

## MOLDOVA

### "HOW DID THE VISA-FREE REGIME WITH THE EU AFFECT THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THE RESIDENTS OF THE TRANSNISTRIAN REGION?"

#### 00:00:00-00:00:22 ANGELA ZAHAROVA JOURNALIST

*About 400 thousand people live in the Transnistrian region. Two-thirds of them are citizens of the Republic of Moldova and more 100, 000 citizens have obtained Moldovan biometric passports and the **right to circulate freely** in the European Union. **How** did the visa-free regime **affect** the opportunities of the inhabitants of the left side of the Nistru River? We have learned about it from transnistrians inhabitants who used **their right**.*

#### 00:00:22 -00:00:46

We cross the Nistru River. On the left bank of the river the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova we reach the unrecognized Transnistria. Local passports document the identity of its citizens, but they do not allow the inhabitants of the region to travel abroad. Thus, for a quarter of a century, they need to obtain the citizenship of other states like Russia, the Ukraine, Moldova, Romania or Bulgaria.

#### 00:00:46- 00:01:02 OXANA POGREBNAIA INHABITANT OF RYBNITSA CITY, TRANSNISTRIAN REGION

*I hold Transnistrian citizenship; I have the citizenship of Moldova, and also - the citizenship of Russia. And everything is absolutely legal. We are all "citizens of the world"! My father is Russian and my mother is Moldovan. We live in the transnistrian territory. Well, where should we go?*

#### 00:01:02 -00:01:30

Oksana is a teacher and lives in the town of Rybnitsa – it's at one hundred kilometers distance from Chisinau. She likes to travel. She travelled to Russia and in the neighboring Ukraine. Due to the complexity of obtaining of visas and to the stereotypes linked to this process, a trip to Europe **has remained** a dream for her. After the abolition of the visa regime, like other thousand inhabitants of the region, her family received Moldovan biometric passports and passed the EU border for the first time. This was a great event in their family life, contrary to **her myths and fears**.

#### 00:01:30-00:02:37 OXANA POGREBNAIA TEACHER, INHABITANT OF RYBNITSA CITY, TRANSNISTRIAN REGION

*The first time (**travelling to the EU**) we were afraid because we did not know how it would be! It was very scary! Because people said, "here the border (**control**) is so thorough, especially the first frontier, it is so" wow! ". -Guys! You can go! Nobody touches you! All people are very friendly! This, of course, was something new for us. For us it was a big, but a very big event in our life. I am, however, a teacher of foreign languages! Yes, it is interesting when we read, but anyway I wanted to see everything, to touch it, to feel all that. Well, but probably everyone wants to visit Europe! At least once! But when I finally got a biometric passport and I realized that in order to travel abroad we could simply take a transport and leave, so we decided not to wait for the next summer, we decided to go even in December at Christmas Fairs. This greatly facilitated the movement of people abroad. At least for my family: to go abroad in Budapest! Prague! Dresden!*

#### 00:02:37-00:02:42 CHISINAU AIRPORT: PASS CONTROL, BORDER POLICE STAMP AND AIRPLANE FLIGHT.

#### 00:02:42 - 00:02:46 TRAINING IN THE SPORTS MARTIAL BATTLE CLUB

#### 00:02:46 - 00:02:59

This is the unique center of the development of universal struggles in the Transnistrian region. Sergei is a master of sport, a top international referee. In the gym of the Martial Arts Club in Rybnitsa he prepares real champions of Europe and of the world.

#### 00:02:59 - 00:03:07 SERGHEI COROVAI TRAINERS MARTIAL WRESTLERS, MASTER OF SPORTS, INTERNATIONAL REFEREE, MOLDOVA

*And, of course, I want each athlete participate in all the championships from the calendar of this kind of sport.*

**00:03:07- 00:03:29**

Club wrestlers represent the Republic of Moldova on international arenas. The visa-free regime has expanded the "geography" of sporting events and championships to which they can participate. Yevgeny has practiced the universal struggle from the age of 5. He is already the European champion and the world champion/ **in his category/**. He received his first Moldovan biometric passport, immediately following the abolition of the visa regime in 2014.

**00:03:29-00:03:54 YEVGENY LUPAN EUROPEAN CHAMPION, WORLD CHAMPION IN UNIVERSAL WRESTLING, RYBNITSA, MOLDOVA**

*We obtained/**passports/** in 2014 when I went to the world championship in hand-to hand fighting between boys aged between 14-15 and 16-17 years old young man. "Here it is (passport), it is here, I show the Moldovan biometric passport and we are not required any kind of visa, as, for example they ask from young men from Russia. They (**border officers**) simply checked if it is Delegation applied the stamp on our biometric passports and wished us: Have a nice trip and Good luck in competitions!!*

**00:03:54 – 00:04:01**

For athletes and coaches, the visa-free regime means first and foremost the freedom to choose championships and more time for training.

