

Moldova After Elections —

Lessons, Stakes, and Strategic Directions



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Executive Summary

Moldova's 2025 parliamentary elections were not only a domestic political contest but a structural stress-test of democratic consolidation under conditions of sustained hybrid interference and accelerated EU accession. The elections confirmed that procedural integrity alone is no longer the primary vulnerability. Moldova's core exposure lies in low social trust, reform fatigue, and the fragility of the citizen-state relationship, including diaspora participation.

This brief advances *three central claims*. First, hybrid interference is effective where trust deficits persist, converting economic grievances and identity cleavages into institutional delegitimation rather than manipulating electoral procedures. Second, EU accession will not be sustained by legislative compliance alone: reforms must generate a visible "resilience dividend" for citizens for the EU norms be socially internalized. Third, diaspora participation is one of Moldova's strongest democratic assets yet remains vulnerable when mobilized electorally but not structurally integrated into governance.

Drawing on empirical evidence from the 2025 cycle, the brief identifies *four key lessons*: 1) resilience is produced through cross-sector coordination; 2) trust deficits are the primary vulnerability; 3) diaspora engagement must move beyond episodic mobilization; and 4) Europeanization without the social integration of EU norms risks reform fatigue rather than consolidation. Moving from lessons to strategy, the brief proposes a paradigmatic framework shift: democratic resilience should be treated as the enabling condition of democratic consolidation.

The recommendations translate this framework into targeted actions for the Government of Moldova, civil society and media, diaspora organizations, and European partners. The latter emphasize that durable consolidation depends on institutionalizing directions such as coordinated governance, inclusive participation, and strategic communication, transforming adaptive responses into stable governance routines. The strategic task is not merely to withstand shocks, but to institutionalize the adaptive capacities that make democratic norms durable under continued geopolitical pressure.

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1. Context

Moldova's 2025 parliamentary elections should be read as more than a domestic political contest. They were an early stress-test of the European Union's enlargement credibility in a frontline state operating under sustained hybrid pressure. Moldova has already entered accession negotiations ([June 2024](#)) and is implementing a major [EU-backed Reform and Growth Facility](#) for 2025-2027, designed to accelerate reforms while cushioning socioeconomic strain. In this context, elections are not only about electoral integrity, party competition or democratic governance; they are about whether reforms can retain social legitimacy under economic hardship and information manipulation, and whether the EU can support **democratic consolidation**¹ without unintentionally reinforcing polarization.

The 2025 electoral cycle confirmed both resilience and fragility. On the one hand, Moldova's electoral administration and wider democratic ecosystem (institutions, civil society, media, diaspora) demonstrated adaptive capacity in a [contested](#) information space - an area where international [assessments](#) still flag meaningful [vulnerabilities](#), including disinformation and cyber-related [risks](#). On the other hand, the September 2025 elections took place amid reform fatigue, persistent distrust in institutions, and intensified attempts to weaponize [social cleavages](#): conditions that hybrid actors reliably [exploit](#). This brief therefore focuses less on "who won" and more on what the elections reveals about the next phase of Moldova's democratic and European trajectory.

This policy brief advances three claims:

- 1. Moldova's primary vulnerability is no longer procedural (in an electoral context), but societal: low trust in political institutions has become a strategic weakness that can be readily exploited.** Hybrid interference is effective where it can convert economic grievances and identity cleavages into institutional delegitimation. This implies that counter-interference policy cannot be treated as a narrow security file; it must be integrated into governance reform, public communication, and resilience strategies.
- 2. EU accession will not be sustained by compliance alone: Moldova needs a citizen-centered "resilience dividend"**². The EU's expanded support and accession benchmarks create unprecedented momentum, but democratic consolidation will remain shallow if citizens experience Europeanization as technocratic, detached from everyday welfare, without becoming socially

¹ In this brief, democratic consolidation is treated as the ultimate objective, referring to the stabilization and irreversibility of democratic norms and institutions ("the only game in town": see [Linz & Stepan, 1996](#)). Democratic resilience, by contrast, denotes the system's capacity to withstand, adapt to, and recover from shocks.

² This is a concept developed by the authors. Borrowed from economic theory, where dividends represent returns on investment, the resilience dividend captures the extent to which externally driven reforms generate endogenous societal resilience through citizen-perceived gains in governance performance, which in turn strengthen trust, legitimacy, and resistance to internal and external shocks.

internalized. Policy success depends on translating accession into visible governance fairness, integrity, and socioeconomic security while protecting the information environment in which citizens interpret those outcomes.

