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## **ANNEX**

NEIGHBOURHOOD, DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION  
INSTRUMENT

**MULTIANNUAL INDICATIVE PROGRAMME  
(2021-2027)**

## MULTIANNUAL INDICATIVE PROGRAMME (MIP) 2021-2027 REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

### 1. The overall lines of the EU international cooperation in the partner country/region

#### 1.1. Basis for programming

The EU, its Member States and the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter Moldova) signed an **Association Agreement**<sup>1</sup>, including a **Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area** (DCFTA) in 2014 and fully applied it from 2016 after its ratification. It is the main tool for bringing Moldova and the EU closer, promoting political association and economic integration between the parties based on common values of democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. The Association Agreement sets out a long-term and comprehensive reform framework and, by its normative power, including legal approximation to the EU *acquis*, provides a stepping-stone for growth and development. Its DCFTA, linked to the broader process of legislative approximation, contributes to further economic integration with the EU's Internal Market.

An **Association Agenda** sets out a list of priorities for joint work on implementing the Association Agreement. The revised joint document covering the period 2021-2027 guides EU-Moldova bilateral relations, and together with the five policy objectives of the March 2020 **joint communication**<sup>2</sup> "The Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all" will frame financial assistance under the next Multiannual Financial Framework for the programming period 2021-2027. The programme is also fully aligned with the **Joint Staff Working Document (JSWD)**<sup>3</sup> **setting out the post-2020 Eastern Partnership agenda**, published on 2 July 2021, including its **Economic Investment Plan and five flagship initiatives** to support socio-economic recovery and strengthen the country's resilience.

Important political developments have taken place in Moldova, notably with the election of Maia Sandu as President in November 2020 and the emergence of a pro-reform parliamentary majority in July 2021. The alignment of the Presidency and the government on the same objectives has created broad opportunities for structural reforms.

In response to these developments, the European Commission announced an **Economic Recovery Plan** for Moldova<sup>4</sup> in June 2021. The Economic Recovery Plan aims to stimulate long-term socio-economic recovery, foster the green and digital transition and unleash the untapped economic potential of Moldova to benefit all citizens. It aims to leverage structural reforms, particularly on the rule of law, justice reform and anti-corruption, in order to unlock the sustainable economic recovery of the country. It follows the EU's smart conditionality approach. The Economic Recovery Plan will mobilise up to EUR 600 million in macro-financial assistance, grants and investments, supported by blending and financial guarantees. The priorities put forward in the Economic Recovery Plan are reflected in the present Multiannual Indicative Programme.

The main strategic planning document of the country, which serves as a basis for current programming, is the **National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030"**, approved by the Government on November 7, 2018. The main objectives are embedded in four basic pillars and cover ten national-level sustainable development objectives.<sup>5</sup> In the context of COVID-19, the government developed a national plan for

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<sup>1</sup> Association Agreement of 30 August 2014 between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part

<sup>2</sup> JOIN(2020) 7 final

<sup>3</sup> SWD(2021) 186 final

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_21\\_2712](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_2712)

<sup>5</sup> <https://moldova.un.org/en/15729-national-development-strategy-moldova-2030-approved-government>

response and socio-economic recovery<sup>6</sup>, to reduce the country's vulnerability to the pandemic, allowing a transparent and efficient recovery process by respecting human rights and mainstreaming gender equality into all its actions. Furthermore, the Secretariat of the Economic Council to the Prime Minister of Moldova developed a policy matrix for economic recovery under COVID-19 conditions, involving companies and business associations from most economic sectors of the country. In addition, the activities taken by the Government should address the disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on women in terms of loss of access to income and intensified economic insecurity, increased burden of domestic and care work, and higher incidence of domestic violence because of strict confinement measures.

Implementing the Association Agreement and the priorities of the Eastern Partnership remains a strong driver of democratic reforms. EU assistance is based on the principle of strict conditionality. It is linked to satisfactory progress in reforms and the respect for the rule of law, effective democratic mechanisms, gender equality and human rights. In line with the Association Agenda and the Joint Communication on the Eastern Partnership, the EU will support the strengthening of the rule of law and resilient institutions through an incentive-based approach ('more for more' and 'less for less'). Future reforms should be based on recommendations of relevant international bodies such as the Venice Commission and the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO). The visa free regime between Moldova and the EU continues to promote people to people contacts, bringing positive economic, social and cultural benefits to Moldova and to the EU Member States.

This MIP is fully aligned with the European Commission's Political Guidelines 2019-2024<sup>7</sup> and reflects all relevant flagship strategies adopted by the Commission. In line with the Investment pillar of the post-2020 Eastern Partnership Priorities, outlined in the Joint Staff Working Document, it supports the delivery of key global policy objectives, including the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. Under the Governance pillar of the post-2020 priorities, this MIP supports reforms and promotes shared fundamental values in rule of law and good governance. It is fully sequenced with the needs deriving from the COVID-19 pandemic, including support to sustainable socio-economic recovery and health resilience. The gas crisis, as well as the spillover effects of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, are adding new economic and security challenges for Moldova, which has experienced the fastest inflow of refugees per capita among Ukraine's neighbours. In addition, low human and institutional cyber capacities make Moldova vulnerable to cyber threats. In line with the EU gender action plan (GAP) III<sup>8</sup>, gender equality will be mainstreamed throughout all programmes and actions, together with a focus on youth. The twin green and digital transitions will also be mainstreamed in all programmes and actions.

All actions taken under this programming exercise shall comply with EU legislation, in particular EU restrictive measures (sanctions) adopted pursuant to Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

## 1.2. Status of joint programming

The EU and its Member States are the biggest donors to Moldova<sup>9</sup>. Current EU cooperation with Moldova aims at supporting the adoption and implementation of democratic reforms and at improving citizens' lives, with a focus on the Moldovan regions. Moldova started the joint programming process in 2015 when the EU, its Member States and Switzerland agreed to carry out a **joint analysis** of the

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<sup>6</sup> <https://moldova.un.org/en/93768-united-nations-moldova-covid-19-socio-economic-response-and-recovery-plan-updated-version>

<sup>7</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/political-guidelines-next-commission\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en_0.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join-2020-17-final\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://stats.oecd.org/>

country's economic, social and development context. In 2020, the joint analysis was updated with contributions from Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden along with the European Investment Bank as well as like-minded donors such as Switzerland. The EU, its Member States and their development agencies as well as the European financial institutions (the EIB and EBRD) agreed to step up successful cooperation in the context of Team Europe initiatives. Currently, 14 Member States have diplomatic representations in Moldova, with several others covering the country from nearby locations such as Kiev or Bucharest.

### 1.3. Priority areas of the EU's cooperation with the partner country/region

The priority areas of EU cooperation with Moldova are based on the Association Agenda for 2021-2027. This, in turn, reflects the policy objectives of the joint communication on the Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, with the overarching theme of resilience. The priority areas are: (i) a resilient, sustainable and integrated economy; (ii) accountable institutions, the rule of law and security; (iii) environmental and climate resilience; (iv) a resilient digital transformation; and (v) a resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive society.

Firstly, in line with the priority of a resilient, sustainable and integrated economy, Support will be directed towards **key investments, in line with the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) for the Eastern Partnership**. These investments will target in particular the competitiveness of the Moldovan economy, EU-Moldova trade, the green transition, sustainable transport infrastructure, and Moldova's human capital and gender equality. The European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+) will play a critical role to mobilise private sector investment. Considering the limited fiscal space, it will be important to develop a single project pipeline for Moldova, to ensure that lending possibilities target these strategic investments. To guarantee that these investments have a sustainable impact, investments will also be made in innovation and human capital, including at local level and addressing the urban-rural divide and gender gaps.

In light of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the volatile situation in the energy sector and the fallout of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, **priority will also be given to supporting the country and ensuring socio-economic recovery**, including through the implementation of the Economic Recovery Plan for Moldova. Support will be directed towards key investments, in particular sustainable transport infrastructure, private sector development and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), digital and energy connectivity, and investments in climate, environment, energy and blue economy<sup>10</sup> sectors.

Secondly, all investments will be **underpinned by support to the country's reforms in the rule of law, good governance and security and justice sectors** in line with the fundamental values of the EU, and will continue to be conditional upon Moldova's continued progress in these areas. Reforms in these areas are central for building a resilient society and sustainable and resilient recovery can only be achieved in an environment grounded in good governance, the rule of law and reliable statistics.

Thirdly, based on the recent political priorities and commitments by the European Commission and the High Representative<sup>11</sup> to **strengthen societal resilience** throughout the EU neighbourhood regions,

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<sup>10</sup> Moldova has endorsed the 2019 Bucharest Ministerial Declaration on the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea - [https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/ocean/sea-basins/black-sea\\_fr](https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/ocean/sea-basins/black-sea_fr)

<sup>11</sup> European Democracy Action Plan (3 December 2020); Joint Communication on Tackling COVID-19 Disinformation (10 June 2020) & Joint Communication "Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all" (18 March 2020)

including in Moldova, there is a clear need for sustained support for civil society, while youth, education and research remain important. The EU will step up its support in the area of **strategic communication**. Priority will be given to ensuring effective strategic communication about the EU's policies and support for Moldova, with a specific highlight placed on Team Europe umbrella communication<sup>12</sup>. Enhanced and targeted support will foster media independence and pluralism, raise awareness about disinformation, and strengthen societal resilience against it, through developing media, information and digital literacy and critical thinking skills. Wherever appropriate, this will include enhanced EU support to empower civil society and build the capacities of the Moldovan government to communicate more effectively about the EU and to respond better to disinformation.

Fourthly, work beyond 2020 will also focus on the **digital and green transformations**. Deliverables will focus on impact and making a difference to people's lives. The Multiannual Indicative Programme will ensure that all Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) targets are met. Particular attention will be given to the NDICI climate target, which will be directly supported through interventions foreseen in the third priority sector, but also by mainstreaming climate support in the other priority sectors. This MIP will ensure complementarity and coherence with the Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme for the Eastern Neighbourhood as well as with other regional cooperation programmes, and mirroring EU priorities including the Green Deal<sup>13</sup> and the Digital Agenda<sup>14</sup>. It will be complemented with other instruments such as the flagship Erasmus+ programme, which will continue to promote intercultural dialogue and awareness of European cultures and values, but also with other EU instruments as well as support provided through the European Civil Protection Mechanism (EUCPM).

In line with the EU gender action plan (GAP) III, **gender equality** will be mainstreamed throughout all programmes and actions.

#### **1.4. Justification and context**

##### **Resilient, sustainable and integrated economy and green job creation**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant negative impact on the Moldovan economy, notably on SMEs, leading to a drop in GDP, a decrease of private consumption, increased gender inequalities, and a worsening fiscal situation. Following the gas crisis and the knock-on effects of Russia's invasion in Ukraine, Moldova's already vulnerable economy is set for further steep contraction. Rising energy prices, high inflows of refugees, and trade and supply chain disruptions exert additional inflationary pressure. Strengthening the economy is therefore crucial to help the country withstand the multiple crises, meet citizens' expectations, reducing inequality and making Moldova a place where Moldovans want to build their future. The aim is to boost economic development and economic integration, increase women's participation in the labour force, create decent jobs and economic opportunities for both women and men, ensure prosperity for all citizens, and promote geographically-balanced growth opportunities, thus addressing the root causes of migration.

Looking ahead, the EU will expand the efforts initiated as part of the **Economic Recovery Plan for Moldova**, in conjunction with assistance to be channelled under the regional umbrella ("EU4Business") and the EFSD+. Implementing further trade facilitation measures and support to customs remain

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<sup>12</sup> Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU. Communication and visibility activities should be implemented in accordance with the EU communication and visibility requirements in force.

<sup>13</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/european-green-deal-communication\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/european-green-deal-communication_en.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/communication-shaping-europes-digital-future-feb2020\\_en\\_4.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/communication-shaping-europes-digital-future-feb2020_en_4.pdf);  
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0118>

important from the point of view of **boosting trade facilitation**, supply chain integration and addressing technical barriers to trade.

The EU will be investing in people, in particular youth, to **improve their employability** (including through vocational education and training). To promote decent work for all, the EU will also support strengthened labour rights and improved working conditions, in line with international standards and the EU acquis, as well as increased access to quality employment services. Human capital development and up-skilling the workforce remain a priority as well as creating economic opportunities in rural areas to decrease the urban-rural divide, promoting opportunities for reintegration of returning migrants and addressing the root causes of migration.

Additional support will be provided for transforming current economic structures into a **green economy**. Creating green jobs and green upskilling in different sectors will generate decent employment and income opportunities with a reduced environmental impact and an increased ability to cope with the challenges of climate change and scarce resources.

