

# Towards a common vision in the Transnistrian settlement

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There are three dimensions to a common vision:

- WHAT is its content?
- WHO is to share it?
- HOW can it be achieved?

## What is the content of the common vision?

- It is not the settlement itself, but rather a set of broader parameters within which a future settlement can take concrete shape.
- In the Moldovan context, this will require, among other things, determining what “special status” means in terms of:
  - The distribution of competences between Chisinau and Tiraspol;
  - The representation of Transnistria in the institutions of the central state;
  - The application of the constitution of the Republic of Moldova and its international obligations; and
  - The social and economic integration of the country as a whole.
- Two criteria will need to be applied to such a set of parameters:
  - They need to be feasible; i.e., they need to reflect the basis of an adoptable settlement; and
  - They need to be viable; i.e., they need to lead to a functioning Moldovan state that serves all its citizens equally and well, and is a dependable partner in Europe and the world.

## Who is to share this common vision?

- The initial work towards a common vision needs to be done by the government of Moldova acting as a legitimate representative of all citizens of Moldova, rather than of particular political and/or economic interests.
- However, bearing in mind the criteria of feasibility and viability, a credible vision also needs to consider the likely interests of other stakeholders as they are reflected, for example, in the current 5+2 negotiation format. This is another important meaning of a COMMON vision.
- From a Moldovan perspective, the vision needs to reflect the country’s interests expressed in term of both:
  - A desirable end state; and
  - Clear red lines that cannot be crossed in achieving it.
- These two aspects need to be seen as two sides of the same coin, while also being mindful of the fact that everybody will have red lines and that between these red lines enough bargaining space needs to remain so that a truly common vision can emerge that can be turned into a feasible and viable settlement.

### **How can a common vision be achieved?**

- Within Moldova, the main mechanism will need to be a process that is inclusive of all relevant political, social, and economic stakeholders who need to rise above their particular interests and act with a sense of broader responsibility for a greater common good.
- At the same time, the development of a common vision needs to be buttressed by concrete steps, however small, that build the necessary trust among stakeholders inside and outside of Moldova, including confidence in the process itself.
- This requires recognising the close connection between developing a common vision and resolving issues of common interest and concern between the Sides in the broader 5+2 process, including in Working Groups and in high-level direct contacts between Chisinau and Tiraspol.
- Progress like the recent breakthroughs in Vienna are important in this context in that they demonstrate the political will and ability of the Sides to reach agreement.
- They also create potentially critical momentum in the development of a common vision and progress towards an actual settlement reflecting this vision. For that momentum to be maintained, however, agreements need to be followed by their implementation and by further outcome-oriented engagement between the Sides and their international partners.
- A common vision, in this sense, helps to structure this engagement in the short term, which in turn makes it possible to establish in a more concrete way what is feasible and viable in the long term.
- Political leadership on all sides will be absolutely critical in this process. For such leadership to be successful, a common vision is essential, but so are the skills and determination to develop and implement it.
- In this sense, the endgame for a settlement of the Transnistrian conflict begins, rather than ends with a common vision.