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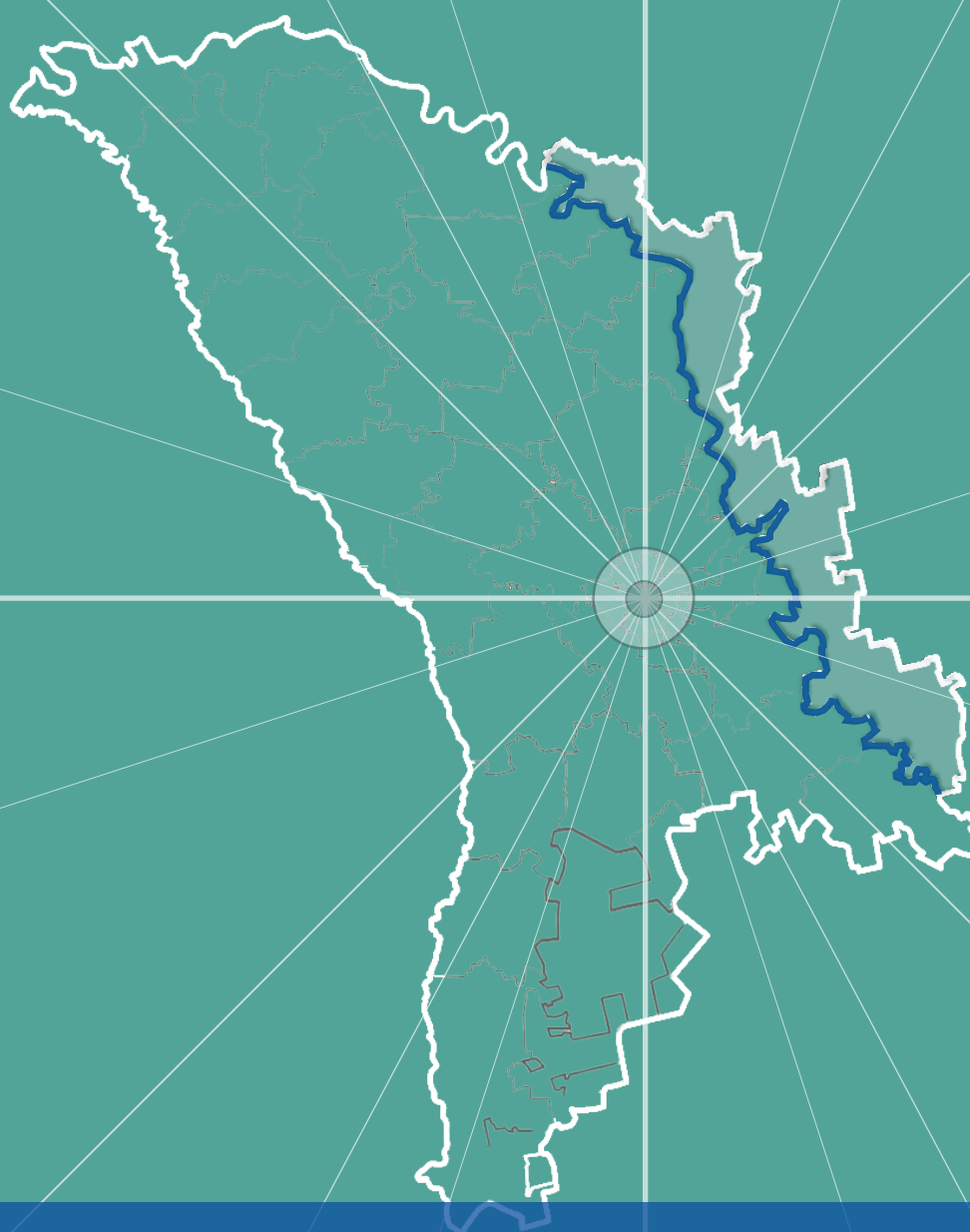


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# DNIESTRIAN REALITIES

NEWSLETTER

Issue 5  
November 2013



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# The politicization of a technical issue: territorial offices of the BMA



The decision of Chisinau to establish six territorial offices of the Bureau for Migration and Asylum along the Dniester River in localities Hârbovăț (Anenii Noi), Hagimus (Căușeni), Dubăsari, Criuleni, Rezina and Sănătăuca (Florești) caused many controversial discussions and speculations on both banks of the Dniester. A purely technical matter related to migration security has acquired a political and even geopolitical character.

