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Diplomacy as a tool for building and strengthening bridges between states. How Eugen Cara's studies at Natolin equipped him to support Moldova's European journey

For **Eugen Cara**, a young Moldovan diplomat, European integration is far more than just reforms or technical negotiations. It represents a profound transformation – of institutions, society, and mindsets. This vision was forged during his participation in the **Natolin Fellowship Programme**, an initiative by the College of Europe in Natolin in partnership with **EU4Youth**, designed for professionals from Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia.

Over eight months at the College of Europe in Natolin, Eugen immersed himself in an intensive academic programme that encompassed European integration, diplomacy, international law, and public policy. He didn't just learn how the European Union functions; he gained insight into the real-world challenges facing candidate countries.

"The Programme provided me with a comprehensive understanding of the EU's institutional framework, policies, and challenges faced by candidate countries. Expanded perspective on EU integration, focusing on negotiation processes, legal frameworks, and balancing national sovereignty with EU standards, helped me realize how regional cooperation is essential, not just in terms of policy alignment but also in creating a shared vision for peace, stability, and development", says the young man.

A European dream, strengthened at the College of Europe in Natolin

Alongside colleagues from across Europe, Eugen benefited from the guidance of international experts and strengthened his vision of Moldova's evolution as an EU candidate country. He believes that programmes like the one at Natolin are vital for shaping a generation of leaders capable of actively contributing to the democratic and European transformation of the Eastern Partnership countries.

"Natolin Fellowship Programme indeed is a targeted programme for EU candidate countries, including Moldova, that is beneficial for both civil society and government sectors, offering a unique platform for gaining and sharing experience", thinks the fellow.

At the College of Europe in Natolin, Eugen focused on one of the most sensitive topics on Moldova's European agenda: the compatibility between EU accession and the Transnistrian conflict. His research paper – *"Accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union with or without a defined status of the Transnistrian region"* – analyzes both official positions and the geopolitical implications of this unresolved conflict.

"Moldova's European perspective, amid an unresolved territorial conflict, remains a contentious issue both domestically and externally. Some argue that the country's EU accession depends on the final and sustainable resolution of the Transnistrian conflict, as neither the persistence of the territorial dispute nor the Russian illegal though decades-lasting military presence could be neglected by the EU institutions or member states when pursuing further enlargement", stated Eugen.

Eugen Cara completed his internship at the University of Warsaw. There, he represented the Republic of Moldova in academic and diplomatic contexts, delivering presentations on the country's geopolitical situation and participating in more than 15 meetings with government officials, ambassadors, academics, and Polish experts. This practical experience gave him a hands-on understanding of how Moldova's European aspirations are perceived in European capitals and showed him how important diplomacy is as a tool for strengthening international cooperation.

The #EU4Youth opportunity – a decisive step and a new professional perspective

Today, Eugen continues his career at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova, contributing directly to the processes of alignment with European Union standards and policies. He is actively involved in bilateral dialogues, analysis, and public policy initiatives regarding European integration, working every day to ensure that Moldova's European path becomes not just an ideal, but a concrete reality.

"The Natolin Fellowship Programme has had a profound impact on my professional journey, giving me an in-depth understanding of the institutions, policies, and integration mechanisms of the European Union. I am determined to pursue a diplomatic career and to actively contribute to bringing my country closer to European values and standards", shared Eugen.

For Eugen, European values – the rule of law, respect for human rights, solidarity, and dignity – are not just theoretical concepts but concrete benchmarks in his daily work. The young diplomat is convinced that Moldova has the potential to become an active and responsible member of the European Union. But this will require more than political will – it will require a new generation of dedicated and well-prepared professionals.

"This Programme had a significant impact on my personal and professional development. It shaped my academic skills by enhancing my ability to analyze and share my ideas and thoughts", says the diplomat.

Looking ahead, Eugen sees himself supporting integration efforts and contributing to the training of a new generation of European affairs experts. For him, diplomacy is more than a career – it is a personal commitment to Moldova's European future.

About the EU4Youth Phase III programme: Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship

The programme is funded by the European Union and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, and implemented by the Central Project Management Agency (CPVA). It aims to support young people from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine through access to quality education, internships, and development opportunities that can empower them to become active agents of change.

The Natolin Fellowship Programme is funded by the EU and by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania as part of and in the framework of the project [EU4YOUTH – Phase III Youth Employment, and Entrepreneurship programme](#) Scholarship Scheme for Eastern Partners at the College of Europe in Natolin ("EU4Youth-Natolin4EaP").