TOWARD A SHARED DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM BETWEEN ROMANIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract: On 11 February 2022, Romania and the Republic of Moldova signed a Memorandum of Understanding to build a common digital space, an initiative that has since generated a growing set of bilateral agreements, national laws and pilot projects. This chapter examines four years of implementation to determine how much of that framework has produced measurable cross-border results rather than remaining a declaration of intent. It maps the legislative and institutional architecture on both sides, from Moldova's interoperability and cybersecurity laws to Romania's digital identity and artificial intelligence strategies, and situates the bilateral relationship within Moldova's EU accession process, in particular the digital transformation chapter under Cluster 3. Roaming cost reduction, cybersecurity cooperation and EU association funding emerge as the clearest areas of documented progress, while mutual recognition of electronic signatures and a shared digital identity remain largely unrealized. Drawing on the literature on digital sovereignty, the chapter argues that this cooperation functions at once as a preparatory stage for EU integration and as a defense against hybrid threats, and outlines several directions, from AI governance sandboxes to a consolidated funding architecture, through which the partnership could evolve into a more substantive shared digital ecosystem.
Keywords: Cyber Diplomacy, Digital Sovereignty, EU Accession, Cross-Border Interoperability, Romania-Moldova Cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

On 11 February 2022, the governments of Romania and the Republic of Moldova signed a Memorandum of Understanding committing to build what officials in both countries have since called a common digital space (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2022a). Four years later, this commitment has produced a substantial set of agreements, laws and pilot projects. It remains far less clear how much of this has actually translated, legally or operationally, into something tangible on either side of the border. This article examines that record and asks to what extent it amounts to real structural integration, and to what extent it is instead a parallel evolution in the two countries.

In the bilateral documents, this phrasing covers a wide range of elements: interoperable platforms, shared infrastructure and electronic public services. In practice, however, the cooperation extends beyond what the term suggests. It gives the Republic of Moldova an opportunity to apply, even before accession, components of the EU acquis, such as roaming rules, recognition of electronic signatures and cybersecurity standards, speeding up the integration process (in step with Romania's support for Moldova's European path).

The sections that follow examine the legislative and institutional architecture already in place, situate it within Moldova's accession process, separate announced intentions from measurable outcomes, and close with proposals drawn from official documents and the specialized literature, together with some suggestions on possible directions for this cooperation.

The analysis draws on primary legal and institutional sources, including national laws, intergovernmental agreements and strategy documents published by Romanian and Moldovan authorities, together with EU-level decisions, monitoring reports and regulatory data, and covers the period from the founding Memorandum of 11 February 2022 through 2026. An initiative is treated as a measurable outcome, rather than a declared intention, when the sources reviewed document operational use, legal effect, institutional implementation or quantifiable results; where such evidence is absent, the initiative is described as an announced commitment. On this basis, the article's contribution lies in offering a systematic assessment of the bilateral digital partnership that separates institutional alignment, announced commitments and demonstrable cross-border outcomes, an exercise not attempted in the specialized literature reviewed for this chapter.

EXISTING STRATEGIES AND LEGISLATION

The founding instrument of the current cooperation is the Memorandum of Understanding on Digital Transformation, signed in Chișinău on 11 February 2022 by Moldova's deputy prime minister for digitalization, Iurie Țurcanu, and Romania's minister of research, innovation and digitalization, Marcel Ioan Boloș (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2022a). The document set the shared goal of developing digital platforms, infrastructure and electronic public services, explicitly linking that goal to the transposition of European norms and the application of common standards, and opening the way toward joint participation in European digital development projects. Four months later, on 16 June 2022, a Joint Intergovernmental Commission was established to implement the Memorandum, which both sides presented as a strategic partnership operating on a non-commercial basis, intended to set out concrete activities and shared working mechanisms rather than negotiate contractual obligations (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2022b). On the Moldovan side, the e-Government Agency (AGE) was designated as the entity responsible for the common digital space, tasked with building digital solutions together with Romanian public authorities and maintaining the applications developed under the partnership.

