

The role of strategic communication in shaping the external image of Moldova

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Abstract:

This study examines the role of strategic communication in shaping and strengthening the external image of the Republic of Moldova, in the context of an increasingly complex geopolitical and information environment. Strategic communication has evolved into an essential tool of modern governance, serving both as a mechanism for projecting national values and interests and as a protective instrument against hybrid threats, disinformation, and external interference. The paper highlights how Moldova's external image remains deeply influenced by historical vulnerabilities, institutional fragility, and internal political polarization, yet has recently undergone significant improvement due to progress in European integration, humanitarian actions, and strengthened international partnerships.

The analysis explores the evolution of Moldova's strategic communication practices, noting the transition from fragmented and poorly coordinated initiatives to the adoption of a more coherent and institutionalized framework. Key developments—such as the approval of the Concept of Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation (2024–2028) and the creation of the Patriot Center—illustrate the state's commitment to enhancing information resilience, consolidating internal cohesion, and projecting a credible international profile.

Additionally, the study investigates the strategic opportunities that Moldova can leverage, including its EU candidate status, deepening partnerships with democratic states, the mobilization of the diaspora, and increased global visibility through participation in major international events. The research demonstrates that strategic communication contributes not only to improving the country's international reputation, but also to strengthening national security, guiding public diplomacy, and supporting the implementation of structural reforms.

The paper concludes that Moldova's long-term success in securing its European future depends on the state's ability to implement proactive, well-coordinated, and credible strategic communication, aligned with democratic values and societal expectations.

Keywords: *Strategic communication, image, Republic of Moldova, European integration, disinformation, soft power, public diplomacy, hybrid threats, national interests.*

Introduction

In the current geopolitical context, marked by an unprecedented circulation of information, strategic communication has become an essential pillar in building and maintaining the reputation of states on the international stage. This type of communication does not only involve transmitting messages, but embody a true art of anticipating, adapting, and influencing perceptions, with the objective of achieving foreign policy interests. For any state entity that aspires to stability, sustainable partnerships, and harmonious integration into the global community, framing a favorable external image is no longer a simple desire, but a strategic necessity. This requires a deep understanding of cultural dynamics, social sensitivities, and factors that shape behaviors and opinions at a global level.

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For the Republic of Moldova, a country in a continuous process of asserting its European identity and consolidating its geopolitical position, *the role of strategic communication is crucial. Building a positive external image* depends not only on the actions of the authorities, but also on the way in which they are communicated, on the coherence and transparency of the messages transmitted, as well as on the ability to effectively counter distorted narratives. A sustained strategic communication effort, focused on the democratic values, economic potential, and cultural heritage of the Republic of Moldova, can significantly contribute to creating an attractive perception among international partners, investors, and the general public.

Theoretical approaches to strategic communication and external image. In the contemporary international environment, strategic communication, a relatively new field of communication, with approaches and principles of a universal nature, finds application, in one form or another, in several spheres of human activity, although, initially, by this term, a specific instrument in ensuring the foreign policy of the state was designated. *The concept of strategic communication*, in short, *StratCom*, became popular in the scientific community at the beginning of the 21st century, occupying a strong position in the official documents of the governments of the states and those of international organizations, constituting an indispensable element in achieving foreign policy objectives and promoting the external image.

In a broader sense, *strategic communication* represents the projection by the state into the consciousness of the national and international target audience of strategic values, interests, and objectives through the appropriate synchronization of various activities in all areas of public life with professional communication³.

We're certain that this projection is not limited to isolated messages, but involves careful coordination between actions carried out in various spheres of public life – politics, economy, culture, security, education – and professional communication, understood as an institutionalized form, planned and carried out by specialists. Even if strategic communication can be interpreted as a set of actions aimed at forming, among the target audience, representations favorable to state policies, it is not reduced to propaganda or political advertising. On the contrary, it implies a coherent and long-term vision, in which the state's image, public trust and international support are built through the correlation between message and action. Thus, strategic communication becomes an essential tool in achieving national objectives, reflecting a state's capacity to influence the internal and external environment through non-coercive means, based on credibility, transparency and professionalism.

J. Nye integrates *strategic communication* into the sphere of non-coercive state influence, emphasizing that this is only one aspect of soft power. The author defines strategic communication as a series of communications in which a set of simple themes is developed, or a planned campaign of events and symbolic communications, intended to promote a specific government policy⁴.

It should be pointed out that J. Nye treats strategic communication as a means of transmitting the central values and themes, found in the arsenal of a state's soft power. The efficiency of this type of communication depends on the consistency of the values promoted and on the state's ability to generate attraction and legitimacy, not on the use of force or coercion. This interpretation, although it limits to a certain extent the applicability of the concept (being anchored, especially, in public diplomacy), nevertheless provides a solid basis for understanding strategic communication as a mechanism of indirect and persuasive influence.

A significant contribution in defining the concept of *strategic communication* belongs to *the Barack Obama administration*, which described it as a way of synchronizing words and actions so that they are perceived coherently by the target audience. The definition also implies

³Бурлаков В.А. Стратегическая коммуникация как метод современной геополитики. В: Ойкумена, №2, 2016, с. 8.
<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/strategicheskaya-kommunikatsiya-kak-metod-sovremennoy-geopolitiki>

⁴Duell Z. What is Strategic Communications and why is it so hard to define?
https://www.academia.edu/53883693/What_is_Strategic_Communications_and_why_is_it_so_hard_to_define

the inclusion of a wide range of activities, carried out with the aim of ensuring the most coherent and effective communication of the government message⁵.

Therefore, the communication strategy does not only consist of formulating the message, but also in aligning real actions with the messages transmitted. Strategic communication thus becomes an integrated governance tool, in which the behavior of institutions and the official discourse support each other, contributing to strengthening public trust. At the same time, the efficiency of strategic communication, in this sense, is based on a deep understanding of the target audience – of the cultural values, expectations and factors that shape their behavior. Thus, strategic communication involves the ability to build relevant and convincing messages, adapted to the specific context. This definition emphasizes the complex and multidimensional nature of strategic communication, in which discourse, institutional behavior and public perceptions form an interdependent system, essential for achieving the political objectives of the state.

