



**STRONGER TOGETHER
TEAM EUROPE**

NEWSLETTER OF THE DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



EU – MOLDOVA: COOPERATION NEWS

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MOBILITY AND PEOPLE

EUROPEAN UNION SOLIDARITY IN ACTION!

Seventeen EU Member States and Norway have expressed their solidarity with the Republic of Moldova in managing the challenges posed by the flow of refugees from Ukraine, providing humanitarian aid through the European Union's Civil Protection Mechanism worth more than 14 million EUR. Humanitarian aid includes ambulances, tents, power generators, water tanks, basic goods, food and tons of fuel. In addition, the European Commission has allocated 4.2 million EUR from the rescEU strategic reserve and over 430,000 EUR through the newly

created European Commission unit EHCR - European Humanitarian Response Capacity. At the same time, another 13 million EUR were offered to the Republic of Moldova by five EU member states as bilateral support for managing the flow of refugees.

In these difficult times, refugees from Ukraine find safe shelter and basic needs in the Republic of Moldova. The efforts of citizens and authorities to support them are highly encouraged by the Member States of the European Union

"I am not Moldovan, but I am proud of you! I read with emotion the message of a Ukrainian citizen, who thanked the citizens of the Republic of Moldova for the way his family was received here. His wife and children, who had to take refuge from the war, were met at the border, fed for free, brought to Chisinau and accommodated in an apartment for which the landlord is not going to ask for rent. He could not believe that he had found so much goodness in Moldova."



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It is simply impressive how ordinary citizens have mobilized to greet people at the border, provide them with food and shelter, bring them clothes. I hear over and over again about simple Moldovan families who have opened their doors to welcome their Ukrainian neighbours in their hour of need, people whom they have never met before.



It is outstanding how the authorities of the Republic of Moldova reacted swiftly to support Ukraine in these darkest hours, through a facilitated entry system and humanitarian support.



The European Union will support the efforts of the Republic of Moldova to help refugees from Ukraine, but it is your collective effort that we are supporting. I want to thank the people of this country from the bottom of my heart that they are truly friends helping the ones in need”, mentioned the Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova, Jānis Mažeiks.



EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORTS LONELY ELDERLY PEOPLE, PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND FAMILIES WITH MANY CHILDREN TO OVERCOME THE ENERGY CRISIS



The crisis in the energy sector has brought more worries to lonely elderly people, people with disabilities, low-income families and other disadvantaged groups. In response to this crisis, the European Union has launched the "Supporting together the vulnerable population affected by the energy crisis" project, through which vulnerable individuals and families in all districts of the country receive a one-off financial aid of 1,000 lei. By 28 March 2022, more than 35,800 vulnerable households have already received this aid, with a total of 40,000 households expected to benefit from EU support.

The non-governmental organisation People in Need Moldova coordinates the distribution of financial aid to households selected on the basis of several vulnerability criteria: how many members are in the family, how many

disabled people are in the family, how many children are in the family, whether there are single elderly people with an income below the guaranteed minimum income, whether the family uses gas (piped or bottled), but also what are the sources of income in the household. The People in Need Moldova team selected the households, which scored the highest according to these criteria, and the families and individuals are informed that they will receive financial support under the project by registered letters sent to their homes.

What can 1,000 lei provide? The money can be used to buy a third of a ton of briquettes to heat the house. That is what Iurie, a resident of the Criuleni district, who received one-off financial aid, will do. Although he has to pay a lot of money for medicine, as a disabled person, Iurie appreciates any help, big or small.

"We make fire to heat the house for 8 months a year. The heating materials are expensive, for what we can afford, to be honest. We are not given facilities to buy these materials. Any help, no matter how small, especially these 1,000 lei you have given me, is very welcome for us. It's a big plus and I'm very grateful,"

said Iurie, smiling at the thought that it will be a little easier for him now.



The project “Supporting together the vulnerable population affected by the energy crisis” also provides other forms of aid: heating materials for 6,000 households, around 20 grants for social service providers and civil society organisations to develop their capacity to provide vulnerable groups with social services. A separate grant was also offered to a media organisation to verify the fairness of the distribution of funds to the population most affected by the energy crisis.

Project activities will be completed in April 2023. Financial assistance from the European Union has been allocated through the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI).

SOCIAL CANTEEN SERVICES WILL BE IMPROVED IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

In January 2022, the project „Partnerships for inclusive and resilient social canteen services” funded by the European Union, co-founded and implemented by P.I. „Keystone Moldova”, P.A. „Concordia. Social Projects” and P.I.S.M. „Diaconia” was launched. The project aims to enhance social canteen services in the Republic of Moldova and ensure a wider access to the services for people from vulnerable groups.



Photo: Signing of the Memorandum of cooperation between the Ministry of Environment, P.I. „Keystone Moldova”, P.A. „Concordia. Social Projects” and P.I.S.M. „Diaconia”, Chişinău, 3 March 2022

The programme will encourage the active involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in policy dialogue in order to improve the regulatory framework legislating the operation of social canteen services. In this regard, at the beginning of March 2022, the three nongovernmental organisations signed two Memoranda of Cooperation: with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and with the Ministry of Environment. According to the Memoranda, in the following three years, the CSOs will provide technical assistance to central public authorities for the improvement of the legal framework for social canteen services and the development of an efficient regulatory framework for the operation of an innovative mechanism for donation and redistribution of surplus food through the Food Bank.

Thus, within the project, the capacity of the Food

Bank, as a national mechanism to prevent food waste, will be consolidated. The Food Bank will ensure the collection, storage and redistribution of food surplus to social services that support vulnerable groups, increasing access to food for people affected by food poverty. In addition, the Food Bank’s network of beneficiaries will be expanded through the creation of new partnerships with food suppliers, CSOs, social canteen services and other social service providers throughout the country.

At the same time, the project will improve the infrastructure and financial activity of five social canteen services delivered by A.O. “Concordia. Social Projects”, while the canteen staff will benefit from training programs.

The implementation period of the project is 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2024 with a total value of 1,327,609 EUR.



„MOVE IT LIKE LUBLIN” - A PROJECT FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION DESIGNED TO SUPPORT THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN CHIȘINĂU

Thanks to the EU funded project “MOVE IT like Lublin”, implemented by Chișinău City Hall in partnership with Lublin city administration from Poland, the residents of Chisinau city will benefit from safer, more inclusive, and more efficient transport services.

The project was officially launched on 19 January 2022 and aims to improve the public transport system in Chisinau. The total budget of the project is 3,500,000 EUR, of which 3,325,000 EUR is the non-reimbursable funding provided by the European Union, and 175,000 EUR is the contribution of Chisinau municipality.

The aim of the project is to achieve three main objectives:

- ♦ Improving urban transport policies at the municipal level;
- ♦ Increasing the institutional capacities of Chișinău Administration, in accordance with the practices of the European Union in the field of urban mobility;
- ♦ Increasing the quality of public transport management in Chișinău, by implementing innovative sustainable solutions and technologies. In this regard, a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan will be developed and a modern Centre for traffic monitoring will be established.

MOVE IT LIKE Lublin
CHIȘINĂU Transport Development Initiative

Funded by the European Union

ABOUT US
Project Description

The **overall objective** of the Project is the Improvement of the public transportation system in Chisinau.

The Project will support local authorities in Chisinau and Lublin in making the City's Public Transport more **inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**.

EU Programme
Partnerships programme for sustainable cities in the Southern and Eastern Neighborhood

Partners
Local Authorities of Chisinau (Moldova) and Lublin (Poland)

Implementation period
(48 months) 01.02.2021-01.02.2025

The final beneficiaries of the project are all the inhabitants and guests of the capital city, especially those who travel regularly by bus and trolleybus.

In the opening of the project launch event on 19 January 2022, Mayor - Ion Ceban thanked the representatives of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova for the financial support provided to the Chisinau City Administration, as well as the City Administration of Lublin for their openness and cooperation, including the project implementation team.

The 3.32 million EUR grant is provided under the funding programme „Local authorities: Partnerships for sustainable cities 2020”. The grant will be allocated in several instalments over a period of 4 years.

THE AMBASSADOR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA MET ONLINE WITH THE EU INFORMATION CENTRES, PROMOTERS OF EUROPEAN VALUES

The Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova, Jānis Mažeiks, met in an online event with the representatives of the Euro Clubs and Information Centres of the European Union in the Republic of Moldova. Participants shared common views on the need to communicate and promote EU assistance and its impact on the Republic of Moldova, especially among young people. They also talked about the experience gained in 2021, but also about the action plan and future activities.



Photo: Jānis Mažeiks, Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova

Jānis Mažeiks emphasized the importance of Euro Clubs and Information Centers in ensuring the connection between all citizens of the Republic of Moldova and the European Union. Information Center and Euro Club Coordinators work daily to inform their communities about EU values and support provided for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova.

The Euro Clubs and Information Centers of the European Union (EUIC) are an extensive network of information multipliers about the European Union's contribution to the development of the Republic of Moldova, improving the quality of life of citizens, tangible results of ongoing EU support

and opportunities that can be accessed by members of communities where they operate. The Euro Clubs and Information Centers of the European Union contribute to gathering and disseminating knowledge regarding European topics: policies, institutions, community programmes, neighborhood relations, etc. At the same time, they stimulate citizens' interest regarding the cooperation relations between the European Union and the Republic Moldova.

Currently, 29 EUICs and Euro Clubs operate throughout the Republic of Moldova. The activity of the Euro Clubs and Information Centres is being supported by the European Union.



EUROPE CAFÉ HAS OPENED ITS DOORS TO HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIALS FROM BRUSSELS

In the context of the visit to Chisinau of Mr Josep Borrell Fontelles, the Vice-president of the European Commission and High representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Mr Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, on 2 - 3 March 2022, the EU high level officials have also visited the premises of Europe Café, the main EU Information Centre from Chisinau. During their visit, the officials highlighted the European Union's full support for the Republic of Moldova in addressing the refugee crisis and humanitarian assistance. Josep Borrell and

Olivér Várhelyi appreciated the assistance provided by the national and local authorities to the citizens of Ukraine and mentioned that they will support the efforts of the Republic of Moldova to manage the crisis. The two officials also thanked Moldovan citizens who responded by providing food, transportation and accommodation to the refugees.

The European Union will provide 20 million EUR to the Republic of Moldova for managing the refugee crisis and providing immediate assistance to Ukrainian citizens who had to leave their country.



EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORTS THE PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPING SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Soros Foundation Moldova, Institutum Virtutes Civilis and Keystone Moldova signed on 20 January 2022 a Memorandum of Cooperation for the development of social services and the creation of a favourable environment for contracting social service providers from public funds.

The partnership was initiated to ensure the successful implementation of interventions within the EU funded project „Civil society organisations acting for better social services”, through which grants are provided to civil society organisations for the creation,

development or expansion of at least 40 social services across the country for people from vulnerable groups. The project will help create the conditions for contracting social services from public funds from service providers.

„We started this partnership because we want to intensify the social policy dialogue, to contribute to the development of new services at community level for people from vulnerable groups and to create premises for ensuring the financial sustainability of the developed social services”,

stated the Minister of Labour and Social Protection, Marcel Spatari.



„The cooperation will contribute to improving the quality of life of disadvantaged people by increasing access to quality services according to their needs, through capacity of service staff and active involvement of disadvantaged people in decision-making during the development and provision of services”,

noted Ludmila Malcoci, Executive Director of Keystone Moldova.

The project „Civil Society Organisations Acting for Better Social Services” is funded by the European Union, co-financed and implemented by Soros Foundation Moldova in partnership with Keystone Moldova Association and Institutum Virtutes Civilis.



EU-FUNDED EVA PROJECT SUPPORTS UKRAINIAN WOMEN WHO FLED THEIR COUNTRY DUE TO THE RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE

Women and War: thousands of Ukrainian women flee their country and have no clear destination

Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians are leaving their homes as the threat of the Russian invasion turned into a full-fledged war on the morning of 24 February. The EU funded “EVA Project – Strengthened gender action in Cahul and Ungheni districts” along with local public authorities from Cahul, volunteers, and civil society in that region mobilised to offer help, to guide and to host them.



A family from Odessa, fleeing the war in Ukraine, goes towards Galați border-crossing point in order to reach Romania. Photo: UN Women Moldova

As soon as the war started in Ukraine, the local public authorities of Cahul created a Crisis Unit under Cahul Mayoralty, working around the clock. This is where humanitarian aid and donations – from both economic operators and individuals – are stored and distributed. They also provide blankets, tins, hygiene products, as well as information about food for refugees and ways to be tested for COVID-19 and get vaccinated upon request.

According to the local public authorities of Cahul, besides the Crisis Unit, they arranged temporary placement centres for Ukrainian refugees, which currently accommodate over 100 people: dormitory of ‘B.P. Hasdeu’ State University, ‘Nufărul Alb’ sanatorium, and the Maternal Centre from Cahul. Many refugees benefit from the generosity of local inhabitants and are given shelter by people from rural areas of the district.



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Tatiana Romaniuc, deputy mayor of Cahul municipality talking about the response of local authorities to the refugee crisis in Cahul region. Photo: UN Women Moldova

Many people provide help immediately. They respond on the internet, they mobilise themselves, they offer accommodation, transport, clothes, food, health care or translation services. Some refugees, who decide to stay here for a longer term, ask to become volunteers and help their co-nationals, while other view the Republic of Moldova as a prospect for their future.

A significant share of refugees reach the Republic of Moldova by crossing Giurgiulești - Reni border-crossing point. Around 10,000 people cross the border daily, entering Moldova. Border Police officers lead refugees to an improvised tent zone where they are offered tea or coffee. From there, most of them, mothers and children, walk on foot around two kilometres to Galați Customs, at the border with Romania. Volunteers organise transport especially for mothers with small children.

Irina taught at the Waldorf School in Odessa and now she was forced to leave the town. She is frozen but she is hardly convinced to take a break. She is concerned to get to a warm and safe place before the evening comes.



"We will see where we get. We could go to France or Switzerland. There is a community of teachers that invited us. We haven't decided yet which way to go. It's important that we reach the Galați Customs. Maybe we will go to Switzerland. We have a school community there, friends, and we will see how things work out,"

confessed Irina.

Galina, aged 40, was among those who queued up for kilometres to travel from Ukraine to Moldova, escaping from Ismail, a town from Odessa Region (south-western Ukraine). Ismail, a town located 192 km south-west of Odessa and 80 km from the place where Chilia branch of Danube enters the Black Sea, was the Soviet Union's largest port on the Danube



Galina, 40 years old, from Ismail, is crossing the border in Reni in the company of her two sons. They are fleeing the war in Ukraine. Photo: UN Women Moldova

"I feel lost. Everybody is running. It was so hard to make this decision. I had no choice. I must take care of my boys. My husband stayed to fight. I decided to leave while my eyes were welling up with tears. Everything I wish is for the war to end and for us to go back home. My life's work is back in Ismail. My home, my household – everything is back there. Lately the air-raid sirens went off more and more often, and then I used to hear all kinds of sounds coming from the sea and I could not stay calm. We fear for our lives. We see what happens in Kiev, Mykolaiv or Harkiv,"

shared Galina.



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Galina does not know which way to go, but she would like to get to Galați border-crossing point. In Romania, she will make a faster decision. The refugee inflow increases. Many of them come with friends, relatives, or pets. Aliona is 33 years old and fled from Odessa with her three children



Aliona, 33 years old, from Odessa, fleeing the war in Ukraine together with her three children. She crosses the border in Reni Customs on foot. Photo: UN Women Moldova

"We used to hear bombs every day in Odessa. People are dying, do you see what's happening? Life doesn't matter anymore; it is worth nothing. Both military and civilians are shot. Innocent mothers and children are dying. It is horrible and terrifying. I have so many friends in Harkiv, but they cannot leave even if they wanted to. It is impossible to get out. That's not because of the lack of a green corridor, but because they are bombed all the time and it is very dangerous,"

said Aliona.

Aliona does not have a clear destination either: "

The sirens we hear every day are frightening. We stayed in the basement for a couple of days, but we couldn't take it anymore. My husband decided to stay and to fight for our home. I hope I will get to Bulgaria. I have an aunt there. We wrote each other a little during this time, but nothing is clear. It is important that I get there. I speak Bulgarian and even if my aunt doesn't help me, I hope I will find a job there."



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“MY HEART BREAKS”: MOLDOVAN WOMEN MOBILISED TO HELP UKRAINIAN REFUGEES WITH EU SUPPORT



More than 400,000 Ukrainians have crossed the territory of the Republic of Moldova since Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February.

According to Moldova's Bureau for Migration and Asylum, by 10 March, over 1,600 Ukrainians have requested asylum in the Republic of Moldova.

As part of the support provided to Ukrainian refugees, the EU-funded “EVA Project – Strengthened gender action in Cahul and Ungheni districts” were offered 100 canvas bags with hoodies, puzzles, umbrellas, food containers and thermoses.

The first days of March registered temperatures of minus two-three degrees Celsius. Hundreds

of thousands of Ukrainians have abandoned their homes since 24 February. The queues are growing, despite the cold, snow and rain.

Nadejda (63 years old) and Ina (39), mother and daughter, came from Kharkiv in Eastern Ukraine, but before reaching Moldova, they spent a week with relatives in Vinnytsia (a town in central-western Ukraine). On 6 March, eight Russian missiles hit Vinnytsia and completely destroyed the town's airport, but Nadejda and Ina had already moved on. Nadejda is accompanied by her husband, and Ina by her seven-year-old daughter, who has epilepsy.

When the Russians began bombarding Kharkiv, the family decided to move in with their relatives in Vinnytsia.



"We are from Kharkiv. We lived on the 9th floor, and we were living in fear every day under the sound of sirens and bombing. Although that was our house, it was impossible to stay there. We decided to move in with our relatives in Vinnytsia, where we lived for a week. Generally, I am happy we managed to leave because we lived in the basement most of the time,"

said Nadejda.



Nadejda, a 63-year-old refugee who left Kharkiv, Ukraine, with her family to seek a safe haven in Moldova. Photo: UN Women Moldova



Ina, a 39-year-old mother, fled Kharkiv, Ukraine, to seek safety in neighbouring countries. Photo: UN Women Moldova

Now, the family has reached the Sculeni Border Crossing Point between the Republic of Moldova and Romania, where refugees are welcomed by a group of volunteers from the leadership organisation JCI Ungheni, which is affiliated with the global network Junior Chamber International. They have put up a tent where they provide shelter to all those who cross the border, offering them tea, hot meal, and warm clothes. Those who are in a hurry receive sandwiches and move on. Nadejda and Ina were able to rest in a warm place and were helped to find onward transportation to go to Romania.

Ludmila (aged 41) and Polina (21), a mother and daughter from Odesa, arrived in Sculeni after a long trip. Despite everything, the women retain their hope and optimism.

"I am terrified of what is happening in our town. But we stay optimistic and hope for a peaceful future," said Polina.

Odesa is unrecognisable. This historic cultural and educational hub, known as the City of Heroes for its defence against the Nazis in 1941, has been largely abandoned by its civilian population.

"People are leaving and my heart breaks. I want peace, I want this to end so we can live in peace. My husband is a police officer and stayed behind to fight. Together with my son-in-law. There is no other way. They stay behind to defend the home,"

added Ludmila.