The Commission's second plenary session, held in Chișinău on 12 December 2022, extended the cooperation framework to the private sector. On that occasion two trilateral memoranda were signed, one with Microsoft and another with the Romanian company UiPath, both without commercial commitment and conceived as strategic partnerships meant to accelerate cloud adoption, robotic process automation and digital skills training in public administration (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2022c; Romania Insider, 2022). A third trilateral memorandum followed in September 2023, this time with IBM Romania, signed on the margins of the Three Seas Initiative Summit in Bucharest and aimed specifically at cloud solutions and joint digital transformation projects (Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization of the Republic of Moldova, 2023b). Moldova's Digital Transformation Strategy 2023-2030 places the bilateral partnership within a longer succession of national policy documents, including the earlier Digital Moldova 2020 program, the Strategic Program

for the Technological Modernization of Governance, and the Strategy for the Information Technology Industry and the Digital Innovation Ecosystem 2018-2023 (Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization of the Republic of Moldova, 2023a).

Beneath these framework agreements lies a set of Moldovan laws that give the cooperation legal substance. Law No. 142/2018 on data exchange and interoperability established MConnect, the national interoperability platform, and introduced the once-only principle, under which citizens need not submit the same information to different public authorities more than once (European Commission, 2025b). Law No. 124/2022 on electronic identification and trust services, adopted on 19 May 2022 and in force from December of that year, replaced the older 2014 electronic signature law and partially transposed the EU's eIDAS Regulation, Regulation (EU) No. 910/2014, by introducing advanced and qualified electronic signatures, trust services, and rules for recognizing qualified certificates issued by providers in EU Member States (Schoenherr, 2022; CEE Legal Matters, 2025). The same direction runs through more recent legislation: Law No. 48/2023 on cybersecurity, drafted with EU support and in force since 1 January 2025 (EU Neighbours East, 2023), and Law No. 195/2024 on the protection of personal data, which largely transposes the General Data Protection Regulation and enters into force on 23 August 2026 (DLA Piper, 2026).

On the Romanian side, the counterpart institution is the Authority for the Digitalization of Romania (ADR), which coordinates the national digital identity system, ROeID, currently under phased rollout and financed through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (Outsourcing Today, 2025; The Paypers, 2025). In July 2024, Romania approved the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2024-2027, drawn up jointly by the Authority for the Digitalization of Romania and the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, with a governance structure meant to align national AI policy with the EU AI Act (Digital Watch Observatory, 2024; OECD, 2025). The National Cybersecurity Directorate (DNSC) acts as the operational counterpart to Moldova's cybersecurity institutions in the arrangements described below.

Telecommunications policy provides one of the clearest examples of a bilateral instrument translating directly into measurable outcomes. The same 11 February 2022 agreement that established the Memorandum on digital transformation also required Romania's national telecommunications regulator, ANCOM, and its Moldovan counterpart, ANRCETI, to lower roaming charges between the two countries and monitor the results (ANCOM, 2026). Cybersecurity cooperation followed a parallel but distinct path. In November 2025, Moldova's Cybercor National Institute for Innovation in Cybersecurity, the Technical University of Moldova (UTM), and Romania's National Cybersecurity Directorate signed a protocol on training, certification and joint activities intended to reduce digital vulnerabilities through collaboration among the public sector, the private sector and academia. Three months later, in February 2026, this bilateral arrangement expanded into a trilateral structure. Moldova, Romania and Ukraine signed a memorandum in Kyiv establishing the Cyber Alliance for Regional Resilience, covering threat information sharing, joint development of AI-based defensive tools, specialist training and critical infrastructure protection, with membership open

to other states that share the same democratic commitment (National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, 2026).

Table 1 summarizes the main legal and institutional instruments discussed in this section.