In *J. Farwell's* opinion, *strategic communication* is a complex and comprehensive concept, applicable in multiple dimensions, although the author places particular emphasis on its implications in the sphere of political issues and national security. Farwell emphasizes that an effective communication strategy must be flexible and able to adapt quickly to contextual changes, this adaptability being crucial for increasing its impact. At the same time, he highlights the fact that strategic communication uses various forms of human expression, such as words, symbols, images and actions, with the aim of influencing the attitudes and opinions of the target audience and changing their behavior. Inherently, strategic communication is oriented towards achieving concrete political or military objectives, thus constituting a fundamental tool in the political and security arsenal of the state.

Strategic communication has become a pressing necessity in the current context, marked by the rapid evolution of information technologies and the exponential growth of propaganda and disinformation activities. In a world where media sources are increasingly diverse and manipulative influence campaigns target various audiences, the role of strategic communication extends beyond the simple promotion of national interests abroad. It develops into a vital tool for protecting information integrity. Through a well-designed strategy, a state can anticipate and counteract the destructive effects of propaganda and malicious information, thus strengthening the resilience of its society in the face of information threats.

Strategic communication has a *very important function*, which consists in *forming in the consciousness of the elite* (political, economic and intellectual) of the target state a *sustainable positive image* of the state carrying out these activities of influence and a *sustainable system of cultural values*, corresponding to the one that dominates in the country carrying out strategic communication. *The sustainable positive image* contributes to reducing the level of resistance of the object of influence. Indeed, there is no need to resist someone who constantly declares his good intentions and finds arguments convincing enough to explain even indecent actions. A *sustainable system of values* will inevitably influence the system of national interests. It is the political elite that articulate the interests that, after legitimization, acquire the character of national interests, that is, are recognized as vital for the entire state. In this context, cultural values act as the most important criterion for the formation of these interests. Interests cannot be national if they contradict the cultural values embedded in society, and adjusting the value system will implicitly contribute to adjusting the interest system. In this way, through strategic communication, such a value, ideological and cultural environment is formed that allows the legitimization of completely different constructions.

The concept of image has played an important role in the political process throughout the existence of human society. Although it is generally considered that the concern of countries to promote their image beyond their borders is an old practice, it was only towards the end of the 20th century that researchers began to study and conceptualize this process. As *M. Kavatzis*⁶

⁵Peru-Balan A., Calugăru C. Comunicarea strategică și noua diplomatie publică: consubstanțialitate și percepție în spațiul public național. În: Administrație publică, Relații internaționale și integrare europeană, nr.2, 2021, p. 106. https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/105-113_6.pdf

⁶Kavatzis M. Cities and their brands: Lessons from corporate branding. In: Place Branding and Public Diplomacy, volume 5, 1, 2009. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263329154_Cities_and_their_brands_Lessons_from_corporate_branding

notes, *the role of the image of nations* is widely discussed by a multitude of disciplines, including history, international relations, diplomacy, literature, social psychology, sociology, communication sciences, marketing and public relations, and only recently have these disciplines begun to influence each other.

K. Boulding, the first, evaluated the important role that the state image has traditionally had in the system of international relations, defining it as stereotypical behavior, based not on real facts, but on prestige, opinions, illusions, which people create for themselves, on the mythological representation of the past and the imaginary one of the future, which can influence both the behavior of an individual or group, as well as the behavior of a nation⁷. This researcher provided an analysis of the influence of the national image on the particularities of state policy.

The image of the state functions as a complex projection of what it is and what it wants to be perceived: a synthesis between objective dimensions – geographical, economic, power – and subjective constructions – expectations, stereotypes, public myths. In the opinion of *A. Kendzhetaeva*, *the image of the state* represents a complex of rational and emotional perceptions, formed through the interaction of objective realities with the expectations and representations of the public⁸. It serves not only for information, but also as an active tool of soft power, incorporating a deliberate information strategy. Through the coherent transmission of values, symbols and messages, strategic communication becomes the means by which these perceptions are cultivated, aligning the psychological considerations of the public with national interests.

Consequently, strategic communication becomes a fundamental tool for building and managing a state's image. Through a planned and coherent process, national values, interests, and objectives are projected towards the target audience, consolidating favorable perceptions and political support. Thus, a state's image is not just a simple reflection of reality, but the result of an active communication process that shapes public opinion and creates legitimacy. Strategic communication and image management are in an interdependent relationship, each supporting and amplifying the effectiveness of the other.

The external image of the Republic of Moldova in terms of historical context. *The image of the state* represents a complex phenomenon of social perception and collective political consciousness, which must be approached as a national value with international relevance⁹. Each state manifests a strategic interest in creating and promoting an attractive image both inside and outside, investing considerable resources in this regard. In particular, the external image determines the place, weight, and significance of the state in the system of international relations, in the global model of world order, and within world civilizations. It integrates a set of objective and interdependent characteristics, reflecting the state structure in multiple dimensions: economic, geographical, ethnic, demographic, evolutionary developed in the process of statehood formation as a subsystem of world order.

In order to develop and strengthen an effective national image, it is imperative to carry out a systematic analysis of the perception of the state's image from both an internal and external perspective, accompanied by the development of coherent image management strategies. In this context, *strategic communication* stands out as an essential tool, capable of ensuring credibility, transparency and coherence in relations with international actors and the domestic public. The credibility conferred by well-articulated strategic communication facilitates the creation and consolidation of trust networks, indispensable for promoting a positive image or for rehabilitating a damaged one. Thus, strategic communication contributes fundamentally to supporting national interests, achieving foreign policy objectives and establishing lasting and sustainable relationships with target audiences.

⁷Телегина К. Понятие и структура имиджа государства. В: Исторические, философские, политические и юридические науки, культурология и искусствоведение. Вопросы теории и практики, Тамбов: Грамота, № 12 (50): в 3-х ч. Ч. II, 2014, с. 192. <https://www.gramota.net/article/hss20142448/fulltext>

⁸Кенджетаева А. Имидж государства в международных отношениях: сущность и функции. В: Институт политических исследований при Фонде Т. Усубалиева, 23. 01. 2025. <https://usubaliev-institute.org/2025/01/23/%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B8%D0%B4%D0%B6-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%83%D0%B4%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B0-%D0%B2-%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%B6%D0%B4%D1%83%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D1%8B%D1%85-%D0%BE%D1%82/>

⁹Турко Т., Светличная Р. Имидж Республики Молдова в средствах массовой информации. В: Moldoscopie, nr.4 (LI), 2010, с. 165. https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/Imidj%20RM%20v%20sredstvah%20massovoi%20informatii.pdf

Since gaining independence, *the Republic of Moldova* has established as its fundamental priority the formation of a favorable external image, in the context of *the crystallization of the national idea and "country identity"*¹⁰. The creation of this image has significantly contributed to fostering the economic development of the state, increasing its tourist attraction, promoting diplomatic relations with other states, and gaining international recognition and prestige. Thus, each state builds a certain image in the consciousness of the target audience, which results from its perceptions, knowledge and preferences, from the reputation and visibility of the country in the international arena, from the stereotypes created about the respective people, from domestic and foreign policy, as well as from the actions taken and from the way of developing a continuous dialogue with the target audience.