In accordance with article 88 of Additional Measures to the National Program to implement the Action Plan Republic of Moldova - European Union on visa liberalization, in 2013 the Government took several steps to improve the Republic of Moldova's capacity to ensure the control of foreign citizens' migration on the territory of Moldova. This decision is necessary because the constitutional authorities in Chisinau, for the time being, do not control the Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border, through which foreign citizens could enter and leave without being registered by the Moldovan authorities.

In February and April 2013, the Government of the Republic of Moldova adopted two decisions providing that the registration of foreigners entering and exiting the Republic of Moldova through the segment of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border that is not controlled by Moldovan authorities can be conducted by the branches of the Bureau for Migration and Asylum. By the Minister of Interior order in February 2013 was modified the structure and staff of the Bureau for Migration and Asylum. A Department of migration control (6 points, 36 staff that ensure monitoring and registration (upon demand) of foreign citizens).

On 12 June 2013, the Government of the Republic of Moldova submitted for examination to the Parliament the draft law that amends and supplements certain legislative acts, developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and approved by Government Decision No. 356 of 12 June 2013. The draft stipulated that foreign citizens temporarily entering the Republic of Moldova territory through the Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan border are obliged to inform the respon-

sible bodies within 72 hours after entering the country. The foreign national will be able to choose where to be registered: at a branch of the State Enterprise "Register" in any city of the country or at the offices of the Bureau for Migration and Asylum.

The government's decision caused political controversy and dissatisfied reactions in Tiraspol. The PCRM criticized the fact that the residents of Transnistria who do not have Moldovan citizenship but are citizens of other countries, for instance Russia or Ukraine, will also be included on the list of foreigners who will have to pay fines. Tiraspol, in its turn, described the project as a coercive measure of Chisinau to impose Moldovan citizenship on Transnistrian residents who do not have it. In addition, the PCRM and Tiraspol said in unison that this decision introduces elements of the border along the Dniester River.

On 11 October 2013, in the Parliament was discussed the draft of the Decision on the implementation of actions to facilitate the free movement on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. According to this decision, Transnistrian residents who do not have yet Moldovan citizenship do not have to register with the territorial offices of the Bureau for Migration and Asylum.

On 17 October 2013, the PCRM filed a no-confidence motion against the Government. On the grounds that the Legislature was not given clear evidence and arguments on the need for the proposed mechanism, the PCRM labeled the government's actions as the Republic of Moldova's territorial disintegration.

Given the speculative nature of the communists' initiative, the motion of censure failed. The decision on temporary establishment of territorial offices of the Bureau for Migration and Asylum along the Dniester River, seeking to monitor the mechanism to guarantee the right to freedom of movement and residence in the Republic of Moldova, proves the political will of the pro-European government in Chisinau to remove, one by one, the obstacles to free movement of Moldovan citizens. But in the Republic of Moldova, due to the division of society, even a purely technical issue may become the subject of political or even geopolitical speculation. ■

## ■ interviews

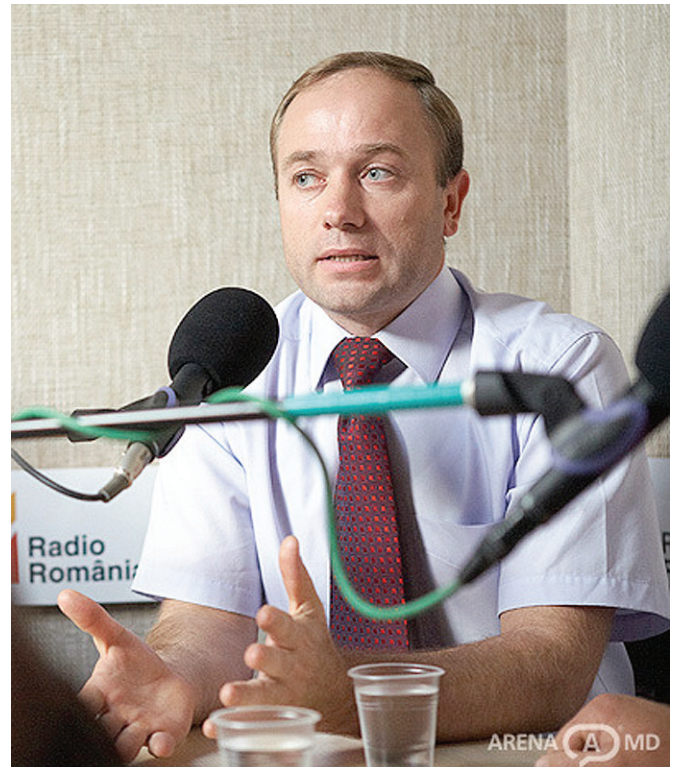
# Border Security and the Transnistrian conflict