41-year-old Ludmila (right) fled Odesa, Ukraine, with her 21-year-old daughter Polina (left) to seek a safe haven in neighbouring countries. Photo: UN Women Moldova

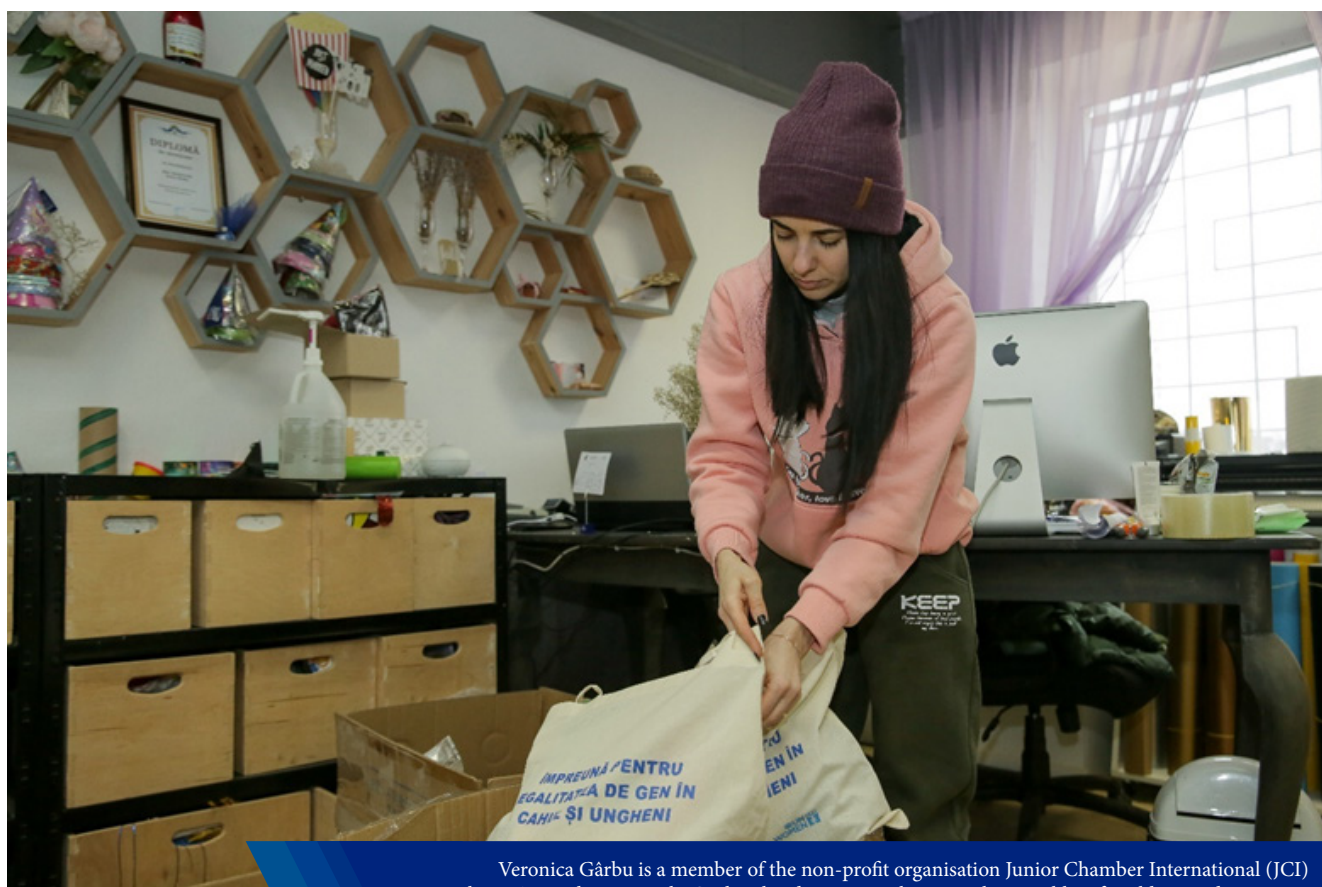
At the Sculeni Border Crossing Point, the queue of cars waiting to go to Romania is growing. People come from different regions of Ukraine, from Chernivtsi, Vinnytsia, Kyiv or Odesa to reach Romania or other European cities.

Together with the volunteers, the border police officers are the first to welcome the refugees

from Ukraine. For almost two weeks, they have been working non-stop and show dedication, professionalism and care for refugees. Many of them are women: according to the IGPF (General Border Police Inspectorate), 77 women were hired in 2021, and women account for 30% of the total number of border police officers, while 464 women or 26.34% work for the Customs Service.

Veronica Gârbu has been involved from the beginning of the crisis.

"From the morning of February 24, I felt I had to get involved. I have relatives in Ukraine, who could not come to Moldova and then I decided to support them somehow, or at least to help the people who come from that side. I collect things, I sort them, I prepare parcels and provide all the support I can. I cried a lot on the first days, I listened emotionally to their stories."



Veronica Gârbu is a member of the non-profit organisation Junior Chamber International (JCI) Ungheni. As a volunteer at the Sculeni border crossing between the Republic of Moldova and Romania, she supports collecting donations for refugees from Ukraine. Photo credit: UN Women Moldova

Another mother with four children reached the border crossing point. The volunteers asked her questions "Where are you going?", "Do you need transport?", "How can we help?", "Do you want a hot soup? Hot tea? Hygienic products?" The tent is stocked up with water, sandwiches, fruit, winter clothes, hygienic products and blankets. Volunteers have an established working mechanism, some prepare food, other provide transportation.



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Vera is a single mother, 50 years old and from Kyiv. After six days of tension and terror, she took her four children and decided she had to flee at all costs:

"We hid for six days in the basement. At one point, the sirens were on three-four times a day, and my children did not sleep for a week. We didn't have anything to eat, we did not know how to survive. There was no bread in the shops, all the food was sold at once. If you didn't spend two hours in the line, you couldn't buy anything. As a single mother, without any support, with four children, I just couldn't manage to find anything."



Vera, a 50-year-old mother of 4 from Kiev, fleeing the military offensive in Ukraine.
Photo: UN Women Moldova

When the Russian bombs started to fall closer to their house, Vera found a way to leave the city.

"We left at seven in the morning. In 24 hours, we reached Moldova. We could not go directly to Poland, because we had to stay in line for three days at the railway station. In Moldova, I was surprised by people's kindness; volunteers gave us food, hot drinks and provided us with winter clothes. My children hadn't eaten in a week. I feel safer here. My eyelid stopped ticking, I don't have panic attacks or nervous breakdowns. I am calm."

Vera and her four children hope to reach Poland.

"I don't know where I'll end up. Maybe in Poland. I have a friend there. The four children ate hot soup and received warm jackets, takeaways and hot drinks. I cannot explain to my children why we are bombed and why we had to flee from our home. We lived a nightmare, a terror in the past days; my children slept next to a toilet. And what would have happened if we hadn't managed to flee?" asked Vera.

“EU4MOLDOVA: STARTUP CITY CAHUL” – SUPPORTS UKRAINIAN PEOPLE!



“EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul”, in partnership with Cahul State University “Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu” and Cahul City Hall join forces to help Ukrainian refugees in the Republic of Moldova. For the refugees who are currently in the south of the country, a communication and coworking area has been set up, equipped with everything necessary for them to be able to carry out their activity. Thus, Ukrainian citizens who are in Cahul and have the opportunity to work remotely can come to Cahul State University “Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu” (1 Piata Independentei, Cahul town) to benefit free of charge from:

- ◇ Communication and coworking spaces equipped with the necessary technique;
- ◇ High performance equipment;
- ◇ Internet connection;
- ◇ Food consumables.

Other needs of the refugees will be further identified in Cahul so as to provide them with all necessary support.

EU4Moldova: Start-up City Cahul is implemented in the period 2020-2024 by ATIC, with the financial assistance of the European Union in partnership with Sweden. The initiative addresses the sustainable socio-economic development of Cahul municipality and neighboring localities,

which complements the regional coverage of development assistance provided by the European Union to the Republic of Moldova. The project supports particularly the economic development through innovation, the entrepreneurship, the employment for small and medium-sized enterprises outside the capital, and provides study opportunities for young people, women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).



EU4YOUTH AWARDED THE WINNERS OF THE COMPETITION „SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP - COOPERATION ACROSS BORDERS”

Outstanding bloggers and vloggers from the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine entered the regional competition „Social entrepreneurship - cooperation across borders” and were awarded. The media award ceremony for social entrepreneurship was organised in Kiev within the framework of the EU4Youth project - Unlocking the potential of young social entrepreneurs in Moldova and Ukraine (EUnlocking) funded by the European Union through the EU4Youth Programme.

During 2 months, more than 70 materials were entered in the competition, and the authors of the 9 best materials in the video, audio and written press categories, who received the highest score from the jury, were awarded by the organisers.



Maria Ivanova is one of the journalists from Ukraine who participated in the regional competition. The journalist says that

„the competition was very useful for me personally, first of all. After all, that's how I found out who social entrepreneurs are. It's a trend abroad. But in Ukraine this trend is just beginning. There is no proper law and no financial support for social entrepreneurs. Active young people were the first to start such a

business in our country. Many of them used to take credits from international funds. But now, thanks to the EUnlocking project, its competition and journalists, I hope things will change and more people will learn about social entrepreneurs and their businesses will develop in favourable conditions.”

Another journalist, Mariana Ionel from Moldova, was awarded in the competition.

Mariana says

„Social entrepreneurship is the economic model of the future. In some European countries, the future is already at home. In the Republic of Moldova, it is our common duty to promote this model, including by popularising the idea and best practices among the population. It is particularly valuable to use your chance to contribute to the development of your community in this way. We must offer „the best of us” - the theory of social entrepreneurship and any competition, including journalistic”.



The award ceremony was also attended by some of the heroes/heroines, entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs from the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine from the winning material, who shared the emotion of their job, the purpose of social entrepreneurship for the community and how precious it is to involve journalists in the development of this field.

The best entries received awards across three categories – video, audio and written press are:

VIDEO

Prize 1: Iulia Vrabie (Moldova)

[\(Nepotu Irina's story, employed at the social company Floare de Cires\)](#)

Prize 2: Lilia Andrusik (Ukraine)

[\(Social mission – caring for others\)](#)

Prize 3: Maria Ivanova (Ukraine)

[\(Oksana Stakhnevich, a Charity shop in the Zaporizhzhia region\)](#) and [Apostu Eugenia \(Moldova\)](#)
[\(Hancu family got a taste for social entrepreneurship during an international training\)](#)

AUDIO

Prize 1: Iulia Vrabie (Moldova).

[Podcast with Sergiu Gurău on social entrepreneurship and a chance for normality for vulnerable people](#)

Prize 2: Ivan Lyla (Ukraine)

[How young social entrepreneurs develop business in an environmental direction. Education of future social entrepreneurs and opportunities for all-Ukrainian and foreign cooperation.](#)

WRITTEN PRESS

Prize 1: Ionel Mariana (Moldova).

[Angela Achiței: people, environment, community, focus on young people and disadvantaged people – values promoted also at regional level](#)

Prize 1: Victoria Kolomiets (Ukraine)

["These are not homeless; these are people." The story of Lviv's 'Oselya', which helps homeless people feel needed and start a new life](#)

Prize 2: Galina Khalymonyk (Ukraine)

[Social enterprise: Libental Farm helps teenagers with difficult destinies find their way home](#)

The regional competition was organised in Moldova and Ukraine within the framework of the EUnlocking Project, which contributes to fostering the social entrepreneurial potential of young people in Moldova and Ukraine by creating an enabling ecosystem for social enterprises, as well as inspiring and supporting more young social entrepreneurs to develop and sustain their innovative solutions for promoting social inclusion and environmental sustainability

in both countries. The project is funded by the European Union through the EU4Youth Programme.

The EUnlocking project is implemented by Gustav Stresemann Institute e.V. (GSI) (Germany), Egalite International (Ukraine), AXA Management Consulting (Moldova), ECO-RAZENI Association (Moldova), CONTACT Centre (Moldova) and „Pro NGO! e.V” (Germany).



EU SUPPORTS THE CREATION OF NEW SOCIAL SERVICES AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF EXISTING SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN GAGAUZ-YERI

17 officials, representatives of educational institutions, partners and other constituents met on 17 March 2022, at a launch event of the project „Involving NEET* youth by developing social and employment inclusive and innovative services ‘InnoStart4NEET’”.

The initiative will contribute to the creation of new social services and to the improvement of existing ones for young people who do not benefit from education, training and jobs and the socially vulnerable young people from the Gagauz Autonomous Territorial Unit.

„We initiated this project after a series of meetings with representatives of the Regional Direction of the National Employment Agency (ANOFM) and of vocational training institutions that have accredited educational programs”,

said the Executive Director of the European Centre „Pro-Europe” in Comrat, Irina Selezneva.

In this context, the project [„Involvement NEET Youth through the development of innovative social and employment services in the field of innovative inclusive work”](#) InnoStart4NEET will create conditions for improving existing services and creating new services for education, training, jobs and social vulnerable youth in the region. In addition, innovative approaches and new programs to support NEET young people will be promoted by the Innovation Incubator „InnoCentru”, opened at the State University of Comrat, through a mechanism of vertical and horizontal cooperation between the Public Association [European Centre „Pro-Europe”](#), Comrat, the Employment Agency, the “InnoCentru” University Incubator, the [Comrat Vocational School](#) and the Ceadîr-Lunga Vocational School.



The Project “Better opportunities for Young Women and Men Not in Education, Employment and Training in Moldova (NEET Inclusion Initiative)” is funded by the European Union, co-funded by Sweden and implemented through [East Europe Foundation](#) in partnership with the National Youth Council of Moldova (NYC), Centre Partnership for Development (CPD), Agency for Regional Development from the Transnistrian region (ARD).

*NEET: Not in Education, Employment and Training

EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORTS THE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES NEEDS FOR YOUTH, WHO ARE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT NOR TRAINING

NEET young people (Not in Education, Employment and Training) represent an enormous potential for community resources and development. In recent years, the attention of national and international actors has focused on the development of services in reducing the NEET phenomenon and reintegration into their educational and professional field. In order to understand the value system and the needs of the NEET group in Bălți, the Training and Personal Development Center „ANIMA” recently organised a series of focus groups on „The profile and situation of NEET in Bălți”. The event brought together 30 participants, of

which 20 young people (17-25 years old) and 10 specialists from different fields related to youth in Bălți.

The assessment was conducted by the project “Better opportunities for Young Women and Men Not in Education, Employment and Training in Moldova (NEET Inclusion Initiative)”, funded by the European Union, co-funded by Sweden and implemented through East Europe Foundation in partnership with the National Youth Council of Moldova (NYC), Centre Partnership for Development (CPD), Agency for Regional Development from the Transnistrian region (ARD).

Among recommendations outlined by experts following the analysis of the findings of the three thematic focus groups are:

- ♦ The development of a mechanism for identifying / informing / motivating / involving young people NEET would lead to clarity and understanding of the way of working with the target category of young people and to the reduction of the rate of the researched phenomenon.
- ♦ The creation and development of specific programs for the NEET group would contribute to a better reintegration into the life of the community, including: i) basic skills development program (writing, reading); ii) program for developing communication and public speaking skills; iii) parental education (communication with the child, establishing a healthy and organic parent-child relationship, etc.), iv) psychological support that would help young people to overcome the problems they face and previous unpleasant experiences, etc.



EU “CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES” PROGRAMME: SIX MOLDOVANS FROM BOTH BANKS OF THE NISTRU REACHED THE HEART OF THE HIMALAYAS

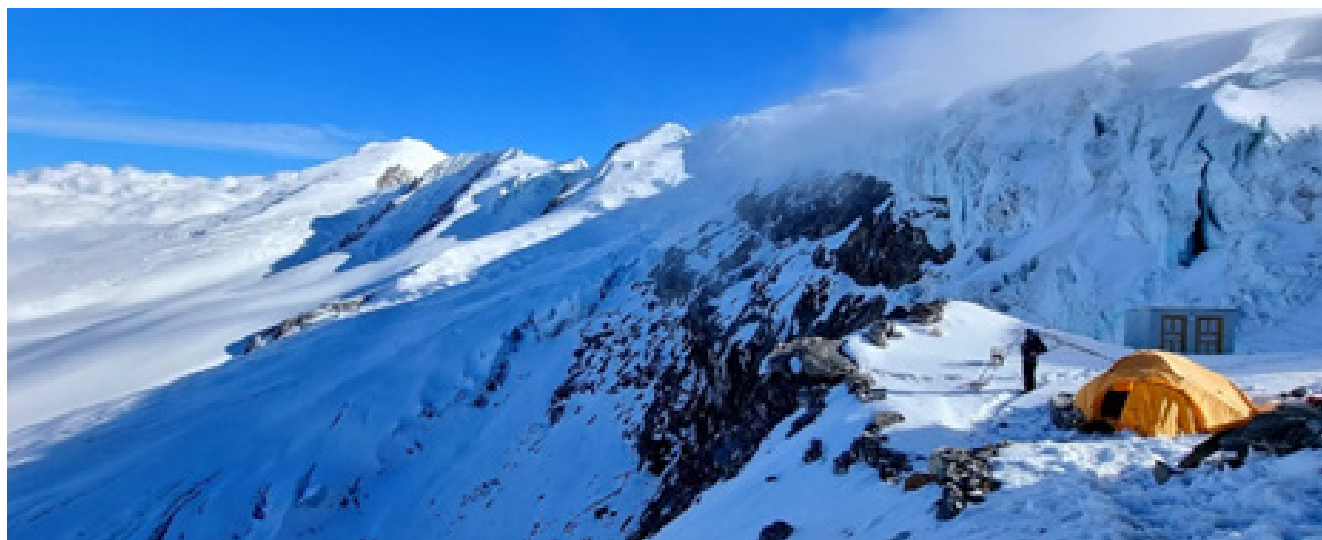
Treat the mountains with respect and they will reward you with unique experiences

In 2021, several Moldovans backpacked their courage and embarked on an adventure to the Everest, but not just for the sake of it, but accompanied by a shooting crew. It happened in the framework of “My Everest” project.

“My Everest” is a documentary series about the expedition of the six Moldovans, from both banks of the Nistru, to the heart of the Himalayas. The team chose the route to Mount Mera Peak, of 6,476 meters above sea level, considered to be the highest hiking trail in the world.

The documentary series “My Everest” was produced with the financial support of the European Union in the Republic of Moldova through the EU “Confidence-Building Measures” Programme, implemented by UNDP Moldova.

Who and under what conditions would return to the Himalayas, what is it like to actually see the peaks of Everest, but also how much the live experience differs from what we see on the screens? We invite you to find out at the following link: <https://medium.com/undp-moldova/in-search-of-own-everest-or-how-six-moldovans-reached-the-heart-of-the-himalayas-1cbf6dac34a>



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ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS



The new framework of the Erasmus+ Programme 2021-2027 has opened up opportunities for the vocational education and training (VET) institutions from the Republic of Moldova. Therefore, they can participate in capacity building in the field of vocational education and training projects (CBVET), but also in International Credit Mobilities (ICM).

Capacity building projects are international cooperation actions, based on multilateral partnerships between organisations active in the field of VET in the countries associated to the Erasmus + Programme (EU states, Iceland, North Macedonia, Turkey, Norway, Serbia and Liechtenstein), and from third countries not associated with the programme, such as the Republic of Moldova. They aim to support the relevance, accessibility, and responsiveness of VET institutions and systems in third countries not associated to the Programme as a driver of sustainable socio-economic development.

Starting with 2022, the international credit

mobility projects are also accessible for VET institutions from the Republic of Moldova. This supports a wide range of mobility activities, including direct observation at work, professional development courses for staff, internships, invited expert activities etc. At the initial stage, the respective projects will involve the mobility of staff from the EU institutions to those from the Republic of Moldova.