Due to its geographical position, the Republic of Moldova has been and continues to be at the confluence of the great powers in the neighborhood, in a permanent confrontation to establish and maintain influence over this territory. The external image of the Republic of Moldova is perceived by the foreign public differently due to the regional geopolitical situation. The state's security challenges have resulted in a number of instabilities, with the general public's incorrect perceptions of the state's intentions or misunderstanding of political and economic realities as a benchmark.

Thus, *sources of instability of a socio-political nature*, generated by peaceful or violent protests, anti-government demonstrations, and internal unrest; *of a cultural nature*, caused by the activity of weak, inefficient, corrupt, and dysfunctional political and administrative institutions, by the weaknesses of the democratic regime and dangerous social gaps; as well as *of an economic nature*, determined by financial difficulties caused by inflation, lack of consumer confidence, the unemployment rate, and the increase in prices over the years, image crises have been manifested by the lack of notoriety, the decline of public trust, and the absence of a solid reputation, both domestically and internationally.

Since becoming an independent state, the Republic of Moldova has faced *a number of significant challenges* that have greatly influenced its image on the international stage. These difficulties were caused by historical, political, economic and institutional factors, **which influenced both the state's ability to promote a coherent image and its external perception:**

First, the Republic of Moldova faced the *lack of a consolidated tradition of self-government and sovereignty*. The territory of the country has historically been part of larger state entities, and the absence of a modern tradition of statehood has hindered the process of establishing the institutions and mechanisms of a viable state.

Second, upon declaring independence in 1991, the Republic of Moldova faced *difficulties in developing a fundamental legal framework and forming political elite that was not associated with the former Soviet regime*. The Soviet system was the primary source of training for the most administrative and political cadres, and the transition to democratic governance, with leaders who had a national and independent vision, was a difficult and arduous process.

Third, the *transition from a centrally planned economy to a free market economy* was a significant factor in amplifying *the difficulties*. This transformation was marked by difficult privatizations, severe economic crises, high inflation and a significant decline in living standards, a context in which our state had to integrate into a globalized economy without significant natural resources of its own.

These causes have led to image crises:

- The most significant consequence was *the difficulty in establishing a cohesive and unifying national identity*. This identity fragility, fueled by internal divisions and external influences, deprived the state of a solid basis for its external projection and hindered citizens' efforts to identify with a positive image of their own country.

- Amid political instability and a lack of resources, *the authorities have not consistently demonstrated a concern for managing the country's image*. Thus, little effort has been made to create an institutional structure in the field, with a clear strategy, capable not only of projecting a

¹⁰Пержу В. Формирование международного имиджа Республики Молдова. 05.07.2010. <https://veaceslavperju.livejournal.com/543.html>

positive image, but also of managing public reactions and effectively countering negative narratives.

• Inevitably, *due to the state's lack of strategic communication, the information space was dominated by a flow of negative messages, about corruption, political scandals and socio-economic difficulties*. Thus, the Republic of Moldova's image of was more determined by external crises and perceptions than by its own vision.

These historical vulnerabilities are not simply reminiscences, but rather active aspects of the present. In the current context, marked by information warfare, they can easily exploited by hostile actors to undermine trust in the state's institutions and in its European path. Therefore, effective and modern strategic communication requires managing this historical baggage, along with countering negative narratives and building a positive external image. Our state's potential, values and national interests can only be truly reflected in its external image by building and promoting it through a coherent policy supported by a clear vision and adequate resources.

Strategies for strengthening the external image of the Republic of Moldova. The current geopolitical context, characterized by profound transformations and an accelerated dynamics of international relations, imposes on the Republic of Moldova *the need for a continuous reassessment of its positioning strategies on the global stage*. The external image of the state is subject to a combination of influences and pressures, coming both from the sphere of internal challenges and from regional and international developments. The military aggression of the Russian Federation on Ukraine has generated a significant reconfiguration of the security architecture in Eastern Europe, amplifying the degree of vulnerability of the Republic of Moldova. This is manifested by exposure to increased risks, including hybrid threats, systematic disinformation campaigns and economic pressures.

In contradiction, this heightened vulnerability has offered an enormous strategic opportunity: advancing the Republic of Moldova's European integration. Obtaining *the status of candidate state for EU accession in June 2022*, followed by the *European Council's decision in December 2023* to open accession negotiations, is not only a political validation of the country's European aspirations, but also an essential vector in reconfiguring the international perception of it.

In this dual context, marked simultaneously by fragility and potential, *strategic communication* becomes an indispensable tool for managing the complexity of the external environment, strengthening institutional resilience and coherently promoting the national interests of the Republic of Moldova. Beyond the simple reaction to disinformation campaigns or external informational pressures, strategic communication must constitute an essential element of foreign policy, actively contributing to the deliberate construction of a favorable external image, in full accordance with democratic values and assumed national objectives. This approach involves not only the efficient transmission of messages, but also engaging in forms of active listening, sustainable dialogue with the target audience and strengthening trust through the consistency and transparency of public actions.

The adoption of documents, such as *the Concept of Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation, Information Manipulation and Foreign Interference for the period 2024–2028*¹¹ and the subsequent establishment of *the Center for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation "Patriot"*¹², signals an important institutional maturation and an increased awareness of the need for a systemic, coordinated and effective response to contemporary information threats. This initiative highlights a deepening of the understanding of the current context, in which public perceptions and media narratives exert a significant influence on political and social processes. In this sense, the management and shaping of discourses become essential elements not only for the effective functioning of democratic

¹¹Decision No. 416 of 22.12.2023 on the approval of the Concept of strategic communication and countering disinformation, information manipulation actions and foreign interference for the years 2024–2028. In: Monitorul Oficial, nr. 17-19, art. 29. Publicat: 17-01-2024.
https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=141254&lang=ro

¹²Law on the Center for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation and amending certain normative acts. Draft, July 5, 2023.
<https://presedinte.md/app/webroot/uploaded/proiectul%20legii%20Centru.pdf>

governance, but also for contemporary diplomatic strategy, which must dynamically respond to the challenges generated by information flows and manipulations of an external nature.