3. **Diaspora participation is Moldova's democratic advantage and, simultaneously, its most contested source of political legitimacy.** It functions as a transnational resilience infrastructure linking political participation, civic engagement, professional expertise, and social and economic capital and constitutes a critical pillar of democratic consolidation. High diaspora mobilization strengthens pro-reform mandates and transnational accountability, but it is also targeted by narratives that frame external voters as 'foreign' or 'illegitimate'. While diaspora mobilization strengthens reform credibility and international accountability, it remains institutionally under-embedded and vulnerable to questions of its legitimacy. This unresolved tension allows hybrid actors to weaponize diaspora participation, turning a long-term democratic asset into a repeat trigger for political polarization and institutional fatigue.

Positioned within the broader policy discussion, Moldova now sits at the intersection of three EU-level agendas: [enlargement](#), [hybrid threat](#) resilience, and democratic [legitimacy](#) under reform [conditionality](#). Moldova is increasingly treated as a reference case for how external actors use disinformation, illicit finance, and narrative warfare to obstruct European integration; as well as for how the [EU can respond](#) with instruments that build both state capacity and social cohesion. Against this background, the brief distils lessons from the 2025 elections into targeted strategic directions for Moldovan institutions, civil society and media, diaspora organizations, and European partners.

2. Key Lessons from Moldova's 2025 Parliamentary Elections

The four lessons below draw on empirical evidence from the electoral process, documented interference patterns, and broader governance dynamics. Together, they provide context for readers and analytically ground the three claims advanced in this brief.

Lesson 1: Democratic resilience in Moldova is produced through coordination, not institutional strength alone.

The 2025 elections demonstrated that democratic resilience in Moldova is less a function of formal institutional capacity than of effective coordination across institutions, civil society, media, and diaspora actors, a finding reflected in post-election European Commission' [assessment](#) of Moldova's democratic performance. Despite operating under sustained hybrid pressure, the Central Electoral Commission, law-enforcement bodies, independent media, and civil-society organizations jointly safeguarded electoral integrity, as documented in international election observation reports by [OSCE/ODIHR](#) and domestic monitoring by [Promo-LEX](#). Coordination between election authorities, police, watchdog organizations and civil society ensured transparency, rapid response to irregularities, and public confidence in the electoral process. Post-electoral discussions

at the [Moldova Security Forum 2025](#) explicitly framed this cross-sectoral coordination as a core resilience mechanism in a high-pressure hybrid environment, compensating for structural capacity constraints and reinforcing public confidence in democratic processes.

This network-based resilience, based on adaptive capacities to external stress factors, confirms broader findings in EEAS 2025 FIMI [report](#) , Freedom House Moldova 2024 [evaluation](#), IDEA 2025 [report](#) and other international assessments that democratic survival in high-pressure environments depends not on isolated institutional robustness, but on the capacity of multiple actors to align rapidly around core democratic functions, particularly under conditions of foreign interference and information manipulation.

This lesson suggests that in highly hierarchical governance systems such as Moldova's, democratic resilience is strengthened when network-based coordination is deliberately institutionalized rather than reactively activated.

Lesson 2: Hybrid interference succeeds where social trust is low, not only where procedures are weak.

In the September 2025 elections, hybrid interference focused on delegitimizing institutions rather than disrupting electoral administration. Election monitoring [reports](#) show that procedural irregularities remained limited and were addressed through existing safeguards, while disinformation narratives concentrated on questioning the legitimacy of diaspora voting and framing socioeconomic hardship as proof of elite capture. At the same time, national surveys conducted by Watchdog ([September 2025](#)) and IPP ([September 2025](#)) reveal persistently low trust in political institutions alongside higher trust in non-political social institutions, creating fertile ground for interference strategies that convert grievances and identity cleavages into institutional delegitimation rather than administrative failure.