In terms of gender equality in the labour market, the focus should be on the following three priorities:

1. reducing the gender pay gap (currently disfavouring women by 14.4%)
2. bridging professional gender segregation (women dominate in lower-paid professions in education, health and social care professions while men prevail in higher-paid IT, financial and construction sectors);
3. addressing the unequal distribution of the care workload between men and women (women allocate twice as much time as men for household work, leaving women with fewer opportunities to engage into income-generating activities).

Although all sectors are characterised by substantial labour productivity gaps, agriculture is a particular concern, as it provides employment for about 20% of the population but generates only 10% of GDP. The causes of low productivity in the agricultural sector are complex and interdependent. Equally, the links between agriculture and industry are quite weak and their consolidation could have a substantial positive impact on both sectors.

The EU has paid particular attention in recent years to support for private sector development and services in specific ‘focal regions’ in the country, with a view to promoting smart specialisation, encouraging youth employment and reducing territorial disparities. Pilot programmes were launched in Cahul and Ungheni. The local dimension will continue to be an essential part of the present MIP, with support for local authorities and regional smart specialisation to be extended to other regions. These initiatives will also be used as tools to incentivise territorial reform.

These initiatives will contribute to EIP Flagship 1: Supporting a sustainable, innovative, green and competitive economy; and Flagship 2: Boosting EU-Moldova trade;

*Related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 1: No poverty, 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, 5: Gender equality, 8: Decent work and economic growth, 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure, Climate action*

### **Accountable institutions, the rule of law and security**

To ensure the good governance of public sector entities and to improve implementation of the rule of law, Moldova must strengthen the independence, accountability, professionalism and efficiency of its institutions. An independent judiciary governed by a legal framework in line with European standards and which implements them in practice will ensure that all state institutions abide by the law and that citizens have access to justice and can exercise their rights fully. It is also crucial for international cooperation and much needed economic development and improving the business climate, including

attracting foreign investment. EU support for justice sector reform therefore continues to be critical to strengthen the resilience of society as a whole.

While in recent years some progress has been made, a lack of political will and widespread corruption have prevented the design and implementation of genuine reforms. Moldovan civil society as well as private sector representatives have emphasised the need to improve results significantly in the governance area, notably the rule of law, the fight against corruption, money laundering, organised crime and the role of independent media and civil society. Under this priority area, the EU will support progressive reform agendas on anti-corruption and accountability, investigation of bank fraud asset recovery (including by the set-up of a new national asset recovery mechanism) and anti-money laundering measures.

The country has made some progress in the fight against corruption and money laundering since 2016. Specialised prosecution and investigation bodies have been established, as well as an e-declaration system for civil servants. However, new institutions and revised mandates, coupled with weak implementation still make it difficult to address high-level corruption and corruption in high-risk areas such as the health, education, agriculture and private sectors. The EU will support the integrity of the public sector, with a focus on effective assets control. In the field of money laundering, the Moneyval Committee of the Council of Europe adopted in 2019 the mutual evaluation report for Moldova against the 40 Recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force. Implementing these recommendations will further strengthen the national legislative framework in the country as well as the capacity of key investigation and prosecution bodies to fully implement the EU Anti Money Laundering Directives.

There is a need to strengthen the independence and effectiveness of the Constitutional Court, as well as continuing the reform of the public administration at central and local levels especially in line with the ongoing public finance management reform. The results-oriented agenda, supported by professionally independent, good quality official statistics for monitoring progress and in support of evidence-based decision-making, will therefore be reinforced in the future support for this priority area. Democratic consolidation including inclusive electoral reform and support for improved transparency and oversight in parliament is also important to strengthen the role and functioning of the parliament.

Future assistance will help Moldova to improve and strengthen local autonomy. There is a need to continue support for public administration reform at all levels. The ongoing improvement of public finance management, budgetary planning, execution and control are key elements of this support. Moreover, public investment, public procurement, and the efficiency and effectiveness of local administration through successful territorial reform and amalgamation, fostering fiscal decentralisation, will be important. There is also a need for support to strengthen gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming to ensure that reforms promote equality between women and men.

Moldova has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). Support is needed for its successful implementation.

Furthermore, the next period will introduce the external dimension of the EU Security Union Strategy in the EU's programming. This will include: working on protecting critical infrastructure in Moldova as a neighbouring country to the EU and on the exchange of information (legal and police cooperation), security sector reform; support for the fight against serious and organised crime, including fight against illicit drugs and corruption; addressing trafficking in human beings; fight against cybercrime; countering hybrid threats and strengthening cyber security, terrorism, firearm trafficking, and cooperation with Europol and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL). An operational cooperation Agreement with Europol and a Working Arrangement with CEPOL are in force.

*Related SDGs: 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, 5: Gender equality.*

## **Environment and climate resilience**

Moldova's green and blue economy potential will be unleashed through policy reform and strengthening environmental governance, enhanced connectivity, more sustainable transport policy, as well as an operational and competitive energy market in line with EU rules. All the activities will take inspiration from the European Green Deal and be aligned with the Paris Agreement as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, therefore embedding the principles of climate resilience and "doing no significant harm" to climate and environment as crosscutting elements.

The main areas for operations will be municipal and selected local/community infrastructure, including energy efficiency and renewables, support for introducing a carbon pricing system and other tools to limit greenhouse gas and air pollutant emissions. This will improve public service delivery by creating a conducive environment for green growth and sustainable development. Energy security will be addressed by strengthening transmission networks, energy efficiency and increased diversification of energy sources.

Assisting Moldova in fighting pollution (air, water) by developing emission inventories and monitoring systems will help the country improve the health of its citizens, meet its international commitments on climate and environment and approximate to the EU legislation.

The greening and climate adaptation of agricultural and maritime policies, where possible in line with the Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy<sup>15</sup>, as well as biodiversity protection should be supported.

Sustainable management of transboundary water resources will receive particular attention. Climate adaptation will be framed by Disaster Risk Reduction, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030<sup>16</sup>, as well as disaster risk management actions under the EU CPM.

As women have limited access to climate resilience decision-making and greener economic growth, it is important to more widely engage women in these processes to use their vision, experience and address climate-related problems experienced by women such as proper access to natural resources and utilities.

The EU will continue the strategic collaboration with International Financial Institutions. The EU will continue investing in blending finance to support 'green' investments and infrastructure, thereby addressing issues such as energy poverty, inefficient use of resources, land degradation, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening environmental and climate resilience.

These initiatives will contribute to EIP Flagship 3: Increasing energy efficiency

*Related SDGs: 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; 3: Good health and well being; 6: Clean water and sanitation, 7: Affordable and clean energy, 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure, 11: Sustainable cities and communities, 12: Responsible consumption and production, 13: Climate action, 15: Life on land*

## **Resilient digital transformation**

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<sup>15</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en).

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>.



The Digital Agenda for Europe was established with a view to stimulating economic growth while at the same time addressing social challenges through information and communications technology. In both cases, gender is of particular relevance<sup>17</sup>. The achievements of Moldova in the field of information and communications technology (ICT) provide a good starting point for the digital transformation of its economy and the society. Dedicated programmes were initiated already several years ago<sup>18</sup>.

The Moldovan legal and regulatory system is relatively well aligned with the EU regulatory framework<sup>19</sup>. However, the assessment identified some areas for improvement in order to strengthen National Regulatory Authority organisational and financial independence.<sup>20</sup>

Support will be envisaged for digital transformation, including e-government, broadband infrastructure, e-trade, e-health, digital skills, e-learning, digitalisation of traditional sectors and public services as well as innovative digital start-ups. The EU will support women's engagement in digital professions, since they currently only make up 19% of ICT professionals. In launching digital public services and solutions, it is critical to ensure that women and men equally benefit from them, and that no one is left behind digital transformations because of economic status, place of residence or digital literacy level. Concrete measures will be put in place to accompany those who are in need of support in the digital transformation, notably the elderly population.

Moldova already benefits from free and open access to space data and the services of the EU flagships Copernicus and Galileo. Moldova will also benefit from EGNOS, the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service, for safer and greener aviation. The objective is to support the capacity of the public institutions to use the EU space data and services to enable a smart, modern and digitalised economy and for evidence-based policy-making.

Furthermore, the EU will assist Moldova in strengthening its response to threats related to cyber security and cyber-crime, for instance through offering support to establish a robust cyber threats monitoring and reaction mechanism (Cyber Security Operation Centre and national CERT) to help identify possible cyberattacks and enable relevant authorities to launch and coordinate responsive action when necessary. In addition, the EU will support building and enhancing the central governmental agency (the National Cyber Security Centre) responsible for cyber security at the national level and work on strengthening cybersecurity of the whole governmental sector. . Other policy objectives include aligning Moldova's legal framework to the EU Directive on security of network and information systems (NIS Directive 2016/1148).

*Related SDGs: 4: Quality education, 8: Decent work and economic growth, 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure, 11: Sustainable cities and communities*

## **Resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies**

EU-Moldova bilateral cooperation will focus on human capital development and better matching skills supply to demand. Over the medium-long term, this will reduce brain drain and emigration rates. The EU will support the modernisation and reform of the Moldovan education system at all levels, and a stronger integration between higher education, research and innovation. This will boost employability

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<sup>17</sup> In terms of economic growth, the so-called knowledge economy is a key economic factor underpinning national and EU development. The World Bank suggests that every 10 % increase in access to broadband results in a 1.38 % rise in GDP in developing countries. <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/digital-agenda>

<sup>18</sup> Government Decision on the approval of the Strategy for the Development of the Information Technology Industry and the Digital Innovation Ecosystem for 2018-2023 and the Action Plan for its implementation, No. 904 of 09.24.2018.

<sup>19</sup> Completed by "EU4Digital: supporting digital economy and society in the Eastern Partnership

<sup>20</sup> Report "Gap assessment of the Republic of Moldova regulatory system in the field of electronic communications", <https://eufordigital.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Gap-assessment-of-Moldova-regulatory-system-in-the-field-of-electronic-communications.pdf>

by investing in young people's skills development according to labour market needs. In complementarity with regional initiatives for the Eastern Partnership region, the EU will support youth empowerment and leadership as well as youth participation in policy-making. Furthermore, the education sector in Moldova is highly gendered: women outperform men in completing secondary education, accessing higher education or participating in lifelong learning. However, it does not translate into gender equality in the labour market, as women remain at greater risk of social exclusion, unemployment and low-quality jobs.

Engaging with civil society has been critical in ensuring effective reforms: this increases public accountability, advances human rights and local development, gender equality and ensures service delivery to the whole population, including people belonging to vulnerable groups. Targeted EU support to civil society will strengthen their capacities, ensuring that assistance also reaches grassroots organisations in rural areas. In particular, support should go to civil society platforms (Eastern Partnership platform and Association Agreement platform). The roadmap for engagement with civil society will ensure the internal coherence of the financial support allocated to civil society organisations. This assistance will particularly aim at increasing their capacity to perform their roles better:

- i) as independent actors of governance and development,
- ii) in promoting, communicating and disseminating information on European values and reform processes related to the implementation of the Association Agreement, including the implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan,
- iii) in supporting social entrepreneurship and job creation for vulnerable people,
- iv) further extending local development multi-stakeholder approaches to rural development (LEADER approach) or urban regeneration.

The visa-free regime is one of the main achievements in the EU-Moldova relationship. The Visa Liberalisation benchmarks and the recommendations in the regular Visa Suspension Mechanism Reports<sup>21</sup> issued by the European Commission need to be continuously fulfilled. The cooperation on migration includes efforts to reduce the number of unfounded asylum applications lodged by citizens of Moldova<sup>22</sup>, to enhance the cooperation on return and readmission including the provision of reintegration support, strengthen border management, including cooperation with Frontex, promote legal migration while respecting existing national legislation and competences, notably in the context of the Talent Partnerships proposed under the New Pact on Migration and Asylum<sup>23</sup>. In terms of prevention of irregular migration and fight against migrant smuggling, actions and initiatives should be stepped up in line with the renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling (2021-2025). Moldovan society is heavily affected by migration (every year around 0.07% of women and 0.06% of men emigrate from Moldova<sup>24</sup>).

High numbers of people at risk of marginalisation, especially from the older generation or children left behind (emigration is particularly heavy in the age of 25-44 years old<sup>25</sup>), are exposed to poverty and exclusion. A main priority will be to support social services for those belonging to vulnerable groups, ensure gender equality and prevent violence against women and girls, including domestic violence.

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<sup>21</sup> Latest, fourth report (2021) available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda\\_21\\_3964](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_3964) .