Currently, for the Republic of Moldova, strengthening and promoting a positive image at the international level, especially in the EU space, the country's main political and economic partner, remains a strategic priority. In this context, C. Ejov and A. Ejov emphasize that the image of a state, both internally and externally, is not formed spontaneously, but is the result of a long-term process, which requires a clear conceptual vision, considerable financial and human resources, as well as effective mechanisms for coordination and monitoring of results¹³.

It can be seen that, due to limited resources, the Republic of Moldova has a low international visibility, which is a significant disadvantage from a political and economic point of view. This vulnerability allows other actors, with superior information projection capabilities, to negatively influence the perception of the country, both domestically and internationally. In many situations, international public opinion either does not have sufficient information about the Republic of Moldova, or operates with erroneous representations, fueled by stereotypes or distorted information, which do not reflect reality.

However, *starting in 2021 and accelerated by the post-February 2022 context*, there has been an *unprecedented improvement in the country's image*. This transformation is no longer just a perception, but is based on *concrete directions of action*:

1. *Humanitarian response*. The management of the refugee crisis, caused by the aggression of the Russian Federation on Ukraine, represented a turning point for the Republic of Moldova in consolidating its international image. The rapid reaction and the solidarity shown by the citizens were appreciated globally, contributing to the promotion of a country brand, defined by the expression “*A small country with a big heart*”¹⁴. This perception was supported by statements from high-ranking officials, such as the *Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova, Janis Mazeikis*, who expressed the opinion that the image of Moldova and its citizens, globally, has increased like never before¹⁵, confirming the EU's solidarity with our state. Although the flow of refugees has stabilized in recent times, data provided by *UNHCR, at the beginning of 2025*, show that the Republic of Moldova continues to host a significant number of Ukrainian refugees¹⁶. The efforts of the national authorities in managing this situation remain considerable and are constantly supported by international partners, thus strengthening the country's profile as a responsible and involved humanitarian actor.

2. *Diplomatic validation*. A defining moment in the process of consolidating the international prestige of the Republic of Moldova was the organization of the *European Political Community Summit, held on June 1, 2023*¹⁷. The event, attended by 47 *heads of state and government*, placed the Republic of Moldova at the center of the European diplomatic agenda and contributed to consolidating the image of the Republic of Moldova as a credible, active and committed partner in promoting regional security and stability. This success was followed by the historic decision of the *European Council, in December 2023, to open accession negotiations with the EU*¹⁸. The process visibly advanced, with the holding of the first *Moldova-EU Intergovernmental Conference, on June 25, 2024*¹⁹, thus marking the official start of the negotiations by chapters.

3. *Strengthening resilience*. In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has managed to overcome the status of a state perceived as vulnerable, becoming an active beneficiary, but also a credible partner within the European security architecture.

¹³Ejov C. Ejov A. Imaginea statului în relațiile internaționale. Suport de curs. Chișinău: CEP USM, 2018, p.165.

¹⁴Republica Moldova, pe primul loc în lume după numărul de refugiați pe cap de locuitor. 24.02.2023. <https://moldova1.md/p/5075/republica-moldova-pe-primul-loc-in-lume-dupa-numarul-de-refugiati-pe-cap-de-locuitor>

¹⁵Мажейкис: Имидж Молдовы на мировом уровне вырос как никогда. 04.03.2022. <http://www.evedomosti.md/news/mazhejkis-imidzh-moldovy-na-mirovom-urovne-vyros-kak-nikogda>

¹⁶Trei ani de război în Ucraina. R. Moldova continuă să găzduiască peste 127 de mii de refugiați. Câți dintre aceștia au primit cetățenia moldovenească. Publicat: 24.02.2025. <https://moldova1.md/p/44565/trei-ani-de-razboi-in-ucraina--r-moldova-continua-sa-gazduiasca-pest-127-de-mii-de-refugiati-cati-dintre-acestia-au-primit-cetatenia-moldoveneasca>

¹⁷Reuniunea comunității politice europene, 1 iunie 2023. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/meetings/international-summit/2023/06/01/>

¹⁸UE deschide negocieri de aderare cu Republica Moldova. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/press/press-releases/2024/06/25/eu-opens-accession-negotiations-with-moldova/#:~:text=Acest%20eveniment%20este%20urmarea%20unei,cu%20metodologia%20de%20extindere%20revizuit%20C4%83>

¹⁹Prima conferință de aderare cu Republica Moldova. 25 iunie 2024. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/meetings/international-ministerial-meetings/2024/06/25/moldova/>

▪ *In the field of security*, a central element of this transition is the *EU Partnership Mission in the Republic of Moldova (EUPM Moldova)*, launched in 2023, the mandate of which was extended until 2027²⁰. This mission contributes essentially to the strengthening of institutional capacities in the security sector, through technical assistance, strategic advice and support in countering hybrid threats. Another significant step was the signing of the *Defense Cooperation Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and France, in March 2024*²¹. The document provides for the deepening of military collaboration, including in areas such as training, equipment and interoperability, thus contributing to increasing the state's defense capabilities. Through these concrete developments, the messages of support sent by international partners have transformed from symbolic declarations into sustainable partnerships and impactful institutional measures. The state's strategic communication is currently tasked with consolidating and capitalizing on this image capital, in order to accelerate internal modernization and full integration into the EU.

▪ *Tariffs and quotas on the export of Moldovan agricultural products to the EU* have been completely eliminated, a measure extended to 2025. A major step was the inclusion of the Republic of Moldova in the free roaming area with the EU space, eliminating costs for citizens and the business environment. The organization of large-scale economic forums, such as *"Moldova Business Week 2024"*, attracted the attention of international investors, especially in the IT, renewable energy and value-added agriculture sectors. *Progress in diversifying energy sources continued*, through the completion of electricity and gas interconnection projects with Romania, reducing historical dependence and consolidating the image of a state that strategically invests in its resilience.

▪ *In the cultural and educational field*, the attractiveness of the Republic of Moldova has constantly increased. In the 2023-2024 academic year, 5,217 foreign students enrolled in studies in the Republic of Moldova. Of these, almost 52% were from Romania, 21% - from India and 10.3% - from Israel²². Beyond the established festivals (*"Mărțișor"*, *"Maria Bieșu"*), the cultural image was promoted through: the country's wineries, which obtained a record number of medals at prestigious international competitions in 2024, consolidating the country's image as a top wine destination; the open-air classical music festival *"DescOperă"*, from Orheiul Vechi, attracted an increasingly large international audience, being promoted on European cultural platforms; the Republic of Moldova became a full member of the *"Creative Europe"* and *"Horizon Europe"* programs, facilitating access for artists and researchers to European funds and partnerships.