Table 1. Main Legal and Institutional Instruments

Instrument	Date / period	Scope
Memorandum of Understanding on Digital Transformation	11 February 2022	Founding bilateral instrument; digital platforms, infrastructure, electronic public services; transposition of EU norms
Joint Intergovernmental Commission	Established 16 June 2022	Implementation body; Moldova's e-Government Agency as the main executive entity
Trilateral memoranda (Microsoft, UiPath)	12 December 2022	Non-commercial strategic partnerships; cloud adoption, robotic process automation, digital skills
Trilateral memorandum (IBM Romania)	September 2023	Cloud solutions and joint digital transformation projects
Moldova's Digital Transformation Strategy 2023-2030	2023	National strategic framework; successor to the Digital Moldova 2020 program
Law No. 142/2018 (Republic of Moldova)	2018	Data exchange and interoperability; established MConnect; once-only principle
Law No. 124/2022 (Republic of Moldova)	Adopted 19 May 2022; in force from December 2022	Electronic identification and trust services; partial transposition of eIDAS
Cybersecurity Law (Republic of Moldova)	In force since January 2025	National legal framework on cybersecurity
Law No. 195/2024 on the protection of personal data (Republic of Moldova)	Enters into force in August 2026	GDPR-equivalent framework
ROeID (Romania)	Phased rollout since 2023	National digital identity application; financed through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan
National Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2024-2027 (Romania)	Approved July 2024	AI governance aligned with the EU AI Act
Cybercor-UTM-DNSC Protocol	November 2025	Bilateral training and certification in cybersecurity
Cyber Alliance for Regional Resilience	February 2026	Trilateral structure (Romania - Republic of Moldova - Ukraine); threat information sharing, joint defense, critical infrastructure protection

Taken together, these instruments describe an architecture more developed on the institutional and telecommunications side than on binding legal harmonization. The Memorandum, the joint Commission and the trilateral partnerships with private providers establish who is responsible for the cooperation and through which channels it proceeds. Legislative alignment on electronic identification, interoperability, cybersecurity and data protection gives the Republic of Moldova, independent of the bilateral relationship, a legal architecture already compatible with EU norms. What remains less settled and will be taken up again in the third section is the extent to which these parallel developments have produced actual cross-border legal effects, as opposed to domestic modernization that happens to advance simultaneously on both sides of the border.

THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION DIMENSION

Moldova's accession path provides the framework within which the bilateral digital relationship with Romania should be read. The Republic of Moldova obtained candidate status in June 2022 and formally opened accession negotiations at the first Intergovernmental Conference on 25 June 2024. Negotiations proceed by cluster, following the methodology introduced in 2020, with several chapters opening at the same time within a given group, and Cluster 3, "Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth," which explicitly covers digital transformation alongside the labor market, social policy, education and industrial policy, opened for technical negotiations in March 2026 (Moldpres, 2026a; Council of the European Union, 2026). Digital policy therefore sits formally within the accession process, not merely alongside it, and the Romania-Moldova bilateral cooperation described in the previous section functions, in part, as preparation for the eventual closing of this cluster.

The clearest example of bilateral cooperation feeding directly into integration at EU level is roaming. The rate-reduction agreement signed by Romania and the Republic of Moldova in February 2022 preceded, and was consistent with, the broader process that led to the Council of the European Union's decision of 25 July 2025 to bring Moldova into the EU's "Roam Like at Home" area from 1 January 2026, extending to it the same obligations that already govern the European Economic Area (Council of the European Union, 2025; ANCOM, 2026). The Council's own language is explicit: including Moldova supports its gradual economic integration into the EU internal market under the 2016 Association Agreement, a claim considerably broader than a simple consumer protection measure would suggest. A similar logic applies to trust services, though at a different level. Moldova's inclusion on the trusted list of third countries for validating electronic signatures allows mutual recognition, without further formalities, of Moldovan and European qualified signatures, a step the European Commission has explicitly linked to its wider efforts to deepen EU-Moldova digital cooperation (European Commission, 2025a). This recognition operates at EU level and does not by itself amount to the bilateral mutual recognition of electronic signatures between Romania and Moldova that the 2022 Memorandum envisaged, a commitment that, as the fourth section discusses, remains open at the bilateral level even as EU-level recognition has advanced.

Association agreements for funding programs extend this pattern into research policy and the business environment as well. The Republic of Moldova joined Horizon Europe as an associated country in October 2021, giving Moldovan research entities access to a 95.5 billion euro program for the 2021-2027 period on the same terms as entities from EU Member States (European Commission, 2021). Association with the Digital Europe Programme followed, with retroactive effect from 1 January 2024, accompanied by a 95% reduction in the financial contribution Moldova must pay through the end of the program in 2027, a facility designed to speed up SME digitalization in a country whose fiscal capacity is far more limited than that of EU Member States (European Commission, 2024).