**— How will the establishment of 6 territorial offices of Bureau of Migration and Asylum impact on the free movement of Moldovan citizens?**

— Chisinau does not control the state border on the Transnistrian segment and this situation implies different risks. The 6 territorial offices are set for monitoring and securing the border on the Transnistrian segment by exercising an efficient control over the migration flow. Immigration checkpoints are not designed against the inhabitants of the left bank. They will not create any problems for them and will not affect in any way their movement. They residents will not even be registered. Only citizens of other countries entering Moldova through the Transnistrian area will have to register in order to comply with the rules of stay and not to be penalized.

**— To what extent will the establishment of 6 territorial offices affect the negotiations on the Transnistrian conflict settlement?**

— I think Tiraspol could bring this issue on the negotiations agenda and at the same time turn it into an „important” problem and other more important issues would be excluded or overlooked. As a matter of fact neither Tiraspol nor Moscow agree with the establishment of these 6 offices. They think this would control their agents coming on diverse missions to the territory controlled by the constitutional authorities in Chisinau. For a certain period it could even refuse to discuss other issues until these 6 offices have been removed. They are certain to fail because both the Republic of Moldova and the European Union are very interested in the functioning of these offices in the context of visa liberalization for Moldovan citizens.



Vasile **CROITORU**,  
President NGO  
Partnerships for the future

**— Will there be any retaliation measures from Tiraspol?**

— It is hard to say if there are any concrete actions by Tiraspol. There will rather be more contradictory propaganda declarations that Chisinau wishes to isolate or block the movement of the residents of the Transnistrian region or that by establishing these offices they set an official frontier on the Dniester which would lead to the independence of the region. At the same time, the Tiraspol administration will try to promote ever insistently the alleged law of Shevchuk on the so-called “state border”. ■

## ■ chronicle

## October 2013

● **1 OCTOBER.** The leaders of the separatist regions of Transnistria and Abkhazia signed a Cooperation Agreement in several areas.

— Shevchuk visited the region of Abkhazia on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of unrecognized independence, following the war of 1991-1992, marked each year on 30 September.

● **3 OCTOBER.** A new round of 5 +2 negotiations was held in Brussels. The discussions focused again on the locations of check points on the river Dniester.

— The agenda included mostly technical discussions related to the situation in the Security Zone and territorial offices of the Bureau for Migration and Asylum. Nina Shtanski declared that according to the assurance of Chisinau, conformed by the OSCE, the new control measures will not apply to residents of Transnistria holders of Russian or Ukrainian passports. Other topics under discussion referred to the Dniester River ecosystem protection and the prospects to remove funicular between the towns of Rezina and Ribnitsa. The next round of negotiations is scheduled for November in Kiev.

— Similar assurance was given in Chisinau by European Commissioner for Enlargement, Stefan Füle, who insisted that Moldova gets closer to the EU tending to unify the country and not to establish new barriers.

● **3 OCTOBER.** After the last round of negotiations in Brussels was opened the art exhibition "Artists build confidence." The exhibition organized by the OSCE Mission in Moldova included works by artists from both banks being inspired by the Dniester River as a symbol of peace and inclusion.

● **9-11 OCTOBER.** Several journalists from both banks of the Dniester were informed during a common presentation about the registration mechanism of migration flows, particularly of foreign nationals arriving in the Republic of Moldova from the territory of Ukraine.

● **11 OCTOBER.** The leader of the break-away republic on the left bank, Yevgeny Shevchuk met with Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, Dmitry Rogozin. He stated again that initialing the association agreement between Moldova and EU will damage the economy of Transnistria.

— According to Shevchuk, the residents of the left bank could lose their jobs. Rogozin promised Shevchuk humanitarian aid. After the meeting with the Tiraspol leader, the Russian Deputy Minister wrote on a social network that "Transnistria is preparing to give a tough response to the authorities in Chisinau in case of Moldova's association with the EU."

● **12 OCTOBER.** The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova parliament voted in final reading the bill on immigration check points on the Dniester River.