▪ *In the social and sports fields*, the focus has shifted to participation in international initiatives and internal reforms aligned with European standards. If in 2022-2023, the response to the refugee crisis was the defining social project for the country's image, in the period 2024-2025, the focus has shifted to *internal structural reforms with social impact*, supported by external partners. Efforts in *justice reform and combating corruption*, although arduous, are constantly monitored by the EU and reflected in progress reports, contributing to the image of a state committed to strengthening the rule of law, an essential precondition for European integration.

Participation in major international competitions continued to strengthen the image of the Republic of Moldova abroad. After the notable successes in 2023, Moldovan athletes reconfirmed their status as ambassadors of the country, and the most visible moment was represented by their presence at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, where they achieved remarkable results, significantly contributing to the consolidation of the positive notoriety of the Republic of Moldova.

▪ *In the field of media and global projection*, the participation of the Republic of Moldova in world-wide events represents a valuable opportunity for international affirmation and

²⁰Mandatul Misiunii de Parteneriat al Uniunii Europene în Republica Moldova a fost prelungit până în mai 2027. 21.05.2025. <https://mfa.gov.md/ro/content/mandatul-misiunii-de-parteneriat-al-uniunii-europene-republica-moldova-fost-prelungit-pana>

²¹Republica Moldova a ratificat Acordul de cooperare în domeniul apărării cu Republica Franceză. 30 mai 2024. <https://www.parlament.md/ns-newsarticle-Republica-Moldova-a-ratificat-Acordul-de-cooperare-n-domeniul-aparii-cu-Republica-Francez.aspx>

²²Numărul studenților străini din R. Moldova, în creștere. Peste 50% sunt din România. 20 iulie 2024. <https://agora.md/2024/07/20/analiza-numarul-studentilor-straini-din-r-moldova-in-crestere-peste-50percent-sunt-din-romania-infografic>

strengthening the external image of the country. In this context, the *"European Moldova" Assembly*, held on the *Grand National Assembly Square on May 21, 2023*²³, is included, constituting a successful example of improving the state image through strategic communication. This event aimed to affirm the aspiration of the Republic of Moldova to become a full member of the EU, by virtue of the fact that the Moldovan people are European, both historically, geographically, culturally, and through fundamental values. Accession to the EU currently represents the only path that can bring stability to our country in the face of challenges and the only chance for the development of the Republic of Moldova that will allow future generations to realize their potential. The organization of the *European Political Community Summit on June 1, 2023*, represented a diplomatic and logistical maturity exam passed with flying colors, validating Moldova as a partner capable of hosting the leaders of the continent. Through the *Constitutional Referendum on European integration, in the fall of 2024*²⁴, the Republic of Moldova came to the attention of the international press and demonstrated the commitment of society to the European path, consolidating the image of a state where the vector of development is decided by popular will.

An essential tool in strengthening the external image of the Republic of Moldova is its active participation in international exhibition-type events and the organization of strategic media campaigns. Such projects contribute to affirming the country brand and attracting the attention of international public opinion to the economic, cultural and innovative potential of the state. Such events, with an impact on the image and strategic communication, can be considered the world exhibitions in which the Republic of Moldova participated: *Hannover* (Germany) in 2000, *Shanghai* (People's Republic of China) in 2010, *Milan* (Italy) in 2015 and *Dubai* (United Arab Emirates) in 2021.

The participation of the Republic of Moldova in Expo Osaka 2025, organized in Japan from April 13 to October 13, 2025, marks a new key moment in the external projection efforts. The government approved, in April 2023, the organizational plan of the national presence, which aims to present the country brand, domestic products and the strengths of the Moldovan economy. With over 150 participating countries, 25 international organizations and about 28 million expected visitors, the event offers a unique platform for increasing visibility and attracting new economic, cultural and technological partnerships²⁵.

In this context, it becomes essential to maintain a functional and efficient relationship with international press agencies, as well as to conduct well-targeted strategic communication campaigns, which would capitalize on the media impact of these events and consolidate Moldova's positioning as a modern, open and competitive state.

An integral part of the image promotion activity is the efforts to explicitly and efficiently present the positive features of the Moldovan state on the international arena, through strategic communication. In this context, concepts for improving the socio-economic, investment and tourism status of the Republic of Moldova are being developed and implemented, which will cause positive changes in the perception of the state abroad.

At the same time, maintaining a favorable image abroad is essential in achieving the domestic and foreign policy goals and national interests of the Republic of Moldova. These depend, to a large extent, on the quality of the decisions of the rulers, expressed not only at the declarative level, but also through concrete actions. In this context, only coherent strategic communication will contribute to promoting a successful image of the Republic of Moldova, both internally and externally.

The evolution of the legislative framework in the Republic of Moldova in the field of strategic communication. The Republic of Moldova has undertaken certain legislative actions with reference to strategic communication.

²³Rezoluție a Adunării „Moldova Europeană”, adoptată în Piața Marii Adunări Naționale la 21 mai 2023. <https://moldovaeuropeana.md/> (vizitat 22.05.2023).

²⁴Șupac I. Provocările și perspectivele referendumului privind drumul european al Republicii Moldova. 07 iunie 2024. <https://www.ipis.md/2024/06/07/provocarile-si-perspectivale-referendumului-privind-drumul-european-al-republicii-moldova/>

²⁵Au fost aprobate mai multe detalii organizatorice în privința participării Moldovei la „Expo Osaka 2025”. 19 aprilie 2023. <http://bitly.ws/Exb8> (vizitat 07.05.2023).

In 2012, the *Information and Communication Strategy in the Field of Defense and National Security*²⁶, was developed, constituting a first attempt to establish an inter-institutional communication mechanism at the national level to inform public opinion about the reform of the security sector, about the deepening of cooperation with external partners and about the contribution of the Republic of Moldova in ensuring regional and international security.

D. Marin, conducting an in-depth study of its content and effects, finds that the Strategy did not have the expected impact due to the lack of a concerted effort by the institutions and partners to implement the document, but also the inability to adapt institutional communication to new internal and external security developments²⁷. At the same time, the Strategy loses relevance after the aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, which changed the European security paradigm and deepened the information wars, aimed at manipulating public opinion.