The academic literature on digital sovereignty offers a useful interpretive frame for this bilateral relationship. Falkner, Heidebrecht, Obendiek and Seidl trace how the EU's own language has shifted, from an initial emphasis on an open and global information society towards the language of digital sovereignty, and argue that interoperability and standard-setting are themselves exercises of sovereign authority rather than neutral technical choices

(Falkner et al., 2024). Bellanova, Carrapico and Duez make a related point about European security integration: interoperability among the EU's centralized databases is itself a way in which sovereign power is exercised, not only a neutral framework within which it operates (Bellanova et al., 2022).

Read in this light, the alignment of MConnect with the European Interoperability Framework, alongside Romanian efforts to build an interoperable public administration, looks less like ordinary IT modernization and more like an early, smaller-scale version of the sovereignty-sharing that full EU accession will eventually require. The Interoperable Europe Act offers a concrete model for what that sharing might look like: its flagship project, Erasmus Without Paper, allows EU Member States to exchange school records across borders without concentrating the data in a single central system (Computer Law & Security Review, 2026). A shared Romania-Moldova layer of public services built on the same principle would exchange data directly between the two national systems, without building a common repository that neither government fully controls.

No peer-reviewed academic work addressing the Romania-Moldova digital partnership as such was identified in preparing this chapter. Details of the bilateral relationship appear almost exclusively in government press releases, regulatory reports and policy literature rather than in academic research proper. This is a gap in the specialized literature that the present article aims to help address.

WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN ACHIEVED

Separating what has actually happened from what has merely been announced matters for a subject this exposed to programmatic government communication. On telecommunications, the record is unambiguous. Joint reporting from ANCOM and ANRCETI shows that, in the first year after the February 2022 agreement, internet roaming traffic between the two countries grew twentyfold for Moldovan users in Romania and threefold for Romanian users in Moldova. Average roaming costs fell over the same period by about 70% for Moldovan users and 30% for Romanian users (ANCOM, 2026). By the fourth year of implementation, users on both sides had accumulated 7.4 million days of bilateral roaming, a 66% increase over the first year. This bilateral arrangement was then folded into the broader EU framework once Moldova joined the “Roam Like at Home” area on 1 January 2026.

Digital identity has moved from declaration to a working pilot project, though not yet to full cross-border legal recognition specifically with Romania. Moldova's MPass single sign-on system, built on the SAML v2 standard since 2012, was converted into a functioning eIDAS node. It was successfully tested for cross-border authentication with Estonia, Armenia and Georgia under an EU4Digital pilot completed in 2024, which led Moldova's chief systems architect to state publicly that the technical side of European integration on electronic authentication was complete on the Moldovan end (Biometric Update, 2024). No equivalent bilateral Romania-Moldova pilot was identified in the sources reviewed for this chapter, despite Romania being the closest partner both geographically and institutionally.

Cross-border customs and trade cooperation has produced concrete, if more limited, results. Under the eTrade component of EU4Digital, Moldova's Customs Service worked directly with

Romanian customs authorities on technical pilot projects covering cross-border electronic identity and electronic customs clearance between 2022 and 2024. The Cyber Alliance for Regional Resilience, described in the first section, illustrates a similar case in which a declared framework became ongoing practice: member institutions report active exchange of threat information (National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, 2026).

On funding, the gap between rhetoric and documented achievement narrows the most. Table 2 summarizes the main instruments through which European and bilateral funding already reaches Moldova's digital economy.

