace keeping forces are stationed along the Dniester)³⁵
- Russian-Moldovan negotiations
 - Hungarian Moldovan diplomatic relations
 - Moldova is admitted to the UNO.
- 1993 Leu is introduced.
- 1994
- A new constitution. Independence and reinforcement of the Moldovan language; autonomy of Gagauz³⁶ and Transnistrian areas.
 - CIS membership
 - Russia promises to withdraw troops.
- 1995
- Compulsory knowledge of Moldovan (Romanian) language is expected of Moldovan leaders.³⁷
 - The death penalty is abolished.
- 1997 Russian-Moldovan agreement regarding free trade in Transnistria.
- 1999 Istanbul treaty. As a result, Russia promises to withdraw their troops – an obligation that has yet to be fulfilled.³⁸
- 2001
- The Moldovan Communist Party³⁹ comes to power again and has retained a governing position since.
 - Commencement of marking the Moldovan-Ukrainian border.
- 2003 The Moldovan political leadership's first steps towards loosening their subordination to Russia and opening towards the EU and the USA.

³⁵ Villages that rebelled in 1992 now belong to Moldova. Cocieri, Molovata, Cosnita, Pirita, Pohrebea, Dorotcaia, Roghi, Vasilieuca. Corjova is of interest as the present president of republic, Vorogyin, was born here. This village belongs is split equally between Moldova and Transnistria.

³⁶ In the territory of Gagauz, autonomy was achieved through a local referendum in 1995.

³⁷ According to my experience, Russian is still the determinant language in office work and in private communication between individuals. On street signs and billboards, both Cyrillic and Latin letters are present. The fact that the officers' staff was educated in Moscow in the Soviet era determines the law enforcement experts' training

³⁸ As a part of this agreement, Russia reduced her troops from 9,000 to 2,600 on territories over the Dniester and also withdrew many armaments.

³⁹ The Communist Party was banned between 1991 and 1994.

2004 Population census

2005

- Elections in the in the presence of foreign observers. The Transnistrian citizens who cross the virtual border also vote in the elections
- A political turn: from Russia towards the EU
- The Ukrainian-Moldovan customs⁴⁰ agreement; blockading Transnistria.
- Transnistrian forces occupy Vasilievca along a strategic road; within a few days, they withdraw.

2006 3rd March the Ukrainian-Moldovan customs agreement comes into force.

⁴⁰ According to this agreement, from 1 January 2006 only those Transnistrian trains and trucks that have a Moldovan exit clearance stamp can leave Moldova. Thus, Moldova began to control (i.e. blockade) the economy of the split territory, and as a reaction to this, Russia increased the price of gas.