Moldovan government [estimates](#) indicate that Russian-linked actors spent around €200 million to influence the 2024-2025 electoral environment. European analyses document how interference blended disinformation with illicit political finance and organised mobilisation, aiming to structurally weaken democratic trust and stall EU integration rather than “hack” election administration. European institutional and think-tank analyses consistently show that interference combined disinformation with illicit political finance and paid mobilisation to erode democratic trust and stall EU integration, rather than to “hack” electoral procedures ([EEAS 2025 Report](#), [ECFR 2025](#), [EPC 2025](#) , [GLOBSEC 2025](#)). The political-economy dimension of hybrid interference matters because illicit finance amplifies distrust rather than persuading voters, a dynamic confirmed by Moldova-focused election-risk assessments by [GMF](#) and [FIMI-ISAC](#) demonstrating how financial and informational manipulation reinforce one another to undermine public confidence.

This lesson emphasises that trust deficits are the primary vulnerability. Where trust deficits persist, disinformation operates less through persuasion than through grievance amplification. Countering hybrid interference therefore requires treating trust as a primary vulnerability, not a secondary governance concern.

Lesson 3: The diaspora is a democratic asset, but becomes a vulnerability when mobilized (only) electorally rather than politically integrated.

With 280,000 votes cast abroad (17,5% of the total electorate and 26,2% of PAS's votes coming from the diaspora), external participation played a decisive role in shaping the 2025 parliamentary outcome. During the electoral campaign, diaspora was deliberately targeted by hybrid strategies aimed at delegitimizing external political participation rather than disrupting electoral procedures. Investigative reporting by [Ziarul de Gardă](#) documented an organized operation involving illicit financial flows, political intermediaries, and cross-border networks designed to influence and discredit diaspora voting. In parallel, Russian officials publicly accused Moldovan authorities of preparing electoral fraud in diaspora polling stations: a [narrative](#) amplified in regional media and identified by Moldovan authorities as an attempt to pre-emptively undermine the legitimacy of external voting. These actions were accompanied by [documented](#) pressures and intimidation targeting diaspora communities, prompting public warnings from the Moldovan presidency ahead of the vote.

Diaspora engagement has been decisive in shaping electoral outcomes, advancing pro-EU mandates, countering [disinformation](#), and [mobilising](#) civic participation, with its role growing significantly across successive elections between 2020 and 2025, including the 2024 EU referendum. Moldova's experience shows that its diaspora functions as a structural democratic asset, but its impact remains constrained by the absence of consistent political integration beyond electoral moments. Noroc Olanda [White Paper](#) on Moldova's democracy building shows that diaspora participation is largely activated episodically, around elections, while remaining weakly embedded in permanent governance structures, policy co-creation processes, and institutional dialogue. This imbalance has allowed Russia and Russian-backed actors to question the legitimacy of external voters and frame diaspora influence as detached from domestic realities, reinforcing polarising narratives.

This lesson highlights that treating citizens abroad as equal political stakeholders between elections, not only as voters, is essential to democratic consolidation. If diaspora participation continues to be mobilized primarily during electoral cycles while remaining weakly embedded in permanent governance and policy processes, it will remain vulnerable to delegitimation and hybrid exploitation.

Lesson 4: Europeanization without internalization of EU norms at a societal level produces reform fatigue, not democratic consolidation.

Moldova's reform trajectory illustrates the limits of a Europeanization process driven primarily by conditionality and technocratic compliance. While EU accession benchmarks anchored legislative and procedural reforms, public confidence eroded as citizens saw few gains in governance and economic security. The 2025 European Commission [report](#) on Moldova notes legislative alignment progress but highlights implementation gaps and credibility risks. Economic recovery also remained fragile. Following a -5,0% GDP contraction in 2022, growth recovered modestly to 1,8% in 2023 and remained subdued at approximately 2,0-2,5% in 2024, with limited spillover into household welfare (World Bank [data](#)). This assessment is reinforced by the 2025 socio-economic [report](#) from the

Moldovan Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization, which points to pressures on incomes, uneven sectoral recovery, and household vulnerability to inflation and external shocks; highlighting the gap between macroeconomic stability and lived economic security. Post-election policy [analysis](#) reflects this dynamic, framing economic stabilization and household welfare as the government's priority and positioning economic governance as a core pillar of democratic legitimacy under EU accession.

This reform rhetoric-lived experience gap fuelled scepticism toward European integration, not by eroding support for the EU, but by weakening confidence in reform credibility and ownership. The IPP' [2025](#) public poll shows that while support for EU accession remains comparatively high, trust in core institutions (Parliament, Government, and the judiciary) continues to lag behind. WatchDog.MD' 2025 national [survey](#) similarly indicates that economic insecurity, perceived inequality, and dissatisfaction with justice reform shape how citizens interpret reforms, increasing receptiveness to elitist or externally imposed narratives. As emphasized in [IPRE 2025 analysis](#), disinformation actors exploit this gap between formal compliance and lived experience, transforming socioeconomic grievances into scepticism toward Europeanization.

