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STATEMENT

of the Civic Movement "Construim Încredere" ("Building Trust") on the Draft Law on the Administrative-Territorial Organisation of the Republic of Moldova

Chișinău, 22 October 2026

The Civic Movement "Construim Încredere" advocates for strong local public administration capable of providing citizens with quality public services, regardless of where they live. We recognise that territorial fragmentation, depopulation and insufficient resources are genuine challenges that require bold solutions. This is precisely why we believe that administrative-territorial reform must be implemented properly: with the participation of citizens, in accordance with the law and in the spirit of local self-government.

We have examined the Draft Law on the Administrative-Territorial Organisation of the Republic of Moldova, developed by the State Chancellery, which provides for reducing the number of mayoralties to 273 and replacing the 32 districts with three regions, starting with the 2027 general local elections.

In its current form, the draft risks turning a reform intended to strengthen local self-government into a mere redrawing of administrative boundaries, accompanied by an increased concentration of decision-making powers at the central level.

Reform Must Not Mean Centralisation

In Recommendation 538 (2025), the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe called on the Republic of Moldova to pursue more effective decentralisation. Its monitoring report found that the principle of subsidiarity (Article 4, paragraph 3 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government) was not being respected. However, recent developments indicate a movement in the opposite direction.

Under the "Restart in Education" reform adopted by Parliament, district councils lose their status as founders of primary schools, gymnasiums, lyceums and special education institutions.

On 21 October 2026, the Government approved the establishment of 34 territorial education agencies, directly subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Research and financed from the state budget. These agencies will administer the respective educational institutions starting on 1 January 2027 (and from 2028 in Chișinău and Bălți).

This is not an isolated case. Under the "RESTART" social assistance reform, responsibilities for social assistance have already been transferred from district authorities to territorial structures of the central public administration.

According to the explanatory note accompanying the draft law, approximately 77% of district budgets for 2025, representing around MDL 7 billion out of MDL 9.2 billion, consisted of transfers for education.

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These resources and responsibilities are not being transferred downwards to mayoralties, closer to citizens, but upwards to the ministry.

The regions intended to replace the districts are being established without any powers defined by law and, according to the Government, will not provide public services.

We therefore conclude that the second tier of local public administration is being effectively stripped of its functions, while decisions concerning schools, school principals and the school network are being transferred from locally elected authorities to structures subordinated to the ministry.

This is centralisation, not decentralisation.

Our Main Concerns

1. Administrative boundaries before responsibilities: regions without a clearly defined role.

The draft law establishes regions without assigning them any specific powers, while the Government explicitly states that they will not provide public services.

The proposed responsibilities of these regions — identifying development priorities, preparing projects and attracting funding — are already performed within the same territories (North, Centre and South) by the regional development agencies subordinated to the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, as well as by the regional development councils, which approve regional strategies and projects.

The Government's concept states that the roles of these institutions will be “distinct”, but fails to explain how they will differ.

2. Constitutional risks.

Articles 110 and 113 of the Constitution provide for districts and district councils responsible for coordinating public services of district-level interest. The explanatory note does not examine the compatibility of the draft law with these constitutional provisions, while the establishment of regions that do not provide public services raises serious constitutional questions.

3. Merely formal public consultations.

Article 109 of the Constitution enshrines the principle of consulting citizens on local matters of particular importance.

The draft law does not establish any consultation procedure for mandatory territorial amalgamation and expressly exempts such amalgamation from the obligation to submit the results of consultations to Parliament (Article 20(3)).

Moreover, the Government is submitting only the proposed administrative map for consultation, without specifying the responsibilities and financing of the new authorities, even though their effective functioning depends precisely on these elements.

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Consultations must cover the entire reform package simultaneously: administrative boundaries, responsibilities and financing.

Communities such as Bașcalia, where 610 residents unanimously rejected the proposal, were given only a few days to analyse and discuss the changes. Furthermore, contested territorial arrangements were maintained without any public justification.

4. No guaranteed financing.

The draft law does not guarantee that financial resources will accompany the transfer of responsibilities. Financial incentives are reserved exclusively for administrative-territorial units that voluntarily amalgamate, while the costs of the transition have not been calculated.

5. Legislative gaps that could disrupt public administration.

The draft law does not specify who will assume the rights, liabilities and pending litigation of the 31 districts undergoing reorganisation, nor who will be responsible for executing their budgets between the 2027 elections and the end of the financial year.

6. Reform without calculations, villages without guarantees.

The draft law is not supported by a published feasibility study or a quantified impact assessment.

There is no clear information on the cost of the transition, the savings the reform would generate or the number of employees that the new mayoralties and regions will require.

The explanatory note itself acknowledges that the draft does not allow for “a credible estimate of net savings” and that staffing calculations “may be carried out in 2027”.

Furthermore, the law does not guarantee that villages losing their own mayoralties will retain a local access point for public services or a form of representation, despite such assurances being made in the explanatory note.

Our Demands

In this context, we call upon:

The Government:

To withdraw the draft law in its current form; present the entire reform as a single legislative package covering administrative boundaries, the powers of local authorities, their financing and electoral amendments; accompany this package with a feasibility study and impact calculations covering costs, savings and staffing levels in the new institutions; and organise public consultations lasting at least 30 days, including debates in each region and reasoned responses to objections raised by local communities.

The Government and Parliament:

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Not to adopt the new administrative-territorial map without the legislation governing local powers and finances. All these laws must be adopted together to ensure that the reform transfers responsibilities and financial resources towards local communities rather than concentrating them at the central level.

Parliament:

Not to adopt the draft law in its current form; incorporate into the legislation a procedure for consulting local communities and guarantees for the settlements forming part of the new administrative units; and request the Constitutional Court to interpret Articles 110 and 113 of the Constitution before the vote.

The Republic of Moldova's development partners:

To make their support for the reform conditional upon compliance with the principles of decentralisation and local self-government enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

We encourage local authorities, civil society organisations and citizens to participate actively in public consultations, make their voices heard and defend their right to decide on matters affecting their communities.

Only through collective efforts can we achieve a reform that strengthens, rather than weakens, local communities.

The Movement will prepare a consolidated opinion on the draft law, including specific proposals for amendments, which will be submitted to the State Chancellery as part of the public consultation process.

We will also address the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, requesting an examination of the reform within the framework of the monitoring mechanism established under the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

Administrative-territorial reform can succeed only if citizens have confidence in it.

Trust is not built through consultation periods lasting only a few days or through decisions made behind closed doors. It is built through genuine public consultation, clear rules and guaranteed resources for local communities.

We remain open to dialogue with the Government, Parliament and local authorities to achieve a European-style reform of public administration: bringing decision-making closer to citizens, not further away from them.

Civic Movement “Construim Încredere” (“Building Trust”)