**00:04:01 - 00:04:50 SERGHEI COROVAI TRAINERS MARTIAL WRESTLERS, MASTER OF SPORTS, INTERNATIONAL REFEREE, MOLDOVA**

*Previously I was also in charge of obtaining visas and training the athletes. It's a big DIFFERENCE NOW!! I can say. Previously, in order to leave, you needed an invitation, to go the consulate for weeks, staying in line and you were demonstrating that you were going to the Championship. You had to have a certain amount of money for each sportsman if you were passing through other countries. It was a torment, a mast, it was a Hell!  
«But now it's super simple, great, and wonderful! In Romania we were, we were to the Czech Republic, Poland, in Germany we were. I took: the application, the athlete and the biometric passport. Smoothly! No problems!*

**00:04:50-00:04:56 CHISINAU AIRPORT: PASS CONTROL, BORDER POLICE STAMP AND AIRPLANE FLIGHT.**

**00:04:56 -00:05:00 GERMAN LANGUAGE LESSONS AT THE CENTER FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND TRANSLATIONS FROM TIRASPOL, TRANSNISTRIA**

**00:05:00 - 00:05:13**

A German language lesson at Tiraspol's Center for Foreign Language Studies. Some of the students have already been enrolled / accepted in European universities and schools. Last year hundreds of inhabitants of the Transnistrian region learned European languages at the Center.

**00:05:13 -00:05:46 TATIANA YASIKOVA PRESIDENT OF "TRANSNISTRIA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY" TIRASPOL**

*the public's interest in studying foreign languages increased including the possibilities offered by the Visa-free regime: tourist trips, traveling abroad to be enrolled in different universities, visits to these countries to get acquainted with institutions, education and even the purpose of looking for a job. Now EUROPE HAS BECOME CLOSER! It is no longer so complicated to travel, so local people have started to learn foreign languages.*

**00:05:46 - 00:06:02**

Tatiana manages a non-commercial regional development organization in the Transnistrian region. With the support of the European Union in Tiraspol, a Tourist Center was opened. Tatiana's activities require frequent travels abroad and the visa-free regime for her means: new directions and new opportunities:

**00:06:02 - 00:06:43 TATIANA YASIKOVA PRESIDENT OF "TRANSNISTRIA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY" TIRASPOL**

*The visa-free regime opens new borders, new looks and travel opportunities. Do you already know how? The visa-free regime does not spoil us but makes us think about other new areas where we could go: where we could not even think of going, because it was necessary to get visas, it was another special regime. I have had the*

*experience of traveling abroad when I had to get a visa. Of course I felt the difference and it became very comfy.*

**00:06:43 -00:07:08**

The projects of Tatiana and her colleagues cover most of the localities in the Transnistrian region. She often communicates with locals and says that the population is most interested in study visits, tourism and work. People know that abolishing of visas allows them a short stay in the EU and does not give them the right to work, but it opens new perspectives for it.

**00:07:08 –00:07:38 TATIANA YASIKOVA PRESIDENT OF "TRANSNISTRIA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY" TIRASPOL**

*However, this opportunity is for short trips in European countries, especially for tourism purposes. And most people go to this end. This does not give us the right to work, although it is clear that some citizens also seem to benefit from this right too. But the access procedure and visiting the country open opportunities for training, enhancing skills, practices and competences. So yes, people are leaving. Because right now you can get on the road or right now you can take a plane ticket and fly.*

**0:07:38-00:07:43 CHISINAU AIRPORT: PASS CONTROL, BORDER POLICE STAMP AND AIRPLANE FLIGHT.**

**00:07:43 -00:08:43**

The visa-free regime with the European Union for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, in one way or another, facilitates the interaction of the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region with the Moldovan authorities. Following the abolition of visas, Chisinau issued more than 1.6 million biometric passports, of which more than one hundred thousand - the inhabitants of the left bank of the Nistru and their number continues to increase. The total number of citizens visiting the EU with a biometric passport already exceeded one million six hundred thousand. Visa liberalization has also improved the reputation of Moldovan citizenship in the Transnistrian region. The authorities in Chisinau estimate that by October 2017 more than two thirds of inhabitants of the unrecognized Transnistrian became citizens of the Republic of Moldova.

