

POSITION PAPER

Increase in Diesel Excise Duty from 1 January 2027: European Obligation or a Matter of Timing?

Chişinău, September 2026

In brief. The 1 January 2027 deadline for a 20% increase in the excise duty on diesel fuel is not imposed by the European Union. It is a pace chosen by the Government. The countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 were given between 6 and 9 years after accession to reach the European minimum. In 2026, amid a major price crisis, the EU itself allows Member States to temporarily reduce excise duties, even below the minimum level. The Republic of Moldova is facing record diesel prices and can negotiate an adjusted timetable.

1. What the Draft Fiscal Policy for 2027 Provides

The draft budget and fiscal policy for 2027 provides for a 20% increase in the excise duty on diesel fuel from 1 January 2027. For most other excisable goods, the proposed increase is 10%. The Ministry of Finance justifies this difference by the need for “accelerated alignment” with the minimum taxation levels applicable in the European Union.

The proposed timetable for diesel excise duty is as follows: 4,774.7 lei/tonne in 2026, 5,729.7 lei/tonne in 2027, the same level in 2028, and 6,875.6 lei/tonne in 2029.

According to the Minister of Finance, the increase would add around 67 bani to the price of one litre of diesel fuel. For farmers, the Government promises full reimbursement of the additional amount through subsidies. In other words, the state would collect an excise duty and then refund it, generating additional administrative costs.

2. What European Union Law Actually Requires

Directive 2003/96/EC establishes a minimum excise duty on diesel used as motor fuel of **EUR 330 per 1,000 litres**. This obligation becomes enforceable for a state upon accession or at the end of a negotiated transitional period. Until then, a candidate country is in the process of legislative approximation.

Converted into euros per litre, the levels proposed by the Government are as follows:

Year	Excise duty (lei/tonne)	Estimate (EUR/1,000 l)	% of EU minimum
2026	4,774.7	195–201	≈ 60%
2027	5,729.7	234–241	≈ 72%
2028	5,729.7	234–241	≈ 72%
2029	6,875.6	280–289	≈ 86%
EU minimum –		330	100%

Movement calculation: NBM exchange rate of 20.1111 lei/euro (15 September 2026); diesel density of 0.82–0.845 kg/l.

These figures lead to three conclusions:

- **Even in 2029, Moldova does not reach the EU minimum.** The year 2027 does not correspond to any European threshold; it is an intermediate step set by the Government.
- **There is zero increase in 2028.** The 20% step can be shifted from 2027 to 2028 without changing the final level reached in 2029.
- **“Accelerated” alignment is a choice.** Even the explanatory note refers to accelerated alignment, not to a mandatory deadline.

3. Practice of Countries that Joined the EU in 2004, 2007 and 2013

The countries that joined the EU in 2004 were granted transitional periods for diesel fuel under Directive 2004/74/EC and, in the case of Cyprus, under Article 18b of Directive 2003/96/EC. At the time of accession, they were required to apply a minimum level of only EUR 245/1,000 l.

State	Accession	Required minimum level	Deadline for EUR 330
Estonia	2004	EUR 245 from 1 May 2004	1 January 2010
Malta	2004	EUR 245 from 1 May 2004	1 January 2010
Cyprus	2004	EUR 245 from 2004; EUR 302 by 2008	1 January 2010
Poland	2004	EUR 245 from 2004; EUR 274 from 2008	1 January 2012
Latvia	2004	EUR 245 from 2004; EUR 274 from 2008	1 January 2013
Lithuania	2004	EUR 245 from 2004; EUR 274 from 2008	1 January 2013
Romania	2007	EUR 302.51 in 2011; EUR 316.03 in 2012	2013

Sources: Directive 2004/74/EC, Article 1; Directive 2003/96/EC, Article 18b; Romanian economic press (2012).

Key argument: the countries that joined in 2004 were required to apply EUR 245/1,000 l upon accession. Moldova would already reach approximately EUR 234–241 in 2027, without being an EU Member State and without having a fixed accession date.

Romania reached the minimum only in 2013, six years after accession. On 1 January 2012, the diesel excise duty increased from EUR 302.51 to EUR 316.03/1,000 l, while the Government at the time stated that the minimum had to be reached in 2013.