Since December 2021, the National Erasmus+ Office in Moldova has organised a series of information events aimed at promoting new opportunities in the Erasmus+ 2022 call for proposals. Particular attention was paid to the projects aimed for institutions in the field of VET from Moldova. During January-March, Q&A sessions were held for colleges, vocational schools and centres of excellence that declared their intention to participate in the CBVET and ICM projects under the Erasmus+ 2022 call.

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in

Europe. The Erasmus+ Programme 2021-2027 was approved with an almost doubled budget of 26.2 billion euros, compared to the 2014-2020 edition. Thus, the new Erasmus+ will support study mobility and cross-border cooperation projects for 10 million beneficiaries of all ages worldwide. The program aims to become more inclusive, more digital and green, to support the resilience of the education process in pandemic conditions, while encouraging active citizenship and a more dynamic participation in democratic life.



84 VOLUNTEERS TRAINED IN THE FIELD OF HOMECARE WITH EU SUPPORT

In the framework of the EU-funded project “Improvement of medico-social care services for people with long-term care needs on both sides of the Dniester River” under the General EU Confidence Building Measures Programme, the German Development Cooperation through GIZ implemented a 5-days „Training of Trainers” (hereinafter - ToT) course in the field of **Homecare** - home-based primary medico-social services for people with long-term care needs. 84 volunteers (representatives of CSOs, unemployed, former social workers, individuals and domestic caregivers) from 7 districts of the transnistrian region participated to this course.



Though practiced on the right riverside since 2006, the homecare know-how represents a novelty practice on the left riverbank. The transfer of gained experience over the years, has been duly ensured by health professionals and practitioners from Chisinau and Balti mobilised by the Association HOMECARE from Chisinau. The logistical and organisational support was proficiently provided by the NGO „Association of Health and Sports” from Tiraspol. Thus, a long-term efficient cooperation between CSOs on both riversides has been practically achieved in the health area.

The ToT curricula, including for domestic caregivers were elaborated and approved on both riversides by competent authorities. A Handbook on Homecare has been developed and duly used in trainings and disseminated to domestic caregivers. The Handbook ensures harmonization of local policies with EU trends in the development of health and social care systems. Representing a novelty on both riversides, the Handbook is used as a ‘pillow’ guide for trainers and domestic caregivers, enjoying an increasing demand, including among profile professionals.



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Note: **Homecare** – combined primary medico-social services, provided at home and within a specialized facility (Day Care Centre) by professional social and medical staff and trained nonprofessional caregivers, focused on specific category of patients with long-term care needs: bed-ridden, with chronic disabilities and/or diseases, who should not necessarily be hospitalized to receive specialized services, including socially vulnerable people and lonely elderly, etc.



Such service mechanism represents a solution to cover the increasing needs for long-term care at relatively low costs, as well as ensures a dignified life for such patients by observing their independence within the domestic environment and community entourage to the largest possible extent.



“WOMEN FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE” LEADERSHIP ACADEMY, ORGANISED WITH THE EU SUPPORT

Dozens of active women from different regions of the country attended a series of training sessions in February and March at the “Women for Good Governance” Leadership Academy. The participants are representatives of local government, NGOs and Local Initiative Groups from all over the country.

They were given guidance on how to engage in the decision-making processes in their localities, including what to draw attention to when they decide to participate in election campaigns. President of the AO „Institutum Virtutes Civilis” Liliana Palihovici moderated the session „Formulating the mission statement”, where she described techniques for communicating with voters,

understanding the problems they face and, above all, how they can engage with the community towards solving them. „We especially urge you to communicate with each other, the representatives of the different parties, because we want you to do politics differently! One in favour of the citizens, one that strengthens cohesion in society”, was Liliana Palihovici’s message.



The journalist and communication expert Mircea Surdu led a practical session on the importance of participating in TV debates. The techniques shared by the journalist were related to the rules of electoral debates, to making speeches in an accessible language and, above all, in a respectful manner, even towards the opponents. „You have 30 seconds to make a good impression” is one of the messages of actress Dana Ciobanu, who moderated the session „Diction and the Art of Speech”. She pointed out that in public debates „how you say” is as important as „what you say”.



The youngest participant of the Academy is Valeria Mihalache, from the capital, and she says she wanted to attend these trainings because she believes that political education is as important as financial or legal education: *„As long as the new generation invests in knowledge, we can be sure that our society has a future, so I am grateful to have the opportunity to learn new things that will be useful for my career,” mentioned Valeria.*

Academy participants are from several regions of the country. Lidia Ostaş is a local councillor in the village of Congazcicul de Sus, UTA Gagauzia. She says that she is constantly involved in the Academy’s trainings so she can help her fellow villagers.

„We need changes in the decision-making process. We need to help people to get involved in solving local problems,” said Lidia.

More than one hundred women from several regions of the country have been selected to participate in the “Women for Good Governance” Leadership Academy trainings. The mentoring sessions are organised within the framework of the project „Partnerships for Women’s Leadership and Good Governance”, implemented by the [Friedrich Ebert Foundation Moldova](#) and the AO „[Institutum Virtutes Civilis](#)”, with the financial support of the European Union and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.



CAREER GUIDANCE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN 25 SCHOOLS WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF EUROPEAN UNION

Students and teachers from 25 schools in the Republic of Moldova (Soroca, Calarasi, Nisporeni, Straseneni and Causeni districts), partners in the Joboteca project - a pilot programme for preparing young people in Moldova for the labor market, already have three training programmes on career guidance and entrepreneurship education. Terre des hommes Moldova, the organisation implementing Joboteca Project, has developed training and guidance programmes for teachers, school psychologists and deputy principals for education in carrying out activities with students to train them in developing entrepreneurial skills.



The course „Entrepreneurial education for young people” aims to develop students’ skills such as: entrepreneurial skills and the spirit of initiative; communication, learning, social and civic skills; basic skills in mathematics, science and technology; digital skills and other skills needed for young people for a successful career path.

„Career Guidance and Career Education” programme aims to support young people in career guidance by providing them with a set of tools to analyze their situation and to draw a personal development plan that includes the necessary skills both on local and on international labor market. The skills covered in this course are communication, cooperation, flexibility, critical, creative and strategic thinking, planning.

The third programme - „Digital Skills” - aims to develop young people’s digital skills and competencies as well as to provide them with a range of independent learning tools for personal and professional development during the transition from school to employee / entrepreneur status. This course will develop skills for teenagers from the 25 schools such as information and data literacy, communication and collaboration through information technology, digital content creation.

In March, Terre des hommes started training with teachers based on these courses. Afterwards these teachers will select 20 young people from each school to participate in the programme and will start the activities in the Joboteca spaces.



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„Joboteca - pilot programme for preparing young people in Moldova for the labor market” project is funded by the European Union and is implemented between 2021 and 2024 by the Terre des hommes Foundation - Romania and Moldova office - in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova.



INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNMENT

IMPROVING ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION AND THE EU STANDARDS IN THIS AREA: WORKING SESSION WITH THE MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

On 25 January, the team of experts of the EU funded project “Support for structured policy dialogue, coordination of the implementation of the Association Agreement and enhancement of the legal approximation process in the Republic of Moldova,” represented by the Team Leader Primož Vehar, former Head of the Secretariat of the Committee on European Affairs in the Slovenian Parliament and Dawid Sześciło, academic and international expert on public administration from Poland, led a workshop on necessary reforms in the area of access to public information in the Republic of Moldova.



The event was organised in cooperation with the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, and it was attended by the members of various parliamentary committees, as well as the staff of the Parliament.



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The discussions focused on the key shortcomings of the current legislative framework and practice, such as:

- ◊ Insufficient guarantees on proactive transparency - the scope of information to be disclosed proactively is very limited and generally described, compared to other countries;
- ◊ Appeal procedure that do not ensure effective remedies against refusal of access to public information or administrative silence – multi-stage procedure, including internal administrative appeal (to the top management of information holder or superior body) is not efficient in securing fast access to information;
- ◊ Lack of effective and efficient mechanism for imposing sanctions for violations of the right to information;
- ◊ Unclear regulation of fees for access to information;
- ◊ Absence of clearly allocated responsibilities for monitoring situation in the field, promoting transparency and performing independent inspection activities; and
- ◊ No regulation on re-use of public sector information implementing the EU standards in this matter.

In order to address these shortcomings, new law on access to public information needs to be elaborated, based on the review of best international standards and practices. In addition to this, creation of independent supervisory body in the field of transparency should be considered. Adoption of the new legislation and institutional reform should be accompanied with trainings and other forms of support for civil servants and other staff of public institutions.



Extensive support from the project has been offered for the preparation of the new legislative and institutional framework enhancing transparency. It has been proposed to hold an international event, where experts from other countries (especially Western Balkans and CEE countries) could present their experience in enhancing transparency of public bodies. As next steps, it has been suggested to collect feedback from civil society organisations and media as a roundtable discussion, review experiences and practices of countries that the Republic of Moldova may learn from in the field of access to public information, and full support in drafting and implementing new legislation on access to information.

The workshop participants pointed out the need to promote proactive transparency and the establishment of an independent

supervisory body for proper monitoring and regulation in the field of access to public information. They also underlined the need for revision of the current legislative framework in this field that would foster transparency of public institutions.

These ideas were welcomed by the MPs and the representative of the Ministry of Justice. The participants highlighted that the reform in this field is necessary. The MPs and the Ministry of Justice declared their willingness to collaborate on development of the new legislative framework.

This event was followed by consultations with the civil society organisations and media, as well as further conceptual work on necessary legislative changes in cooperation with the working group established by the Ministry of Justice.

The EU-funded project “Support for structured policy dialogue, coordination of the implementation of the Association Agreement and enhancement of the legal approximation process in the Republic of Moldova” aims at increasing the capacities of the Government of the Republic of Moldova and other key national institutions in implementing the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agreement. The project’s work is arranged into 4 components contributing to the further enhancement of structured policy dialogue with civil society, improving policy development mechanisms for adequate budgeting of strategic documents, supporting the legal approximation process by providing technical expertise and capacity building as well as upgrading the IT systems in public administration supporting the implementation of the Association Agreement. The project is implemented by a consortium led by DAI – Human Dynamics for a five-year implementation period.

EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORTS THE MODERNISATION OF THE FINANCIAL SECTOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

On 18 January 2022, the kick-off event for the Twinning project dedicated to the financial sector in the Republic of Moldova “Strengthening supervision, corporate governance and risk management in the financial sector” took place.

The National Bank of Moldova (NBM) and the National Commission for Financial Markets (NCFM) will benefit in the next two years from support provided by the European Union to further develop and reform the financial sector in the Republic of Moldova.



The EU partner institutions, which will provide support to NBM and NCFM within the Twinning project, are the National Bank of Romania, the Central Bank of the Netherlands and the Central Bank of Lithuania, in collaboration with the Romanian Financial Supervisory Authority and the Romanian National Authority for Consumer Protection.

The Twinning project aims, among other things, to strengthen and diversify macroprudential oversight instruments, improve the regulation and supervision of payment services and financial market infrastructures, as well as to ensure the necessary conditions for Moldova's accession to the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA).

„The current Twinning project has a wide scope, not only for the banking sector, but also for the financial market in the Republic of Moldova. It aims to benefit both the National Bank of Moldova and the National Commission for Financial Markets of the Republic of Moldova, by strengthening institutional capacities and governance, as well as developing the regulatory

framework, supervising the operational framework for enhanced functionality. On this occasion, I would like to express my full gratitude to our partners - De Nederlandsche Bank, Lietuvos Bankas, as well as the Romanian Financial Supervisory Authority and the Romanian National Authority for Consumer Protection”, underlined the Governor of the National Bank of Romania, Mugur Isărescu.

In his speech, the Governor of the Central Bank of the Netherlands, Klaas Knot, stated „*The intermediate aim of the project is to strengthen the capacity of the National Bank of Moldova and the National Commission for Financial Markets. And to align their functions and operations with EU regulations and international standards. But of course, the ultimate objective goes beyond this. That is to improve stability, functioning, and trust in the financial system. So that the people of Moldova can build their future, knowing that their money is safe, that they can pay without trouble, and that they can get credit to buy a house or to start up a business.*”

At the same time, the Governor of the Central Bank of Lithuania, Gediminas Šimkus, noted that “*Together with experts from the central banks of Romania and the Netherlands, we are taking the lead in helping Moldova’s central bank and supervisory authority to bring the financial sector structure and supervision closer to the EU standards and thus accelerate the path of Moldova’s integration into the EU as well as achieve sustainable long-term economic growth.*”



The project assistance will be also provided to strengthen the capacity of insurance and non-bank lending organisations by aligning the national regulatory framework with that applicable in the European Union.

development of the local financial market, with a high level of security, with quality financial products and services, to meet better the current needs of various categories of consumers and customers.

According to the project team’s estimates, the successful implementation of the project will provide opportunities for local and foreign investors to participate in the sustainable

The event can be watched at the following link: <https://youtu.be/-7s2-2hf4rl>

THE CONCEPT OF AMENDING THE ELECTORAL AND RELATED LEGISLATION – UNDER DISCUSSIONS BY RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Promo-LEX Association, member of the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections, in partnership with the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), organised a series of discussion workshops based on the proposals of amending the electoral and related legislation, presented by CEC on 4 February 2022. At the same time, Promo-LEX experts have developed and presented several policy documents on the stringent issues in electoral law.

The workshops were organised within the project „Advocacy for a new Electoral Code in Moldova”, implemented with the financial support of the European Union and the International Organisation of La Francophonie. The workshops are intended to encourage representatives of the electoral authority and relevant institutions, political parties, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to engage actively in the review of the subject-matter law.

In this regard, six online discussion workshops were held during 2 – 30 March 2022 and gathered 389 representatives of authorities (CEC, Parliament), political parties, civil society, experts and media.

During the workshops, participants have discussed subjects related to the review of the law on the political parties; reforming the system of electoral bodies; improving the legal provisions regarding the establishment and operation of polling stations abroad and for voters residing in localities from the left bank of Nistru River; review of the nomination and registration of candidates procedures; regulation of the electoral campaign in terms of the status of observers and media coverage of the election campaign, funding of political parties and electoral campaigns, and legal procedures in elections.

Another two events are planned to take place in April 2022, and will focus on topics related to the electoral procedures and initiation and conduct of referenda.



Picture, source: www.coe.int

REFORMS AGENDA – THE MAIN TOPIC OF THE WORKING MEETING OF THE PRIME MINISTER WITH THE AMBASSADOR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE TEAM OF EU HIGH LEVEL ADVISERS

Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilița had a first working meeting on 9 February 2022 with the team of EU High Level Advisers, with the participation of the Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova, Jānis Mažeiks. The priorities of the Government, deriving from the commitments assumed in the EU-Moldova Association Agreement, were the main topic of the meeting.

At the beginning of the meeting, Prime Minister Gavrilița reconfirmed the Government's determination to continue the European path and, in this context, appreciated the support provided by the European Union to the Republic of Moldova,

through the development programmes it finances, including expertise and technical assistance provided in order to strengthen the administrative capacity in our country.

In his turn, Ambassador Mažeiks mentioned that the EU High Level Advisers Mission is an important cooperation mechanism between the EU and the Republic of Moldova and encouraged public institutions to make full use of the expertise provided. *„The European Union is ready to provide support to the Government for long-term strategies, but also to deliver immediate results that will improve the lives of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova,”* the official said.



Currently, the Republic of Moldova benefits from the support of twelve High Level Advisers, in areas such as: anti-money laundering and assets recovery; education and research; energy; green transition; justice and prosecution; confidence-building measures; local public administration reform, including decentralisation and voluntary amalgamation; financial services; customs and tax policy, strategic coordination and European affairs, internal security affairs.

Each Adviser took stock of the current situation in their sector and presented specific proposals to accelerate the reforms in the key areas of the Association Agreement.

The Head of the Government expressed her openness to the proposals of the EU HLAs team, expressing gratitude for the continuous support provided to our country by the European Union, including through this valuable tool of high-level expertise.

COMPLIANCE OF MARKET SURVEILLANCE LEGISLATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA WITH EU REQUIREMENTS WILL FACILITATE TRADE AND EXPORTS, RAISE CONSUMER PROTECTION AND WILL BETTER PROTECT CITIZENS

On 8 February 2022, the European Union funded project “Support for structured policy dialogue, coordination of the implementation of the Association Agreement (AA) and enhancement of the legal approximation process for the Republic of Moldova” organised a workshop dedicated to harmonization in the area of market surveillance of non-food products, which is vital for consumer protection. It was focusing on current situation, EU legislation, priorities and needs.

The scope of the workshop was to acquaint the representatives of the Ministry of Economy and relevant agencies in the field with the implementation of EU Regulation on market surveillance and compliance of products, as well as to present the gap and needs assessment of consumer protection legislation in the Republic of Moldova.



The workshop was led by experts from the EU and the Republic of Moldova, providing an exchange platform with representatives of national public authorities to meet and discuss the challenges facing the Republic of Moldova in harmonising its legislation with relevant EU regulations in these areas, as well as discuss recommendations and explore solutions to improving national legislation. This assistance was provided to ensure the Republic of Moldova is on track and online with its commitments

in the Association Agreement on further developing and implementing appropriate regulatory framework.

In addition, the EU project team presented a gap assessment on consumer protection and provided an in-depth analysis on the proposed revision of Consumer Protection in Association Agreement.

The upgrading of rules in the field of consumer protection brings daily benefits to all citizens.

For instance, in the EU, the everyday lives of consumers are impacted by consumer laws thanks to greater access to goods and services and increased protections.

EU consumer laws provide the following key rights, namely to:

- ◊ Truthful advertising.
- ◊ Have faulty goods repaired or replaced.
- ◊ Contracts without unfair clauses.
- ◊ Return most goods purchased online within 14 days.
- ◊ Access goods and services on the same terms as local customers.
- ◊ Free assistance from European Consumer Centres for problems with a trader based within the EU/EEA.

Moreover, the experts of the EU funded project have presented a gap assessment on market surveillance for non-food products in the Republic of Moldova, which also aims to further facilitate trade and exports to the European Union while guaranteeing high level of protection of consumers health and safety as well as other aspects of public interests such as protection of environment.

Aims of market surveillance

Market surveillance ensures that non-food products on the EU market do not endanger consumers and workers. It also ensures the protection of other public interests such as the environment, security and fairness in trade. It includes actions such as product withdrawals, recalls and the application of sanctions to stop the circulation of non-compliant products and/or bring them into compliance.

In order to guarantee the free movement of products, it is necessary to ensure that products are compliant with legislation and therefore fulfil requirements providing a high level of protection of public interests, such as health and safety in general, health and safety in the workplace, protection of consumers, protection of the environment, public security and protection of any other public interests protected by that legislation. Robust enforcement of these requirements is essential to the proper protection of these interests and to create the conditions in which fair competition in the market for goods can thrive. Rules are therefore necessary to ensure this enforcement, regardless of whether products are placed on the market via offline or online means and regardless of whether they are manufactured in the Union or not.

The EU-funded project ***“Support for structured policy dialogue, coordination of the implementation of the Association Agreement and enhancement of the legal approximation process in the Republic of Moldova”*** aims at increasing the capacities of the Government of the Republic of Moldova and other key national institutions in implementing the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agreement. The project’s work is arranged into 4 components contributing to the further enhancement of structured policy dialogue with civil society, improving policy development mechanisms for adequate budgeting of strategic documents, supporting the legal approximation process by providing technical expertise and capacity building as well as upgrading the IT systems in public administration supporting the implementation of the Association Agreement. The project is implemented by a consortium led by DAI – Human Dynamics for a five-year implementation period.