Table 2. Funding Instruments Supporting Digital Cooperation

Instrument	Period	Scale and notes
Horizon Europe (associated country status for Moldova)	2021-2027	95.5 billion euro program; the EIC Accelerator offers up to 17.5 million euro per project; participation on equal terms since October 2021
Digital Europe Programme (Moldova's association)	2021-2027, retroactive from January 2024	7.5 billion euro program; 95% reduction in Moldova's contribution through 2027; financed Moldova's first European Digital Innovation Hub (2 million euro)
Interreg NEXT Romania - Republic of Moldova	2021-2027	Total budget of 109.9 million euro; 76.2 million euro mobilized across 88 joint projects by 2026; the digital component remains, so far, largely incidental
ESIL Moldova (TechAngels Romania, Business Angels Europe, META Group, Moldovan Technology Transfer Network)	Launched July 2026; two-year program	Builds on more than 47 million euro already invested by TechAngels Romania in a portfolio of over 270 start-ups; funded by the EU, co-financed by the French government through Expertise France

The resources already committed through these instruments are not negligible. Horizon Europe association alone gives Moldovan researchers access, on equal terms with EU Member States, to a 95.5 billion euro program, including mixed grant and equity financing of up to 17.5 million euro for individual advanced technology projects through the EIC Accelerator (European Commission, 2021). The Interreg NEXT Romania-Republic of Moldova program had mobilized 76.2 million euro across 88 joint projects by 2026, out of a total budget of 109.9 million euro (keep.eu, 2025; RHN.ro, 2026). A newer and more targeted instrument is the ESIL Moldova program, launched in July 2026 by TechAngels Romania together with Business Angels Europe, META Group and the Moldovan Technology Transfer Network. It aims to build angel investment capacity in Moldova, drawing on the experience of Romanian investors, who have placed more than 47 million euro in a portfolio of over 270 start-ups over the past thirteen years (Romania Insider, 2026).

Available documents show that the Interreg NEXT program has so far been oriented much more toward border security, disaster resilience, and health and education infrastructure than toward the digital economy as such. Its digital component currently consists mainly of upgrading equipment in schools and universities, without yet amounting to a dedicated funding line for innovation or start-ups. Funding specific to the digital economy, Horizon Europe, the Digital Europe Programme, EU4Innovation East and the private angel investor networks linked through ESIL Moldova, sits entirely outside the Interreg structure, spread

across several separate instruments and not yet consolidated within the bilateral framework that the 2022 Memorandum initially set out. The strength of the Romania-Moldova digital innovation and technology ecosystem depends on mobilizing growing Romanian capital and risk appetite to finance start-up companies, and on developing the managerial capacity to make use of skilled labor on both sides of the border. Technology hubs such as Iași, close to Moldova, may be particularly well positioned to support this process.

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND FURTHER ATTENTION

Measures Proposed in Existing Policy Documents

Several possible steps toward a fully shared digital ecosystem are already set out in the official documents and specialized literature reviewed for this chapter, even though they have not yet been put into practice. The 2022 Memorandum lists, among its declared areas of cooperation, preparing a technical platform through which Romanian authorities could implement prototype public services based on systems already developed in Moldova, along with initiating procedures for mutual recognition of digital signatures between the two states and joint negotiations with the EU on recognizing qualified signatures issued by Moldova (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2022b). Four years after signing, none of these commitments has been reported as complete.

EU4Digital's own recommendations from February 2025 point in a related direction, proposing future cross-border mutual recognition of electronic identity solutions among Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, along with continued alignment of Moldovan legislation with the Digital Services Act and the amended European Digital Identity Regulation (EU4Digital, 2025a). The reform agenda under Moldova's Growth Plan is candid about this gap: the country's own public services portal, though offering single access to 166 electronic services, "is not integrated with EU systems, which limits cross-border interactions" (Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization of the Republic of Moldova, 2025).

A parallel proposal appears in the financial sector literature. An analysis of crowdfunding in Moldova argues that current legislative restrictions on non-resident investors limit access to diaspora capital, and that the legislative modernization required by the EU accession process offers a concrete route to unlocking Romanian and diaspora investment in Moldovan start-ups, an investment the current law does not permit (Balkanika Finance, 2026).

Additional Policy Options

The directions that follow were developed for this chapter rather than drawn from measures already contained in the official documents reviewed above, and should be read as possible avenues for analysis rather than as proposals with an existing institutional mandate.

A joint Romania-Moldova pilot project on interoperability between eIDAS and the European Digital Identity Wallet would build directly on the capacity Moldova has already demonstrated with Estonia, Armenia and Georgia. It would also close an apparent gap in the current interoperability framework: Romania, as an EU Member State under its own obligation to

implement a European digital identity wallet, has not yet been included in Moldova's existing pilot program, despite being the closest partner.