**INFOGRAPHIC 1:**

**Source: Public Services Agency on 01.10.2017**

MOLDOVAN BIOMETRIC PASSPORTS ISSUED 1 614 384  
FOR TRANSNISTRIAN inhabitants: 107 114

**INFOGRAPHIC 2:**

**Source: Border Police RM on 01.10.2017**

PERIOD: 2014-2017  
NUMBER OF BIOMETRIC PASSPORTS ISSUED: 1 614 384  
MOLDOVAN TRAVELERS IN EU WITH BIOMETRIC PASSPORT: 1 608 244

**INFOGRAPHIC 3: MOLDOVAN CITIZENS IN THE TRANSNISTRIAN REGION:**

**Source: Bureau of reintegration RM on 01.10.2017**

FROM 400 000 HOUSES - 315 000 DID THE CITIZENSHIP OF THE RM IN 2017  
AGAINST 289,000 - IN 2014

**00:08:43-00:09:17 GHEORGHE BALAN VICE PREMIER FOR REINTEGRATION REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

*It's true, once the achievement of this liberalized regime obtained, we have noticed and gained an increase in the ranks of the population who wanted to reconfirm their Moldovan citizenship. Currently over 315,000 people living in the region/Transnistria/ have already obtained it.*

*We can affirm that most of the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region have Moldovan passports and Moldovan identity documents. This is a big difference from other conflicts that took place in the post-soviet space, because here, the greatest majority of the Transnistrian region, we represent about 400 000 and 315 000 of them have already Moldovan papers/passports/. And this interest and desire to obtain, to confirm and reconfirm our citizenship is **persisting** now.*

**00:09:17 -00:09:27**

At the same time, experts Expert in security policies, border management and migration policies, believe that Chisinau must make much more effort in the future to maintain the visa-free regime:

**00:09:27- 00:09:28 ROSIAN VASILOI EXPERT IN SECURITY POLICIES, BORDER MANAGEMENT AND MIGRATION POLICIES, R.MOLDOVA**

*At the same time we must ensure that those who receive the official documents of the Republic of Moldova should take all measures in order to meet the security requirements established in the Moldovan legal norms and acts.*

**00:09:29 -00:10:15**

Visa liberalization continues to attract the population of the Transnistrian region but this cannot substitute the problems in the field of justice, mass media freedom and corruption in Moldova, according to the expert. As for him, Chisinau must continue the reforms and follow the Association Agreement with the EU which will also have tangible results for the Transnistrian inhabitants. Especially now when since 2017 the neighboring Ukraine has obtained a visa-free regime with the European Union.

**00:10:15-00:11:10 ROSIAN VASILOI EXPERT IN SECURITY POLICIES, BORDER MANAGEMENT AND MIGRATION POLICIES, R.MOLDOVA**

*The Ukraine has been obtained the visa liberalization. Respectively, our citizens who have a Ukrainian passport can already choose with which passport they can travel: the Ukrainian or the Moldovan one, with Romanian citizenship, and according to some sources, Bulgarian citizenship.*

*For the further implementation of the reforms and the European Integration Agenda, in particular, on the Association Agreement with the EU, those backlogs that we have, and not only in dialogue with the EU, but also the dialogue with our citizens from the Transnistrian region, to be a clear vision: how do we reintegrate the country, how do we implement those policies to get closer to reality, not with the travel document, but in reality our citizen living on the left bank of the Dniester. We do not have to stop.*

**00:11:10-00:11:18**

In both Chisinau and Brussels the abolition of visas for Moldova is seen as a stage in a further process and in no case a final result.

**00:11:18 –00:11:55 PETER MICHALKO THE EU AMBASSADOR IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

*There must be concrete measures to improve the lives of people on both sides and it will create the conditions or the atmosphere, if you wish, for the future settlement of the conflict. But it is certain that the process must continue, it must be supported and that the European Union should be as active as possible.*

**00:11:55 -00:12:32**

The visa-free regime has opened new opportunities to citizens from the Transnistrian region: for traveling, education and training or professional development. At the same time, these benefits significantly increased the number of Moldovan citizens in the left of the Nistru River. From 2017, the abolition of visas for the neighboring Ukraine offers the same opportunities to Transnistrian residents with Ukrainian citizenship.

**Meanwhile, the diversity of citizenship and the problem of self-determination (*identity*) continue to remain a particularity of the Transnistrian inhabitants, who choose between the West and the East.**