<sup>22</sup> In 2020 citizens of Moldova lodged 6440 asylum applications in EU; the rate of positive decisions was 1%.

<sup>23</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en) .

<sup>24</sup> [https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/20%20Populatia%20si%20procese%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procese%20demografice\\_\\_POP\\_\\_POP070/POP070400.px/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774](https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/20%20Populatia%20si%20procese%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procese%20demografice__POP__POP070/POP070400.px/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774)

<sup>25</sup> [https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/20%20Populatia%20si%20procese%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procese%20demografice\\_\\_POP\\_\\_POP070/POP070400.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774](https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/20%20Populatia%20si%20procese%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procese%20demografice__POP__POP070/POP070400.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774)

The health sector has proven to be vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU support in the next period will focus on assessing the needs to improve the resilience of health and education institutions, enhancing human resources' capacity to respond to emergencies and facilitating equitable access to quality health services. The health sector in Moldova is highly gendered. Women generally live longer than men (life expectancy at birth is 75.1 years for women and 66.8 years for men<sup>26</sup>). However, fewer women are expected to live healthy life years than men.

In complementarity with regional initiatives for the Eastern Partnership region, the EU will support Moldova to maximise the potential of its cultural heritage and creative industries as catalysts of national cohesion and engines for sustainable social and economic development. The EU will promote the key role of culture to build openness and promote European values as well as to foster intercultural dialogue for peaceful inter-community relations.

The progress or stagnation of the Transnistrian conflict settlement can affect the overall security, economic development, customs or legal cooperation. The EU will continue its support for the conflict settlement at the political level, strongly supported by confidence-building measures, improving the living conditions of the population on both sides of the Nistru river through their mutual cooperation e.g. joint initiatives involving local authorities, civil society organisations and other stakeholders.

The EU should continue and increase, where appropriate, its support for independent media and journalists in Moldova, including in its Transnistrian region, to increase the quality and diversity of produced content, promote sectoral cooperation between the right and left banks and improve financial sustainability of media businesses in the whole country. Furthermore, sustained efforts will continue in the area of strategic communication and raising awareness of the target audiences on EU policies and support, show-casing Team Europe efforts and focusing on impactful public outreach. Opinion polls conducted in 2020 and early 2021 indicate a high susceptibility of the population to foreign disinformation as well as weak skills within the society to distinguish between false and true information. This calls for greater EU support to strengthen societal resilience to foreign information manipulation and interference, including through media and information literacy, fostering civil society initiatives aimed at addressing disinformation, as well as for enhanced and targeted support for media independence and pluralism.

These initiatives will contribute to EIP Flagship 5: Human capital development

*Related SDGs: 1: End poverty, 3: Healthy lives and well-being at all ages, 4: Quality education, 5: Gender equality, 8: Decent work and economic growth, 10: Reduce inequality; 11: Sustainable cities and communities, 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions.*

### **1.5. Duration of the MIP and option for synchronisation**

The duration of the MIP coincides with the Multiannual Financial Framework and the EU-Moldova Association Agenda and covers the seven-year period from 2021-2027. It will be subjected to a mid-term review and possibly ad-hoc reviews, if needed. Synchronisation will be done through jointly agreed documents. In the case of a new or updated joint document, the MIP may be reviewed accordingly.

## **2. EU support per priority area and proposals of Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs)**

In addition to the priority areas and TEIs, a series of flagship initiatives for Moldova have been included in the Joint Staff Working Document "Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities". These are concrete priority projects with tangible results that have been jointly identified

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<sup>26</sup>[https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice\\_\\_POPrec\\_\\_POP020/POP020700rcl.px/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774](https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice__POPrec__POP020/POP020700rcl.px/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774)

with the partner countries, taking into account their priorities, needs and ambitions. They are closely linked with the priorities outlined in the MIP. The five flagships for Moldova are presented in Annex 3. Civil society will be engaged in the five identified priority areas, playing an important role in policy dialogue as well as in overseeing reform progress.

## **2.1 Priority area 1: Resilient, sustainable and integrated economy**

The overall objective is to boost economic development, economic integration, create decent jobs and economic opportunities for both women and men.

### **2.1.1 Specific objectives related to the priority area**

S.O. 1. To strengthen economic competitiveness and boost exports through full implementation of the DCFTA;

S.O. 2. To improve access to services and financing for SMEs through guarantee schemes, interest rate subsidies, investment incentives and equity in line with applicable rules on state aid;

S.O. 3. To foster decent work and improve employability and capacity for increased access to the labour market, with a focus on regional development and gender aspects.

### **2.1.2. Expected results per specific objective**

For S.O. 1:

- R 1.1: Continuous positive results achieved in bilateral trade and economic relations;
- R 1.2: Increased institutional capacities and support services for trade and export facilitation;
- R 1.3: New opportunities in high-growth potential areas such as agriculture, greening of the economy and digital markets are seized;
- R 1.4: Increase in access to high value market segments for agriculture produce, blue economy, and for value addition in the country;
- R 1.5: Start of implementation of Smart Specialisation strategy.

For S.O. 2

- R 2.1: SMEs, in particular those from rural areas and owned by women, are developed, including social enterprises, and they have broader access to financing and to services;
- R 2.2: Innovative and smart financing and business development programmes (including equity, venture capital, business angel, crowd funding and business advice) are available for start-ups and SMEs, using a gender-balanced approach (overcoming stereotypes against women in business, ensuring women's access to credit and services, addressing gender segregation of business niches) complying with applicable rules on state aid.

For S.O. 3

- R 3.1: Reduced disparities between regions and between urban and rural areas in Moldova;
- R 3.2: Young people's knowledge and skills match future labour market needs;
- R 3.3: Decrease in informal employment as a share of total employment;
- R 3.4: Improved conditions of work, including health and safety, and improved effective application of labour rights;
- R 3.5. Reduction in the difference between how much time women and men invest in unpaid work (care for family members, house chores);

- R 3.6. Women and men in all their diversity have equal opportunities, equal access to employment, decent work, equal pay for work of equal value in order to be economically independent.

### **2.1.3. Indicators (including baseline and targets), per expected result**

Key indicators include the following:

- Volume and/or value of trade with the EU;
- Number of innovative funding opportunities and amounts (in EUR) available for start-ups and SMEs;
- Employment rate at national level, sex-disaggregated;

### **2.1.4 Possible use of blending and guarantees for investment under EFSD+**

Improvement of access to finance of SMEs will be implemented through blending and private guarantees under the Neighbourhood Investment Plan (NIP)/EFSD+ in line with applicable rules on state aid. Focus will be on supporting investments contributing to the green and digital transition in Moldova.

This priority links with the following Flagships of the EIP, to be funded under EFSD+ and, where appropriate, via bilateral or regional allocations under NDICI – Global Europe: Flagship 1: Supporting a sustainable, innovative, green and competitive economy – direct support for 50 000 SMEs; Flagship 2: Boosting EU-Moldova trade – construction of an inland freight terminal in Chisinau.

### **2.1.5 Risks**

The overall **risks** to the sector intervention are:

- Political instability, exacerbation of the gas crisis, or escalation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine impacts the government's ability and commitment to implement provisions of the AA/DCFTA and to adopt needed economic development strategy and programmes;
- Corruption, the informal economy and a lack of financial capacity of SMEs increase the asymmetry of information between banks and SMEs and thereafter the cost and possibility of lending;
- Delays or failures to eliminate deficiencies in the financial-banking sector and the capital market, the system of legal protection of property rights etc., which limit (discourage) private investment for business start-up and development, infrastructure co-financing and public services;
- Insufficient and inadequate available labour force which limits economic attractiveness, professional horizontal gender segregation that channels women to lower-paid jobs;
- Constraints that women entrepreneurs face in terms of access to credit and support services for SMEs caused by stereotypes against women in business; gender segregation of business niches may prevent women from equally benefiting from the intervention.

The EU will closely monitor and react to mitigate the impact of any of the above-mentioned risks by, *inter alia*, allocating human, financial, technical and diplomatic resources and by reinforcing the policy dialogue and through the application of smart conditionality.

## **2.2. Priority area 2: Accountable institutions, the rule of law and security**

The overall objective is to promote good governance and democratic institutions, the rule of law, effective anti-corruption policies, fight against organised crime, respect for human rights and

strengthening security. Civil society engagement will be supported in advancing rule of law reforms across the board and promoting public administration transparency, accountability, inclusive, evidence-based and gender-sensitive policy-making and integrity in both the public and private sector.

### **2.2.1. Specific objectives related to the priority area**

S.O. 1. To strengthen the rule of law and accountable institutions, including by supporting the independence, professionalism and accountability of the judiciary and prosecution in line with European standards. Promoting equal access to justice and prison reform by stepping up the fight against corruption and by supporting the Parliament to exercise effective oversight and promote accountability for government decisions and to ensure an open, transparent and participatory legislative process.

S.O. 2. To improve the efficiency, effectiveness, governance, and equality at all levels of public administration through public administration reform at national and local levels and territorial-administrative reform, with a focus on public services, public finance management and capacity-building in key institutions, to strengthen the production of reliable and timely official statistics.

S.O. 3. To combat organised crime and strengthen security, including the fight against money-laundering and terrorism-financing, countering hybrid threats, illicit drugs, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in human beings, violence against women, cyber-crime, terrorism and firearms trafficking, and to support Moldova's cooperation with Europol and CEPOL.

### **2.2.2. Expected results per specific objective**

For S.O. 1:

- R 1.1: An independent, accountable and effective judiciary and prosecution system in line with European standards is in place and public trust in the judiciary increases;
- R 1.2: All state institutions abide by the law and ethical standards and citizens have access to justice and can exercise their rights fully;
- R 1.3: The penitentiary system and resocialisation programmes better comply with international standards and the legal aid service and capacities of lawyers and legal professions to defend citizens' rights are improved;
- R 1.4: Investigating and prosecuting corruption-related crimes becomes more effective and efficient, in particular regarding high-level corruption; and the overall perception of corruption in society decreases;
- R 1.5: The capacity of the criminal asset recovery agency and other relevant specialised authorities is strengthened and inter-agency cooperation mechanisms for asset recovery and management are established and implemented. Parallel financial investigations and international cooperation are improved;
- R 1.6: The institutional capacity of the Parliament of Moldova is strengthened including for more effective oversight, based on the existence of a majority strongly committed to reforms, not controlled by vested interest groups and demonstrably committed to implementing the Association Agreement.

For S.O. 2:

- R 2.1: The transparency and accountability of the public administration, including state-owned enterprises, are enhanced;
- R 2.2: Consolidate central public administration reform, improve policy development including performance-based budgeting and mid-term budgeting. Carry out local territorial reform;
- R 2.3: Higher consideration of gender equality in decision-making in all branches of the government at the national and subnational level;

- R.2.4: The quality, accessibility, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of public services, including e-governance services, both at national and local levels are enhanced;
- R 2.5: The quality and accountability in the governance of public finances at national and subnational levels and gradual approximation with relevant EU fiscal governance standards are improved. Public Finance Management and Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability strategies, including gender-responsive budgeting, are adopted;
- R 2.6: The coverage and quality of available statistics, including sex-disaggregated statistics, are improved and use of official statistics made for policy decisions is increased; reliable and timely official statistics are available for policy makers and end users.

For S.O. 3:

- R 3.1: Strengthened institutional capacity of Moldova to ensure the security of its population and to be more resilient to security threats;
- R 3.2: A solid and effective framework to fight organised crime is in place to ensure comprehensive and proportionate criminalisation of activities linked to organised crime, sufficient resources and expertise, appropriate access of competent authorities to information sources, adequate investigative techniques and effective channels for international cooperation;
- R 3.3: The National Antidrug Strategy 2020-27 is effectively implemented and full participation in the EU4Monitoring Drugs programme managed by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction is ensured. The National Antidrug Agency is created and operationalised.
- R 3.4: National legislative, strategic and operational capacities to prevent, detect and counter the trafficking of firearms are enhanced;
- R 3.5: Enhanced capacity to prevent and fight against trafficking in human beings, as well as to ensure the early identification of victims; provision of proper assistance and support to all victims or potential victims of trafficking, and in particular vulnerable groups, including women and children;
- R 3.6: The Istanbul Convention is ratified and implemented, law enforcement authorities and the judiciary identify, investigate and prosecute cases of gender-based violence; public tolerance to violence against women is reduced;
- R 3.7: A functional and enforceable framework to fight cybercrime is in place;
- R 3.7: Cooperation in chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defence (CBRN) related issues from the perspective of counter-terrorism, hybrid threats and disaster risk reduction is strengthened;
- R 3.9: Cooperation with Europol and CEPOL is enhanced.