EUROPEAN UNION WILL SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS FOR THE NEW CUSTOMS CODE

Management of the Ministry of Finance, the Customs Service, and representatives of the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova, as well as the EU High Level Adviser on Customs & Tax Policy held a working meeting to mark the launching of the large-scale exercise on developing the implementing regulations for the recently adopted Customs Code.

The new Customs Code, approximated with that of the EU, was adopted by Parliament in its final reading in August 2021. According to its provisions, it shall enter into force on 1 January 2023, and its implementing regulations, as well as draft laws for its alignment with EU customs regulations, have to be developed and adopted by then. Following the Ministry of Finance request, the European Union, via its 'EU High Level Advises' Mission', has agreed to support the development of implementing regulations, as well as the relevant draft laws.



A total of nine EU experts will be working, during the next six months, together with the representatives of the Customs Service and Ministry of Finance to assess the provisions of the current Moldovan customs legislation to be applied in the context of the new Customs Code, as regards their compatibility with the EU customs legislation.

The experts will also produce a plan of related measures necessary to prepare for the practical implementation of the new Customs Code from the date of its entry into force. The conclusions, results achieved and recommendations for further actions will

be summarised in a final report that will be shared with the beneficiaries. The launch of this mission is part of a larger EU programme in support to the Moldovan Customs service including the AEO Mutual Recognition Programme and the New Computerised Transit System (NCTS) implementation, among other EU-funded projects.

The developed regulations will mark one more step towards approximation with the EU acquis and will pave the way for full-fledged implementation of the new Customs Code.

THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA PROGRESSES IN COMBATting INTERNATIONAL ILLICIT TRADE IN TOBACCO PRODUCTS, WITH EU SUPPORT

The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova adopted on 17 March the law for the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the Protocol on the Elimination of Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, under the Framework Convention of the World Health Organisation on Tobacco Control. This is an important achievement in terms of tobacco control policies and public health.

The EU High Level Advisers' Mission has been advocating for Moldova's accession to the Protocol - a commitment of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement. The Protocol provides a comprehensive set of tools to fight illicit trade including smuggling, and seeks greater collaboration between government agencies, including customs

and other law enforcement agencies, at national and international level, involving also the health sector. The Mission has been recommending several ways of securing the supply chain of tobacco products, including tracking and tracing technologies, which are key to achieving this objective.



PROTOCOL
TO ELIMINATE
ILLICIT TRADE IN
TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Note: According to statistics, the share of illicit trade in tobacco products in our country is 2-3 percent of the total volume of these products placed on the market. This leads to the non-collection in the state budget of about 40 million lei annually. The Protocol on the Elimination of the Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products was adopted on 12 November 2012. To date, over 60 states have acceded to it.

GENDER-SENSITIVE STRATEGIES, ACTION PLANS AND BUDGETS FOR 2022 DEVELOPED BY COMMUNITIES FROM CAHUL AND UNGHENI

For the first time, 23 communities from Cahul and Ungheni developed gender-sensitive strategies, action plans and budgets for 2022. Twenty of them were approved by Local Councils in December 2021. Thus, 19 rural communities and 3 urban communities from Cahul and Ungheni, partners of EVA Project - Strengthened gender action in Cahul and Ungheni districts, will benefit of gender-sensitive local programmes, based on the needs of community's women and men. The local development strategy is the document that establishes the medium and long-term development directions and areas, focusing in particular on "what needs to change" in the community.

The strategies and action plans developed in the 23 communities (Cucoara twp, Alexanderfeld v., Vadul lui Isac v., Alexandru Ioan Cuza v., Baurci Moldoveni v., Slobozia Mare v., Văleni v., Andrușul de Jos v., Larga Nouă twp, Zîrnești twp, Măcărești v., Mănoilești v., Pîrlița v., Zagarancea v., Rădenii Vechi v., Costuleni v., Cornești t.; Cahul mun., Ungheni mun., Pelinei, Valea Mare, Cornești v., Teșcurenii v.) contain activities that support women/girls in various areas, such as: accessible and inclusive infrastructure, entrepreneurial environment attractive for young people, women and girls; mainstreaming gender equality in education and in the decision-making processes of Local Public Authorities (LPAs), increased participation of citizens in community's sustainable development and in fighting violence against women and children. These efforts at policy and strategic levels were coupled with the budgetary planning process.



In this regard, 22 communities from Cahul and Ungheni districts allocated 2% of their budget for gender-based prevention and response and mainstreamed gender in their local budgets. These communities use for the first-time budget indicators and budget subprogramme objectives that take into account the needs of community's women and girls. Culture, sports, street lighting, road infrastructure and education are some of the areas addressed. For the first time the local strategies and programmes reflect the needs and priorities expressed by women and men during the participatory processes (women

and men from the community participated in public consultations) and incorporate data disaggregated by sexes and gender indicators to measure progress in gender equality promotion.

These achievements were possible thanks to the commitment of local public authorities in generating gender-sensitive budgets, action plans and strategies, by engaging actively in the mentoring offered by UN Women and its partners (such as Contact Cahul, IVC CALM, ONG AXA and Gender Centre), with the financial support of the European Union.



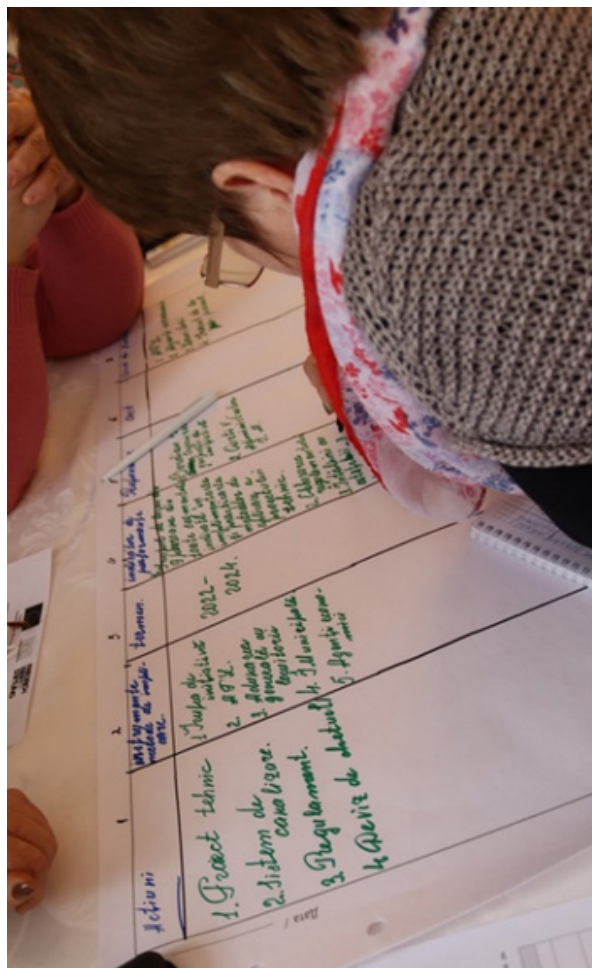
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CIVIC INVOLVEMENT IN PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE AT LOCAL LEVEL, ORGANISED WITH THE EU SUPPORT

During the month of March, more than one hundred citizens from four districts of the country attended consultations in order to develop action plans on civic involvement in promoting good governance at local level. They were urged to encourage people from their localities to get actively involved in public consultations on decisions that could impact their standard of living.

In Rezina, the vice president of the district, Aurelia Grigoriță, encouraged the participants to be active and to generate as many ideas as possible for future projects for the development of localities. Ialoveni District President Mihail Silistraru noted that he was convinced that the local public administration and the whole community would benefit from good cooperation with citizens, while Strășeni District Vice-President Liliana Rusnac stated that the administration was open for the district budgets to be „participatory”, i.e. taking into account the wishes and needs of local residents.

The coordinator of the AO Institutum Virtutes Civilis training programmes, Carolina Buzdugan, urged the participants to ensure that local public authorities are transparent. „Only in this manner you are able to contribute in a practical way to the development of the public policies that meet your needs and those of your locality, to have access to quality services, and if these are not available, by engaging and promoting good governance, you can ensure that such services can be developed in your locality”, explained Carolina Buzdugan.



Raisa Railean is a former local councillor in the village of Tîrșiței, Telenesti district. Even today, when she has retired, she is actively involved in the development of the locality through an initiative group. „I have been convinced all my years as a local councillor of the fact that good ideas only succeed when there exists a close cooperation between the administration and the citizens”, stated Raisa Railean.

The workshops organised in Rezina, Straseni, Telenesti and Ialoveni represent a continuation of two trainings on good governance previously organised for representatives of public associations, local action and initiative groups. The participants are to submit their plans for public debate to ensure the continuity of the ideas they worked on in the practical workshops.

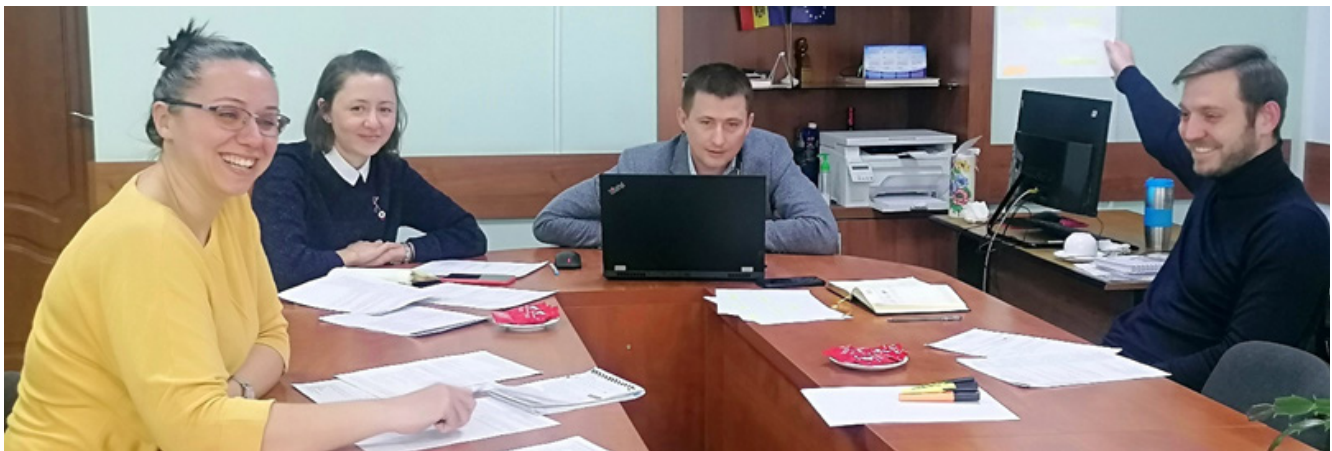
The trainings organised this week are part of the project „Partnerships for Women’s Leadership and Good Governance”, implemented by the [Friedrich Ebert Foundation Moldova](#) and the AO „[Institutum Virtutes Civilis](#)” with the financial support of the European Union and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

EU CONTINUES TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO THE AGENCY FOR LAND RELATIONS AND CADASTRE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The first three months of the year 2022 brought about a challenging, but productive period for the EU-funded Twinning project for the Agency for Land Relations and Cadastre of the Republic of Moldova “Improving spatial data services in the Republic of Moldova following EU standards”.

The project’s experts focused on drafting the framework for designing different type

of licences in scope needed for spatial data sharing, which would be applicable in the Moldovan national spatial data infrastructure (**hereinafter - NSDI**). At the same time, work was targeted at reviewing the institutional framework of NSDI in the country and issuing recommendations meant to improve the activity of NSDI Council and thematic Working Groups (technical WG, data sharing WG and capacity building WG).



In addition, the Project developed a methodology for identification of NSDI benefits, based on the experience and best practice from EU-member states. This methodology was further applied during several interviews and discussions with NSDI institutions in the Republic of Moldova (altogether 11 institutions). The aim of this work was to detect benefits arising in the Republic of Moldova from the implementation of NSDI both from the data producer’s and data user’s perspective. Not in the least, preparatory works and discussions focused on the governmental services to be integrated with the new NSDI Geoportal were organised.

The Project’s experts produced also a high-level plan for the harmonisation of the spatial data existing in the country, with specific recommendations on the criteria and priorities to be considered while

beginning this huge process of spatial data sets’ harmonisation.

Following discussions with the Centre of Excellence in Constructions and College for Ecology and Tiraspol State University, the Project’s experts made a review of the educational programmes in the field of NSDI. Croatian and Polish experience was shared with the teaching staff, so within this activity recommendations were offered for the input of ALRC staff to educational programmes at in total three universities and two colleges in R. Moldova, offering courses in the field of project main topics.

At the same time, a series of missions were organised on the preparation of amendments to the legal framework concerning metadata creation and updating, as well as drafting of a Collaboration Agreement model for sharing spatial data in the country.

PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT TRAINING ORGANISED WITH THE EU SUPPORT

The EU-funded Project Preparation Facility (PPF) Technical Assistance team designed and delivered a specialised training course on Public Financial Management (PFM) for Ministry of Finance External Assistance Directorate (EAD) team. The training took place on 3 and 4 March 2022.

The training course was designed to deepen the understanding of the EAD on PFM systems and discuss key issues that concern the area of external assistance management.

The training course covered the entire PFM cycle: strategic planning, budget preparation, budget execution, accounting & reporting, external audit & parliamentary scrutiny, and policy review. The training method was interactive using practical exercises adapted to the actual Moldovan PFM systems and active engagement by the EAD team participants.



The course was delivered by the PPF Project Team Leader, Yiannis Hadziyiannakis



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THE APPLICATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA FOR EU MEMBERSHIP – NEXT STEPS AND CHALLENGES

The European Union funded project “Support for structured policy dialogue, coordination of the implementation of the Association Agreement (AA) and enhancement of the legal approximation process for the Republic of Moldova” provides support in increasing the capacities of the Government of the Republic of Moldova and other key national institutions in implementing the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agreement. In the context of the applying for EU membership, the project team will continue to provide the necessary achievements in order to help relevant institutions fulfil their commitments and obligations pertaining to the AA.



The Republic of Moldova officially applied for membership in the European Union on 3 March 2022.

This step marks a significant change in Moldova-EU relations as Moldova also has formally entered the EU accession process. This change in relations will have a significant effect on the EU requirements for Moldova and on Moldova’s approach to the European Union. Even though the existing Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the EU is very demanding, Moldova’s application for membership will raise the requirements to a higher level.

EU membership

This application is submitted based on Article 49 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) which prescribes that *“any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union”*.

Article 2 of the TEU defines these values, stating that *“the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.”*

Any potential future EU member state will be assessed against these values. The country’s ability to demonstrate its willingness to act in line with these values will be essential for EU accession. Since in its essence the EU is the largest European peace project ever, the sharing and promoting of these shared values becomes particularly important in the light of the war in Ukraine and other threats to European peace.

After receiving Moldova's application, the Council has already invited the European Commission to submit its opinion on Moldova's application as the EU's first step in the accession process. To be able to draft such an Opinion, **the Commission will submit a substantial Questionnaire to the Republic of Moldova.** Based on the Questionnaire's answers, which have been prepared and submitted by Moldova, the Commission will issue its Opinion and will most likely:

- 1) recommend granting Candidate status to Moldova and the ability of Moldova to start accession negotiations or –
- 2) recommend granting Candidate status but only after specific conditions are fulfilled by Moldova.

The EU Member States will decide on Moldova's application, acting unanimously, based on the Commission's Opinion. Once Moldova receives Candidate status, the date for opening the EU accession negotiations will be set (most likely after the Republic of Moldova meets additional conditions). Accession negotiations will be conducted until the country will meet all of the EU membership requirements, particularly requirements around political criteria, because core EU values as defined in article 2 of the TEU are assessed under the political criteria. Once the terms of Moldova's accession are agreed, the Treaty of Accession is negotiated, agreed to and signed by Moldova and all EU Member States and the date of accession is set.

It is expected that the Republic of Moldova would organise a referendum where its citizens should confirm the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union.

The Accession Treaty must be approved by the European Parliament and ratified by the Republic of Moldova, as well as by each EU Member State national parliament prior to its entry into force.

As mentioned above, **the Commission's Questionnaire** is the crucial first step in the EU membership process which will show readiness of the Republic of Moldova to react by answering the questions in a timely and precise manner. The Questionnaire should be understood as a picture of Moldova at the specific moment of reply, no more and no less.

The last Questionnaires for the Western Balkan countries contained 2,500-3,000 questions each. They served as a snapshot of how each country functioned and how close to meeting the EU membership requirements each country was at the moment of answering the Questionnaire (Questionnaire and responses of Republic of Serbia can be found on the following link: <https://www.mei.gov.rs/eng/documents/national-documents/answer-to-the-european-commissions-questionnaire>, questionnaire and responses of Bosnia Herzegovina can be found on the following link:

<https://www.dei.gov.ba/en/odgovori-na-upitnik-ek>).

The Republic of Moldova could expect that the number of questions could be higher, in order to accommodate the country's specific circumstances. The questions will be multi-layered and will require the involvement of the entire state administration and many consultations among the different state

institutions. Additional follow-up questions will be sent later to clarify Moldova's responses. The responses will provide a clear view to the European Commission of Moldova's readiness to conduct accession negotiations and the capacities of Moldova's administration. Not being able to respond



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to a question or taking too long to submit its answers to the Questionnaire will also serve as indication for Moldova's lack of capacities.

Structure of the Questionnaire

The Questionnaire will be structured to follow the format of accession negotiations which are organised to cover the 1993 Copenhagen accession criteria:

- 1) **political criteria:** stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- 2) **economic criteria:** a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces; and
- 3) **ability to take on the obligations of EU membership** including the administrative and institutional capacity to effectively implement the entire EU acquis (organised in more than 30 negotiation chapters).

For the Republic of Moldova to be able to respond to the Questionnaire in a coherent and organised manner (as well as to be organised for accession negotiations later) and to speak "with a single voice", the administration should organise its work in a way to mirror the structure of the questions posed by the European Commission. This means that Moldova will need to organise its work in replying to the Questionnaire according to the structure of the Copenhagen criteria (Political criteria, Economic criteria and over 30 negotiation chapters). For the Political and Economic criteria chapters and each negotiation chapter, a leading institution should be determined, and all institutions related to the substance of the criteria/chapter should be identified. Such an internal reorganisation of the coordination process will also serve Moldova well during the subsequent accession negotiations.

This reorganised coordination process which is aligned according to the structure of the negotiations chapters does not require new institutions and people. However, the reorganisation of existing coordination structures into the new working groups should be done within the next several months while Moldova is waiting for the Questionnaire. Institutions outside the Government such as the Parliament, the judiciary, state agencies, Ombudsman, etc. should also be included in the Questionnaire process.

The questions received should be divided among the institutions within the newly-established working groups (which will be later transformed into negotiation groups), so that all competent bodies/actors will be able to provide its contribution for each individual question. The response to a single question may require the work of many institutions that must agree and provide a common, unified answer to the question. All responses within a chapter should be synchronised and a joint response to the entire chapter should be defined. All chapters should be synchronized by the institution leading the entire process. The final responses should be adopted by the Government and then sent to the European Commission in Brussels. The responses to all questions can add up to about 8,000-10,000 pages.

The experience from the Western Balkans indicates that it took 6-12 months to respond to the Questionnaire, with the necessary administrative structures being set prior to this timeframe.

