

DECLARATION of the Civic Movement “Building Trust”

Citizens cannot be consulted only to be ignored. The lesson of Baraboi raises a fundamental question for the entire administrative-territorial reform.

The Civic Movement “Building Trust” was notified by representatives of the community of Baraboi village, Dondușeni district, regarding the way in which the voluntary amalgamation process of localities is being carried out.

After analyzing the documents presented by citizens, we note that this case goes beyond the limits of a single community. It highlights a matter of principle within the current legislative framework on voluntary amalgamation: citizens are consulted, but the law does not oblige local authorities to respect the will expressed by them.

Such an approach calls into question the genuinely voluntary nature of the amalgamation process.

Chronology of the Baraboi case

On 13 June 2026, a general assembly of citizens was organized in Baraboi village to consult the population on the options for voluntary amalgamation. According to the minutes and the list of participants, 260 people attended the assembly.

Following the public debates, the community clearly expressed its will:

- the option of amalgamation with Frasin was rejected;
- the option of amalgamation with Târnova was rejected;
- the community unanimously supported amalgamation with Mihăileni village.

Subsequently, on 22 June 2026, the Local Council established the working group and, according to the information presented by the community, initiated the amalgamation process in accordance with the decision of the citizens’ assembly.

However, only a few days later, on 30 June 2026, the Local Council was convened again and, according to the information and documents presented to the Civic Movement, the option of amalgamation with Târnova village was put to a vote — an option previously rejected by citizens during the general assembly.

At the same time, the community reports that the decisions adopted by the Local Council were not published within the required timeframe, and citizens’ access to these acts was made difficult.

The Civic Movement “Building Trust” does not pronounce itself on the legality of these decisions, as this falls within the competence of the authorized authorities and, where applicable, the courts. However, the facts presented demonstrate the existence of a systemic problem that may affect any community in the Republic of Moldova.

A serious legislative gap that calls into question the voluntary nature of the reform

The Baraboi case is not merely a local dispute regarding the choice of the community with which amalgamation is to be carried out. It reveals a major vulnerability in the current regulatory framework governing the voluntary amalgamation of administrative-territorial units.

The law obliges local public authorities to organize public consultations and inform citizens about the amalgamation process. However, in its current form, it does not oblige the Local Council to respect the result of these consultations when adopting the final decision on amalgamation.

Moreover, this approach is enshrined directly in the normative acts regulating the amalgamation process. Thus, point 37 of the Methodology for the Voluntary Amalgamation of Administrative-Territorial Units, approved by Government Decision No. 925/2023, expressly provides:

“The local referendum on the voluntary amalgamation of ATUs is consultative, while the decision on the voluntary amalgamation of ATUs, according to the respective draft decision, is adopted by the local council of the ATU participating in the voluntary amalgamation process.”

This provision demonstrates that, at present, even the result of a local referendum — the strongest form of direct expression of citizens’ will — is not binding on the Local Council. The final decision belongs exclusively to local councillors.

Therefore, if the law does not confer binding force even on a local referendum, it is clear that it does not oblige the Local Council to respect the result of a general assembly of citizens or other forms of public consultation either.

The Baraboi case demonstrates that this legislative gap is not merely a theoretical problem. It produces concrete effects on communities. Citizens are invited to participate in consultations, to debate and to express their option, yet the Local Council may subsequently adopt a different decision, without the law providing an obligation to respect the will of the majority of the community.

We consider that this situation contradicts the very philosophy of a reform declared to be voluntary. A reform cannot be considered voluntary if the will of the community has only a consultative character, while the final decision may be taken in contradiction with the option expressed by citizens.

The administrative-territorial reform is one of the most important institutional transformations of the Republic of Moldova in recent decades. Its success will not be measured only by the reduction in the number of administrative-territorial units or by the administrative efficiency achieved, but also by the level of trust citizens will have in the fairness of this process.

The participation of local communities cannot mean only the right to be heard. Participation must also mean the obligation of the authorities to take into account the will expressed by citizens. Otherwise, public consultations and even local referendums risk becoming mere procedural formalities, while people’s trust in state institutions and in the administrative-territorial reform will inevitably be affected.

If the state asks people what future they want for their community, their answer must matter. Otherwise, public consultation no longer represents an instrument of participatory democracy, but only a formal stage in a process in which the decision is made by others.

In this context, we call on the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova to amend the Law and the Methodology on the voluntary amalgamation of administrative-territorial units by introducing clear safeguards for respecting the will of local communities.

We request:

1. The introduction of a legal obligation requiring the Local Council's decision on amalgamation to be adopted in accordance with the result of the official consultation of the community, especially when this will is expressed through the general assembly of citizens.
2. The establishment of an obligation to organize a new public consultation if the Local Council intends to adopt a solution different from the one previously supported by the community.
3. The introduction of the possibility to challenge and annul decisions on amalgamation adopted while ignoring the result of the official consultation of the community.
4. The review of all decisions on amalgamation adopted against the will expressed by local communities.
5. The strengthening of transparency obligations, so that all draft decisions, adopted decisions and minutes concerning amalgamation are published within clear deadlines and are accessible to citizens.
6. We request that the State Chancellery verify all cases where there are indications that decisions on amalgamation were adopted in breach of transparency procedures or without respecting the will expressed by local communities.

The lesson of Baraboi

The Baraboi case should not be viewed as a local conflict. It is a warning signal for the entire administrative-territorial reform. If we want stronger communities and more efficient local administrations, we must also strengthen citizens' trust in the decision-making process. And trust is not built only by consulting people.

Trust is built when authorities respect the will of those they represent.

For this reason, the Civic Movement "Building Trust" considers that the Law on Voluntary Amalgamation must be amended so that consultation with local communities becomes a real instrument of democratic participation, and citizens' voices cannot be ignored when decisions are made about the future of their localities.

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