



## Why Moldova Matters on the European Geopolitical Chessboard

*Prof. Dr Donnacha Ó BEACHÁIN (Dublin City University)*

*Ms Oana POPESCU-ZAMFIR (GlobalFocus Center)*

Dear Madam, Sir,

We are pleased to invite you to an **evening conference** hosted by the **Centre for Security and Defence Studies** of the **Royal Higher Institute for Defence** on **Thursday 22 January 2026** from **17:00 until 18:30**.

Moldova, one of the smallest European states on the eastern border of the EU, is emerging as a strategic pivot in the evolving security architecture of Europe, while grappling with its constitutionally enshrined neutral status. Located at a critical geopolitical crossroads, Moldova navigates significant security challenges, which include enduring separatism in Transnistria, the ongoing war in neighbouring Ukraine, and the intensification of hybrid threats across its territory and its public sphere. These challenges underscore its vulnerability but also its growing relevance as a buffer, a partner and a test case for Western resilience and support in the face of Russian influence.

This conference will explore why Moldova matters — not only to its immediate neighbours, but also to the broader Euro-Atlantic community. It will discuss Moldova's political evolution and the momentum underlying its EU integration process. Moldova's progress as a candidate country is a litmus test for the EU's credibility and strategic vision in its eastern neighbourhood, representing not just a policy challenge, but a strategic opportunity as well: to reinforce democratic governance, support critical (infrastructure) reforms and demonstrate a long-term commitment to security and stability on the Union's borders. For Belgium and other Western partners, Moldova's trajectory is of direct relevance to the broader objective of strengthening security and sovereignty along Europe's eastern flank, in line with the values and interests of the Euro-Atlantic community.

To address these issues, we are pleased to welcome Prof. Dr Donnacha Ó Beacháin, Professor of politics at the School of Law and Government at Dublin City University, and Ms Oana Popescu-Zamfir, Director of GlobalFocus Center and Associated Expert at Carnegie Europe. They will offer insights into the regional and national dynamics at play, reflecting on recent events and long-term developments.

This conference will be held **in English at the conference room at campus Renaissance** (entrance: **rue Hobbema 8/Hobbemastraat 8, 1000 Brussels**) on **Thursday 22 January 2026 at 17:00**. Simultaneous interpretation in Dutch and French will be available on site. Please note that online participation will not be possible.

Kindly register in advance at [www.defence-institute.be](http://www.defence-institute.be). **Registration is required by Thursday 15 January 2026 at the latest.**

(Signed)

Baudouin COPPIETERS DE GIBSON, MSc Eng

Rear Admiral

Aide-de-Camp to the King

Director-general

Royal Higher Institute for Defence

### Programme:

16:30: Welcome  
17:00: Conference and Q&A  
18:30 – 19:30: Reception