Funding architecture offers a second opportunity. One possible policy option would be a dedicated funding line for start-ups and scale-ups in the next Interreg NEXT programming period, which will follow 2027, consolidating under a single treaty-level instrument activities currently spread across EU4Innovation East, the Moldovan Technology Innovation Park and private angel investor networks such as those coordinated through ESIL Moldova.

Another direction follows from a policy Romania has already announced but not yet implemented: the possible issuance of Romanian electronic identity cards to Romanian citizens residing in Moldova. Should this move forward, this population would offer a well-defined group for testing reciprocal cross-border access to tax, health and banking services before any broader rollout.

Artificial intelligence and cloud governance raise a further possibility. The existing trilateral memoranda with Microsoft, UiPath and IBM could be placed under the authority of the joint Intergovernmental Commission rather than remaining stand-alone arrangements with providers, giving the two countries a bilateral testing ground for the risk-based logic of the EU AI Act before accession requires Moldova to align its AI governance framework with the relevant EU acquis. These agreements could evolve toward policy sandbox approaches, creating a dynamic environment for identifying and validating the most effective policies.

Another possible perspective, drawn from the broader literature on digital platform governance and network effects in innovation economics rather than from any source specific to the Romania-Moldova relationship, would treat education, research, innovation, funding and market access as stages of a single chain that generates greater combined value when the stages develop together than when each is treated in isolation. Table 3 presents this perspective in illustrative form, adapted from the type of systems thinking found in comparative analyses of the Estonian-Finnish X-Road model of cross-border interoperability.

Table 3. Illustrative perspective on the cooperation chain

Stage	**Illustrative Romania - Republic of Moldova content**
Education and skills	Joint training programs in digital skills and cybersecurity
Research	Joint participation in Horizon Europe consortia
Innovation	Cross-border incubators and technology transfer cooperation
Funding	Angel and venture funding linking Romanian and Moldovan networks, such as ESIL Moldova
Governance and market access	Harmonized regulation, interoperable digital identity, coordinated cybersecurity

Whether this perspective on the cooperation chain, or the narrower proposals discussed above, gains any institutional relevance will depend on developments beyond the scope of this chapter, in particular the pace of the Cluster 3 negotiations and whether funding instruments, currently spread across several programs, are ever consolidated into something closer to the single treaty-level instrument the 2022 Memorandum originally suggested.

CONCLUSIONS

Bilateral digital cooperation between Romania and the Republic of Moldova now rests on a successful, though still fragmented, legal and institutional architecture. Several of the results achieved are measurable rather than merely announced. Roaming traffic and cost data show sustained use on both sides of the border. An electronic identity interoperability pilot has been completed technically on the Moldovan side. Cybersecurity cooperation has moved from a bilateral protocol to an operational trilateral alliance. Association agreements with the EU have brought real funding, not only eligibility, to Moldova's research and digital economy sectors. At the same time, several of the commitments carrying greater structural weight under the founding 2022 Memorandum, mutual recognition of electronic signatures above all, remain declared intentions rather than completed reforms, and recent official Moldovan documents now openly acknowledge this gap, whereas earlier communications described only uninterrupted progress.

This digital cooperation functions as preparation for accession: roaming, trust services and the structure of the accession clusters all point in the same direction. On the other hand, it functions as a defense against hybrid threats, most visibly through the shift from a bilateral cybersecurity protocol to an operational trilateral alliance.

Whether the initiative eventually produces the deeper structural integration envisioned in 2022, mutual recognition of signatures, a fully portable digital identity and a consolidated funding architecture, will depend less on new declarations and more on following through on commitments already made on paper. Moldova's Cluster 3 accession negotiations provide an external mechanism of pressure that did not exist when the Memorandum was signed. Whether the Romania-Moldova bilateral relationship accelerates this process, or merely continues to advance alongside it as a parallel and partly overlapping path, will become clearer only once Moldova moves from opening the relevant negotiating chapters to closing them.

Finally, whether the experience Romania accumulates in this partnership could inform its future role in supporting other accession processes, for instance in the Western Balkans, is a question this chapter does not develop but that may offer a useful avenue for future comparative research.

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