### **2.2.3. Indicators (including baseline and targets), per expected result**

Key indicators include the following:

- Level of implementation of the justice reform; level of compliance of the legal framework to European standards and Council of Europe (Venice Commission and GRECO) recommendations and level of implementation of the Justice Reform Strategy; number of corruption cases reported, disaggregated by source (State or non-State actors), as well as number of investigations and convictions in these cases;
- Results of the CEPEJ Eastern Partnership Dashboard and the World Bank Justice Surveys;
- Level of implementation of the territorial reform; budget transparency and oversight; use of statistics for evidence-based decision-making.
- Number of victims of human right violations directly benefitting from assistance funded by the EU, sex-disaggregated.

#### **2.2.4 Risks**

The overall **risks** to the sector intervention are:

- Political instability, exacerbation of the gas crisis, or further escalation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has an impact on the government's ability and commitment to implement the provisions of the AA/DCFTA;
- Internal and external political tensions and macro-economic shocks divert the Government's focus, restrict the pace and direction of the public administration and justice and security home affairs reforms and inhibit the capacity of the Government to finance its reform agenda and make the necessary capital investments;
- A lack of political will and/or vested interests derail the public administration and justice and security home affairs reforms and efforts to fight against corruption; resistance within the public administration, the judiciary, prosecution services and border management services to the proposed reforms;
- Gender stereotypes against women in government and decision-making – pervasive in Moldovan society – constitute an obstacle to policy reform. Reluctance of law enforcement authorities and the judiciary to intensify persecution of perpetrators of violence against women, including domestic violence.

The EU will closely monitor and react to mitigate the impact of any of the above-mentioned risks, by, *inter alia*, allocating human, financial, technical and diplomatic resources and by reinforcing the policy dialogue.

### **2.3. Priority area 3: Environment and climate resilience**

The overall objective is to address climate change and strengthen environment and climate resilience as well as to tackle major environmental challenges by stimulating a circular economy, enhanced sustainable transport, green and blue economy, in line with the zero-pollution ambition of the European Green Deal. Environmental and energy civil society organisations and think tanks and general population at large will be supported in their awareness raising, advocacy and quality expertise provision roles.

#### **2.3.1. Specific objectives related to the priority area**

S.O. 1. To reduce air pollutant emissions in view of reducing impacts of air pollution on health and the environment and working towards the zero-pollution ambition;

S.O. 2. To promote the development of a resource-efficient, clean and circular economy based on a more sustainable use of natural resources as well as promoting green public services, including sustainable transport connectivity, and the protection of nature and ecosystems;

S.O. 3. To improve energy security and promote green and blue economy, including through promoting energy efficiency and renewable energies;



S.O. 4. To modernise relevant legislation and institutional frameworks with a view to engaging citizens and stakeholders in order to reinforce climate resilience (including both mitigation and adaptation policies), and disaster risk reduction efforts.

### **2.3.2. Expected results per specific objective**

For SO 1:

- R 1.1: Establish and make operational a permanent system for air quality monitoring of air pollutant concentrations, in the framework of a broader air quality management system, and in line with EU Directives 2008/50 and 2004/107;
- R 1.2: Establish and implement air quality plans and measures in areas with excessive concentrations of air pollutants, and in line with EU Directives 2008/50 and 2004/107;
- R 1.3: Annual submissions of air pollutant emission inventories and projections, in line with the EU Directive 2016/2284 and the Air Convention Gothenburg Protocol requirements.

For SO 2:

- R 2.1: Rollout of pilot innovative projects, e.g. electric and hydrogen mobility, diffusion of bio-based technologies and scale-up circular economy approach on secondary raw materials;
- R 2.2: Land restoration, extension of forested and protected areas, biodiversity protection and green measures, sustainable management of water and land resources (incl. sustainable irrigation) expanded;
- R 2.3: Introduce a carbon pricing mechanism compatible with the EU Emissions Trading Scheme;
- R 2.4: Improved resource and energy efficiency and increased coverage of drinking water, wastewater and solid waste treatment systems as well as enhanced service delivery;
- R 2.5: Improved and increased sustainable transport connectivity (including cooperation under the Eastern Partnership Road Safety Observatory) in road, rail, aviation (including under the EU-Moldova Common Aviation Area Agreement), maritime and waterborne sectors; increased safety and efficiency based on relevant international and EU standards; more sustainable urban mobility.

For SO 3:

- R 3.1: Increased energy security;
- R 3.2: Increased energy efficiency and higher share of renewable energies from local sources in the energy mix, increased market competition and transparency also through enhanced independence of the energy regulator and implementation of EU energy market and sustainable energy legislation;
- R 3.3: Integration of environmental and climate concerns in all sectors of the economy;
- R 3.4: New green and blue economic development and jobs created linked to the green transition, equally available to women and men.

For SO 4:

- R 4.1: Continued approximation with EU acquis with policy documents, laws and secondary legislation related to climate action and environmental legislation;
- R 4.2: Improved administrative set-up with the capacity to elaborate, implement and enforce environmental and climate-related legislation;
- R 4.3: A legal and regulatory framework in the fields of environmental and climate action which is more conducive to the engagement of citizens in general and women in particular;
- R 4.4: A reinforced civil society network on environmental and climate issues, with strong capacities to participate effectively in decision-making processes.

### **2.3.3. Indicators (including baseline and targets), per expected result**

Key indicators include the following:

- Reduction of air pollutant concentrations and emissions per year;
- Number of new green jobs created, ratio of women and men employed at new green jobs;
- Completion of the strategic infrastructure projects on transport, gas and electricity connectivity with EU/Romania;
- Renewable energy generation capacity installed (Megawatt with EU support.
- Number of cities with climate change and/or disaster risk reduction strategies developed / under implementation with EU support;
- Number of micro, small and medium enterprises applying sustainable consumption and production practices with EU support.

### **2.3.4. Possible use of blending and guarantees for investment under EFSD+**

Large-scale infrastructure would benefit from blending investments. EFSD+ could also address some infrastructure development, including at municipal level as well as green growth in general. The type of guarantees could be sovereign or sub-sovereign with some opportunity to foresee also guarantees for private investments on renewable energy development.

This priority links, inter alia, with the following Flagships of the EIP to be funded under EFSD+ and, where appropriate, via bilateral or regional allocations under NDICI – Global Europe: Flagship 3: Increasing energy efficiency - expanding the refurbishment of district heating systems in residential buildings in Chisinau and Balti; Flagship 4: Improving connectivity - anchoring Moldova in the TEN-T.

### **2.3.5 Risks**

The overall **risks to** the sector intervention are:

- Political instability, exacerbation of the gas crisis, or further escalation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has an impact on the government's ability and commitment to act in this area;

- Insufficiently mature, fundable infrastructure investment projects due to a lack of clarity on the prioritisation of investments among different line ministries;
- Lack of financial, technical and human resource capacities in the national and local public administrations to design, manage, monitor and co-finance development projects;
- Exclusion of women from processes related to climate resilience and greener economic growth;
- Climate impacts are addressed insufficiently in sectorial legislation and policies, even in highly climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, energy, forestry and health; nor are they sufficiently mainstreamed into legislation on disaster preparedness.

The EU will closely monitor and react to mitigate the impact of any of the above-mentioned risks by, *inter alia*, allocating human, financial, technical and diplomatic resources and by reinforcing the policy dialogue.

## **2.4. Priority area 4: Resilient digital transformation**

The overall objective is to support digital transformation, including e-government, broadband infrastructure, e-trade, e-health, digital skills, digitalisation of traditional sectors and public services taking into account the principle of gender equality, and integration into the EU digital single market, ensuring a wide territorial coverage.

### **2.4.1. Specific objectives related to the priority area**

S.O. 1: To support the adoption of legal frameworks related to digital transformation in line with EU legislation and best practices and to strengthen e-governance.

S.O. 2: To assist digital start-ups and SMEs to improve their access to finance, reach into EU markets, and link with EU innovation ecosystems;

S.O. 3: To develop robust legal and policy cybersecurity frameworks and relevant institutional and operational capacities based on EU legislation and best practices.

### **2.4.2. Expected results per specific objective**

For S.O. 1:

- R 1.1: Digital-related legal framework adopted or revised in line with EU legislation and best practices and then implemented;
- R 1.2. Citizens and businesses, including women-owned and in rural areas, have equal access to high quality electronic communications infrastructure and services;
- R 1.3: IT solutions increase efficiency, transparency and accountability for public administration;
- R 1.4: Space data and services are taken into consideration in policies and solutions for efficient agriculture, smart and safe transport, emergency response.

For S.O. 2:

- R 2.1 Digital start-ups ecosystem established in line with EU best practices;
- R 2.2 New digital start-ups created and increased access to finance for SMEs, including women-owned.

For S.O. 3:

- R 3.1: Cybersecurity legal and policy framework aligned with the EU legislation and best practices including with the Network and Information Security (NIS) Directive<sup>27</sup>;
- R 3.2: Relevant cyber institutional and operational capacities are developed and operational;
- R 3.3: Cyberattacks effectively countered;

#### **2.4.3. Indicators (including baseline and targets), per expected result**

Key indicators include the following:

- Number of people (disaggregated by sex, geographic region, urban/rural, age group, type of connection, i.e. mobile or fixed) and companies (disaggregated by sex of owner and/or top manager) benefitting , through concrete measures to access to digitalised public and private services due to EU support;
- Number of new digital start-ups (disaggregated by sex of owner and/or top manager) supported;
- Number of cybersecurity-related policies/strategies/laws/regulations developed and/or revised to align with the EU legislative and policy framework, and /or implemented with support of the EU.

#### **2.4.4 Risks**

The overall **risks** to the sector intervention are:

- Political instability, exacerbation of the gas crisis, or further escalation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has an impact on the government's ability and commitment to adopt needed economic digital transformation strategy and programmes;
- Enterprises and entrepreneurs are not making the necessary investments to adapt to the digital transformation era and do not have the necessary knowledge;
- There is a lack of political will and limited institutional and human capacities within the stakeholder ministries to formulate, manage and monitor the implementation of the digital transformation and cyber security policies;
- Insufficient and inadequate available labour force, limiting Moldova's economic attractiveness;
- Elderly people excluded from the digitalisation process, and experience it as an obstacle to their awareness/access to social benefit and health services.

### **2.5. Priority area 5: Resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies**

The main objective is to invest in human capital development and to improve the living conditions of the population, with a special focus on support to civil society organisations, mobility, youth participation, media, gender equality and social inclusion.

#### **2.5.1. Specific objectives related to the priority area**

S.O. 1. To enhance societal resilience through inclusive and equitable quality education, research and innovation, support to civil society, youth empowerment, development of media and information literacy and enhanced and targeted support for countering disinformation, media independence and pluralism;

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<sup>27</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2016/1148/oj> .

S.O. 2. To ensure mobility and people-to-people contacts and reduce brain drain by strengthening social inclusion and quality of life and supporting the establishment of a conducive environment for labour mobility opportunities, diaspora engagement, reintegration of returning migrants; to strengthen Moldova's migration management capacities, supporting Moldova to continue fulfilling the visa liberalisation benchmarks, including to address the issue of unfounded asylum application in the EU and fight against irregular migration, enhance return and readmission, reinforce border management and promote legal migration;

S.O. 3. To contribute to the facilitation of the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict by increasing confidence between both sides of the Nistru River through joint initiatives involving local authorities, civil society organisations and other stakeholders, and to address specific security-related concerns of men and women through the Women, Peace and Security Process.<sup>28</sup>

### **2.5.2. Expected results per specific objective**

For S.O. 1:

- R 1.1: Improved efficiency and effectiveness of the education system (including resilience to shocks) for better learning outcomes, including through eliminating gender stereotypes from textbooks and teaching processes and ensuring that social inclusion and equity are part of any digital education reform;
- R 1.2: More equitable access to quality education at all levels (primary, secondary, higher education and Vocational education and training (VET), reduced drop-out rates and gender stereotypes in the selection of future professions;
- R 1.3: Increased availability and presence of qualified and motivated teachers and education staff;
- R 1.4: Improved use of appropriate teaching and learning methods and resources, including digital resources;
- R 1.5: Improved access to, relevance and quality of lifelong learning;
- R 1.6: Improved integration between higher education, VET, research and innovation;
- R 1.7: Research-industry partnerships are fostered. The diversification of the economy is increased thanks to the growth of innovative sectors;
- R 1.8: Capacity of civil society organisations, including social partners, youth organisations and grassroots organisations in rural areas, to engage meaningfully in policy-making processes and policy dialogue is strengthened;
- R 1.9: Strengthened media, information and digital literacy and critical thinking skills of citizens;
- R 1.10: Strengthened media independence and pluralism;
- R 1.11: Established NGOs addressing the disinformation phenomenon.