This lesson points out that reforms which are not internalized by citizens cannot generate democratic legitimacy, even when formally compliant. Without visible, short-term improvements in fairness, opportunity, and everyday governance practices, Europeanization is likely to be seen as externally imposed conditionality rather than as a shared democratic process that reshapes behaviour and public expectations.

4. From Lessons to Strategy: Implications for Democratic Consolidation

The 2025 electoral cycle does not merely expose operational vulnerabilities; it signals a paradigmatic shift in how **democratic consolidation** must be pursued in Moldova. The central challenge is no longer electoral integrity alone, but whether democratic practices can become durable and self-reinforcing under sustained legitimacy pressure, hybrid interference, and accelerated European integration. Before new actions are designed, a reconceptualization is required: **democratic resilience should be treated as the enabling condition of consolidation**, not as a stand-alone objective or a defensive electoral safeguard. Resilience matters because it determines whether reforms and democratic norms can survive repeated stress long enough to become institutionalized.

Moldova has entered a phase in which democratic consolidation depends on the **institutionalization of resilience capacities**, understood not only as the ability to absorb and adapt to shocks, but as the capacity to translate those adaptations into stable governance routines. Institutional design remains necessary but insufficient. What matters is whether governance systems align state's national agenda with societal needs, whether reforms generate perceived fairness and everyday value, and whether political inclusion (including transnational participation) is embedded beyond electoral moments.

Where coordination is episodic, participation unevenly integrated, and communication reactive, democracy may endure yet remain reversible. Conversely, when coordination, inclusion, and narrative coherence are institutionalized as routine governance practices, democratic consolidation gains durability even under external pressure.

This reconceptualization requires moving beyond defensive electoral safeguards toward sustained institutional adaptation. **Three interlinked directions follow from this assessment:**

1. strengthening coordinated governance across institutions and society;
2. embedding inclusive participation as a permanent feature of democratic practice; and
3. aligning public communication with the lived concerns that shape trust and legitimacy.

These directions operationalize democratic resilience as the enabling condition of democratic consolidation. In a geopolitical environment where legitimacy is continuously contested, democratic consolidation cannot rely solely on transposing the EU acquis; it must also connect citizens to the process and prioritize their needs. The strategic task is therefore not merely to withstand shocks, but to institutionalize the adaptive capacities that allow democratic norms and practices to become durable and self-reinforcing.

Direction 1: Democratic consolidation through coordinated governance

Democratic consolidation in Moldova requires institutionalizing coordination as a permanent governance logic rather than an ad hoc response to crisis. The 2025 cycle demonstrates that democratic durability depends on whether network-based coordination is institutionalized rather than activated reactively.

This direction implies:

- embedding cross-sector coordination (institutions, regulators, media, civil society) as a routine governance practice, not only during elections.
- aligning electoral integrity, rule-of-law reform, and security responses within shared accountability frameworks.
- integrating resilience metrics into EU accession monitoring, treating coordination capacity as a structural benchmark.

The strategic shift here is from ‘strong institutions’ to ‘aligned institutions’.

Direction 2: Democratic consolidation through inclusive participation

Democratic consolidation strengthens when political inclusion is structurally embedded rather than episodically activated. Moldova’s experience demonstrates that participation, particularly that of the diaspora, youth, and local communities, must be normalized within governance architecture, not mobilized selectively.

This direction implies:

- treating transnational participation as a permanent democratic feature rather than an electoral contingency.
- institutionalizing consultative and co-creation mechanisms that extend beyond campaign periods.
- reducing legitimacy gaps that enable hybrid actors to politicize representation and belonging.

The strategic shift here is from ‘turnout-driven legitimacy’ to ‘institutionalized inclusion’.

Direction 3: Democratic consolidation through strategic communication

Democratic consolidation under conditions of hybrid interference depends on narrative coherence and the ability of governance actors to connect reform to lived experience. Legitimacy is sustained not only through compliance, but through perceived fairness and everyday relevance.