In addition, all responses (which will be prepared firstly in Romanian) must be then translated by the Republic of Moldova into a high-quality level of English. If the translation is not done properly, the quality of Moldova's responses will suffer and/or be inaccurate. Additionally, all of Moldova's legislation (primarily laws and some bylaws) that are the basis for responses must also be translated



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into English and attached to the answers. Therefore, the Government of the Republic of Moldova should establish a translation service/unit that will coordinate and ensure the quality translation of the Questionnaire responses and relevant legislation, and subsequently, for all documents related to the accession negotiations.

The EU membership application and its resulting Questionnaire exercise will be challenging for the Republic of Moldova since it signifies the beginning of a completely different and broader level of relations with the European Union. This step is unknown and new. However, the prior experiences of many countries (including all new EU Member States from Central and Eastern Europe as well as most Western Balkan countries) which have responded to the Questionnaire provide a source for many lessons learned.

Since 2014, the Republic of Moldova has been implementing a demanding

Association Agreement with the European Union. If the necessary political support will exist (which recognises that the answering of the upcoming Questionnaire is a strategic priority for Moldova), and if all the necessary administrative preparations will be done in the upcoming months (including setting up the working groups and organising the translation process), then there are no reasons to doubt that the Republic of Moldova can perform this step as successfully as many of the previous countries.

The EU-funded technical assistance project **"Support for structured policy dialogue, coordination of the implementation of the Association Agreement (AA) and enhancement of the legal approximation process for the Republic of Moldova"** is able to provide the necessary support, based on the experiences from the latest Questionnaire responses as well as internal reorganisation from various Western Balkan countries.



ECONOMY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

MEET DANIELA, A GIRL WITH DOWN SYNDROME, WHO STARTED A FLOWER BUSINESS WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



Photo: 19-year-old Daniela Pruteanu

Splashes of red, pink and yellow flowers dot the vibrant hues of green in a greenhouse and gift shop nestled in the village of Colibași, in the southwestern part of the Republic of Moldova. The owner is a girl with Down syndrome who had always dreamed of opening her own business.



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According to the Moldovan [National Bureau of Statistics](#), women were three times less involved in economic development than men in 2016. However, things have started to change in the last few years, with women getting more and more involved in entrepreneurship. While a mere 16 per cent of business-owners were women [in 2016, their numbers had more than doubled by 2020](#), to 34 per cent.

Among them is 19-year-old Daniela Pruteanu, whose cheery disposition prompted her closest friends to nickname her “child of the sun”. The name makes her giggle with and brightens her face immediately.

Two years ago, Daniela and her mother, Elena, started to grow flowers in pots. The process felt daunting so her mother decided to teach her the basics of getting a small business up and running.



Photo: Daniela Pruteanu with her mother who taught her the basics of starting her business.

First, there were some seeds, then more and more, until the floor of the greenhouse built by Daniela’s father, Petru, was covered with the colourful perfumed carpet of hundreds of flowers.



Photo: Daniela's father built the greenhouse where she grows her flowers.



Daniela has fancied flowers since she was a child. Her mother inspired her to love nature and to care for every twig, every blade of grass. She loved it so much that her first word was 'flowers'.



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She uttered the word when she heard her parents discussing what could be planted instead of cabbage, which required a high investment for a small profit. The suggestion hung in the air, but after a few minutes of contemplation, they decided to give it a try.

They built the greenhouse, prepared the soil, and got connected to a water supply. When sunrays penetrated the greenhouse's soft film, they planted various flowers, taking into account the market demand, of course.

"We learn slowly how to build and develop our business," explains Daniela, while watering a row of small yellow flowers that have started to blossom.



FLORI
de DUMNEZEU
frumos create,
flori - zâmbet și sănătate.



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Child of the sun

Daniela has Down syndrome, but this hasn't stopped her from going to school, playing the violin, doing photography, and thinking about the future. Today, she dreams of becoming a successful businesswoman capable of building an awesome future for herself. When she was born, many people said she wouldn't survive.



She proved back then that she was strong, and she continues to prove it now, every single day. Her face lights up with a big smile when she opens the greenhouse door, the comforting heat enveloping her instantly as she passes each flower.

Daniela has always enjoyed being around

nature, among flowers, as if charging herself with their energy. "I feel good among them," says Daniela.

No one can doubt that when watching her caress the leaves and petals gently, in order not to damage them. Her meditative harmony is breath-taking.

"When you do something that you enjoy, it is not just work anymore," adds her mother, Elena, and Daniela nods.



On schooldays, Daniela goes to school, does her homework, and takes care of flowers in the morning and the evening. But her entire Saturday is dedicated to the flowers. She wakes up early in the morning and hurries to

the greenhouse, where she is greeted by a wave of pleasant perfume. She checks every flower to see if it needs water, vitamins or more light.



If more heat is needed, she patiently and carefully moves each pot to the cellar, which has been transformed into an underground greenhouse. There, through the glass ceiling, warm sunrays reach every flower and Daniela is lost among them. This feeling makes her intensely happy.

"We don't even notice how time goes by and it gets dark outside until Petru comes to ask us if he can help or to call us to have dinner,"

laughs Elena.

Sundays and the eves of holidays are Daniela's favourite times, when she fills her baskets with flowers and goes to sell them at the market in Cahul.

"It's a pleasure to share beautiful things," she says, smiling enthusiastically.

Daniela is a beneficiary of the EU-funded "EVA Project – Strengthened Gender Action in Cahul and Ungheni districts", which is implemented by UN Women in partnership with UNICEF. The project interventions aim to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through strengthened implementation of gender mainstreaming in Cahul and Ungheni districts, and to combat domestic violence affecting women and children.

EU AND EBRD TO SUPPORT MOLDOVAN BUSINESSES



- ◇ EBRD, EU provide fresh funds to support MSMEs in Moldova via EXIMBANK
- ◇ Borrowers to benefit from EU grants following successful investment
- ◇ Boost for firms' competitiveness and sustainability

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is extending a 5 million EUR loan to [EXIMBANK](#) to boost the competitiveness of Moldovan micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The loan agreement was signed on 20 January 2022 by EBRD President Odile Renaud-Basso on her first official visit to [Moldova](#).

The new financing will allow borrowers to invest in more modern equipment and align their processes with [European Union](#) (EU) standards. Higher product quality and more efficient production in a safer and healthier working environment will help businesses to operate successfully both locally and in the European market.

At least 70 per cent of the new funds will be used to finance green technologies and a third will be dedicated to improving access to finance for women-led companies.

Borrowers will be eligible for a cashback grant of up to 15 per cent of the loan amount upon successful completion of their respective investments. The financial incentives are funded by the EU under the EU4Business initiative.

The EBRD loan is part of the [EU4Business-EBRD](#) credit line available in [Armenia](#), [Georgia](#), [Moldova](#) and [Ukraine](#).

The EBRD is a leading institutional investor in Moldova and, to date, has invested more than 1.54 billion EUR in the country through 151 projects. It has also provided advisory services to more than 1,500 Moldovan firms to help them improve performance and grow.



EU HIGH LEVEL ADVISERS' MISSION: BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS SHARED THEIR VIEWS ON INCREASED COOPERATION WITH THE CUSTOMS SERVICE

Business sector representatives from European Business Association, American Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova and the Moldovan Association of ICT companies gathered in a meeting on 20 January 2022, to discuss and share their views on increased communication flow between businesses and the Customs Service.

The meeting was organised as part of a larger exercise supported by the EU High Level Advisers' Mission on modernisation of the Customs Service, and was moderated by the EU High Level Adviser on Customs and Tax Policy, Rosario De Blasio and the project's expert on the organisational development of the Customs Service, Veronica Sireteanu.

Several ideas were listed for a more efficient cooperation with the Customs Service, including the modus operandi of the Consultative Council

- a forum made up of representatives of trade organisations involved in the import or export business and Customs Service. The Council also provides the member organisations with an opportunity to promote simplification and facilitation of customs procedures.

According to the business associations, efficient communication and cooperation with the Customs Service is vital for providing predictable provisions in customs procedures and better promotion of customs facilitation instruments. The conclusions of the meeting and ideas expressed will serve as a baseline for the design of a new Communication Strategy of the Customs Service – as part of deliverables within the larger exercise of Customs Service Modernisation, undertaken by the EU-funded project 'Support to the implementation of the EU High Level Advisers' Mission'.



EU4YOUTH: SOCIAL START-UPS IN MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE - EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE IN KYIV

On 25-26 January 2022, nine social entrepreneurs from the Republic of Moldova visited three social start-ups in Kyiv, Ukraine and exchanged ideas, experiences, and business practices, as part of a study visit organised by EU4Youth.

Three social start-ups – Omega Craft, Deutsch Intensiv, and Ira Beauty – hosted the exchange sessions. During the visit to the production facilities of Omega Craft – a company producing pet food – participants learnt how a big idea can be implemented with small financial contributions and dedication. The start-up helps IDPs and ATO veterans to find jobs and cares for homeless pets. The Moldovan guests shared their eco-friendly practices for packaging and recycling, which are much more developed in Moldova than in Ukraine.

During the visits to Deutsch Intensive and Ira Beauty companies, helping orphan teens and victims of domestic violence, participants learnt the legal details of educational business in Ukraine and identified the opportunities of the beauty business on the Ukrainian market. Both start-ups already generate significant income due to high demand and their unique approaches to the service.

In turn, the Moldovan social entrepreneurs shared their experience in the production and sale of toys, voiced their ideas to prevent gadget addiction among children and plans to contribute to healthier and happier societies.



Both teams discussed export and import opportunities, possible regional cooperation and market conditions in the two countries.

“For me, the study visit to Kyiv was a real source of motivation and inspiration. It was surprising and encouraging to learn that more and more social enterprises run by young people are developing in the region,”

said Igor Hincu of the EduJoc social enterprise in Moldova.

The start-ups will continue cooperation thanks to the support of the [EUnlocking](#) project. Funded by the EU under its EU4Youth programme, [EUnlocking](#) helps to foster the social entrepreneurial potential of young people in Moldova and Ukraine by establishing a favourable ecosystem for social enterprises.



STRONGER TOGETHER
TEAM EUROPE

EU4YOUTH ESTABLISHES THE FIRST REGIONAL NETWORK OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS IN MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE

Representatives of social entrepreneurs from Moldova and Ukraine have established the first regional network of social entrepreneurs, following a resolution at the International Networking Forum organised in Kyiv on 27-28 January by the EU4Youth [EUnlocking project](#).

In total, 92 participants attended the event, including 80 social entrepreneurs from the two countries. Participants discussed legal issues, market conditions, the state of social entrepreneurship, and perspectives and challenges for its development in both countries.

The discussion resulted in the decision to create a network to support social entrepreneurs and minimise the negative effects of the pandemic on the sector.

The network will support social entrepreneurs in their daily activities and contribute to the development of individual businesses and of social entrepreneurship in general, promote social enterprises, their products and services on the local and regional market, and serve as a platform for export and import activities.

Even though the EUnlocking project will end later this year, the project's two implementing partners – Egalite International NGO in Ukraine and Eco-Razeni Association in the Republic of Moldova – have committed to manage the Network together until 2025. The two organisations will serve as the Network's Secretariat and provide operational management for the meetings of the Network's members.



[The EUnlocking project](#) helps to foster the social entrepreneurial potential of young people in Moldova and Ukraine by establishing a favourable ecosystem for social enterprises, as well as by inspiring and supporting more young social entrepreneurs to develop and sustain their innovative solutions to the promotion of social inclusion and environmental sustainability across both countries. The project is funded by the European Union under its EU4Youth Programme.

THE EUROPEAN UNION LAUNCHES A NEW CALL FOR GRANTS FOR LOCAL ACTION GROUPS FROM CAHUL AND UNGHENI

Granturi noi disponibile pentru

Grupurile de Acțiune Locală

EU4 CAHUL **EU4 UNGHENI**

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Implementat de



The “EU4Moldova: Focal Regions” programme, funded by the European Union and implemented by UNDP and UNICEF, launched on 24 February 2022 a call for grants for Local Action Groups (LAGs) from Ungheni and Cahul, which will come up with projects and initiatives to develop rural areas and create new jobs. This year, two LAGs will receive non-reimbursable assistance of up to 50,000 EUR each from European funds. The supported activities should be conducted in the following 12 months from the date of signing the Grant Agreement.



STRONGER TOGETHER
TEAM EUROPE

Applicants should meet the following eligibility criteria:

- ◊ The application for funding is submitted by a Local Action Group that includes rural communities from Cahul or Ungheni districts;
- ◊ The applicant has submitted only one application;
- ◊ The application involves administrative costs, which make up to 20% of the budget up to a maximum ceiling of 7,000 EUR;
- ◊ Applicants will ensure a mandatory contribution of at least 20% of the total budget;
- ◊ The requested budget will not exceed 50,000 EUR per application;
- ◊ The priorities indicated in the funding application are reflected in the Strategic Action Plans and/or are intended to mitigate the impact of COVID-19;
- ◊ At least 30% of the amount requested for funding is earmarked for economic development and job creation in rural areas of Ungheni and Cahul;
- ◊ At least 50% of the final beneficiaries are residents of villages in Ungheni and Cahul districts;

Participants who meet all the eligibility criteria will be admitted to the next stage of evaluation. The detailed conditions of the competition and the Application Guide can be accessed on the web pages [here](#).

Applications packages are to be sent by **29 April 2022** to the e-mail address natalia.lipca@undp.org with the subject line „EU4MD: Focal Regions. Small Grants Program for LAGs, 2022 edition”. Each applicant will receive an email confirming the submission of the application package and a registration number.

In 2020, at the first edition of the call for grants, four LAGs received assistance of overall 200,000 EUR, European funds, invested in community development projects and job creation in villages from Cahul and Ungheni regions.

The „EU4Moldova: Focal Regions” programme (2019-2024) supports smart, inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development in Cahul and Ungheni regions, in order to ensure a better quality of life for citizens. The programme has a total budget of 23 million EUR. It is funded by the European Union and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

THE EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORTS CLUSTERS' CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN CAHUL AND UNGHENI REGIONS

The cluster is a business model implying cooperation among small and medium enterprises/entrepreneurs, on one hand, and support structures from public authorities, academic environment, civil society, on other hand. The distinctive element of clusters is their flexible set-up, as each member performs certain activities depending on the market requirements and cluster's strategy.

While clusters proved effective as regional competitiveness model at European level, the Republic of Moldova just starts benefiting from the advantages of cooperation and association for business development. Tourism, agri-food products, furniture, or textiles are several sectors having a potential for clusters' creation in the Republic of Moldova.

The "EU4Moldova: Focal regions" programme, funded by the European Union and implemented by UNDP and UNICEF, provides the necessary financial support to strengthen these local value chains and clusters in Cahul and Ungheni regions.

Strawberries, a value chain in Ungheni region

Zinaida Plămădeală, entrepreneur from Ungheni, represents the "Berries Group" Association, which gathers five strawberry producers managing annually lands with an area of 40-50 ha in Sculeni and Petrești villages. Strawberries are representative for Ungheni region, and the initiative of creating a berry cluster is determined by several regional advantages. Ungheni region offers a stable and sustainable source of water for irrigation, and the berry cultures have always been of interest for the local big and small farmers, as they generated income. At the same time, the proximity to the European Union offers access to a large sales market.



In the opinion of Zinaida Plămădeală, the cluster is a tool with multiple advantages:

"A cluster represents a platform for efficient cooperation and establishing partnerships within value chains, and this tool is a necessary one and it is suitable for the development of the berry sector in Ungheni district, as well as for the entire country."

The cooperation and association of several producers allowed "Berries Group" to increase its production volume, to invest in post-harvesting infrastructure, including in pre-cooling chambers, fruit storage chambers, and fruit drying facilities.

Grapes, a value chain in Cahul region

In Cahul, another region supported by EU within the “EU4Moldova: Focal regions” programme, grapes are a value chain with development potential. The executive director of the Association of Table Grapes Producers from Cahul, Sergiu Tutovan, mentions that table grapes production is a branch with traditions in Cahul district, which brings value to the agricultural sector of the region. Currently, in Cahul district there are approximately 3,000 ha of lands planted with table grapes, where the average harvest is 6 tons per ha. At the same time, 40% of the production is directed for local consumption, and 60% is exported preponderantly in Romania and other markets of EU, Belarus, and Russian Federation.



According to the opinion of Sergiu Tutovan, the creation of a cluster will bring more economic benefits, where one of the priorities is the access to the chain of hypermarkets, which require the delivery of large volume of products of a homogenous quality.

“A cluster, by definition, includes more stakeholders of the value chain, starting with the producers of planting material, input suppliers, table grapes producers, refrigerating warehouses with packing and sorting lines, and grape transporters that will deal with their delivery to the markets,”

stated Sergiu Tutovan.

The creation of an integrated structure for the table grapes sector from Cahul would ensure economic advantages. Unlike other association forms, the cluster allows joining single efforts of key stakeholders to solve an issue faced by the entire value chain. The entrepreneur Sergiu Tutovan mentions that few information and consultation meetings have already been organised, joined by potential members of the future cluster, and soon a memorandum regarding the activity of the cluster will be signed.

Roadmap to boost local economic development in Cahul and Ungheni regions

In the Republic of Moldova, as well as in other countries of the Eastern Partnership, the conceptualisation and implementation of clusters has just started, even if the notion has already been incorporated in certain public policy documents.

The European Union, through the “EU4Moldova: Focal regions” programme, supports the development and strengthening of the value chains and clusters from Cahul and Ungheni regions. For this purpose, local representatives of private sector, in partnership with local public authorities and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the districts of Cahul and Ungheni, have developed a roadmap for each region, containing economic analysis of each district, including from rural and urban areas.

The document emphasizes the value chains with all their links, from obtaining raw material till the sale of the finished product.

Based on this analysis, several value chains were selected, having growth potential and the possibility to obtain a higher added value, with a large share in the social-economic life and opportunities to meet the internal and export markets. Thus, four value chains have been identified in Cahul region (table grapes, tourism, wine-making and sheep farming), and in Ungheni region (tourism, strawberries, furniture and carpets).

“Promoting clusters’ development should represent one of the main elements to strengthen the regional competitiveness, to incentivize economic growth, to create new jobs and to retain the labor force in the regions. At the same time, in the context of clusters’ development, attention needs to be paid to the opportunities of incorporating the circular economy and digitalization dimensions, by applying new technologies and principles and by updating the technological process with the observance of the environment protection principles,”

mentioned Simion Berzoi, Investment Attraction Officer within the „EU4Moldova: Focal regions” programme.

Thus, the roadmap represents a platform for initiating systemic interventions of the “EU4Moldova: Focal regions” programme funded by EU and implemented by UNDP and UNICEF, to boost local economic development in Cahul and Ungheni regions during 2021-2025.



The roadmap is based on the implementation of short-term interventions and, in most cases, with the existing own resources, meant to test and mobilize local partnerships for obtaining “quick wins” on the dimension of value chains’ creation, which will benefit from technical assistance, consultancy and funding joint initiatives.

EU4Moldova: Focal Regions Programme (2019-2024) supports smart, green, inclusive and sustainable development in Cahul and Ungheni, to ensure better life quality for citizens. The Programme has a total budget of 23 million EUR and is financed by the European Union and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

More details about the Programme’s activities in Cahul and Ungheni regions can be found on www.eu4cahul.md and www.eu4ungheni.md.

EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORTS THE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN CĂRPINENI COMMUNE, HÎNCEȘTI DISTRICT

A business consulting centre will be launched in Cărpineni commune within the project „Multi-Dimensional Partnership for Inclusive Sustainable Economic Development in Cărpineni Commune”, financed by the European Union. In this respect, the local authorities have initiated a series of preparatory actions.

“During the period January-March 2022, the technical assessment of the building that will host the Business Consulting Centre was carried out, and the list of necessary works and the budget estimation for the capital renovation of the premises of the Business Consulting Centre was prepared. At the same time, a public tender has been organised to identify the company that will carry out the reconstruction works of the business consultancy centre as well as the technical conditions and the authorization for the connection to the electricity supply network have been requested from the electricity provider”,

said Ion Carpineanu, the mayor of Carpineni commune.

The next priorities of the project envisage organisation of a business training for local youth, entrepreneurs and economic employees. At the same time, an entrepreneurship cluster will be formed, and it will be developed a website aimed at promotion of local products, as well as of the services to be provided by the business consulting centre.

The project „Multi-Dimensional Partnership for Inclusive Sustainable Economic Development in Carpineni Commune”, funded by the European Union, aims to strengthen the entrepreneurial capacities of business people in Cărpineni commune and from the neighbour regions.



STRONGER TOGETHER
TEAM EUROPE

EUROPEAN UNION CONTINUES TO SUPPORT SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Starting from 1 February 2021, with the financial support of the European Union and Sweden, East-Europe Foundation in partnership with the European Business Association and the Center Contact implement the project „Local civil society contributes to the inclusive and sustainable economic development of the country”. The 40-month project aims to contribute to the economic development of the Republic of Moldova through active involvement of the civil society and other stakeholders, under the provisions of the Association Agreement with the European Union, which include the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area.



One of the activities of the project involves the creation of 15 social enterprises or the development of existing ones, in order to increase integration opportunities of vulnerable groups in the labor market and the creation of solutions for long-term development of communities.

The following project proposals have been selected for funding and grant contracts have been signed on 03rd of February 2022:

- ♦ „IT skills development of children and young people in Cahul district - Vibe.MD - IT Academy in Cahul” run by Association for the Development of Professional Skills;
- ♦ “Extending the Angelus Agro social business: mini-poultry and rabbit farm, extended by “Hospice Angelus Moldova” Foundation;
- ♦ “Rental of equipment and means of rehabilitation, run by INVALIDIFE”;
- ♦ “Smart women with resilient incomes”, collection and packaging of medicinal plants run by Center for Socio-Economic Policy Consens;
- ♦ „Providing opportunities for professional and labor integration of women from vulnerable categories of the population through expansion of the social atelier and opening of additional jobs”, Charity Foundation for Helping Children „Детство детям”;
- ♦ “Healthy traditions from Credem-Eco pastry shop”, run by Association of Business Women from Balti municipality;
- ♦ “Capitalizing social entrepreneurship as an opportunity for social and professional integration of vulnerable people”, run by “The Positive Initiative”;
- ♦ „INOVA BUSSINES - we grow to share”, run by Humanitarian Association „Filantropia Crestina”;

- ◇ Extending services of the social enterprise „Center of Integrated Services for Rural Households” run by „От равного к равному”;
- ◇ Children's Development Center „Всезнайка”, Center for Social and Economic Development „Грани будущего”.

Overall, the social enterprises will create 104 job places at national level, including Transnistria region and ATU Gagauzia and the social benefits of created enterprises will be directed to about 560 vulnerable persons.

The second round of competition was launched on 03rd of February 2022 for selection of 5 more NGOs which will run social enterprises.

PHOTO EXHIBITION DEDICATED TO THE EU-FUNDED PROJECT LEADER APPROACH FOR RURAL PROSPERITY IN MOLDOVA

Solidarity Fund PL in Moldova and the National LEADER Network announce the closure of the *LEADER Approach for Rural Prosperity in Moldova* project, which ran from 1 February 2020 to 28 February 2022.

During its implementation, the project activities contributed to the promotion of the LEADER approach in Moldova as a tool ensuring sustainable development and modernisation of rural areas in the country. In this regard, the Local Action



Groups provided support to 230 local development initiatives as part of the Rural Development Fund 2020 and 10 innovative entrepreneurial projects were supported as part of the Pilot Initiatives Fund 2020. The project also contributed to the consolidation of LAGs as development models for specific sectors of activity with the potential to significantly enhance the economic development of the region.



At the same time, 7 new LAGs were created based on the LEADER methodology and the development of 17 partnerships between Moldovan LAGs was encouraged in order to promote and share the LEADER experience, and also to increase the institutional and implementation capacities of the LAGs for the development of their micro-regions.

One of the major results of the project is the promotion of the LEADER approach as a national policy and the creation of a favorable environment

for the development of the legal framework for the operation of LAGs and their financing from the National Fund for Agricultural and Rural Development. Thus, on 9 April 2021, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova passed Law on Local Action Groups No. 50. This Law allows for registering LAGs as legal entities and implementing local development strategies through the National LEADER Programme (NLP), conceptualised and implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI) jointly with the Agency for Intervention and Payments for Agriculture (AIPA).

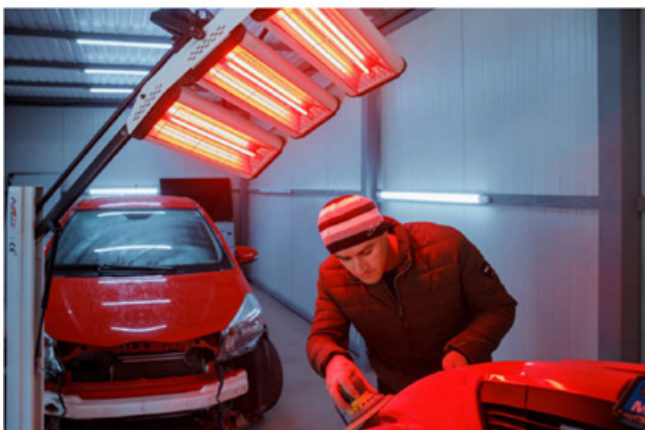


The launch of the pilot edition of the National LEADER Programme will take place at the call of MAFI and is planned for two consecutive years, 2022-2023.

On the occasion of the project closure and in anticipation of the NLP pilot edition, the photo exhibition LEADER Approach for Rural Prosperity in Moldova was organised. It exhibits 20 examples of success stories. It will be open to the public from 25 March to 3 April 2022 and

can be visited on the ground floor of AIPA and MAFI headquarters at 162 bd. Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt, Chisinau. This exhibition is held in partnership with the Agency for Intervention and Payments for Agriculture. Photos can also be viewed in an online gallery available [HERE](#).

The *LEADER Approach for Rural Prosperity in Moldova* project was funded by the European Union and Polish Aid, implemented by Solidarity Fund PL in Moldova and the National LEADER Network of Moldova. Strategic partner - Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of the Republic of Moldova.



THE FIRST 8 LOCAL ACTION GROUPS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA REGISTERED AS LEGAL ENTITIES

The programme “EU4Moldova: Local Communities” is an initiative implemented by the Team Europe, with financial support from the European Union, the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Austrian Development Agency and Polish aid. The overall objective of the programme is to improve the quality of life and to address the economic and social consequences of COVID-19 in the selected local communities of the Republic of Moldova, thus contributing to their long-term resilience. The implementation period will last from September 2021 to December 2025.



The programme is constituted of 4 components, which aim:

- ♦ To improve the quality of local public service delivery within the selected local communities;
- ♦ To enhance the access of men and women to social, economic and technical infrastructure and associated services;
- ♦ To enhance business and job opportunities for men and women;
- ♦ To enhance community-led local development.

Since the launch of the programme, several activities (under component 4) were focused on supporting the institutionalisation process of the LEADER approach in the Republic of Moldova. Thus, following the collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of the Republic of Moldova (MAFI), a Local Action Groups (LAGs) Guide was elaborated and approved on 21 October 2021, aiming to provide recommendations on the process of establishing and registering LAGs and ensuring the methodological basis for the development of the Local Development Strategies (LDSs).

The approval of the Guide allowed LAGs to update their LDSs and to prepare for registration as legal entities. Thus, in the months of February - March 2022, the first 8 LAGs in the Republic of Moldova were registered by the Public Services Agency in the State Register of Legal Entities: “Movila Măgura”, “Valea Cuboltei”, “Calea Dropiei”, “Steaua Bugeac”, “Serpentina Nistrului”, “Stîncile Prutului”, “Hora Ciulucului”, “Vasile Stroiescu”.



The creation of the above-mentioned institutional framework prepared the ground for the launch of the National LEADER Programme in 2022 and would allow LAGs to absorb up to 5% of the National Fund for Agricultural and Rural Development (NFARD), managed by the Agency for Intervention and Payments in Agriculture (AIPA).

LEADER represents a European innovative approach to rural development, which is

implemented in the Republic of Moldova since 2016 and is constantly adapting to the local context. Currently, in Moldova, there are 47 LAGs covering 438 administrative-territorial units that include 732 localities (50% of Moldova's localities) which comprise more than 1 million inhabitants.

The creation of the legal framework for LAGs was a complex process, which involved the promotion and adoption of a series of amendments to the legislation in force, as well as the adoption of the Law no 50 of 9 April 2021 regarding Local Action Groups. Due to the joint efforts of the institutions and organisations involved, the Republic of Moldova has become the first and currently the only non-EU country to implement the LEADER Programme as an instrument of public rural development policies.



EU4ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS COMPANIES INTERESTED IN IMPLEMENTING NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PRODUCTION METHODS

Within EU4Environment, the Organisation for the Development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (ODIMM), in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), is launching a national call for companies interested in implementing new green technologies and production methods.

Eco-innovation is any innovation that stimulates progress by reducing the impact on the environment, by increasing the resilience of nature to environmental pressures or by achieving an efficient and responsible use of natural resources.

Thus, companies with an agricultural and industrial profile will be able to benefit from:

- ♦ targeted technical assistance to implement eco-innovative elements;
- ♦ support for the development of new business models;
- ♦ taking over sustainable and responsible business practices;
- ♦ enhancing the visibility of products and services in external markets (EU).



THE EIB FRUIT GARDEN OF MOLDOVA PROJECT HELPS HORTICULTURAL COMPANIES TO REDUCE THEIR ENERGY COSTS BY FINANCING INVESTMENTS INTO PHOTOVOLTAIC INSTALLATIONS

The Republic of Moldova is a country using energy resources that are practically entirely imported. The two main energy sources, natural gas and electricity, come from the Russian Federation and Transnistria. This poses a huge risk to energy security and has a negative impact on the business environment.

First with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and then with Russia's attack on Ukraine, energy prices have soared. The price per cubic meter of gas increased from 4.2 to 15.2 lei. Electricity prices have not increased so much, but with 2.5 lei/kWh (up from less than 1.5 lei/kWh) they are much higher than what consumers in other non-EU countries of the region have to pay.

In this context, horticultural companies are increasingly interested in investments into renewable electricity generation to reduce

production costs and dependence on external energy sources. EIB has responded to this interest and offers its Fruit Garden of Moldova project to finance such investments.

The Peasant Farm Gheorghe Mereacre from Costești village (Ialoveni district) grows table grapes on 6 ha and operates a cold store with a capacity of 350 tons. The electricity bill was 150,000 lei for a consumption of about 100,000 kW. Not only is Gheorghe afraid of price increases, but also of the danger of power cuts which may lead to a complete damage of produce kept in the cold store. Despite the insecurities following Russia's attack on Ukraine, Gheorghe recently applied for an EIB-financed investment loan for 1.4 million lei through the Fruit Garden of Moldova project to install a 113 kWp photovoltaic system. The application process was swift, and already in April the system will be installed on the roof of the cold store – just in time for the 2022 harvest.



Photo: Gheorghe Mereacre

“The photovoltaic system will allow me to cut costs especially now when many other inputs got so much more expensive. At the end of the season, more money is left for the development of the enterprise and for investments to package grapes according to the requirements of the EU retail market.”,

pointed out Gheorghe Mereacre.

Another example is that of Vasile Gavajuc from Dumbrava village (Chisinau municipality) who buys and stores table grapes and vegetables from Moldovan producers to be sold on the local market and for export. The company has a cold store with a capacity of about 270 tons. It operates almost 12 months per year and the annual costs for electricity have been about 270,000 lei. With the increase in electricity tariffs, the business was risking to become unprofitable. The opportunities offered by the EIB Fruit Garden of Moldova project made Vasile rethink. A 80 kWp photovoltaic

system will soon reduce the company's running costs and make the business more robust to external economic and political developments.

The Fruit Garden of Moldova project partners with Alternative AID, a provider of Business Development Services to horticultural companies. 30% of the investment projects which Alternative AID is currently preparing for financing are for photovoltaic installations: 9 since the beginning of 2022 and 3 since the beginning of Russia's attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022.



ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT



A NEW MANDATE FOR THE EU-FUNDED PROJECT “COVENANT OF MAYORS EAST”

The European Commission has entrusted the CoM-East project team led by the Association of European Local Authorities „Energy Cities” in partnership with organisations from Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan a new mandate to lead the secretariat for the Covenant of Mayors in the Eastern Partnership countries for the next four years.



The aim of the project is to support local public authorities - the signatories of the Covenant of Mayors in their efforts to implement their commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in their territory, (2) increase resilience and prepare for the adverse impacts of climate change, and (3) address energy poverty as a key action in the situation of increasing prices for energy resources.

For the Republic of Moldova, AO AEER (Alliance for Energy Efficiency and

Renewables) will serve as a contact point and support structure providing tailored assistance for the Local Public Authorities in regard to the development and implementation of Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans, networking and cooperation, exchange of experience, capacity building on various topics (ex. climate change mitigation, adaptation, energy poverty, multilevel governance, fundraising and funding instruments), communication, dissemination and promotion of best practices and Project results.



STRONGER TOGETHER
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76 PEOPLE BENEFITED OF A TRAINING IN USING THE EXISTING LEGAL MECHANISMS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, WITH THE EU SUPPORT

Between January and March, the EU-funded project “Shields for Human Rights Defenders – Supporting Human Rights Defenders in the Republic of Moldova”, implemented by EcoContact Association, organised a series of trainings dedicated to environmental human rights defenders for beneficiaries in Hincesti (3 and 25 February) and Balti (16 March).

During the trainings, which were held in a hybrid format, in addition to explaining the theoretical aspects of HR for a healthy environment, the trainers also explained how the legal mechanisms in the Republic of Moldova can be applied to protect these specific sets of rights and how to recover the damage caused by third parties, as appropriate. At the same time, the participants were introduced to the national environmental authorities and their role in environmental protection by offering case studies to outline their importance in ensuring a safe environment.



The work of human rights defenders (HRDs) can sometimes be dangerous, so the training also focused on the conduct of HRDs in their activities to create a safe and secure environment for both themselves and those surrounding them. The training sought to identify those HRDs in environmental protection who already have experience applying national law for further exchanges of experience with them.

Increased interest from the participants was manifested regarding local environmental issues, such as the burning of leaves, dumping of waste in unauthorized areas, illegal grazing, medium and high-intensity economic activities near localities, and other matters related to violations of legal norms that affect the environment and human

health. In addition, the participants discussed the environmental issues in their localities and were informed that the Association can offer them support or consultations if they need it.

The assistance is provided in the framework of the project „*Shield for Human Rights Defenders-Support to Human Rights Defenders in the Republic of Moldova*” funded by the European Union and co-funded by Sweden, implemented by the Legal Resource Centre of Moldova in partnership with EcoContact Association. The recommendations given by the participants have been summarized and included in the „Guide for HRDs in the field of the environment,” which will be published in the next quarter.

EU4ENVIRONMENT: WEBINAR ON RESOURCE EFFICIENT AND CLEANER PRODUCTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

EU4Environment organised an introductory webinar on Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production (RECP) for industrial enterprises and experts the Republic of Moldova. The online event took place on 10 February 2022.

The purpose of the RECP webinar was to promote a wider application of RECP in Moldova, where the local market of service providers should be developed, including with sufficient local capacities and skills. It also provided introduction to a hands-on training for energy and environmental professionals and representatives of manufacturing enterprises on specific activities for greening SMEs under the EU4Environment Action in the Republic of Moldova.

The event was hosted within the EU Industry Days 2022, Europe's flagship annual event, highlighting industrial frontrunners and ongoing industrial policy discussions whilst improving the knowledge base of European industry. The 2022 edition took place in hybrid format in Brussels between 8 – 11 February 2022, and it stimulated discussions across industrial ecosystems on their green and digital transition (including SMEs). The EU Industry Weeks is a wider framing of the EU Industry Days, bringing the discussion to the

local communities. Local events are taking place across the EU and the Eastern Partner (EaP) region until the end of February 2022. Virtual workshops, fairs, seminars, open door sessions and business presentations will demonstrate how European industrial ecosystems are approaching the topics of green and digital transition, resilience, and youth in industry.

For more details, please visit: <https://eu-industry-days.ec.europa.eu/>

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SĂPTĂMÂNILE INDUSTRIEI ÎN UE 2022
EVENIMENT LOCAL ÎN REPUBLICA MOLDOVA
WEBINAR

**EFICIENTIZAREA RESURSELOR ȘI
PRODUCEREA MAI PURĂ (RECP)
PENTRU ÎNTREPRINDERILE
INDUSTRIALE ȘI EXPERȚII DIN
MOLDOVA**

10 FEBRUARIE 2022
10:00 AM - 12:30 PM (CHIȘINĂU) | 09:00 AM - 11:30 AM (CET)

EU INDUSTRY WEEKS

EU4ENVIRONMENT: MARKET ASSESSMENT AND POLICY ANALYSIS OF ECO-INNOVATION LANDSCAPE IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The webinar on the “Market Assessment and Policy Analysis of Eco-innovation Landscape in the Republic of Moldova” took place on 16 March 2022 within EU4Environment.

Meeting objectives were to gather relevant governmental agencies to discuss the findings of the draft eco-innovation market assessment and policy analysis, and to collect their feedback/suggestions; and inform participants about the next steps that UNEP and the ODIMM will undertake under the EU4Environment programme to assist Moldovan SMEs to develop eco-innovation business strategies/models.

The meeting gathered the following participants: Ministers of Economy, of Environment, and of Agriculture and Food Industry, representatives of governmental agencies, environmental and ecological NGOs, Delegation of the EU in RM, representatives of Implementing Partners (ODIMM, UNEP, UNIDO), Business Associations, Business incubators.

SMEs play a crucial role in the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries' economies, and their collective environmental footprint often exceeds that of large enterprises. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the European Union (EU) have been supporting SMEs across the globe in the development and application of “eco-innovation” – a business model that incorporates sustainability and life cycle

thinking throughout all business operations and value chain partners. Eco-innovation entails a coordinated set of modifications or novel solutions to products (goods / services), processes, market approach and overall organisational structure of a company.

EU4Environment, jointly with ODIMM, will be assisting SMEs in the Republic of Moldova to develop new business strategies/models that are aligned with the eco-innovation approach.



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EU4ENVIRONMENT: ASSESSMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

A well-functioning system of environmental compliance assurance has a multitude of societal and economic benefits. It protects public health and the environment, and helps countries implement environmental policies at lower overall costs. It promotes the rule of law and good governance, as well as the expansion of citizen engagement. Finally, it can boost investor confidence and stimulate the creation of new jobs.

With the support of the European Union for Environment (EU4Environment) Action, it was developed and presented the Report on “The environmental compliance assurance system in the Republic of Moldova: Current situation and recommendations”.