In 2016, the *National Defense Strategy of the Republic of Moldova* was adopted, which refers to *strategic communication*, specifying that it will become the indispensable information element of national authorities, representing one of the tools that the state has at its disposal to achieve its objectives in the field of security and defense²⁸. In this direction, efforts will be directed towards developing an effective vision of strategic communication, transforming institutional communication structures and developing forms of collaboration and interaction. Thus, a common interpretation of strategic communication is required, necessary at the level of all public authorities and at the level of all national policies and strategies.

In 2017, the *law approving the Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Moldova*²⁹, was received, which mentions the importance of developing strategic communication mechanisms at the national level for achieving the national interests of the Republic of Moldova.

In 2018, the *Information Security Strategy for 2019-2024*³⁰, was approved, which proposed the development of strategic communication mechanisms, with actions aimed at assessing vulnerabilities, developing communication policies and creating a dedicated information platform. Although it represented a step forward, the implementation period of this strategy ended in 2024, and its partial results highlighted the need for a much more robust and centralized approach, adapted to the intensity of hybrid warfare.

In 2022, in order to combat disinformation and increase the efficiency of strategic communication, amendments were adopted to the *Code of Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova*³¹, which, among other things, establish prohibitions on news and analytical broadcasts from third countries and endow the *Audiovisual Council* with the authority to withdraw the license of a mass media outlet. As a result, on December 16, 2022, the broadcasting licenses of six TV stations were suspended, including *Primul în Moldova*, *Accent TV*, *TV6*, *Orhei TV*, *RTR Moldova* and *NTV Moldova* due to the lack of accurate information in the coverage of national and international events.

Along with legislative measures, the response to information challenges also came from civil society, through platforms such as *STOP FALS*, created in 2015 to expose fake news³². Later, with the outbreak of the large-scale war in Ukraine, the authorities immediately reacted by creating the official government channel on Telegram, "*Prima Sursa*"³³, intended to provide verified information and combat manipulation in real time.

An effective way to carry out strategic communication activities is the diaspora. The State Chancellery, through the Office for Diaspora Relations, coordinates this area. In order to

²⁶Hotărâre nr. 569 din 03.08.2012 cu privire la Strategia de informare și comunicare în domeniul apărării și securității naționale pentru anii 2012-2016. În: Monitorul Oficial, nr. 166-169 art. 626. Publicat: 10.08.2012. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=6949&lang=ro

²⁷Marin D. Strategia de informare și comunicare în domeniul apărării și securității naționale: analiză și recomandări. În: Policy Study, Asociația pentru Politică Externă, nr.2, iulie 2017, p.2. http://www.ape.md/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Studiu-PSAC-2017_Iulie_v2_final.pdf

²⁸Strategia națională de apărare. Chișinău, 2016. <https://www.army.md/img/userfiles/doconline/sna.pdf>

²⁹Lege nr. 299 din 21.12.2017 privind aprobarea Concepției securității informaționale a Republicii Moldova. În: Monitorul Oficial, nr. 48-57 art. 122. Publicat: 16.02.2018. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=105660&lang=ro

³⁰Hotărâre nr. 257 din 22-11-2018 privind aprobarea Strategiei securității informaționale a Republicii Moldova pentru anii 2019-2024 și a Planului de acțiuni pentru implementarea acesteia. În: Monitorul Oficial, nr. 13-21 art. 80. Publicat: 18.01.2019. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=111979&lang=ro

³¹Parlamentul a adoptat modificări la Codul serviciilor media audiovizuale al Republicii Moldova. 3 noiembrie 2022. <http://bitly.ws/EEWq> (vizitat 15.01.2023).

³²Stop Fals. <https://stopfals.md/ro/about-us> (vizitat 15.01.2023).

³³Prima Sursă – официальный Telegram-канал молдавских властей. 24 februarie 2022. <http://bitly.ws/EEVq> (vizitat 15.01.2023).

improve collaboration, the National Strategy “Diaspora-2025”³⁴ was developed. This strategy reached the end of its implementation period in 2025, and the lessons learned from its application are in the process of being integrated into the new government policies on the diaspora, aligned with the European path.

Based on the state priorities and the national agenda, strategic communication allows highlighting the concerns of the target audience and exploring the confusions in the public space, which prevent ensuring the paths and vector of the country's development. In the case of the Republic of Moldova, this vector is *European integration*, confirmed as an irreversible strategic priority by the constitutional referendum in the fall of 2024.

Although European integration had a promising start, the so-called "pro-European" parties have compromised the integrationist model that favors the development and modernization of the Republic of Moldova, in a medium and long-term perspective, through involvement in banking fraud, but also the numerous cases of corruption exposed publicly. The phenomenon of state capture has contributed to the stagnation of the reform process. Also, the ineffective communication of the European vector by the authorities of the Republic of Moldova led to a considerable decrease in its popularity, the European development model being widely associated with the governing parties, with welfare, but less with the way the country develops.

One of the structural factors that continues to affect the European path is *the lack of a broad consensus across the political class*. The results of the 2024 referendum, although they democratically validated this path, also revealed a deeply polarized society. The fact that European integration is not supported by all relevant political actors is the main vulnerability that allows the distortion of information about the essence of the reforms and the benefits of approaching the EU, damaging the external image and internal cohesion.

This societal fracture is systematically exploited. As researchers point out, the Republic of Moldova is facing intense hybrid threats, including disinformation and propaganda, orchestrated by hostile external actors that directly aim to undermine democratic values and the national interest in European integration³⁵. In this context, the creation and development of a national mechanism for ensuring information resilience, through strategic communication, is no longer just necessary, but becomes an essential condition for state security.

The large-scale invasion of Ukraine acted as a catalyst, forcing the authorities to move from reactive measures to building a solid institutional framework. In this context, *two major advances* were made:

1. . In 2023, the Government approved *the Concept of Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation for 2024–2028*³⁶, being the most important strategic document in the field, which establishes a unitary vision on protecting the information space, strengthening the resilience of society and proactively promoting national interests.

2. The previous proposals materialized in 2024, with the establishment of *the Center for Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation "Patriot"*. This new institution has the mandate to coordinate inter-institutional efforts, analyze information threats, and ensure coherent and efficient state communication, directly responding to the need to have a command center in the fight against disinformation.