For S.O. 2:

- R 2.1: Migration-sensitive approaches are promoted horizontally in all strategic sectors of the EU-MD AA and bilateral cooperation programmes;

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<sup>28</sup> Please refer to UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security: <https://www.peacewomen.org/security-council/WPS-in-SC-Council>.

- R 2.2: Moldovan economy and society benefit from diaspora engagement, in-country investments from migrant remittances, labour migration and integration of returning migrants;
- R 2.3: Data management capacities of the national authorities (including in statistics services) are strengthened, and sex-disaggregated migration data are mainstreamed for evidence-based policy planning in all sectors;
- R 2.4: Social inclusion is enhanced through strengthened legal and policy frameworks of social protection and safety nets for minorities and groups at risk of marginalisation;
- R 2.5: Enhanced capacities on migration and mobility, including to enhance border management, also via cooperation with Frontex, to prevent irregular migration and fight against migrant smuggling, to reinforce the effectiveness of return and readmission procedure and their sustainability, to decrease the number of unfounded asylum applications, and to promote legal migration;
- R 2.6: Continued fulfilment by Moldova of the visa liberalisation benchmarks, including addressing the recommendations the recommendations in the regular Visa Suspension Mechanism Reports issued by the European Commission.

For S.O. 3:

- R 3.1: Improved livelihood on both sides of the Nistru River through strengthened connections and cooperation between the populations, economic development and decent job creation for women and men.
- R 3.2: Community development is enhanced through capacity building, small-scale initiatives by existing platforms for civil society organisations cooperation, specific security-related concerns of men and women are identified and addressed;
- R 3.3: Progressive rapprochement or alignment in pilot sectors (to be identified).

### **2.5.3. Indicators (including baseline and targets), per expected result**

Key indicators include the following:

- Percentage of teachers in service who have completed nationally required training/qualification/certification program, disaggregated by sex;
- School/rationalisation policies for schools and universities adopted and implemented, according to national strategies;
- Learning outcomes: PISA results (OECD - Programme for International Student Assessment);
- Share of VET and higher education establishment students by specialties (fields of study), disaggregated by sex;
- Amount of time dedicated to media and information literacy and development of critical thinking skills in school curricula
- Efficient and transparent regulatory bodies monitoring the information space;
- Independent Public Broadcaster fulfilling its public service role;
- Proportion of population below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural);
- Emigration and migration-returning rates, including the number of persons prevented from irregularly crossing the border; number of Moldovans illegally staying in the EU ordered to return and effectively returned; rate of issuance of travel documents following readmission

requests from Member States; number of unfounded asylum applications by Moldovans; number of returnees benefiting from reintegration support, disaggregated by sex;

- Number of individuals directly benefiting from EU support interventions that specifically aim to support civilian post-conflict, peace building or conflict prevention, EU International Cooperation and Development Results Framework (EURF)), disaggregated by sex;
- Number of capacity building projects on integrated border management, including with Frontex;
- Number of initiatives supported to promote legal migration;
- Number of visa liberalisation benchmarks and recommendations of Visa Suspension Mechanism Report respected/implemented;
- Number of institutions supported to prevent and fight against irregular migration (through capacity building, technical equipment);
- Number of individuals directly benefiting from EU supported interventions that specifically aim to support civilian post-conflict, peace building or conflict prevention, disaggregated by sex.

#### **2.5.4 Possible use of blending and guarantees for investment under EFSD+**

This priority links, *inter alia*, with Flagship 5 of the EIP to be funded primarily via bilateral or regional allocations under the NDICI – Global Europe instrument: Investing in human capital and preventing ‘brain drain’ — modernisation of school infrastructures and implementation of the national education strategy.

#### **2.5.5 Risks**

The overall **risks to** the sector intervention are:

- Failure of the Moldovan government to finance sufficiently its education, research and innovation, employment and VET strategies;
- Resistance within the education and research institutions to the introduction of revised management and quality assurance systems, career paths, qualifications and curricula;
- Social partners and civil society organisations are unwilling or unable to play a constructive role in the implementation of the sector policies or uptake of sector objectives; or conversely, the government engages insufficiently with civil society organisations in the formulation of sector policies;
- Political instability or further escalation of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and slow economic recovery further increase emigration and brain drain;
- The stagnation of the political/diplomatic process of conflict settlement in the Transnistrian region due to political instability or further escalation of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and lack of political willingness by either or both parties impacts the implementation of confidence-building measures.

The EU will closely monitor and react to mitigate the impact of any of the above-mentioned risks by *inter alia* allocating human, financial, technical and diplomatic resources and by reinforcing the policy dialogue.

#### **2.6. Proposals of Team Europe Initiatives**

### **2.6.1. Team Europe for local communities: youth, growth and decent jobs**

Following a joint assessment of Moldova with the EU Member States, the wider Team Europe, and subsequent consultations with national authorities/development finance institutions (DFIs), private sector and the civil society, we have identified “local communities: youth, growth and jobs” as the main area where European partners can make a substantive impact by joining forces. This initiative was already piloted in 2020-21 and will provide a socio-economic response to the impact of COVID-19.

#### **Context:**

Rural areas in Moldova face particular challenges as regards growth, jobs and sustainability. As in the rest of Europe, rural areas of Moldova are extremely diverse, ranging from remote and suffering from de-population and decline to pre-urban areas under increasing pressure from urban centres. Lower coverage of basic services<sup>29</sup> and the lack of opportunities, communication and training infrastructure is also a particular problem for remote rural areas and especially for women and young people.

Due to large-scale active labour force emigration, the share of Moldova’s economically active population is the lowest in the region. The rural population has the largest share of the total working population living abroad (70%), 37% of whom are aged between 25-34 years and 18% between 16 and 24 years.

Moldova has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak across all of the country’s regions. The pandemic adds important pressure on the already stretched health and social service delivery systems, exacerbating vulnerabilities of the affected populations. It also disproportionately affects population groups such as women (in terms of loss of access to income and intensified economic insecurity, increased burden of domestic and care work and higher incidence of domestic violence) or children (impacted by school closures and exposed to increased risk of violence and abuse) and the elderly living mostly in remote areas. Given this context, the action will also aim to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in Moldovan local communities thus contributing to their longer-term social and economic resilience.

The main strategic planning document of the country, the National Development Strategy “Moldova 2030”, defines long-term sectoral development priorities, focusing on improving the quality of citizens’ lives in four pillars: 1. Sustainable and inclusive economy; 2. Strong human and social capital; 3. Fair and efficient institutions; 4. Healthy environment. Moreover, the principles of gender equality and women’s empowerment underpin the implementation of the Moldova 2030 strategy.

In this context, the objective of this Team Europe initiative is to improve the quality of life in selected Moldovan local communities while addressing the economic and social consequences of COVID-19, thus contributing to their longer-term resilience. The activities carried out under this initiative will improve the quality and efficiency of public services, provide investment and capacity-building support to the development and rehabilitation of social, economic, and physical infrastructure, and improve access to services associated with these structures. They will also enhance business and decent job opportunities, strengthen community-led local development, and provide equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender, age, ability, or nationality, encouraging the greening of the economy, gender equality, and community-led private sector development. In line with the EU response to the COVID-19 crisis, they will also contribute to the long-term socio-economic resilience of the local communities.

#### **TEI members:**

The following EU Member States and partners have expressed their interest to join this TEI: Austria (Austrian Development Agency), the Czech Republic, France (including Expertise France and AFD),

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<sup>29</sup> Only 55.3% of the rural households are connected to the water network and only 32.7% to the sewage system, compared with 93.5 and 86.2% of the households in urban areas (BNS 2019).



Germany (including GIZ and KFW), Latvia, Poland (including Polish Solidarity Fund and Polish national development bank BGK), Romania, Sweden, EIB and EBRD.

Various modalities and financial instruments will be explored – direct and indirect management, twinning, TAIEX as well as loans and guarantees including under the EFSD+.

### **2.6.2. Team Europe for strategic communication, media support and the building of resilience against disinformation**

Following our joint assessment with the EU Member States and wider Team Europe of the situation in Moldova and subsequent consultations with national authorities, DFIs and the private sector, we have identified “Strategic communication, media support and the building resilience against disinformation” as an area where European partners can have a substantive impact by joining forces. This is also based on the best practices related to the joint communication of EU and Member States support during the COVID-19 pandemic

#### **Context:**

In the wake of growing disinformation on aspects related to EU values and EU support provided to Eastern Partnership countries, including Moldova, a call for a stronger, more impactful and strategic approach to communication has attracted much political attention in recent years. Renewed efforts therefore aim to strengthen the EU’s strategic communications<sup>30</sup> in Moldova through clear, narrative-based, tailored and effective messaging, and by raising awareness of the positive impact of EU policies and actions, with an overarching message to be used by all implementing partners. Further activities in this sector should focus on consolidating the efforts undertaken thus far and enhancing the resources and capacities for strategic communication of EU actions and assistance in the country.

The work undertaken thus far on strategic communications of EU assistance has shown that a coherent and integrated effort with all relevant implementing partners provides greater impact and public outreach as well as better understanding of the target audience of the support provided by the EU and EU Member States for the citizens of the country.

Consistent work on increasing the role and cooperation of implementing partners in show-casing the EU’s role and financing led to improved joint procedures and understanding of necessary efforts for visibility and communication. This work needs to continue with existing instruments, including the Digitool.

From 2013 to 2020, the media environment, including the overall media freedom situation in Moldova, has consistently deteriorated. The COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions further impacted the media environment with serious financial setbacks, for example related to the fall of revenue from advertisement or other sources of income (e.g. revenue from organising conferences and events). Moldova’s media remain diversified but extremely politicised and polarised. The phenomenon of concentration and lack of transparency in media ownership has not disappeared and the political context continues to influence the media landscape. Local content requirements, expansion of social and online media, coupled with the shrinking advertising market dominated by advertising agencies owned by politicians, contributed to independent outlets’ financial fragility and increased their reliance on foreign donors. Online news portals and social media are popular in Moldova. Meanwhile, the local independent online portals are often understaffed, cover current events superficially (in-depth multimedia and/or video reporting is occasional or missing), face financial problems and rely on foreign media donors. Consistent support is required to develop locally created content in Romanian. Furthermore, Russian-

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<sup>30</sup> As defined in the EU Action Plan against Disinformation (December 2018), Joint Communication on Tackling COVID-19 Disinformation (10 June 2020), and European Democracy Action Plan (3 December 2020).

language mass media is underdeveloped with a large share of TV and radio content being re-broadcasted from Russia.

In this polarised and politically influenced media environment, it is crucial to build state and societal resilience to disinformation and increase demand for quality news media by equipping citizens with adequate critical thinking and media and information literacy skills. Significant efforts are needed to bring Moldovan practices in line with European standards in the field of media freedoms and plurality. This includes aligning the media-related legislation and reforming the Audiovisual Council to achieve greater political independence and impartiality. A central emphasis is needed to work with local media outlets to fill the existing gaps as identified in several studies. It includes support to enhance journalist professionalism, media business management skills, learning, adopting and implementing new media business models to increase the financial sustainability.

Activities in this sector should focus on raising awareness and countering foreign disinformation, as well as enhancing the support for developing abilities for investigative journalism.

### **TEI members**

The Team Europe perspective will include all the EU Member States active in Moldova, by providing support from an EU-funded Technical Assistance project to enhance communication activities on Team Europe assistance. It is not foreseen for this action to be implemented by specific Member States, nor for it to receive financial support from other partners. It can be complemented by additional initiatives in direct or indirect management.

The following EU Member States and partners have expressed their interest to engage in additional initiatives which are complementary to this TEI: the Czech Republic, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, and EIB.

## **3. Support measures**

### **3.1. Measures in favour of civil society**

The EU recognises civil society organisations, including the social partners, as actors of governance and drivers of democracy. The EU will focus on promoting a conducive environment for civil society organisations, strengthening their participation in the reform processes (monitoring of the Association Agreement and implementation of the Association Agenda) as well as in Moldova's effective use of the EU assistance, and enhancing its role as a community development actor and service provider to the citizens. These ambitions are reflected in the EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society in the Republic of Moldova (2021-2027)<sup>31</sup>. Core support to civil society is covered under priority 5 “resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies”, while civil society engagement is mainstreamed throughout all sectors.

