



*Understanding the EU's Association Agreements
and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas
with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia*

Youth Essay Competition

EU - eventual rescue of Moldova from uncertainty

Victoria Romanov



My name is Victoria Romanov. I'm 17-years-old and I live in Rezina town, Republic of Moldova. My region is known for its monasteries and the cement manufacturer "Lafarge". I am a pupil in lyceum. Everyone can agree that I'm a good student and that I like to study, but someone's opinion doesn't matter to me. My favorite subjects are chemistry and maths. I'm going to enter the university in the EU because my goal is to study these subjects in future and to

become a respected professional in one of these fields. Now, I'm studying German. I'm sure, it will give me many opportunities and will represent a priority in most cases. My hobby is politics (can I say so?). I follow various foreign and local political commentators. This gives me a broad knowledge of what is going on and the ability to comment thereon.

I visited 3 European countries this summer, I saw a world totally different from what I see everyday. My whole experience was absolutely amazing. That's what inspired me to write this essay.



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The EU itself

The European Union is a political and economic union of 28 member states that are located primarily in Europe.

First things first, looking back into the past we can see a lot of conflicts, war and peace treaties, and so it isn't difficult to understand that first of all the EU was created as a method of maintaining security. Scientists have predicted a United Europe since the Middle Ages. Philosophers like Alighieri, Descartes, Newton, Voltaire, Montesquieu or Kant supported peacekeeping systems in Europe which were based on a federation of united states. The European Union appears in 1993 with the Maastricht Treaty, after the end of the Cold War, to a certain extent degree to avoid political and ideological confrontations or the emergence of a new World War which Europe could suffer. What was left of Europe at the end of the Second World War? Ruins, millions of victims, desperate people, temporary governments, a kneeling continent, lacking any possibility of reaction to the great victorious powers - USA and Soviet Union - to act against their models and political practices. Politicians understood then that the only chance of rescue was ... union. At first, Europe was divided into two, the first steps aimed at the western area. The idea was supported by politicians: Monnet, Schuman and Spaak. The preconditions of the European constitution were: the communist danger in Eastern Europe, US economic aid to the Western Europe, the expansion of the Soviet Area. Winston Churchill said: "We must build a kind of United States of Europe."

Now, it is based more on economic cooperation between member states and others, trade, raising the quality of life and exit from the economic crisis. Today the European Union has become a major security area where war is impossible.

The EU is currently the world's largest economic power with 25 percent of the world's riches. It is the seat of many multinational firms and the main tourist destination of the world. The European Union protects universal values: human rights, democracy and freedom of action and expression. It directs more funds than other states for mutual assistance. The challenge of the EU is to keep a balance between wealthy and poor states, to redistribute income between them.

The future is very promising, everyone is waiting for the development of technologies, improvement of ecological issues and exclusion of terrorism. The need for peace and security makes the Europe united. One of the most important factors in the global progress arena is the scientific revolution. Western Europe is the main actor in the arena of innovations. The discoveries in medicine, chemistry, physics or math make it possible to change fundamentally the way and the life of humanity. The presence of law and the democratic government has

created a trend towards liberalization of the economy and the accelerated development of trade.

Does that save us for the future? It depends on us all. For we are the future and we need to be working together... united and free. Sometimes our progress seems to be slow, but with persistence we soon will find that our goal has been reached

The EU from my point of view

We live in the century of globalization. It is normal to build diplomatic relations between countries. To approve certain common codes, to share the same ideals and values. Every day there are more and more structures that support the affiliated existence of states, which advocates for economic development, ensuring security and free traffic. I think the EU is the best example of fruitful relations between countries. EU policies aim to ensure the free movement of people, goods, services and capital within the internal market, enact legislation in justice and home affairs and maintain common policies on trade, agriculture and regional development. Since from history it is known that great empires dominated the world. We are all inhabitants of the Earth, but for a better life, we must comply with standards, rules, to maintain safety. In my point of view, the EU is an international union, which is responsible for coordinating the international situation and to ensure international security of the Member States. Until now, the biggest impact of the European Union in my life is in my high school, where with the sponsorship of the EU some courses in physics, robotics, and French were offered with modern technologies.

It hurts so much that a lot of families are destroyed by migration, so many children remain without their parents and teenagers remain without support. Too many people are far away from their children, relatives and home.

The Republic of Moldova can easily obtain energy independence through solar panels, because it is a sunshine country, or through hydro-electric stations, such as with the Dniester Hydroelectric Station. Moldova has unused fields rich in humus, which could see the growth of lots of plants that could be exported. I personally see a lot of opportunities through which Moldova can raise its standard of living. I'm sure my country can develop in fields such as science, education, tourism, medicine, botany or arts, without natural resources such as natural gas, oil, heavy metals or expensive stones.

There are many little countries in EU which have great economies. European integration remains to be the best way to make our country to thrive.

The EU for my fellow citizens

Is the European Union a goal for Moldovans? Yeah, of course. Moldovans have demonstrated this often through pro-European protests, in which they chanted "Forward to a European future". They always support the pro-European parties and the European course in the

elections. Moldova's eventual European integration is very visible in educational and administrative institutions across the country. Also the young generation is well informed about the principles of the EU's functioning. The EU is haven for thousands of Moldovans, which partly maintains the country's economy. Moldovan people are very grateful for the money they received from the EU, with which many areas are growing.