This direction implies:

- reframing Europeanization in terms of everyday fairness, opportunity, and welfare rather than geopolitical alignment alone.
- integrating strategic communication into reform design, not treating it as a post-factum response to disinformation.
- addressing socioeconomic grievances as governance issues rather than solely informational vulnerabilities.

The strategic shift here is from ‘reactive counter-disinformation’ to ‘proactive legitimacy building’.

5. Conclusions: from Strategy to Actions

The 2025 electoral cycle confirms the three core claims of this brief. Moldova’s primary vulnerability is societal rather than procedural: low social trust in state institutions remains the strategic entry point for hybrid interference. EU accession, while advancing formal alignment, will not translate into durable democratic consolidation unless reforms are socially internalized and experienced as fair and materially relevant. At the same time, diaspora participation, one of Moldova’s strongest democratic assets, remains vulnerable to delegitimation when mobilized electorally but not structurally integrated into governance.

The four lessons derived from the elections demonstrate that democratic consolidation in Moldova now depends on the institutionalization of resilience. Coordination across sectors, societal inclusion (including diaspora) beyond electoral cycles, and credible citizen-focused communication are not auxiliary measures; they are structural conditions for making democratic norms durable and self-reinforcing. Where these elements remain episodic or reactive, consolidation remains reversible despite procedural integrity and EU compliance.

The three strategic directions outlined in this brief: (1)coordinated governance, (2)inclusive participation, and (3)strategic communication, translate these lessons into a governance model oriented toward long-term consolidation rather than short-term survival. Moldova's democratic viability depends not only on its ability to withstand shocks, but on turning crisis management into durable institutional practices and connect them to citizens. Moldova's democracy will not be judged by its ability to withstand isolated shocks, but by its capacity to embed adaptive practices into stable institutional routines. In this sense, resilience is not the endpoint; it is the pathway through which democratic consolidation becomes sustainable under continued geopolitical pressure.

6. Recommendations for Democratic Consolidation

Translating the strategic directions into practice requires targeted institutional and policy adjustments. The following recommendations operationalize coordinated governance, inclusive participation, and strategic communication as structural drivers of democratic consolidation. They focus on institutionalization rather than crisis response, and on embedding adaptive capacity within Moldova's governance architecture under EU accession.

6.1. Government of Moldova

1. Safeguard electoral integrity as a permanent state function. Electoral integrity should be treated as a continuous governance responsibility rather than an episodic exercise. This requires institutionalizing a standing cross-sector coordination mechanism linking the Central Electoral Commission, cybersecurity authorities, law enforcement, financial oversight bodies, and independent election monitors to anticipate and respond to hybrid threats beyond campaign periods. Moldova should strengthen political finance transparency and monitoring of illicit cross-border funding, invest in robust cybersecurity and procedural transparency, and establish permanent rapid-response communication protocols to counter disinformation. Secure and facilitate diaspora voting through resilient administrative and digital systems, while proactively defending the legitimacy of external participation, to protect electoral credibility both domestically and abroad.

2. Embed Democratic Consolidation within the National Resilience Plan. The [National Resilience Plan](#) approved in December 2025 should position democratic consolidation as a central governance objective rather than treating resilience solely as a security function. Hybrid-threat risk assessment should be systematically integrated into justice reform, political finance oversight, media regulation, and public administration modernization, instead of being managed as a parallel security file. The Plan should formalize a whole-of-government coordination mechanism, linking Central Electoral Committee, Foreign Affairs Ministry, the Bureau for European Integration, security agencies, regulatory authorities, and other line ministries, with structured collaboration frameworks involving independent media, civil society organizations, and diaspora associations. By embedding hybrid-threat response within core reform architecture and

cross-sector cooperation, Moldova can transform resilience from reactive defense into a structural feature of democratic governance.

3. Link EU accession to visible, citizen-perceived gains in governance and welfare (“resilience dividend”). EU accession can generate dividends if translated into lived outcomes. The Bureau of European Integration, in coordination with the State Chancellery and line ministries, should explicitly link Reform and Growth Facility disbursements to measurable household-level outcomes (such as energy affordability, quality of public services, and justice delivery) ensuring that each reform milestone includes a publicly accessible, citizen-facing performance indicator. A centralized reform impact dashboard, managed under the accession coordination framework, should track implementation progress and social effects in real time. Regular public reporting and structured third-party monitoring should be institutionalized to reinforce transparency, credibility, and societal trust in the accession process.