### **3.2. Cooperation facility**

A cooperation facility is foreseen to finance support measures encompassing policy dialogue, strategic communication and visibility, including fighting disinformation, public diplomacy activities, capacity building, technical preparation and any support to facilitate Team Europe coordination at country level. The facility will also finance approximation to EU legislation and technical standards through technical assistance and exchange of public expertise, such as TAIEX and Twinning as well as the participation of Moldova in EU programmes such as Horizon Europe, EU4Health, Customs and Fiscalis and

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<sup>31</sup> [https://euneighbourseast.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/eu\\_roadmap\\_for\\_engagement\\_with\\_csos.pdf](https://euneighbourseast.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/eu_roadmap_for_engagement_with_csos.pdf)

cooperation with EU agencies. It will support the implementation and evaluation of the EU's cooperation, including via technical assistance.

Strategic communication is crucial to ensure effective visibility of the EU, its values, policies, interests and its support to Moldova. In parallel, building state and societal resilience to foreign information manipulation and interference, strengthening the media environment need to be supported aiming at increasing pluralism and independence of media. A call for a stronger and more strategic approach to communication has gained high political attention in recent years, also in the wake of growing disinformation on EU values. Renewed efforts therefore aim to strengthen the EU's communication in Moldova through clear, narrative-based, tailor-made messaging, and raising awareness of the positive impact of EU policies and actions with the overarching message 'Stronger Together'.

Sustained efforts for increasing the strategic communication capacities and support, also from a Team Europe perspective, need to be continued. In addition to this, support for the media via bilateral actions will have a clear and tangible impact on the improvement of the media consumption culture in the country and content creation. The work undertaken thus far on strategic communication has shown that a horizontal approach, show-casing unity in actions and messages, provides a more efficient and impactful outreach to the target audiences.

#### 4. Financial overview

Although the duration of this MIP is seven years, the indicative allocations for Moldova and for each of the priority areas and support measures laid down in the table below are provided for the 2021-2024 period only. The indicative allocations for 2025-2027, as well as the possible modification of other substantial elements of this MIP, will be subject to a decision by the EU. This decision should be preceded by a review of the implementation of this MIP, which should include a dialogue with the authorities and other Moldovan stakeholders.

<b><i>Priority area 1: Resilient, sustainable and integrated economy</i></b>	<b><i>EUR 78 million</i></b>	<b><i>30%</i></b>
<b><i>Priority area 2: Accountable institutions, the rule of law and security</i></b>	<b><i>EUR 39 million</i></b>	<b><i>15%</i></b>
<b><i>Priority area 3: Environmental and climate resilience</i></b>	<b><i>EUR 52 million</i></b>	<b><i>20%</i></b>
<b><i>Priority area 4: Resilient digital transformation</i></b>	<b><i>EUR 26 million</i></b>	<b><i>10%</i></b>
<b><i>Priority area 5: Resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive society</i></b>	<b><i>EUR 52 million</i></b>	<b><i>20%<sup>32</sup></i></b>
<b><i>Support measures</i></b>	<b><i>EUR 13 million</i></b>	<b><i>5%</i></b>
<b><i>TOTAL for initial period</i></b>	<b><i>EUR 260 million</i></b>	

#### Annexes

1. Intervention framework
2. Donor matrix showing the current indicative allocations per sector
3. Flagship Initiatives for Moldova

<sup>32</sup> 5% of the indicative budget for priority 5 will be dedicated to support civil society organisations.

## Annex 1 Intervention framework

Priority area 1: Resilient sustainable and integrated economy			
Specific objective 1: To strengthen economic competitiveness and boost exports through full implementation of the DCFTA			
Expected Results	Indicators	Means of verification	Baseline & targets
a) Continuous positive results achieved in bilateral trade and economic relations.	a1) Volume and/or value of trade with the EU	National Bureau of Statistics Reports	EUR 4.7 billion in 2019
	a2) Value of Foreign Direct Investment originating from the EU		
b) Increased institutional capacities and support services for trade and export facilitation.	a3) Score of Moldova on the Trade across borders indicator of the WB Ease of Doing Business	Association Implementation Report	USD 2.01 billion, EU FDI (82.2%) (2019)
	a4) Number of exported products/product categories	Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure Annual Report	92.3 (2020)
c) New opportunities in highgrowth potential areas such as agriculture, blue economy, greening of the economy and digital markets are seized.	b1) Number of agri-food businesses that transit or export products to the EU (indicator for meeting SPS standards)	World Bank Reports	10 % of SMEs implemented EU standards (2019)
	b2) Contribution of SMEs in the GDP	Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment Reports	
	c1) Number of SMEs which implemented European Standards,	ANSA Reports	43.19 % in 2020
	c2) Number of micro, small and medium sized enterprises applying sustainable consumption and production practices with EU support, with sex disaggregation of their owners as relevant	Institute for Standardisation of Moldova Reports	
	c3) Share of SMEs using digital sales platforms	National Bureau of Statistics Reports	13 social enterprises created with EU support in 2020
	a4) Number of agro-food operators with quality improvements (compliance with SPS standards) and value addition (as processing, branding, certification etc.) through EU support	Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment Reports	
	Number of social enterprises and survival rates	Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure Report	
		ANSA Reports	
		ODIMM Reports	

<b>d)</b> Increase in access to high value market segments for agriculture produce, and for value addition in country.	<b>d1)</b> Enterprise value-added, profitability and per capita productivity rates (incl. number of enterprises certified (organic, geographic origin, etc.) and price premiums achieved)	Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment Reports ANSA Reports	
<b>e)</b> Start of implementation of Smart Specialisation strategy			
<b>Specific objective 2: To improve access to services and financing for SMEs through guarantee schemes, interest rate subsidies, investment incentives, and equity in line with applicable rules on state aid</b>			
<b>Expected Results</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Means of verification</b>	<b>Baseline &amp; targets</b>
<b>a)</b> SMEs, in particular those from rural areas and owned by women, are developed, including social enterprises, and they have broader access to finance, and services.	<b>a1)</b> Number of business start-up supported and survival rates over 2 years, with sex disaggregation of their initiators as relevant	Statistics of the National Bank  Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure Reports	Survival rate 40.9% (2019)
<b>b)</b> Innovative and smart financing and business development programmes (including equity, venture capital, business angel, crowd funding and business advice) available for start-ups and SMEs, using gender-balance approach (overcoming stereotypes against women in business, ensuring women's access to credit and services, addressing gender segregation of business niches) and complying with applicable rules on state aid.	<b>b1)</b> Number of innovative funding opportunities and amounts (in EUR) available for start-ups and SMEs	Small Business Act assessment (OECD)  Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey (EBRD)  European Commission services (DG CONNECT, DG NEAR)  Relevant MD Ministries, agencies	27 programmes (2019) €144.13 million (2019)
<b>Specific objective 3: To foster decent work and improve employability and capacity for increased access to the labour market with a focus on regional development.</b>			
<b>Expected Results</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Means of verification</b>	<b>Baseline &amp; targets</b>

<b>a)</b> Reduced disparities between regions and between urban and rural areas in Moldova.	<b>a1)</b> Number of women-led business initiatives supported; <b>a2)</b> Number of new jobs created with EU support in rural areas outside agricultural production (incl. in agri-food processing and value addition); <b>a3)</b> Number of agro-tourism initiatives, including establishment of wine routes.	ODIMM Reports EBRD Reports EU4Business Reports Association Implementation Report Investment Agency Reports National Statistics Project Reports Labour Inspectorate Annual Reports	19,531 SMEs supported 28.71% women-owned SMEs supported (2019) 21,930 new jobs created (2019) 3 wine routes (2020)
<b>b)</b> Young people knowledge and skills match future labour market needs.	<b>b1)</b> Number of people who have benefited from institution or workplace based VET/skills development interventions sex-disaggregated	ANOFM Annual Report Ministry of Education, Culture and Research Reports	67 %women (2019) 868 persons (2019))
<b>c)</b> Decrease in informal employment as a share of total employment.	<b>c1)</b> Employment rate at national level, sex-disaggregated <b>c2)</b> Share of informal employment in total employment	National Statistics	52,4% (men) -2020 47,6% (women) - 2020 16,7% (2020)
<b>d)</b> Improved conditions of work, including health and safety, and improved effective application of labour rights.	<b>d1)</b> Number of inspections (labour law and health and safety at work) performed; <b>d2)</b> Number of inspectors; <b>d3)</b> Number of violations sanctioned.	Labour Inspectorate Annual Reports	1701 inspections (2020)
<b>e)</b> Reduction in the difference between how much time women and men invest in unpaid work (care for family members, house chores).	<b>e1)</b> Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, sex and age disaggregated.	Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection reports, CSO reports, UN Women reports,	Percentage of hours dedicated to unpaid work: 45,2 % (women) 31,9% (men) (2019)
<b>f)</b> Women and men in all their diversity have equal opportunities, equal access to employment, decent work, equal pay for work of equal value in order to be economically independent.	<b>f1)</b> Number of women-led business initiatives supported; <b>f2)</b> Gender pay gap addressed	Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection reports, CSO reports, UN Women reports, UNFPA reports	19,531 SMEs supported 28.71% women-owned SMEs supported (2019)

Priority area 2: Accountable institutions, the rule of law and security			
<b>Specific objective 1: To strengthen the Rule of Law and accountable institutions, including by supporting the independence, professionalism, and accountability of the judiciary and prosecution in line with European standards. Promoting equal access to justice and prison reform by stepping up the fight against corruption, and by supporting the Parliament to exercise effective oversight and promote accountability for government decisions and to ensure an open, transparent and participatory legislative process.</b>			
Expected Results	Indicators	Means of verification	Baseline & targets
<b>a)</b> An independent, accountable and effective judiciary and prosecution system in line with European standards is in place and public trust in the judiciary increased	<b>a1)</b> The level of independence, accountability, efficiency of the judiciary and prosecution services is increased <b>a2)</b> Level of compliance of the legal framework with Council of Europe (Venice Commission and GRECO) recommendations <b>a3)</b> Composite indicator Judicial independence (WEF) <b>a4)</b> Level of public trust in the prosecution services, the judiciary and the law enforcement agencies <b>a5)</b> Level of legal framework and practice of appointments, disciplinary proceedings, evaluation, transfer and promotion of judges and prosecutors in line with European standards <b>a6)</b> Level of court management improved and number of judges and prosecutors supported by EU-funded capacity-building programs	Corruption Perception Index CEPEJ Reports	

<p><b>b)</b> All state institutions abide by the law and ethical standards and citizens have access to justice and can exercise their rights fully</p>	<p><b>b1)</b> Composite indicator Access to Justice (WJP)  <b>b2)</b> Level of public trust in the prosecution services, the judiciary and the law enforcement agencies, sex-disaggregated  <b>b3)</b> Level of compliance with GRECO recommendations</p>	<p>Public Opinion Poll  User satisfaction and legal needs surveys  Statistics on ECtHR jurisprudence  Public reports by international and local actors on the independence and efficiency of the justice system</p>	
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<p>c) The penitentiary system and resocialization programs better comply with international standards and the legal aid service and capacities of lawyers and legal professions to defend citizens' rights are improved</p>	<p>c1) Level of prison management c2) Percentage of inmates participating in resocialisation and rehabilitation programmes c3) Level of legal aid programs and pertaining legal framework in line with European standards c4) Number of lawyers supported by EU-funded capacity programs</p>		
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<p><b>d)</b> The existing competences on investigating and prosecuting corruption related crimes are revised to become more effective and efficient, and corruption, in particular high-level corruption, conflicts of interest and perception of corruption decrease</p>	<p><b>c1)</b> Anti-corruption competences are shared with the police  <b>c2)</b> Number of files on which a verdict was reached within 1y/2y/3y.  <b>c3)</b> Number of high-level corruption investigations and verdicts.  <b>c4)</b> High-level corruption is actively detected and investigated and liability for high-level corruption offences is effectively, independently and impartially enforced. Criminal statistics on high-level corruption are published analysed and used in updating policy.  <b>c5)</b> The anti-corruption policy is up-to-date, evidence-based and includes key corruption risk areas  <b>c6)</b> The anti-corruption policy development is inclusive and transparent and it is efficiently implemented. Regular monitoring, coordination and implementation is ensured.  <b>c7)</b> Number of cases of conflict of interest resolved out of the total number of cases identified  <b>c8)</b> Asset disclosure in e-declarations is comprehensive, regular and based on real market values and it applies to high corruption risk positions</p>	<p>NAC annual reports  GPO Reports  NIA Reports  CSO reports  Project Reports  Official statistics</p>	
<p><b>e)</b> The capacity of the criminal asset recovery agency and other relevant specialised authorities is strengthened, and inter-agency cooperation mechanisms for asset recovery and management are established and implemented. Parallel financial investigations and international cooperation are improved</p>	<p><b>d1)</b> Dissuasive and proportionate sanctions are enforced  <b>d2)</b> The functions of identification, tracing, management and return of illicit assets are performed by specialised officials  <b>d3)</b> Identification and tracing of corruption proceeds are effective and confiscation measures are enforced in corruption and money laundering cases  <b>d4)</b> Management of seized or frozen assets is cost-efficient and transparent</p>	<p>CARA annual reports  NIAS  NAC annual reports  CSO reports</p>	