This report takes stock of the state of the environmental compliance assurance system in the Republic of Moldova, including its legal and institutional framework, monitoring, enforcement and compliance promotion activities. Based on this assessment, it identifies gaps and provides recommendations for improvement.

The report is available in [English](#) and [Romanian](#) languages.



EU4ENVIRONMENT: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS MARKED IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Forests provide multiple benefits... Worldwide, over 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their livelihoods. We all rely on forests for the important role they play in mitigating climate change through carbon sequestration.



Forests also play an important role in the Republic of Moldova providing multiple economic, environmental and social benefits. Forests supply renewable environmentally friendly raw material and are a source of renewable energy. Forest ecosystems are crucial for biodiversity conservation, climate change resilience, and protection of water and soil. People value forests for the recreational benefits they provide and for their ability to enrich our lives.

The role of forests for the development of local communities is very strong in the Republic of Moldova. Many forest landscapes in Moldova are true refugia of biodiversity (including endangered species) with a pronounced social-cultural affinity to community development.

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries worked with the World Bank on institutional development support to promote forest governance through the EU-funded Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) Programmes (Phase I: 2008 - 2012 and

Phase II: 2012 - 2016). Despite progress several challenges still exist. To help the EaP countries to address them the European Union and the World Bank continue supporting **conservation and sustainable forestry and timber trade**. Under the **EU-funded EU4Environment Programme**, a World Bank-led component was launched in 2020 which supports the EaP countries in developing communities' capacities to increase non-timber goods production, strengthening the countries' timber/wood trade control systems and developing well-planned and predictable financing for sustainable management of forests and ecosystem services.

In the **Republic of Moldova**, the Programme focuses on identifying high conservation value forests to help improve forest management through increased community participation, conducting silvo-pastoral planning through provision of communal forest and pasture management plans to avoid overexploitation and ensure long-term rational use. It also supports local public

authorities in organising community-based events to promote conservation and socio-economic development among forest-dependent communities and strengthening timber and wood product trade control systems.

These interventions aim to foster sustainable natural resources management, economic development and participation at local

community level. They also promote legal trade and preventing illegal trade in wood products and enhance strategic financing to the forest and natural resource management sectors. All activities carried out under EU4Environment are important contributions to the promotion of sustainable production and consumption and building a more resilient world for communities that depend upon forests.

EU4ENVIRONMENT: GREEN ECONOMY IN EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES – SUPPORT FOR THE GREEN TRANSITION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The high-level Meeting of the EU4Environment National Implementation Committee: Launching of the Green Growth Indicators Report and web platform in Moldova took place on 18 February 2022.



EU4Environment
Green Economy in Eastern Partner Countries

European Union for Environment in Eastern Partner Countries

Action implemented by:



The meeting's objectives were to examine and approve the revised Country Work Plan for the Republic of Moldova for 2022-2023, Launch the Report on Green Growth Indicators and web platform in the Republic of Moldova, the first among the Eastern Partnership countries and present the Progress on implementing EU4Environment in Moldova in 2021.

The participants, members of the Inter-ministerial Working Group on the promotion of Sustainable Development and Green Economy/National Implementation Committee for EU4Environment in Moldova and invited persons (EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova, Implementing Partners, invited persons and local experts – OECD, UNEP, UNECE, UNIDO, the World Bank)

welcomed the launch of the Green Growth Indicators Report and of the web platform and encouraged their practical application for decision-making and monitoring of the country's green transition performance. Were approved the general report for 2021 and the submitted plans (the detailed work plan of the project for the first half of 2022 and the country work plan for the period 2022-2023 from EU4Environment with all the proposals and amendments presented). The regional events of the current year have been taken into account and the active participation of the representatives of the institutions in the given events is encouraged. The active involvement of WG members in the process of drafting the Programme for the Promotion of the Green Economy for 2022-2027 is encouraged.



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TOWARDS GREEN TRANSFORMATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: STATE OF PLAY IN 2021

EU4Environment Action, funded by the European Union, launched in February 2022 the report "Towards Green Transformation of the Republic of Moldova: State of Play in 2021".

This report presents a snapshot of the country's progress towards green economy over 2015-20, using OECD green growth indicators. This is also a first attempt to evaluate the implementation of the National Programme on the Promotion of Green Economy in the Republic of Moldova and its Action Plan 2018-20, based on green growth indicators. In addition, the report will support preparation of the new action plan on green economy for 2022-27 and of Environmental Strategy 2030.

The Ministries of Environment and Economy welcomed the launch of the updated Report on Green Growth Indicators and the list of new indicators presented. Being updated, this list serves as a basis for assessing the current situation regarding the promotion of the green economy in our country and will be a new starting point for developing the measures of the green transition, including performance indicators for the Programme on the promotion of Green Economy for 2022-2027.



The list of new indicators needed to assess change - such as green jobs, green services and goods, green investment, etc. - will also be used for decision-making or argumentation on certain sectors of the country's socio-economic development at the current stage.

The digital platform to monitor the progress of the Republic of Moldova towards a green economy, based on Green Growth Indicators, was developed and officially presented to the public. This is the first kind of web portal in the Eastern Partnership region.



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This platform will help the Moldovan government:

- ◇ Track progress towards a green economy
- ◇ Inform the decision-making
- ◇ Demonstrate accountability
- ◇ Raise public awareness of the links between economic growth and the environment
- ◇ Compare progress between countries.

The platform is available in [Romanian](#) and [English](#) languages on the website of the Ministry of Environment.

LEGAL REFORMS OF THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL FUND – A STEPPINGSTONE TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN MOLDOVA

The legal and normative base, administrative settings and daily management of the National Environmental Fund in Moldova are strengthened with the support of EU4Environment, funded by the European Union.

The Republic of Moldova is pressing ahead with legal reform to improve spending under its national environmental funding entity. Under the leadership of the Minister of Environment, and with support from EU4Environment, Law 1515/1993 on environmental protection was amended and the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova adopted it in March 2022. The amendments to the Law include significant changes and will lay the foundations for further reform of the now renamed National Environmental Fund. This is a milestone that will ensure more funding can go towards environmental protection.

The Fund will now focus exclusively on environmental protection, climate change and sustainable resource management. Data shows that previously around 90% of spending under the Fund went to water supply and sanitation projects. While water and

sanitation projects are important, the change in scope under the new Law will ensure that more money can go towards projects with specific environmental protection purposes. Other changes in the Law will help revise the administrative structure of the Fund. Based on that, the new Regulation and Operational Manual of the Fund were developed and submitted for approval.

Since its establishment in 2019, EU4Environment has been providing support to the Eastern Partner (EaP) countries with, amongst others, a specific focus on selected national funding entities. The work includes reviewing and strengthening domestic public finance mechanisms that can finance green investments and providing support to setting up new ones. Subsidy reform and improved targeted support for poor and vulnerable households are integrated into this work.



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EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORTED THE MODERNISATION OF INSTITUTIONS IN CANTEMIR, WHICH NOW SERVE AS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Cantemir schools, rehabilitated and modernised with the support of the European Union, are a source of inspiration in terms of energy efficiency implemented in public buildings. After the completion of the thermal rehabilitation works, several study visits are organised here, for the exchange of experience and replication of demonstration methods.

Teachers and managers from 12 schools in the Republic of Moldova visited the city of Cantemir, within the project „Accelerating the adoption of good practices on sustainable

development of the school environment”, abbreviated „Towards a Greener, More Sustainable and Efficient School”, visited Cantemir to learn about best practices. The coordinators had a tour of Kindergarten no. 2 and of the “Mihai Eminescu” Gymnasium, modernised with the support of the European Union. During the tour, they were able to observe practically the different solutions applied to improve the educational conditions, such as thermal insulation, the use of solar energy for the preparation of hot water and energy, ventilation of the rooms, landscaping, etc.



Ecaterina Enciu, director of the gymnasium, presented the experience of participating in energy efficiency and environment projects, and Victoria Isac, deputy director of education, shared Cantemir's experience in creating community partnerships for sustainable development and attracting investment. „Without partnership, it is not possible to make big and significant projects,” said Irina Plis, project manager for a greener, more sustainable and efficient school.

„In Cantemir, I was very impressed by the thermal insulation of the buildings, everything is pleasant both outside and efficient inside”,

remarked Viorica Bălănel, member of the Green Team Slobozia Mare, Cahul, one of the participants of the study visit.

The study visit to Cantemir was organised as part of the project „Accelerating the adoption of good practices on sustainable development of the school environment”, carried out by the Alliance for Energy Efficiency and Renewables (AEER), in partnership with the Agency for Energy Efficiency (AEE) and the Association of Journalists of Environment (AJMTEM).

GREEN SCHOOL – AN INNOVATIVE PROJECT FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION, IMPLEMENTED IN 12 SCHOOLS ACROSS THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Students, teachers and employees from 12 schools in the Republic of Moldova learn and practice a sustainable planning model, with an emphasis on energy and the environment. The EU funded project „Towards a Greener, Sustainable and Efficient School”, entitled „Accelerating the Adoption of Good Practices on Sustainable Development in the School Environment”, is based on experiential learning in and out of the classroom, and the involvement of students and teachers in environmental problem solving.



The educational institutions participating in the project received practical guidelines for improving the school environment and a kit with specialised tools for assessing the indoor microclimate. To monitor the environmental parameters, plan and implement activities, a Green Team was created in each of the schools made of at least 10 people including teachers, students and parents.



In order for them to feel empowered as agents of change, the project provided them with opportunities to increase their skills, to transform their school and to change their behaviour. Since November 2021, project experts visited each of the Green Teams - both offline and online – to transfer knowledge on 4 thematic areas: energy efficiency and microclimate, waste management, green spaces in schools. At the same time, the Green Team members learned on how to communicate and raise public awareness on the environmental issues. As a result of these activities a list of recommendation on how to improve the situation in each of the schools was drafted for further implementation.

Following the capacity building activities, the coordinators of the 12 Green Teams together with students started developing

an Action Plan to improve the ecological environment in their own school. They set specific objectives and actions to improve the ecological environment of schools, based on measurements using professional tools. Based on the identified problems, each school will submit a series of project proposals for funding, one of which will be supported with a mini-grant for the implementation of the solutions found.

All students involved in the activity are very enthusiastic about sharing their experience on their social pages, developing their communication skills, formed within the project. Through photos, posts, videos, drawings, they draw the attention of the local community to energy and environmental issues, share good practices and success stories in their school.

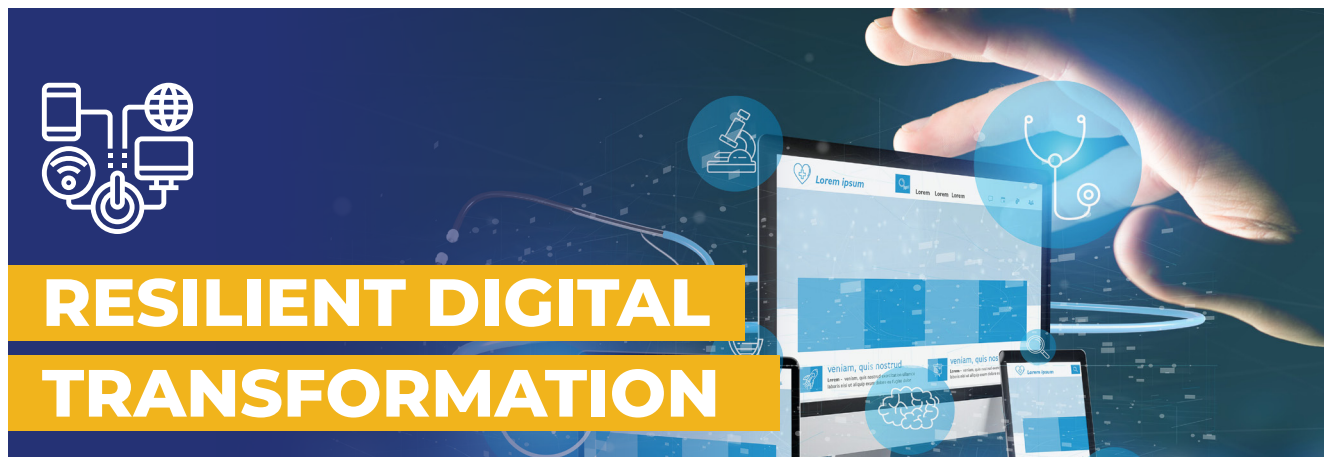


The 12 beneficiary educational institutions within the project are:

- ◇ Gymnasium "Decebal", Chisinau;
- ◇ Lyceum "Grătiești";
- ◇ Lyceum "Nicolae Casso", Chiscareni, Sangerei district;
- ◇ Gymnasium „Alecă Mare”, Slobozia Mare village, Cahul district;
- ◇ Gymnasium „Paraskiewa Wiszniowska”, Vishniowca village, Cantemir district;
- ◇ Gymnasium Constantinovca, Causeni district;
- ◇ Gymnasium Pruteni, Falesti district;
- ◇ Lyceum "Ștefan cel Mare", Șoldănești;
- ◇ Lyceum „C. Sibirschi”, Chisinau;
- ◇ Lyceum "Aristotle", Chisinau;
- ◇ Gymnasium "G. Coșbuc", Andrușul de Jos village, Cahul district;
- ◇ Gymnasium „Vasile Lupu", Chisinau.

The EU funded project „Accelerating the adoption of good practices on sustainable development of the school environment” is carried out by the Alliance for Energy Efficiency and Renewables (AEER), in partnership with the Agency for Energy Efficiency (AEE) and the Association of Environmental and Ecological Tourism Journalists (AJMTEM). The activity is implemented within the project „Support for the Government of the Republic of Moldova in implementing the 2030 Agenda” funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).





THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP STARTUP ECOSYSTEM PLATFORM IS NOW LIVE!

On 27 January, EU4Digital officially launched a startup ecosystem platform for the Eastern partner countries. This solution is designed to act as a key tool for tracking the regional startup ecosystem landscape and will provide intelligence on startups, innovations, investors and funding rounds, and many other insights.

The new year has brought new digital solutions into the startup scene in Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries with the launch of the [EaP startup ecosystem platform](#) by the EU4Digital Facility and its technical partner [Dealroom.co](#). The platform is aimed at: facilitating data-driven policy- and decision-making for the development of the startup ecosystem in the region; sharing cross-industry knowledge; and fostering the partnerships required to help the next generation of innovators succeed on the global stage.



The interactive platform has already gathered more than 2,500 startups alongside a broad range of other participants. The first insights have been made based on the platform data, for example that the startups on the platform now have a combined enterprise value of more than EUR 62 billion, and made EUR 668 million in 2021. Other examples of data on the platform:

- ♦ An overview of the [most valued enterprises](#) born in the ecosystem, led by [EPAM Systems](#)
- ♦ A list of Eastern partner country-based [startups in Edtech](#), among other sectors
- ♦ A landscape of all [startups catalogued according to the technologies they use in different sectors, here Fintech as an example](#)

◇ An overview of the latest investment rounds by [investor type](#) or [investor location](#)

The platform is now open for registration, offering its users [matchmaking tools](#), trusted [insights](#) into the startup and tech ecosystem in Eastern partner countries, as well as information on [macro-level trends](#) to support data-driven policy- and business decision-making. The platform benefits a broad range of users:

- ◇ government institutions and policymakers;
- ◇ VCs, angel investors, and other investors;
- ◇ startups and scaleups;
- ◇ researchers and journalists;
- ◇ universities, service providers, accelerators.

Learn more about the platform from EU4Digital's technical partner Dealroom.co [here](#).

EU4Digital invites you to take the initiative and contribute to the acceleration of the EaP startup ecosystem by sharing this opportunity on your networks and becoming a part of the ecosystem!

EU4DIGITAL FACILITY LAUNCHES PILOT FOR AUTOMATIC EXCHANGE OF CUSTOMS INFORMATION BETWEEN REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA AND ROMANIA



The e-Customs pilot project was launched on 24 March by the EU4Digital Facility jointly with the Customs authorities of the Republic of Moldova and Romania. It allows the automatic exchange of information through the Systematic Electronic Exchange of Data (SEED) system between the customs authorities of neighbouring countries.

As a result of the pilot, it is expected that the automatic exchange of customs information will increase the productivity of customs officials, allow faster border crossing and, ultimately, streamline freight traffic. After enabling the full-scale solution, the e-Customs pilot will facilitate the exchange of data between customs authorities in real time, will improve the time of release of goods and more efficient and effective risk assessment by applying modern mechanisms for exchange, analysis, and comparison of data, and will help in identifying discrepancies and other irregularities in advance.

The piloting project was launched for a day at the Leușeni – Albița border crossing point and allowed the participating customs administrations to test the exchange of data on empty means of transport.

Following the completion of the piloting stage, EU experts will draw up recommendations for implementing the SEED solution. As a result of testing the SEED application, it will be possible to analyse the opportunity of using it for the exchange of data for other types of transportation.

In the context of starting the pilot project, the parties signed a “Memorandum of Understanding between the Customs

Service of the Republic of Moldova and the Romanian National Agency for Fiscal Administration on the pilot project on the automatic exchange of customs information under the EU4Digital Programme.” The Memorandum expressly contains the category and requirements of the dataset for automatic exchange. Following the pilot, the customs administrations will consider the possibility of expanding the use of the solution at other customs points, to facilitate border crossing.

The e-Customs pilot in the Republic of Moldova and Romania was designed after a successful pilot conducted earlier between Lithuania and Belarus and based on over ten years of experience in using the SEED application for customs data exchange in the Western Balkans.

The e-Customs pilot project is launched within the EU4Digital Facility project, funded by the European Union and implemented under the regional EU4Digital Initiative, jointly with the Customs authorities of the Republic of Moldova and Romania.

Background information:

The EU4Digital Facility aims to extend the benefits of the European Union’s Digital Single Market to the Eastern Partner states, supporting them in reducing roaming tariffs, developing high-speed broadband to boost economies and expand e-services, harmonising digital frameworks across society in areas ranging from logistics to health, building cyber security, developing skills, and creating more jobs in the digital industry.

EU4DIGITAL LAUNCHES AN ETRADE PILOT FOR CROSS-BORDER INVOICING BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE



EU4Digital has launched an [additional eDelivery pilot](#) between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. This programme follows, and is built on the experience gained during, two previous successful pilots (one between Poland and Ukraine, the other between Armenia and Ukraine). During the launch, selected companies from both Moldova and Ukraine exchanged standardised invoice data via the [eDelivery channel](#). The global Peppol network connects almost 40 countries: Ukraine became a member during the previous pilot activities, whereas Moldova joined as part of this one.

Participating companies and eDelivery Access Point providers

The following companies took part in the pilot activity and use the eDelivery channel to exchange invoice data:

- ♦ [MHP Ukraine](#) – an agricultural holdings group specialising in poultry breeding, meat processing, crop production and the production of organic fertilizers. MHP products are supplied to 80 countries around the world.
- ♦ [MMD group](#) – a Moldovan company focusing on importing food products into the country. It specialises in logistics and transport, customs brokerage services and importing meat. It also has various investments in the agricultural sector.
- ♦ [Oldcom](#) – a PVC footwear company operating both in Ukraine and Moldova, it is a market leader in practical footwear products.
- ♦ [EDIN](#) – one of the biggest electronic data interchange (EDI) service providers in Ukraine – has continued its active involvement in, and support for, the pilot.

The previously piloted solutions showcased numerous benefits for cross-border data exchange. The successful launch of this additional pilot activity, designed to improve how business is conducted between Moldova and Ukraine, is an important steppingstone. If the solution is taken up and developed further, it's likely to result in more efficient communication between cross-border business partners and savings in terms of time and labour.