4. Integrate Diaspora Actors into Governance Processes. Diaspora participation should be embedded in permanent governance structures rather than activated primarily during electoral cycles. The Government should strengthen the Bureau for Relations with the Diaspora (BRD) by expanding its institutional capacity, staffing, and analytical resources to move beyond coordination toward policy integration. An inter-ministerial Diaspora Advisory Board, chaired by the State Chancellery/BRD, should be established with a formal mandate to contribute to reform implementation and EU accession monitoring. Diaspora expert thematic groups should be formally linked to reform working groups in justice, digitalization, and public administration, building on the existing Diaspora Engagement Platform (implemented by BRD), already demonstrating successful sectoral collaboration in education and research. Structured diaspora consultation mechanisms should also operate in cooperation with the Central Electoral Commission to safeguard electoral integrity and legitimacy. By institutionalizing diaspora expertise within reform architecture, Moldova can transform transnational participation into a structural pillar of democratic consolidation.

5. Commit to Civic Education and Participatory Democratic Oversight. Democratic consolidation requires sustained civic capacity, not episodic mobilization. The Government, in partnership with the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), the Bureau for Relations with the Diaspora (BRD), and the Bureau for European Integration (BEI), should develop continuous civic education programs both domestically and within diaspora communities, focusing on electoral integrity, political finance transparency, and EU reform literacy. Beyond information campaigns, this effort should include the launch of a certified participatory monitoring initiative in diaspora, led by the CEC, supplementing the network of Promo-Lex trained monitors from both Moldova and the diaspora. These monitors would contribute not only to electoral observation, but also to tracking institutional reforms related to electoral standards and EU alignment. By institutionalizing civic competence and participatory oversight, Moldova can transform citizens from recipients of reform into co-guarantors of democratic standards.

6.2. Diaspora Organizations

1. Strengthen Institutional Capacity and Policy Credibility. Diaspora organizations should consolidate their legitimacy by strengthening internal governance, financial transparency, and strategic capacity. This includes adopting formal governance structures, clear accountability mechanisms, and codes of conduct, as well as investing in professional competencies related to policy analysis, advocacy, monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL). Building sectoral expertise (justice reform, digitalization, governance, EU integration) will enable diaspora actors to move from mobilization to structured policy engagement. Strong internal standards enhance credibility both in Moldova and in host countries, reinforcing diaspora's role as a responsible partner in democratic consolidation.

2. Embrace Structured Engagement with Moldovan stakeholders. Diaspora organizations should prioritize structured partnerships with Moldovan public institutions, civil society organizations, and independent media within existing reform frameworks rather than operating in parallel. Engagement should be embedded in established policy platforms (e.g., sectoral reform working groups, BRD initiatives, EU accession processes), ensuring complementarity rather than duplication.

3. Build Transnational Coordination and Structured Policy Voice. To reduce fragmentation and amplify impact, diaspora organizations should establish transnational coordination platforms across EU member states. Umbrella mechanisms or thematic networks can strengthen collective positioning on governance reform, electoral integrity, and EU accession. Coordinated representation enhances influence in dialogue with Moldovan authorities, EU institutions, and host-country policymakers, and reduces the vulnerability created by dispersed, unaligned advocacy efforts.

4. Develop Strategic Public Diplomacy Capacity in EU Member States. Diaspora organizations should develop structured public diplomacy strategies in host countries, positioning Moldova's European integration and democratic consolidation as shared European interests rather than exclusively national concerns. Given their proximity to EU member state capitals and institutional ecosystems, diaspora actors are uniquely placed to socialize EU publics, policymakers, and opinion leaders with Moldova's reform trajectory and geopolitical relevance. This requires moving from episodic advocacy to sustained institutional dialogue with EU bodies, national ministries, parliamentary groups, and international partners. By institutionalizing strategic engagement in host countries, diaspora organizations can strengthen Moldova's political visibility, reinforce support for enlargement, and contribute to consolidating European backing for democratic reform.

6.3. European Union & Development Partners

1. Embed Democratic Resilience as a Governance Benchmark in EU Accession and Support Frameworks. The European Union and development partners should treat coordination capacity, political finance transparency, and information integrity as structural governance benchmarks within the accession process. This requires integrating inter-institutional coordination, hybrid-threat risk assessment, and political-

finance oversight into screening chapters and annual progress evaluations, rather than addressing them as isolated technical issues. Support frameworks should prioritize cross-institutional coordination platforms linking government, regulators, civil society, and media, rather than isolated technical projects. By reinforcing systemic alignment and implementation coherence, EU assistance can strengthen democratic consolidation beyond formal legislative compliance.