<p><b>f)</b> The institutional capacity of the Parliament of Moldova is strengthened including for more effective oversight, based on the existence of a majority strongly committed to reforms, not controlled by vested interest groups and demonstrably committed to implementing the Association Agreement.</p>	<p><b>f1)</b> Number and quality of oversight reports issued by the Moldovan Parliament;  <b>f2)</b> Level of accessibility of draft legal and sub-legal acts;  <b>f3)</b> Number of consultation meetings at the government and parliament level with all relevant stakeholders including the Civil Society and non-state actors.</p>		
<p><b>Specific objective 2: To improve the efficiency, effectiveness, governance, and equality at all levels of public administration through public administration reform at national and local levels and territorial-administrative reform, with a focus on public services, public finance management and capacity-building in key institutions; to strengthen the production of reliable and timely official statistics</b></p>			
Expected Results	Indicators	Means of verification	Baseline & targets
<p><b>a)</b> The transparency and accountability of the public administration, including state-owned enterprises, are enhanced</p>	<p><b>a1)</b> Budget transparency and oversight  <b>a2)</b> Quality of the medium-term budgetary framework;  <b>a3)</b> Quality of public debt management  <b>b4)</b> Gender responsiveness of public financial management<sup>33</sup>  <b>a4)</b> The number of green public procurement procedures</p>	<p>OECD-SIGMA assessments  PEFA assessments, MoF reports</p>	<p>2021 PEFA assessment PI scores</p>
<p><b>b)</b> Consolidate central public administration reform, improve policy development including performance-based budgeting and mid-term budgeting. Carry out local territorial reform</p>	<p><b>b1)</b> Successful implementation of the territorial reform  <b>b2)</b> Increased completeness of financial estimates in sector strategies  <b>b3)</b> Improved ratio between total funds estimated in the sectoral strategies and total funding identified for the corresponding sectors within the MTBF</p>	<p>SIGMA reports    Project Reports    CSO Reports</p>	

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.pefa.org/gender>

c) Higher consideration of gender equality in decision-making in all branches of the government at the national and subnational level	c1) Ratio of men and women among the Members of Parliament; c2) Ratio of men and women among the Ministers and Deputy Ministers c3) Ratio of men and women among heads of administrative divisions (districts, municipalities); c4) Ratio of men and women among judges c5) Ratio of men and women among police and border guard officers	World Economic Forum's annual Global Gender Gap Report Data of the Parliament Data of the Cabinet of Ministers Data of Central Election Commission National statistics	
d) The quality, accessibility, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of public services, including e-governance services, both at national and local levels are enhanced	d1) The number of green public procurement procedures d2) Number of new e-governance modules rolled out (number of accessible public services for citizens through internet);		
e) The quality and accountability in the governance of public finances at national and subnational levels and gradual approximation with relevant EU fiscal governance standards are improved. Public Finance Management and Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability strategies, including gender-responsive budgeting, are adopted.	e1) Budget transparency and oversight e2) Quality of public debt management e2) Gender responsiveness of public financial management	OECD-SIGMA assessments PEFA assessments, MoF reports	2021 PEFA assessment PI scores
f) The coverage and quality of available statistics, including sex-disaggregated statistics, are improved and use of official statistics made for policy decisions is increased; reliable and timely official statistics are available for policy makers and end users.	f1) Use of statistics for evidence-based decision-making and holding the government accountable f2) Number of statistical indicators collected by the National Bureau of Statistics with disaggregation by sex	Reports of the National Bureau of Statistics	26 (2020)
<b>Specific objective 3: To combat organised crime and strengthen security, including the fight against money-laundering and terrorism-financing, illicit drugs, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in human beings, violence against women, cyber-crime, terrorism and firearms trafficking, and support Moldova's cooperation with Europol and CEPOL</b>			
<b>Expected Results</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Means of verification</b>	<b>Baseline &amp; targets</b>

<p><b>a)</b> Strengthened capacity of Moldova to ensure the security of its population and to be more resilient to security threats.</p>	<p><b>a1)</b> Inter-agency coordination and cooperation within the Moldovan law enforcement community strengthened, especially with a view to distributions of powers, joint investigations and information sharing.</p> <p><b>a2)</b> Increased emphasis on basic and in-service training that is operational in nature</p> <p><b>a3)</b> Increased involvement in international operational cooperation (e.g. Joint Investigation Teams).</p> <p><b>a4)</b> Ratio of men and women among police and border guard officers</p> <p><b>a5)</b> Increased awareness of hybrid and cyber threats within the national government</p>	<p>Reports from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the General Police Inspectorate (GPI) and the Prosecutor's General Office (PGO). Council of Europe Reporting (cf. Budapest Convention on Cybercrime). EUROPOL reporting in the framework of the existing operational cooperation agreement</p>	
<p><b>b)</b> A solid and effective framework to fight organised crime is in place to ensure comprehensive and proportionate criminalisation of activities linked to organised crime, sufficient resources and expertise, appropriate access of competent authorities to information sources, adequate investigative techniques and effective channels for international cooperation</p>	<p><b>b1)</b> Cooperation agreements with competent law enforcement authorities signed and implemented (e.g. on Joint Control with the Ukrainian authorities)</p> <p><b>b2)</b> Significant and/or persistent downward trend in numbers related to the illicit trafficking of excisable goods from and through Moldova</p> <p><b>b3)</b> Human resources available to competent authorities for investigating and prosecuting organised crime</p> <p><b>b4)</b> Number of training activities on issues such as e.g. the use of new technologies by organized crime groups</p> <p><b>b5)</b> Databases accessible to competent authorities</p>	<p>Reports from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the General Police Inspectorate (GPI), the General Inspectorate of the Border Police (GIBP) and the General Inspectorate of Carabinieri (GIC). Reports from the Prosecutor's General Office (PGO). Ad-hoc reporting by EUBAM MD/UA CSO reporting</p>	
<p><b>c)</b> The National Antidrug Strategy 2020-27 is effectively implemented, and full participation in the EU4Monitoring Drugs programme managed by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction is ensured. The National Antidrug Agency is created and operationalised</p>	<p><b>c1)</b></p>		

<p><b>d)</b> National legislative, strategic and operational capacities to prevent, detect and counter the trafficking of firearms are enhanced</p>	<p><b>d1)</b> Legal frameworks on arms control fully harmonized with the EU legislation, the Arms Trade Treaty and the UN Firearms Protocol</p> <p><b>d2)</b> Small arms and light weapons strategy in place</p> <p><b>d3)</b> Number of cases, individuals concerned, and quantity of misused and trafficked firearms, ammunition and explosives (FAE) prosecuted and adjudicated in comparison to the number of law enforcement reports on respective seizures</p> <p><b>d4)</b> Number of cases and quantity of FAE seized inland compared to the number of cases and quantity of FAE seized at the external borders;</p> <p><b>d5)</b> Number of FAE for which export licenses were issued by national competent authorities, and identified as diverted</p> <p><b>d6)</b> Firearms Focal Point (FFP) established and operational in each jurisdiction, meeting the the standards of the EU Best practice guidance</p> <p><b>d7)</b> Number of incidents involving firearms and victims affected by the misuse of firearms, disaggregated by sex and age, in each jurisdiction</p> <p><b>d8)</b> Number of firearms and ammunition voluntarily surrendered, as well as firearms legalized or deactivated</p> <p><b>d9)</b> Number of SALW/firearms and their ammunition storage facilities in line with international safety and security standards</p> <p><b>d10)</b> Number of reported SALW/firearms, ammunition, and explosives (confiscated or surplus) systematically destroyed</p>		
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<p><b>e)</b> Enhanced capacity to prevent and fight against trafficking in human beings, as well as to ensure the early identification, of victims, and provision of proper assistance and support to all victims or potential victims of trafficking</p>	<p><b>e1)</b> Number of victims of human right violations directly benefitting from assistance funded by the EU, sex-disaggregated</p> <p><b>e2)</b> Number of persons charged and convicted of trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, organised crime, smuggling and counterfeiting, violence against women, including domestic violence</p> <p><b>e3)</b> Number of trafficking in human beings cases investigated</p> <p><b>e4)</b> Number of trafficking in human beings victims identified</p> <p><b>e5)</b> Number of trafficking in human beings child victims that received specialised support, taking into account their specific psychological, protection and assistance needs.</p> <p><b>e6)</b> Number of specialized training sessions provided to prosecution personnel aimed at avoiding the inappropriate penalization for unlawful acts traffickers compelled victims to commit.</p>	<p>Police statistics</p> <p>Social poll/survey</p>	
<p><b>f)</b> The Istanbul Convention is ratified and implemented, law enforcement authorities and the judiciary identify, investigate and prosecute cases of gender based violence, public tolerance to violence against women is reduced</p>	<p><b>f1)</b> Number of cases of domestic violence reported to the police;</p> <p><b>f2)</b> Share of persons (out of total population) who survived domestic violence over the past 12 months, sex-disaggregated (to be measured through social poll/survey);</p>	<p>Police statistics</p> <p>Social poll/survey</p>	
<p><b>g)</b> A functional and enforceable framework to fight cybercrime is in place</p>	<p><b>g1)</b> Cybercrime strategy adopted and implemented</p> <p><b>g2)</b> Increased involvement in international cybercrime investigations (e.g. Joint Investigation Teams).</p>	<p>Reports from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the General Police Inspectorate (GPI) and the Prosecutor's General Office (PGO).</p> <p>Council of Europe Reporting (cf. Budapest Convention on Cybercrime).</p> <p>EUROPOL reporting in the framework of the existing operational cooperation agreement</p>	

<b>h)</b> Cooperation in CBRN related issues from the perspective of counter-terrorism, hybrid threats and disaster risk reduction is strengthened	<b>h1)</b> Value of illicit goods, arms etc. seized		
<b>i)</b> Cooperation with Europol and CEPOL is enhanced	<b>i1)</b> The Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment methodology introduced in EaP, number of operational actions carried out under the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), as action leader, co-leader or participant;  <b>i2)</b> Number of participants in the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training activities, including within the Training and Operational Partnership against Organised Crime (TOPCOP) regional project, and number of joint investigation teams.		