— The adopted law exempts Transnistrian residents with foreign passports from paying a fine if caught without having registered their temporary residence in Moldova. This amendment counteracts Tiraspol's arguments that Chisinau would try to impede the free movement across the Dniester.

— Later, on October 16, E. Shevchuk at the meeting with Stefano Manservigi, Director -General for Home Affairs in the European Commission expressed his concern that installing the migration



checkpoints along the Dniester will have negative effects on the economy of Transnistria. Previously Shevchuk said that signing the Association Agreement would negatively affect the economy of the region.

— The Head of the EU Delegation to Moldova. Pirkka Tapiola: The points of registering foreigners entering Moldova from Ukraine through the Transnistrian segment of the border should not be deemed as a border on the Dniester.

● **25 OCTOBER. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin and Transnistrian leader, Yevgeny Shevchuk, signed a protocol in Moscow by which Russia commits itself to continue providing financial and logistical assistance to districts on the left bank.**

— The signatories agreed on the economic and social cooperation in monetary policy, investment, science and culture.

— An article of this cooperation protocol provides for the involvement of Transnistrian enterprises in the Russian state orders for defense matters.

● **28 OCTOBER. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that more measures are required to strengthen confidence between Chisinau and Tiraspol, after which it will be possible to start negotiations on political issues of reintegration.**

— Lavrov also said that Russia will continue to seek solutions to problems related to communication between the two banks of the Dniester River and to represent the interests of its citizens residing in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova.

● **28 OCTOBER. Nina Shtanski said, after a closed meeting in Tiraspol, that the Transnistrian administration would take protective measures against the effects of the summit in Vilnius. The**

**discussion was attended by experts from the Russian Institute of Strategic Research.**

● **29 OCTOBER. Media published a letter, sent by an anonymous person, that Nina Shtanski would have sent to the KGB director in Tiraspol.**

— In the letter Shtanski Nina would have asked the head of Transnistrian security to contribute to changing the Republic of Moldova's European vector and organizing in Gagauzia a referendum on Moldova's accession to the Customs Union of Russia-Belarus- Kazakhstan. The secret services from Tiraspol have to monitor carefully the socio-political situation in Gagauzia and Balti on the eve of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius.

— Transnistria's KGB representatives refused to comment on this letter and the foreign department promised to make a statement later.

● **30 OCTOBER. At an international conference on building confidence between Chisinau and Tiraspol in Landshut, Germany, was held the second meeting between the Prime Minister Iurie Leanca and Tiraspol administration leader, Yevgeny Shevchuk.**

— Yevgeny Shevchuk proposed as a solution to the Transnistrian conflict the scenario of a "civilized and formal divorce" of the region from the Republic of Moldova, like the separation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Serbia and Montenegro.

— On the other hand, during the meeting, the Prime Minister Iurie Leanca expressed his concern on Tiraspol's intention to begin on 1st November, to check policemen at the administrative border on the river Dniester and tried to persuade the Transnistrian authorities of the benefits of European integration for both banks.

— the Prime Minister Leanca also proposed to set a neutral, international monitoring format of the situation in the Security Zone, the documents governing mechanisms, the Joint Control Commission, the activity of peacekeeping troops.

● **31 OCTOBER. Transnistrian authorities opened criminal cases against six Moldovan policemen. They are officers from the Bender police station, accused by Tiraspol security of retaining a resident of Bender.**

● **WORKING GROUPS.**

**1) On 1 October in Tiraspol was held the meeting of the working group on education.**

— During the meeting were discussed a number of issues regarding the situation and activity of eight Moldovan administered Latin-Script schools on the left bank of the Dniester and Bender, and legal effects of diplomas issued by educational institutions in the region.

**2) On 1 October was held the meeting of the working group on economy and trade.**

— The discussions related to the economic activity on both banks of the Dniester, current problems, import and export in the context of the association agreement with the European Union.

**3) On 4 and 25 October were held the meetings of the working group on combating crime and emergency situations.**

—The Joint Control Commission. JCC had regular meetings and an extraordinary meeting on 3 October during which was replaced the military observer from the Russian military contingent of peacekeepers.

— The main topic of the JCC meetings was continuing discussions of deploying unilaterally by the Transnistrian side, without prior agreement with the Joint Military Command and JCC, an additional military contingent in Bender/Tighina, a district with a special security regime.