A strong point of the EU are the Schengen agreements, which allow European citizens to travel without having their passports checked at borders. The abolition of the visa regime for Moldovan citizens in April 2014 was one of the most palpable accomplishments of the Moldovan authorities in the European integration process. Partially, owing to this success, Moldova was considered a "success story". But this description was practically abandoned in the light of the multiple political crises caused by corruption and very serious offenses like those committed in the banking system. Yet, during the three years of visa-free regime with the EU, its functioning has never been regarded as problematic. The liberalization of visas continues to be a useful instrument for attracting the population of the Transnistrian region, but its effects should be supplemented with solid country reunification policies that are absent for now.

The security crisis, in parallel with the abundance of illegal migration and the refugee crisis that shook the EU member states. Because of this the Moldovan authorities should prevent trips by citizens who do not meet the criteria for traveling in the Schengen area. "Chisinau should combat offenses related to illegal migration (including illegal stay etc.)», signed by FRONTEx.

The EU's largest beneficiaries are young people, especially lyceum graduates who can get into European universities, sometimes with comprehensive aid. Everyone hopes to develop his possibilities in the space governed by European laws. It's about people who want to open a business. In European countries, such as Italy with whom Moldovans are the most familiar, young entrepreneurs have a lot of privileges.

In a survey in which people expressed their opinion on Moldova's European Integration, they mentioned that money which comes from the EU disappears in a miraculous way. They are sure that the EU will be able to improve the situation with corruption and thefts in Moldova.

As the motto of the European Union is "Unity in diversity", all EU citizens have rights and are respected, regardless of who they are. People with disabilities in the EU have privileges in housing and service provision. While in less developed countries disabled are subject to stereotypes and prejudices.

The opinion of each one of us regarding the European path of Moldova depends on many criteria, such as intellectual level, living conditions or occupations. Usually smart people, who have achieved something, support the EU. But those, who are not willing to trust something new, miss "the good old days". It is time for Moldovans to end their solidarity with the past.

The EU for my country

Moldova is considered one of the poorest countries in the European continent, with its economy relying heavily on agriculture. European Integration can't solve all our problems, but can provide a plan to change our country for the better.

The European Union is the largest market for us and our most important economic partner. The EU is the largest selling market, accounting for about 45% of our exports. So, getting closer to the EU, it will stimulate our economy to grow up. Independent experts believe that the Association Agreements will have a positive effect on the country's economy, with economic growth between 3.2% and 5.4% per year. The new arrangement will create the necessary bases for more jobs and higher wages. It will increase our trade with the EU by 15-16% and will make Moldova more attractive to foreign investors. Last but not least, getting closer to the EU will mean products and services of increased quality and safety.

Relations between Moldova and the European Union are currently shaped via the European Neighborhood Policy, an EU foreign policy instrument dealing with countries bordering its member states.

Moldova has strong ties to the EU member state Romania. Indeed, during the interbellum the two countries were united. They share a common language, traditions and culture. The Moldovan flag is a modified version of the Romanian equivalent, with the Moldovan arms superimposed in its centre. Despite Moldovan nationalist tendencies and a sizable Russophone minority, the Romanians, whilst having no ongoing claim to Moldovan territory consider Moldovans as culturally and ethnically Romanian. The former period of union enables Romanian passports and concurrent EU citizenship to be routinely granted to Moldovans on the basis of descent.

The Republic of Moldova relatively actively pursues EU membership. The level of poverty in Moldova is a stumbling block to accession. The Transnistrian dispute, concerning a self-proclaimed breakaway republic backed by the Russian Federation government, is also an obstacle.

Nevertheless, the EU is developing an increasingly close relationship with Moldova, going beyond cooperation, to gradual economic integration and a deepening of political cooperation. The major strategic priority of Moldova now is membership in European institutions.

It is a sadness that often the population falls deeply into a state of uncertainty. European Integration is the best way to make our country pro-European, because it is in our national interest. A European future means more jobs and better wages, wider trade and increased investment and, ultimately, support in strengthening respect for human rights and in promoting the freedom of movement of our citizens. These changes require time and effort.

The EU, which is based on democracy, multiculturalism, progress, the welfare of the population, represent a model of civilization towards which the Republic of Moldova aspires,

being the best alternative to the situation so far in our country: economic crisis, poverty, reminiscent of totalitarianism.

Conclusion

In 2014 Moldova was so close to the EU that there is no doubt that we can bring Europe home. Moldova has shown that it is in a state of major changes. But recently the European future was stirred by offenses committed in the banking system and political crises. Here are a lot of well-determined people who fight every day for stability, safety, well-being, development, evolution, tolerance and respect to prevail. People who are indifferent or opposing the European path are just misinformed or negatively influenced people. Often even the most patriotic citizens, who dream of Moldova with a flourishing future, are disappointed and leave the country. Taking into consideration the last elections we saw how much it matters to those who are abroad.

For some its citizens the EU is only a method of maintaining diplomatic relations. Many young Europeans probably have never asked questions about the EU, where they actually live. But young Moldovans will never forget this term. They hear this every day, they are ready to debate or give arguments to the EU, at any time. For many of my fellow citizens, the tendency towards European Integration has become their “lifestyle”.

The European integration process will lead to the strengthening of human right and freedom of movement for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova.

Respect for the rule of law is fundamental for the implementation of the European development path. The actions we have undertaken will consolidate internal reforms and bring Moldova’s legal, economic and political system.

Our European choice does not mean hostility towards other partners. Our neighbors will benefit from a stronger Moldova. Our links with the EU do not detract from our relations with other countries. The European route means modernizing the country and not geopolitics. Moldovan people appreciate our relations with Russia, as well as our relations with the EU. All our neighbors will benefit both economically and politically from a stronger and more prosperous Moldova.

Sooner or later, dreams come true. I look forward so much to that day when Moldova will enjoy its European Integration.