The vulnerability of the Republic of Moldova lies, on the one hand, in the country's weakly consolidated institutional and social system, and, on the other hand, in the high capacity for interference by external factors. In fact, any threat constitutes a challenge to the internal stability and well-being of the state, and the establishment of a strategic communication process is an effective long-term measure in countering these threats, increasing resilience and strengthening social cohesion. Therefore, strategic communication can be used to gain credibility, provide legitimacy to the state and ensure freedom of action. At the same time,

³⁴Strategia Diaspora 2025. Guvernul Republicii Moldova. <https://old.brd.gov.md/ro/content/strategia-diaspora-2025>

³⁵Mărzaș E. Comunicarea strategică în sectorul de securitate și apărare. În: Notă analitică, nr. 4, 2019. <https://ipre.md/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/natao-pb-nato-marzac-final.pdf>

³⁶Hotărâre nr. 416 din 22.12.2023 privind aprobarea Concepției de comunicare strategică și contracarare a dezinformării, a acțiunilor de manipulare a informației și a ingerințelor străine pentru anii 2024–2028. În: Monitorul Oficial Nr. 17-19, art. 29. Publicat: 17-01-2024. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=141254&lang=ro

strategic communication is essential in the context of providing support for the implementation of policy strategies, achieving state objectives and promoting national interests.

The successful implementation of strategic communication, at the domestic and international levels, will allow ensuring the security environment, strengthening political, economic, social and cultural factors, countering disinformation and propaganda, developing resilience, ensuring state protection and presenting national interests to both the population and external partners.

The actions and effects of the influence of strategic communication of the Republic of Moldova on the external image of the state. Currently, strategic communication has become an indispensable activity of the state, taking into account the massive development of information technologies, the intensification of disinformation and propaganda campaigns, the diversification of means, sources and targets of manipulative influence campaigns³⁷. Strategic communication represents, in this sense, a vital tool for a state, especially in the context of forming and promoting a positive image, both internally and externally, constituting a process designed to counteract the destructive effects of propaganda, disinformation and malicious information on the external public in order to promote national interests, but also on the internal public in order to increase its resilience.

One of the biggest challenges of strategic communication is that it is an open and accessible process for all, both large and small states, with an emphasis on defending the interests of the state through peaceful means. The tasks of strategic communication lie in the ability to inform citizens, to create and spread the culture, identity, image and values of the state in the international context. Namely, the increase in the importance of public opinion, the export of democracy, the rise of international media, the highlighting of the role of the diaspora, the development of technologies and communications require the need to intensify the implementation of strategic communication tools.

Strategic communication actions are inextricably linked to state-image formation, and the two operate synergistically to advance foreign-policy objectives and safeguard national interests. However defined, each rests on the primary function of social influence—namely, the deliberate shaping of perceptions, preferences, and behaviors. This process entails the systematic construction of narratives, the curatorial selection of themes and persuasive vectors, and the context-sensitive leverage of audience-segment vulnerabilities. Taken together, these stages form an integrated cycle through which strategic communication is executed and a coherent, resilient image of the state is projected.

In the process of formulating the national interests of the Republic of Moldova, we can highlight several *defining aspects*³⁸:

- *Priority of the citizen in relation to the state* – basing national interests on the aspirations of citizens, by all available means. In the conditions of democratization and informatization, citizens have various means to distrust it and tarnish its image. This principle means that the legitimacy and image of the state derive directly from its ability to provide citizens with security, prosperity and opportunities. In an era of disinformation and geopolitical competition, a government that cannot demonstrate concrete benefits for the population quickly loses trust, becoming vulnerable. National interest is not an abstract concept, but the sum of citizens' aspirations. *A major example of success is the inclusion of the Republic of Moldova in the free roaming area with the EU*, a measure with a direct and personal impact for hundreds of thousands of people. Likewise, *maintaining the liberalized visa regime and access for young people to programs such as Erasmus+* are concrete manifestations of this principle. Also, the *organization of the Constitutional Referendum on European integration, in 2024*, is the supreme example of this principle. The state requested a direct mandate from citizens to follow a strategic path, basing the national interest on the expressed popular will.

³⁷Mariș A. T. Comunicarea strategică – element de influențare esențial în exercitarea puterii – soft power sau smart power? În: Buletinul Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”, septembrie, 2020, p.94. <https://revista.unap.ro/index.php/revista/article/download/913/874/>

³⁸Juc V. Fundamentarea și evoluția conceptului de interes național. În: Revista de Filosofie, Sociologie și Științe Politice, nr. 2(150), 2009, p.132.

• *The European vocation of the people of the Republic of Moldova* – ensuring the contribution of national interests to creating the image of a country that consistently advocates for the market economy, but at the same time supports the cultural-historical traditions and values by which the people identify themselves. This interest defines the civilizational identity of the Republic of Moldova. It is not just about joining an economic union, but about affirming the fact that our state, through history, culture and values, is part of the European space. The communication of this vocation must harmoniously balance the adoption of European norms with the protection and promotion of national cultural uniqueness. *The organization of the European Political Community Summit in 2023* was a strategic act through which the Republic of Moldova no longer presented itself as an applicant, but as a host of the European family, demonstrating capacity and belonging. *The holding of the first Intergovernmental Conference in 2024 and the advancement in the legislative screening process* are technical steps that consolidate this image. At the same time, each Moldovan product, accepted on the EU market without customs duties, is a confirmation of the fact that national quality standards align with European ones, demonstrating real economic integration.

• *Ensuring national security* – guaranteeing the close connection of national interests with national security, through strategic communication. In the context of the war in Ukraine, this interest has gained crucial relevance. Security is no longer defined only in military terms, but as a complex concept that includes energy, economic, informational and societal security (resilience). Strategic communication in this area must explain that strengthening capacities and partnerships is not an act of aggression, but an essential condition for the survival and peaceful development of the state. *The projects for the interconnection of natural gas and electricity networks with Romania and, by extension, with the European market (ENTSO-E)*, are strategic actions that have dramatically reduced a historical vulnerability used as a weapon of blackmail. At the same time, strengthening defense is done through transparent partnerships. An example is the EU Partnership Mission in Moldova, which helps to strengthen resilience against hybrid threats. The creation of the *Center for Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation* constitutes a direct institutional response to hybrid warfare, showing that the state is developing modern mechanisms to protect its information space and, implicitly, social cohesion.

Therefore, strategic communication is directly influenced by national interests, and by determining them, the Republic of Moldova has demonstrated its commitment to respecting the values of freedom and democracy.