Even older Member States did not all comply immediately. Spain, Austria, Greece, Portugal and Luxembourg were given until 1 January 2012 to reach EUR 330.

Croatia (2013). The Movement did not identify a transitional period for diesel fuel upon Croatia's accession. Croatia is, however, directly relevant as an example for 2026 (see Section 4).

The level of economic development matters. In 2012, while still within the transitional period, Romania and Bulgaria were more than 50% below the EU average in GDP per capita in purchasing power standards. According to the European Commission, the Republic of Moldova stood at 29% of the EU average in 2023.

Even today, Bulgaria and Malta apply exactly the European minimum to diesel fuel, and no more.

4. During the 2026 Crisis, the EU Itself Uses Flexibilities

– **European Council, 19 March 2026.** In its conclusions, it called for the full use of the flexibilities available under the Energy Taxation Directive, including temporarily reduced rates, to address rising prices following the crisis in the Middle East.

– **Croatia.** In April 2026, it requested authorisation to reduce the diesel excise duty by up to EUR 0.225/litre below the EU minimum for six months. The European Commission proposed approving the measure on 15 June 2026 (COM(2026) 285). This would result in a level of around EUR 105/1,000 l, below the current level in the Republic of Moldova.

– **Romania.** As an EU Member State, it maintains a temporary 25% reduction in the excise duty on standard diesel fuel during the period 16–30 September 2026.

– **The 2022 precedent.** During the energy crisis at that time, Member States were granted three derogations from the Directive in order to mitigate fuel prices.

If the European Union allows Member States to reduce excise duties below the minimum during this crisis, why should it require a candidate country, with incomes three times lower, to increase them at an accelerated pace precisely now?

5. Context in the Republic of Moldova

- **Record diesel price.** For 17 September 2026, ANRE set a maximum price of 35.53 lei/litre. The previous record was 34.98 lei, recorded in April 2026.
- **Pressure on the international market.** The Minister of Energy states that diesel fuel is becoming increasingly difficult to source, while quotations have exceeded USD 1,500 per tonne.
- **Cumulative price increases.** From 1 September, household consumers are paying 20.30 lei for one cubic metre of natural gas, while the authorities warn of further pressure on utility bills.

6. The Government's Argument: the Association Agreement and Our Response

Annex VI to the EU–Moldova Association Agreement provides that the provisions concerning rates under Directive 2003/96/EC are to be implemented **within 10 years** from the entry into force of the Agreement. In a concept paper, the Ministry of Finance referred to the deadlines of 2019 and 2024. The Government may therefore argue that the Republic of Moldova is already behind schedule.

Our response has three elements:

- **The Agreement provides for flexibility.** The same annex contains a clause under which the Association Council may decide on a different implementation timetable if the regional context so requires. The context in 2026 fully justifies activating this clause.
- **Even the Government's timetable does not meet the deadline.** The current plan does not reach the minimum even by 2029. The real discussion is therefore not “EU deadline or not”, but rather the pace chosen in the midst of a crisis.
- **The Growth Plan does not publicly specify this date.** Payments under the Reform and Growth Facility depend on the steps set out in the Reform Agenda. The Movement has not identified, in publicly available sources, a condition requiring the diesel excise duty to be increased specifically from 1 January 2027.

7. The Movement's Requests

- 1. Postpone the 20% increase** from 1 January 2027 to 1 January 2028.
- 2. Introduce a trigger clause:** the increase should enter into force only when international diesel quotations fall below a defined and publicly disclosed threshold.

3. Publication by the Ministry of Finance of the relevant EU document — the Agreement, the Reform Agenda or another commitment — that requires the 1 January 2027 deadline, together with the calculation of the excise duty level in EUR/1,000 l.

4. Refer the matter to the EU–Moldova Association Council in order to establish an adjusted timetable, invoking the regional context and following the model of the flexibilities granted to Member States in 2026.

5. Present an impact assessment of the increase on prices, freight and passenger transport, including the administrative cost of reimbursing the excise duty to farmers.

Civic Movement “Construim Încredere”

Chişinău, September 2026

Methodological Note

The conversion from lei/tonne to EUR/1,000 litres uses the official NBM exchange rate of 20.1111 lei/euro (15 September 2026) and a diesel density range of 0.82–0.845 kg/l. The results are estimates; exact values depend on the conversion coefficient officially applied and on the exchange rate.