While the pilot is limited in scope (i.e. it is only designed to test the invoice data exchange system being established between the countries involved), the activity itself has a broader goal – to prepare the Eastern partner countries for a further scale-up of these activities and the full-scale implementation of the solution.

IT TRAINING FOR CAHUL RESIDENTS WITH THE EU SUPPORT

IT jobs are increasingly in demand in the labor market. Whether we are talking about programmers or developers of applications and online trading platforms, everyday hundreds of ads can be seen on employment sites in Moldova. IT career provides many advantages: attractive salaries, corporate benefit packages, innovative technologies, stable jobs, etc. In support of the community in the south of the country, “EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul” has launched several IT training courses, which can be joined by both young people willing to acquire more skills and those who want to retrain, regardless of their professional area. Dozens of young people are expected to participate in the first edition of the project.



Participants have two options:

- ♦ Those who want to know more about creating web pages, optimizing, setting up and maintaining websites, setting up the domain name, can sign up for the **“Landing Page Creation”** course.
- ♦ For those who want to use digital technologies safely, responsibly and usefully, the course **“Digital Skill Development”** has been launched. Being designed on the basis of the digital skill development modules “DigComp” (supported by the EU institutions), the training programme makes possible interaction and collaboration through digital technologies: intelligent use of the operating system, editing electronic documents, securing personal data or managing technical issues.

“EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul” addresses the sustainable socio-economic development of the southern region and supports economic development through innovation, entrepreneurship, employment for businesses from outside the capital, while providing education opportunities for young people, women and girls, etc. Along with the development of “EU4Innovation Centre” – Centre of ICT Excellence – the project aims to increase the attractiveness of the region and economic development through innovations, aiming to contribute in the coming years to increasing the salary level (average salary in the region) by at least 15%, as well as developing the local IT sector, which should account for at least 5% of the national one in the next 3 years.



“EU4MOLDOVA: STARTUP CITY CAHUL”: IT COURSES FOR CHILDREN IN THE CAHUL REGION

There are more parents enrolling their children in IT courses or programmes from early ages, where they discover enthusiastically engineering, programming or robotics. To make STEM subjects more accessible to children in the south of the country, the project “EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul” in partnership with “Tekwill Academy Kids” has launched 4 tech courses tailored to the latest trends in education, offering unlimited possibilities for young explorers. Being fascinated by technology and dreaming of digital careers from an early age, over 130 children attended the first workshops in Cahul. The sessions take place every Saturday at the “Nicolae Botgros” Palace of Culture in Cahul, including interactive activities:

- ♦ **Young Mechanic** (5 and 6 years old) – LEGO® Education Sets are used to study mechanical elements, build non-motorized devices and understand how technologies work;
- ♦ **MILO** (7-9 years old) – with the support of mentors, children learn scientific concepts and develop fine motor skills by assembling robots;
- ♦ **RoboMaker** (10-12 years old) – learn to program robots capable of reacting to light, simulating the movement of cars without driver, imitating a robot vacuum cleaner, etc.;
- ♦ **Programming and electronics** (13-17 years old) – build basic skills and logic of programming.



“The rapid evolution of technologies is driving IT education from an early age, as digital skills have become a necessity, regardless of age, place of residence or field of activity. We are proud to see parents and children enthusiastic about the tech field, which will allow them to benefit from more opportunities for knowledge, and in the future – from professional opportunities as well. Beyond the subjects taught at school, children need alternatives for multilateral development, and these courses meet these very needs.”

declared Corina Andronic, Project Manager, EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul.

Within the project, free of charge STEM master classes will be organised, where children will be able to use their knowledge of science, technology, art, mathematics and engineering.



The initiative is implemented by ATIC, within the project “EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul”, with the financial assistance of the European Union in partnership with Sweden.



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM THE SOUTH OF THE COUNTRY ARE GUIDED TO CHOOSE AN IT CAREER WITH THE EU SUPPORT

Students of one of the high schools in the south of the country who are interested in information technologies, have now the opportunity to learn more about IT specialties within the “ICT4Youth” project. This is a programme promoting a tech career, which aims to encourage young people in the south of the country to opt for education in the field of information technologies and communications, to be aware of the real opportunities and benefits offered by the industry. The initiative is implemented by ATIC, within the project “EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul”, with the financial assistance of the European Union in partnership with Sweden.



Thus, 20 IT professionals from the largest companies in the country have come to young people with success stories, training and education experiences, and also with activities that guide and encourage them to choose an IT career.

For young people in the south of the country to understand information technologies and career opportunities in this industry, more than 15 educational institutions in the south of the country are conducting online training webinars.

Soon, in the towns of Cantemir, Leova, Taraclia and Cahul, practical workshops will be held with current topics, in which

participants will learn interesting things behind 12 IT specializations, interacting with professionals with relevant experience.

At the end of the programme, young people will have the opportunity to participate in a career fair, where they will know what are the career requirements in the field, what opportunities the labor market provides, being in direct contact with private sector representatives that develop business in the field.

At least 3,000 young people will become beneficiaries of the “ICT4Youth” project in the southern region of the Republic of Moldova.

WITH EU SUPPORT, NINE HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTHERN REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA WERE EQUIPPED WITH DIGITAL LABORATORIES

Nine high schools in the Cahul region will benefit from state-of-the-art digital equipment, content adapted to the current requirements and modernised learning spaces. Within the project “EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul”, fully equipped digital laboratories have been created, which in the current academic year will be used by about 3,000 students and teachers from institutions connected to the “Tekwill in every school” programme. The initiative aims to create more opportunities for the local community to prepare a generation of future specialists to meet the requirements of the current labor market and to work in the region, at home.

“At the beginning of the school year, our institution was included in the ‘Tekwill in every school’ programme, and the students are studying 2 new subjects: Graphic Design and Programming. As children in the villages do not have computers at home, creation of a digital laboratory in our high school will change things a lot,”

stated Tatiana Buciuceanu, Principal at the ‘Alexei Mateevici’ Theoretical High School, Alexandru Ioan Cuza village, Cahul district.

“Digital Lab” helps students to improve their digital skills and provides access to information technologies to those who do not have a device at home. The laboratories will offer high school students an innovative and creative space, divided into 5 thematic areas:



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- ◇ Teacher area, with desk, large screen and interactive whiteboard;
- ◇ Student area, equipped with 20 laptops, computers and webcams;
- ◇ Printing area dedicated to printing materials;
- ◇ Creative area arranged with a board and bean bag chairs
- ◇ Storage area, for the locker room.

“Digital Lab” meets the educational needs of regional high schools and helps students to train and improve their digital skills – an absolute necessity for today’s professions, especially the future ones. With an area of about 50 m², the laboratories will offer high school students an innovative, creative and fully equipped space to study the disciplines of the future.

The laboratories will be launched soon, the value of the project being about 130,000 EUR. “EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul” is being implemented in the period 2020-2024 by ATIC, with the financial assistance of the European Union in partnership with Sweden.

"EU4MOLDOVA: STARTUP CITY CAHUL": A CAREER IN IT ENSURES PERMANENT JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Cahul is passing through the digital transformation, and the authorities are making efforts to provide more digital public services to the community. The employees of the Mayor's Office of the city quickly became aware of the importance of digitizing and developing their skills.

Meet – Iuliana Bulat, specialist of the Public Relations Service of the Mayor's Office of Cahul! The young woman decided to keep up with local trends and enrolled in the "ICT4Women Cahul" programme developed within the project "EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul", where she learned *WordPress Development*. She studied foreign languages and worked for 10 years in the field of tourism, but the pandemic challenges determined her to change her professional profile. She believes that the Cahul region has potential, and such digital projects and services are essential for the development of the economy.

Iuliana Bulat, employee of Cahul Mayor's Office:

"There are few young people in the region who work in the IT field. It is difficult to find a graphic design professional. Working in the field of public relations, I often look for specialists to create models, banners. Unfortunately, there are few specialists in the region, and the existing ones are overworked. Therefore, training and building digital skills are extremely necessary. It is difficult to find a well-paid job in Cahul now, but the opportunities that the region has had lately are promising. There are several projects that offer development opportunities, and we hope that in the future there will be more jobs, which will determine the young generation to remain at home."

#UpgradeCahul: digital services for the southern region

Digitization is part of several initiatives and projects taking place in Cahul, such as: digital



Photo: Iuliana Bulat

bases in the Mayor's Office, online enrollment of children in kindergartens, creation of digital catalogs for libraries, creation of intelligent public lighting system, implementation of remote data registration system, online application system, etc. In the coming years, with the support of "EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul", a number of actions will be carried out to digitize the municipality, including to create an innovation technology center "EU4Innovation Centre". It will have a stimulating effect on the southern region by developing educational initiatives to increase digital literacy, connect communities to create an environment conducive to the development of IT solutions, and support innovative projects that meet community needs.

"EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul" is being implemented in the period 2020-2024 by ATIC, with the financial assistance of the European Union in partnership with Sweden.



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IT BUSINESS DEVELOPED FROM UNIVERSITY BENCHES THANKS TO THE EU SUPPORT

A group of 7 local young people from the State University “B. P. Hasdeu” in Cahul have designed an innovative platform, which will initially be launched locally, and then will be expanded throughout the country. Due to an extensive course of technological entrepreneurship, within the programme “Startup Academy UNI”, they created “LucruDAD” – a platform that enables improving the theoretical knowledge, practical skills of potential jobseekers and get the desired job.

“We are last year students and it was necessary to look for a place for internship. The idea of the platform arose from the need to find companies that offer internships. As there is only one university in Cahul, it was not feasible to limit the platform only to this aspect, so we developed it. The courses of the university curriculum include aspects that are no longer up-to-date, but in the technological entrepreneurship course we studied new trends, modern methods and relevant examples of companies that have grown applying these methods. That determined us to come up with ideas and make sure they were implemented.”,

noted Iuliana Mandru, one of the participants.



Terzi Petru



Chițanu Lidia



Garbuz Victor



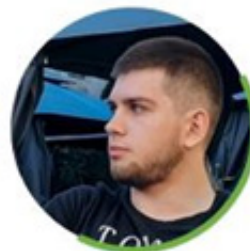
Mândru Iulia



Cîrcelan Oleg



Bărbieru Daniela



Postu Ruslan

The young people, who enrolled in the technological entrepreneurship course, learnt theoretical aspects together with specialized mentors, enjoyed practical support from trackers who monitored and familiarized them with the tools needed to identify the consumer, the market and the business model.



STRONGER TOGETHER
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“Acquiring technological entrepreneurship right from university benches is one of our priorities. Through this initiative, we set out to provide young people in Cahul with the necessary knowledge and opportunity to develop a home-based business. During the programme, students went, step by step, through the business path from idea to application, and generated effective solutions. This is one of the goals of ‘EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul’ – to contribute to the creation of innovation-based businesses, creation of local ICT workforce and regional economic development.”

stated Corina Andronic, Project Manager of “EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul”.

“Startup Academy UNI” – an entrepreneurial development programme implemented in several universities in the country, ran for 13 weeks, including 12 modules focused on business creation, identification, evaluation and finalization of business opportunities and development of a business plan attractive to potential investors. The programme is implemented by ATIC, within the project “EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul”, with the financial assistance of the European Union in partnership with Sweden.

SUCCESS STORY OF OLESEA VULPE – BENEFICIARY OF THE ICT TRAININGS, FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

The number of people who change their professional profile due to technological progress, want to explore a new area or a suitable profession for remote work is growing, and the “ICT4Women Cahul” project offered women in the south of the country the opportunity to develop their IT skills for this purpose. We are talking about an online training initiative for women, which enables the participants to develop more professional skills. Thus, today 30 graduates of the programme work in successful projects of international companies right from their home office. They got their jobs through recruitment platforms and prepared for this day for 5 months, participating in training workshops, mentoring and career guidance sessions.

Olesea Vulpe is one of the beneficiaries who retrained professionally and successfully followed the content writing and communication course within the programme.

Olesea Vulpe, participant in the programme stated:

“The course was very interesting, I received answers to all my uncertainties and curiosities. But the most important thing is that it helped me to structure my knowledge, to understand how this industry works and to be more self-confident. I liked the mentors for their professionalism, dedication and friendly communication.”



Photo: Olesea Vulpe

Previously, she had no connection with information technologies, and for 10 years she was a university lecturer at the State University “B. P. Hasdeu” in Cahul, where she taught marketing and tourism. Now she is working in tourism within a cross-border project.

In addition, Olesea Vulpe noted:

“Currently, I’m involved in a project where one of my responsibilities is to write texts and edit various articles. When I found out about the programme, I saw the opportunity to develop my skills in this field. I write articles, announcements, posts on social networks, and thanks to the programme, I found out about certain opportunities that determine me to deepen my knowledge. Currently, I’m testing what I like to do, I haven’t decided if I’m going to build an IT career, but certainly all the information provided by the course will help me succeed in my activity.”

“ICT4Women Cahul” is implemented by ATIC, within the project “EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul”, with the financial assistance of the European Union in partnership with Sweden.

“EU4MOLDOVA: STARTUP CITY CAHUL”: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES CONNECT COMMUNITIES!

Over 10 editions and 200 participants! These are the first results of “Tech Coffee” in Cahul region – a platform that contributes to strengthening the technological community in the southern region through networking events, exchange of views and experiences to initiate local collaboration between people interested in this field. Being developed regularly, the purpose of the event is to discuss topics of public interest, opportunities, and also to identify potential members of the technology community. Thus, the project “EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul” aims to connect the local community to technologies and encourage economic development through innovation, entrepreneurship and growth of labor force.



The guests of the events are representatives of the academic and economic communities, professional entrepreneurs, local leaders and others, who share good practices, challenges and experiences useful for the progress of various local initiatives.



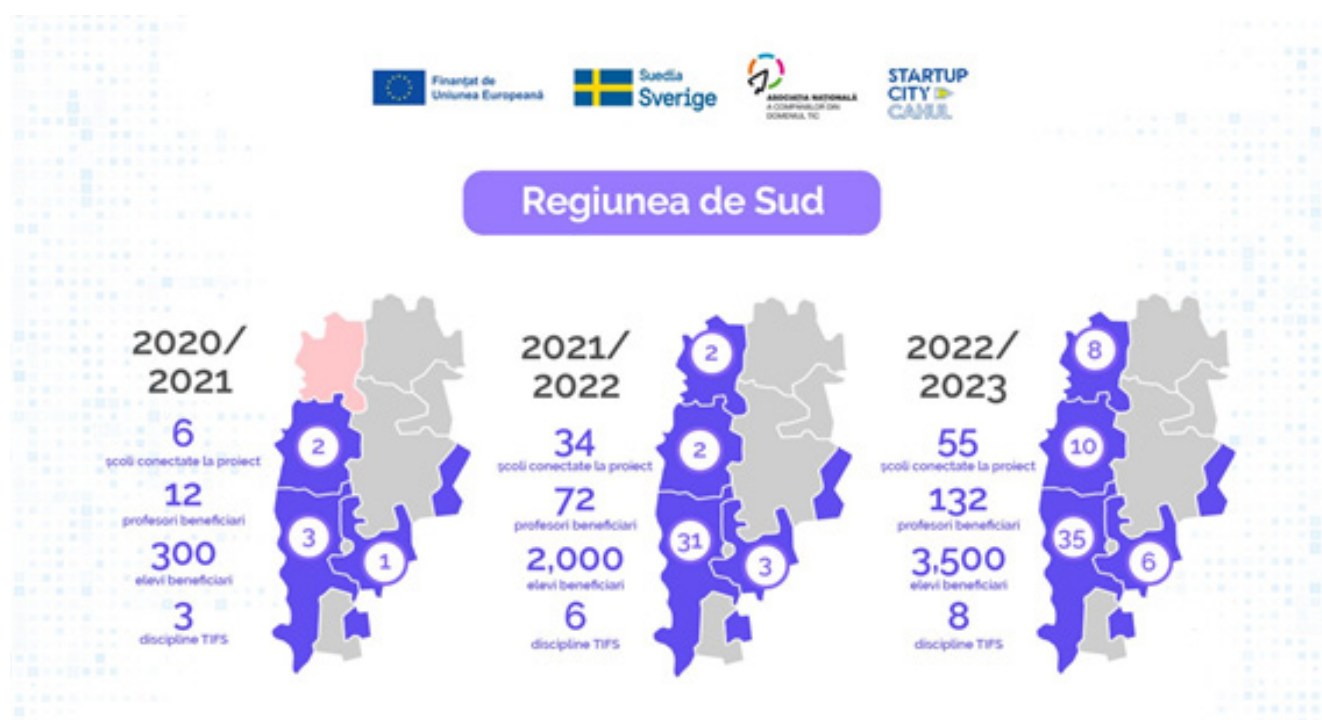
During the 10 editions, many topics were addressed, such as: the opportunities offered by the tech community, the potential for development and digitization of different branches of the economy in the southern region of the country, which is a startup and how to develop it.

“EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul” is being implemented in the period 2020-2024 by ATIC, with the financial assistance of the European Union in partnership with Sweden. The initiative addresses the sustainable socio-economic development of Cahul municipality and neighboring localities, which complement the regional coverage of development assistance provided by the European Union to the Republic of Moldova. The project mainly supports economic development through innovation, entrepreneurship, employment for small and medium-sized enterprises from outside the capital, and also provides education opportunities for young people, women and girls in the field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). As part of the project, a regional innovation and technology center “EU4Innovation Centre” will be created in Cahul, and a large group of local residents will become its beneficiaries.



THE EU PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR 3,500 STUDENTS FROM THE SOUTH OF THE COUNTRY TO STUDY THE “DISCIPLINES OF THE FUTURE”

The most complex extracurricular course programme – “Tekwill in Every School” (TiES) – reached the southern region of the Republic of Moldova, expanding its community and providing more opportunities for students and teachers. In the academic year 2022-2023, in 8 educational institutions in the south of the country, 8 IT courses will be taught for students interested in developing creativity and tech skills, such as: graphic design, algorithm programming, mobile application development, etc. The initiative is implemented by ATIC, within the project “EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul”, with the financial assistance of the European Union, in partnership with Sweden.



“Through the programme, we committed to contribute to the development of today’s students’ skills so that they can be better prepared for tomorrow’s professions. STEM education is one of the priorities of the EU4Moldova project: Startup City Cahul, and this year we are going to provide access to over 3,500 students from the south of the country to these educational opportunities. The skills acquired will bring results for them and for society as a whole.”

pointed out Corina Andronic, Project Manager of “EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul”.

Teachers are also involved in a complex training programme, in which they learn innovative teaching methodologies and techniques, being guided by experts in the field. To provide them with a high standard education, 9 properly equipped digital laboratories have been set up in the south of the country, so that students can work individually or in groups, using laptops, projectors, digital whiteboards

“The programme will give students the opportunity to develop their skills, and teachers to master information technologies. Many graduates choose to study Web Programming and Development, which is why we familiarize them with the professions of the future in middle school classes. We conducted a survey among students, confirming that they want to study tech in school”, declared Rodica Cantea, Principle at “Enichioi” Gymnasium, Enichioi village, Cantemir.

At the national level, over 50,000 students will study this year “Tekwill in Every School” disciplines, a project supported by USAID, Sweden, EU4Moldova and UNDP Moldova. TiES aims to enhance the human capital of the Republic of Moldova, committing itself to connect to the community by 2024 over 90% of high schools in the country. Since 2020 until present day, the programme has been successfully implemented in 234 educational institutions: <https://tekwill.online/en>.



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