Strategic challenges and opportunities of the Republic of Moldova in the field of strategic communication and strengthening the external image. The Republic of Moldova is currently facing *a wide range of challenges in the field of strategic communication and strengthening the external image*, but it also has significant opportunities to counter them. Their identification and correct management is an essential element for strengthening the country's international position and achieving the strategic objective of European integration. Among the *main challenges*, we can highlight:

1. *Intensification of information threats.* In the current geopolitical context, the Republic of Moldova is the target of sophisticated disinformation campaigns and external interference, with increasing intensity and complexity. Most of these actions, originating from the Russian Federation, systematically aim to destabilize public and political perception, both domestically and internationally. By disseminating disinformation, manipulating public discourse and promoting hostile narratives, these external influences contribute to the erosion of trust in democratic institutions and to the undermining of the European path of the Republic of Moldova.

2. *Insufficiently developed institutional capacities.* Although the establishment of the Center for Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation "Patriot" in 2024 represents a fundamental step in strengthening the institutional infrastructure, its full operationalization is still underway. In order for this center to function as an effective shield against hybrid threats, an adequate allocation of material, human and technological resources is necessary, as well as a continuous development of professional skills. Also, the field of cyber security, an integral part

of strategic communication, remains a vulnerable area that requires constant monitoring and proactive measures, adapted to new forms of cyber-attacks.

3. *Limited resources and shortage of specialists.* A significant impediment to the efficiency of strategic communication is limited resources. The shortage of experts in the field of strategic communication and information security, combined with insufficient financial allocations, restricts the ability of authorities to implement coherent and impactful campaigns. This aspect affects both the quality of the messages transmitted and the ability to react promptly to threats. A serious investment is needed in the training and attraction of competent specialists, as well as in adequate technical equipment for managing information crises.

4. *Low informational resilience of the population.* A major internal factor is the insufficient level of media literacy and information security culture among the population. This vulnerability increases citizens' susceptibility to manipulation and amplifies the negative impact of toxic information flows, including disinformation and propaganda. Given that society is not sufficiently prepared to identify and reject these harmful influences, the risk of them infiltrating public discourse and undermining trust in the state increases significantly.

5. *Internal political polarization.* An internal context marked by heightened political polarization amplifies the vulnerabilities of the Republic of Moldova to external pressures. Social and political divisions are actively exploited by external actors with hostile interests, in order to weaken national cohesion. This internal fragmentation affects the authorities' ability to develop and implement a coherent foreign policy, but also to communicate the country's image in a unified and credible manner internationally.

On the other hand, the Republic of Moldova has *relevant opportunities* that, if properly exploited, can decisively strengthen its external image.

First, the status of a candidate country for *the European Union provides an extremely powerful narrative framework*. This can be used to promote a positive image, modernization and adherence to European values, with the negotiation process itself being a platform for highlighting progress.

Strengthening strategic partnerships is another essential opportunity. Deeper cooperation with the EU, the US, Romania and other democratic states facilitates access to technical, financial and expertise support necessary to strengthen capacities in combating disinformation.

Also, *the active involvement of the diaspora and civil society represents a valuable potential*. These groups can function as multipliers of the positive image of the Republic of Moldova and as partners in increasing informational resilience at the national and international levels.

At the same time, *the use of international platforms and constant participation in global forums and events* can contribute to promoting the vision and progress of the Republic of Moldova. An active and coherent presence on the international stage can generate positive perceptions and effectively counter adverse narratives.

Conclusions. The analysis of strategic communication in the context of strengthening the external image of the Republic of Moldova highlights a complex evolution, marked by significant progress, but also by persistent challenges. The transformation of the external image of the Republic of Moldova is closely linked to the firm commitment to European integration, reflected in the organization of the European Political Community Summit and, in particular, in the historic decision of the European Council to open accession negotiations with the EU. These achievements have contributed to shaping a favorable external image, associated with a resilient, democratic state oriented towards European values. However, this image remains vulnerable to hybrid threats, disinformation campaigns and the perception of the slow implementation of reforms, especially in the areas of justice and the fight against corruption.

The Republic of Moldova's path in the field of strategic communication has seen an accelerated transition, from fragmented and incoherent initiatives, specific to the first years of independence, to an institutionalized and strategic approach, determined by the imperative of regional security and the major objective of European integration. The pressures exerted by the

unstable geopolitical environment and the opportunity offered by the rapprochement with the EU, acted as catalytic factors for the maturation of this field.

The adoption of the National Concept for Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation for the period 2024–2028, together with the establishment, in 2024, of the Center for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation “Patriot”, marks a stage of institutional and conceptual consolidation. These initiatives indicate a paradigm shift: from the absence of an adequate regulatory framework and a specialized structure, to the foundation of an institutional architecture, oriented towards communication efficiency and resilience. In this context, the main challenge no longer lies in creating the instruments, but in ensuring effective implementation, supported by clear performance indicators and a visible impact domestically and internationally.

Recommendations. Starting from the new institutional reality, to increase the efficiency of strategic communication and the promotion of the external image of the Republic of Moldova, we consider *the following directions of action as priorities*:

1. *Institutional strengthening and ensuring sustainability.* It is crucial that the new structures benefit from funding and a well-trained professional staff. Ensuring the operational independence of these entities is essential to guarantee the credibility of their actions and to protect them from conjunctural political interference.

2. *Developing and implementing proactive strategic narratives.* The strategic communication of the Republic of Moldova must move from a defensive posture, focused on debunking disinformation, to a proactive one, which imposes its own narrative agenda. It is necessary to articulate clear key messages, centered on themes such as: European transformation, national resilience and investment opportunity, and their constant dissemination through all available channels.

3. *Full synchronization of communication efforts at the government level.* It is necessary to create an efficient inter-institutional mechanism, which would ensure that all state entities (Presidency, Parliament, Government, ministries, agencies) communicate in a unified and coherent manner on topics of strategic interest, both internally and externally.

4. *Systematic involvement of society and the diaspora.* The communication effort cannot be exclusively governmental. It is necessary to develop partnership platforms with independent media, with civil society specialized in combating disinformation and with diaspora associations, in order to transform these groups into efficient multipliers of positive narratives and active partners in increasing societal resilience.

Thus, strategic communication must be viewed not as an auxiliary function, but as an indispensable component of the act of governance and national security policy. The long-term success of the Republic of Moldova in achieving its development and European integration aspirations will be directly proportional to the capacity of the state and society to communicate effectively, credibly and strategically.

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