

## PROMOTING THE SMITH PRINCIPLES

The Rt Hon George Reid in Chisinau and Tiraspol, 28 Sept–2 Oct 2009



*Mihai Ghimpu: Thanks to the Trust for its commitment to Moldova since 2000*

The acting President of Moldova, Mihai Ghimpu, has praised the work of the John Smith Trust for “bringing instant results” in its work to promote democracy in his country.

The “instant result”, he said, was the election as an MP in July of Andrei Popov, who decided to stand for Parliament only during his June 2009 Smith Fellowship.

Mr Ghimpu added: “Since 2000, twenty-seven Moldovans have been selected by the Trust. They are making a real contribution to good governance and a more open society.”



*Andrei Popov: from Fellow in June 2009 to MP in July 2009*

The President’s comments were made on 29 September after a meeting with George Reid and the British Ambassador, Keith Shannon. They were widely reported on national television and radio, and in the country’s newspapers.

His visit to the Presidency started an intensive programme of Trust promotion for Mr Reid, who was making his seventh visit to the country.

On the first evening, Ambassador Shannon held a reception for Fellows and representatives of civic society and international agencies. He spoke of the importance of maintaining the Smith network of alumni as “a force for good”.



*Small Country, Big World:  
George Reid lecturing in the Aula Magnifica of the Free International University*

On 30 September Mr Reid gave a 40-minute public lecture on МАЛЕНЬКАЯ СТРАНА. БОЛЬШОЙ МИР [Small Country, Big World] at the Free International University in Chisinau. This was attended by around 150 staff, students, lawyers, local government staff and representatives of voluntary organisations, who engaged in a lively question and answer session.

Afterwards, there was a separate presentation to potential candidates on the work of the Trust by Mr Reid, local coordinator Ana Anghel and 2009 Fellow, Nadia Hriptievshi.

The following day Mr Reid drove to Tiraspol, the principal city of Transdnistria for a further lecture – НАШ СОБСТВЕННЫЙ ДОМ [A Home of Our Own] – at the Inter-Regional University.

The hall was packed with more than 250 academics, students, journalists and members of voluntary organisations.

The Rector, Vladimir Sokolov, said that the turnout was the largest ever for a speaker from the European Union and represented “real interest in learning about British institutions”.

After the lecture, Mr Reid had discussions with leaders of the youth movement Proriv, and officials working for the local authorities on economic and social enterprise programmes.

He was also “absolutely delighted” to meet the two previous Fellows from Transdnistria, Vlada Lysenko and Alena Arshenova.



*A Home of Our Own:  
Lecture at the Inter-Regional  
University in Tiraspol*



George Reid with (Left) Transnistrian Fellows Alena Arshenova and Vlada Lysenko, and the Trust Co-ordinator in Moldova, Ana Anghel and (Right) at the UK embassy reception in Chisinau with Nadia Hriptievschi, the 2009 Moldovan Fellow specialising in legal aid



On his final day in Moldova, Mr Reid spent the morning with lawyers from the Public Defenders and National Legal Aid Offices. This was to follow up on the internship of 2009 Fellow Nadia Hriptievschi, who studied legal aid systems in Edinburgh, Inverness and London. "There is a possibility that the Scottish authorities may offer continuing collaboration in the fields of institutional development and quality control," he said.

In the afternoon he made a final presentation, as a former correspondent and producer for BBC and ITV, to post-graduate students at the School of Journalism in Chisinau. He urged them to apply for a Smith Fellowship — "a free society only functions with a free press," he said.



*The Power of the Press:*

*"It is the duty of journalists to ask difficult questions and to probe into dark corners."*

In response to questions, Mr Reid said that a good journalist needed three qualities: a fine nose for news, excellent judgement and the ability to work against the clock.

"Simply re-writing press releases is never enough," he added. "All sources have to be cross-questioned."

*Solidarity with the Moldovan Fire Service*

And, finally, there was a visit to the Chisinau Fire Service. Both Mr Reid and Ambassador Shannon are Scots. The visit was to mark the arrival of four reconditioned fire engines and four support vehicles gifted from Scotland to Moldova.

"I was proud to speak of John Smith's commitment to human solidarity across frontiers," said Mr Reid. "For John, it was a lifelong principle."



In the evenings during his visit, Mr Reid had discussions with politicians and editors. "It is a time of transition in Moldova," he commented. "There are very real economic and social problems. The country has to find a balance between its links to the Russian Federation and new opportunities in partnership with the European Union.

"There is recognition that the values promoted by the Trust — democracy, the rule of law and good governance — are essential if Moldova is to move forward."



*Marian Lupu: A Win-Win for All*

Dr Marian Lupu, the Leader of the Democratic Party and the Government's candidate as Head of State, met Mr Reid for an hour. He had pressed Andrei Popov to come home and fight the election. Andrei finally agreed to do so, choosing "Getting Elected" as his Fellowship project, and returning to London a few days before polling to speak at the presentations at Number Ten Downing Street.

"I think it was a win-win situation," said Dr Lupu. "We now have someone in Parliament who will make a big contribution to a democratic Moldova. And the Smith Trust has a well-placed friend for life in Chisinau."