2. Support Trust Infrastructure, Not Only Technical Reform. The European Union and development partners should complement technical reform support with sustained investment in trust-building infrastructure. This includes supporting structured local-level civic dialogue initiatives in vulnerable and politically polarized regions to reduce fragmentation and strengthen democratic cohesion. External assistance should prioritize long-term anti-corruption credibility and institutional integrity over short-term compliance metrics, recognizing that perceived fairness matters as much as legislative alignment. EU-supported communication should also align reform narratives with measurable improvements in governance and household welfare, avoiding purely geopolitical framing that risks deepening polarization. By reinforcing societal trust alongside institutional reform, external partners can strengthen the social foundations of democratic consolidation.

3. Promote the Legitimacy of Diaspora Participation in Elections. The European Union and development partners should actively support the legitimacy and integrity of diaspora participation as part of Moldova's democratic consolidation. This includes coordinating EU-wide messaging that defends the democratic rights of citizens abroad and counters narratives portraying external voting as illegitimate or destabilizing. The EU should also support secure, transparent, and resilient digital and administrative infrastructure for diaspora voting, particularly where cross-border vulnerabilities exist. Structured EU-Moldova strategic communication coordination should proactively address delegitimation campaigns targeting diaspora communities in host countries. By reinforcing the legitimacy of transnational political participation, the EU can strengthen both electoral credibility and enlargement resilience.

4. Ensure Long-Term Support for Democratic Infrastructure Beyond Electoral Cycles. The European Union and development partners should provide sustained, multi-year support for diaspora organizations and independent media as core components of Moldova's democratic infrastructure. Funding frameworks should move beyond election-cycle programming and short-term project grants, prioritizing institutional sustainability, investigative capacity, and cross-border civic engagement. By stabilizing the operational environment of independent media and diaspora networks, external partners can reinforce legitimacy, accountability, and resilience against hybrid interference over the long term.

6.4. Civil Society & Media

1. Shift from Election Monitoring to continuous Governance Oversight. Civil society and independent media should move from episodic election monitoring toward permanent governance oversight. This requires developing reform delivery trackers linked to EU accession benchmarks, strengthening investigative capacity on political finance and illicit influence networks beyond campaign cycles, and multiplying journal materials that offer accessible reform explainers by translating complex policy measures into accessible language.

combining investigative journalism with accessible reform explainers that translate complex policy measures into tangible social and economic impacts. Formalized cooperation among watchdog organizations, independent media, civic-tech actors, diaspora experts and election observers should ensure coordinated evidence-sharing and early-warning mechanisms during periods of democratic stress.

2. Strengthening Civic Cohesion and Democratic Legitimacy. Independent media and civil society should actively reduce polarization by shifting public discourse from moralized or identity-based divisions toward shared civic membership and constitutional citizenship. This requires investing in cross-community dialogue formats (urban-rural, diaspora-home) and promoting locally anchored media literacy and community engagement initiatives, particularly in vulnerable or politically polarized regions. By translating complex policy reforms into accessible narratives that connect governance to everyday fairness and opportunity, civil society and media can counter disinformation, reduce social distrust, and reinforce democratic cohesion.

3. Formalize Cross-Sector Partnerships with Diaspora Expertise. Civil society organizations and independent media should institutionalize structured partnerships with diaspora organizations and professionals, moving beyond ad hoc collaboration toward sustained governance cooperation. This includes incorporating diaspora experts into advisory boards, editorial councils, and thematic working groups, particularly in areas such as electoral integrity, EU reform monitoring, digital governance, and anti-corruption oversight. By embedding transnational expertise within domestic accountability ecosystems, civil society and media can strengthen analytical capacity, broaden legitimacy, and reinforce cross-border coordination against hybrid interference. Structured collaboration with diaspora actors should complement, rather than duplicate, domestic initiatives, ensuring that transnational civic capital becomes an integrated component of democratic consolidation.

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The mission of IPRE is to accelerate the European integration of the Republic of Moldova by promoting the implementation of systemic reforms, increasing participatory democracy and strengthening the role of citizens in decision-making processes on the national and local levels.

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