<b>Priority area 3: Environment and climate resilience</b>			
<b>Specific objective 1: To promote the development of a resource-efficient, clean and circular economy based on a more sustainable use of natural resources as well as promoting green public services, including sustainable transport connectivity, and the protection of nature and ecosystems</b>			
<b>Expected Results</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Means of verification</b>	<b>Baseline &amp; targets</b>
<b>a)</b> Establish and make operational a permanent system for air quality monitoring of air pollutant concentrations, in the framework of a broader air quality management system and in line with EU Directives 2008/50 and 2004/107	Increase in the number of fixed monitoring stations	Reporting by competent authorities	
<b>b)</b> Establish and implement air quality plans and measures in areas with excessive concentrations of air pollutants, and in line with EU Directives 2008/50 and 2004/107	Share of areas with excessive air pollution covered by air quality plans; reduction of air pollutant concentration levels	Reporting by competent authorities	
<b>c)</b> Annual submissions of air pollutant emission inventories and projections, in line with the EU Directive 2016/2284 and the Air Convention Gothenburg Protocol requirements	Annual emission inventories submitted under the Air Convention and found to be of good enough quality in the emission inventory reviews	Emission inventory reviews under the Air Convention	



<b>d)</b> Land restoration, extension of forested and protected areas, biodiversity protection and green measures, sustainable management of water and land resources (incl. sustainable irrigation) expanded	<b>d1)</b> Areas (in ha ) where sustainable land and water management practices have been introduced with EU support (esp. eco/green measures, organic farming, climate smart agriculture, good agricultural practices and climate-resilient irrigation and rainwater harvesting infrastructure) (ha), in line with the Farm to Fork Strategy. <b>d2)</b> Areas of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems under protection with EU support (ha) <b>d3)</b> Areas of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems under sustainable management with EU support (ha)	Ministry of agriculture, regional development and environment M&E reports Project reports	20 % of the total agricultural land
<b>e)</b> Introduce a carbon pricing mechanism compatible with the EU Emissions Trading Scheme	<b>f1)</b> Degree of progress towards the development of an Emissions Trading System or other carbon pricing mechanisms;	Reporting by Government structures responsible for economy, climate and environment	
<b>f)</b> Improved resource and energy efficiency and increased coverage of drinking water, wastewater and solid waste treatment systems as well as enhanced service delivery	<b>g1)</b> Share of inhabitants connected to mains drinking water and waste water systems, incl. to women who are in vulnerable conditions who are traditionally disadvantaged in terms of access to such services <b>g2)</b> Share of inhabitants having access to renewable energy, especially the most vulnerable/poorest households. <b>g3)</b> Share of inhabitants covered by waste/separate waste collection and recycling rates, sex-disaggregated <b>g4)</b> Access to enhanced public services and infrastructure with sex disaggregation as relevant	National Bureau of Statistics Project reports	75% of the population target: 90 % of the population 65% of the population target: 80 % of the population 60 % of the population 80 % of the population
<b>g)</b> Improved and increased sustainable transport connectivity in road (including cooperation under the Eastern Partnership Road Safety Observatory), rail, aviation (including under the EU-Moldova Common Aviation Area Agreement), maritime and waterborne sectors; increased safety and efficiency based on relevant international and EU standards; more sustainable urban mobility.	<b>c1)</b> Number of kilometres of roads and railways located on the indicative extension of the TEN-T networks built, upgraded and regularly maintained; <b>c2)</b> Number of passengers using public transport in major cities; <b>c3)</b> Number of fatalities and serious injuries due to road accidents. <b>c4)</b> Implementation of Association Agreement legislative and regulatory commitments in transport <b>c5)</b> Implementation of the EU-Moldova Common Aviation Area Agreement	National Bureau of Statistics Project reports	Roads 415km (2019 SRA) & 1000km (2030 TEN-T Indicative Investment Plan) Railways 0km (2020) & > 200km (by 2025) 50% increase compared to 2020 50% reduction compared to 2020
<b>Specific objective 2: To improve energy security and promote green growth, including through promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy</b>			

Expected Results	Indicators	Means of verification	Baseline & targets
<b>a)</b> Increased energy security	<b>a1)</b> Completion of the strategic infrastructure projects on gas and electricity connectivity with EU/Romania; gas storage obligations and new synchronous connection with EU/Romania; Energy intensity <b>a2)</b> Proportion of the Moldovan population having acceptable access to diversified sources of energy.	National MRV system National Bureau of Statistics Project report	no gas transit currently gas pipeline fully used and electricity interconnection in place
<b>b)</b> Increased energy efficiency and higher share of renewable energy from local sources in the energy mix, increased market competition and transparency also through enhanced independence of the energy regulator and implementation of EU energy market and sustainable energy legislation	<b>b1)</b> Share of renewables in the energy mix <b>b2)</b> Renewable energy generation capacity installed (MW) with EU support <b>b3)</b> Reduction of the energy intensity per unit of GDP <b>b4)</b> Implementation of Energy Community and Association Agreement legislative and regulatory commitments in energy and climate change <b>b5)</b> Number of cities with climate change and/or disaster risk reduction strategies developed / under implementation with EU support; <b>b6)</b> Number of micro, small and medium enterprises applying sustainable consumption and production practices with EU support.	National Bureau of Statistics Association Agenda	Relevant EU <i>acquis</i> implemented  770 kgoe/1000 EUR to align with EU average, 120 kgoe/1000 EUR  Energy intensity (TFES/ GDP) in thousand tons oil equivalent/USD PPP (baseline – 0.118 (2019); target to be established) CO2 emission from Fuel combustion, million tons (baseline -30.9 (2018), target to be established) Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions avoided (tons CO2eq) with EU support

<p>c) Integration of environmental and climate concerns in all sectors of the economy</p>	<p>c1) Number of measures taken to integrate environmental and climate concerns in each sector of the economy and to promote the implementation of Green Growth Indicators and relevant national SDGs for policy making in Moldova.</p> <p>c2) CO2 emissions/other Greenhouse Gas emissions (tons CO2eq) (per capita and per unit of GDP)</p>	<p>Reporting by Government structures responsible for economy, climate and environment</p>	<p>Reduction in line with the updated NDC under the Paris agreement</p>
<p>d) New green economic development and jobs created linked to the green transition, equally available to women and men.</p>	<p>d1) Number of new green jobs created</p> <p>d2) Ratio of women and men employed at new green jobs</p>	<p>National Bureau of Statistics Project reports</p>	<p>30% of the total new jobs created</p> <p>50%</p>
<p><b>Specific objective 3: To modernise relevant legislation and institutional frameworks with a view to engaging citizens and stakeholders in order to reinforce climate resilience (including both mitigation and adaptation policies), and disaster risk reduction efforts</b></p>			
Expected Results	Indicators	Means of verification	Baseline & targets
<p>a) Continued approximation with EU <i>acquis</i> with policy documents, laws and secondary legislation related to climate action and environmental legislation</p>	<p>a1) Number of EU Directives and Regulations related to climate and environment transposed and implemented in line with EU standards.</p>	<p>Reporting by Ministry responsible for climate and environment</p> <p>Project reporting</p>	

<b>b)</b> Improved administrative set up with the capacity to elaborate, implement and enforce environmental and climate-related legislation;	b1) Introduction and monitoring of key performance indicators to measure environmental and climate capacity  b2) Number of inspections completed, enforcement actions initiated, and penalties levied.	Reporting by Ministry responsible for climate and environment  Environment Agency and Inspectorate reports	
<b>c)</b> A legal and regulatory framework in the fields of environmental and climate action, which is more conducive to the engagement of citizens in general and women in particular	b1) Number of citizens, especially women, having access to decision-making tools and to environmental information in the fields of environmental and climate action	Independent surveys/studies	
<b>d)</b> A reinforced civil society network on environmental and climate issues, with strong capacities to participate effectively in decision-making processes	b1) Number the civil society network on environmental and climate issues	Project reporting	

Priority area 4: Resilient digital transformation			
Specific objective 1: To support the adoption of legal frameworks related to digital transformation in line with EU legislation and best practices and strengthen e-governance			
Expected Results	Indicators	Means of verification	Baseline & targets
a) Digital-related legal framework adopted or revised in line with EU legislation and best practices, and implemented	a1) Number of digital-related policies/strategies/laws/regulations developed and/or revised, and /or implemented with support of the EU.	National Bureau of Statistics, MEI reports, Project reports	0(2021) / 1 (2022) / 3 (2027)
b) Citizens and businesses, including women-owned and in rural areas, have equal access to high quality electronic communications infrastructure and services	b1) Number of people with access to broadband internet with EU support (disaggregated by sex, geographic region, urban/rural, age group, and type of connection, i.e. mobile or fixed)  b2) % of the territory with access to broadband internet with EU support.		Tbd (2021) / tbd (2024) tbd (2027)
c) IT solutions increase efficiency, transparency and accountability for public administration	c1) Number of people (disaggregated by sex, geographic region, urban/rural, age group, and type of connection, i.e. mobile or fixed) and companies (disaggregated by sex of owner and/or top manager) who benefit from access to digitalised public and private services due to EU support; c2) Number of digitalised government services included in interoperable platforms; c3) Share of population (disaggregated by sex, geographic region, urban/rural, age group) who report using digitalised financial services;a3) share of population (disaggregated by sex, geographic region, urban/rural, age group) who report using digitalised government services; c4) Share of population (disaggregated by sex, geographic region, urban/rural, age group) who report using digitalised financial services; c5) Number of people (disaggregated by sex, geographic region, urban/rural, age group) who have benefited from VET/skills development interventions supported by the EU for ICT skills.	Government reports, project reports  social/public opinion poll (survey)	Tbd (2021)/ tbd (2024)/ tbd (2027)  Tbd (2021)/ tbd (2024)/ tbd (2027)

<b>d)</b> Space data and services are taken into consideration in policies and solutions for efficient agriculture, smart and safe transport, emergency response.	<b>d1)</b> The extent to which Space data and services were taken into consideration in the different policies; <b>d2)</b> Share of Galileo/EGNOS enabled equipment per sector; <b>d3)</b> Share of revenues (in Euros) stemming from the use of space data and services ; <b>d4)</b> Status of adoption and use of space data and services by SMEs and start-ups; <b>d5)</b> Number of policy areas where Copernicus data and services are used by Moldovian stakeholders; <b>d6)</b> Status of Moldovian participation in Copernicus networks (Copernicus Academy/Copernicus Relays).	Market reports, reports from public services	Space data and services weren't taken into consideration in policies and solutions for efficient agriculture, smart and safe transport, emergency response in 2020 Uptake of Space Data and Services in 2025
<b>Specific objective 2: To assist digital start-ups and SMEs to improve their access to finance, reach into EU markets, and link with EU innovation ecosystems</b>			
<b>Expected Results</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Means of verification</b>	<b>Baseline &amp; targets</b>
<b>a)</b> Digital start-ups ecosystem established in line with EU best practices	<b>a1)</b> Action plan for the creation fully fledged digital start-ups eco-system adopted and implemented	MEI reports, Projects reports, National Bureau of Statistics	No AP/ AP adopted and implemented (2023)
<b>b)</b> New digital start-ups created and increased SMEs access to finance, including women-owned.	<b>b1)</b> Number of new digital start-ups (disaggregated by sex of owner and/or top manager) supported <b>b2)</b> Conversion ratio from the start-ups early stage to scale-up <b>b3)</b> volume of credits and grants disbursed to digital SMEs (disaggregated by sex of owner and/or top manager) <b>b3)</b> Volume of credits and grants disbursed to digital SMEs (disaggregated by sex of owner and/or top manager);		0 (2021) / 500 (2027)  0,06% (2021)/ 0,12% (2024)/ 0,30% 2027  0(2021) / EUR 30 million (2027)
<b>Specific objective 3: To develop robust legal, policy and operational cybersecurity frameworks based on EU legislation and best practices</b>			
<b>Expected Results</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Means of verification</b>	<b>Baseline &amp; targets</b>
<b>a)</b> Cybersecurity framework aligned to EU legislation and best practices, including alignment with the NIS Directive.	<b>a1)</b> Number of cybersecurity-related policies/strategies/laws/regulations developed and/or revised, and /or implemented with support of the EU <b>a2)</b> National CERT established and operational	MEI reports, Government and National CERT reports, project reports	0(2021)/ 1(2024)/3 (2027)  National CERT non-existing/ National CERT functioning (2023)
<b>b)</b> Cyberattacks effectively countered	<b>b1)</b> Number of cyberattacks countered per year and success ratio		Tbd (2021) / 10 and 80% (2024)/ 10 and 90% (2027)

Priority area 5: Resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies			
Specific objective 1: To enhance societal resilience through inclusive and equitable quality education, research and innovation, support to civil society organisations, youth empowerment, development of media and information literacy and enhanced and targeted support for media independence and pluralism			
Expected Results	Indicators	Means of verification	Baseline & targets
<b>a)</b> Improved efficiency and effectiveness of the education system (including resilience to shocks) for better learning outcomes, including through eliminating of gender stereotypes from textbooks and teaching processes and ensuring that social inclusion and equity are part of any digital education reform.	<b>a1)</b> Sector analysis financial indicators (share of investments on teacher training, teacher incentives, school upgrade/refurbishment, etc.) <b>a2)</b> School/rationalisation policies for schools and universities adopted and implemented, according to national strategies <b>a3)</b> Learning outcomes: PISA results (OECD Programme for International Student Assessment) <b>a4)</b> Digitalisation strategies and action plans implemented according to national strategies.	PEFA (Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability) and/or Annual National Budget analysis  Analysis of school network (data from Ministry of Education, Culture and Research)  OECD-PISA publications	<b>a1)</b> Qualitative indicators: target is an improved value for money (VfM) and cost/benefit analysis compared with the previous period  <b>a2)</b> Baseline: rationalisation policies not adopted and/or not implemented in 2021. Target: rationalised school network in place by 2027, with increased education opportunities and improved learning outcomes in particular in rural areas.  <b>a3)</b> Baseline: Moldova's PISA Results 2018 below the OECD average. Target: Moldova's PISA Results 2021 (pondered with Covid-disruptions) and 2024 aligned with the OECD average.
<b>b)</b> More equitable access and quality education at all levels (primary, secondary, higher education and VET), reduced drop-out rates and gender stereotypes in the selection of	<b>b1)</b> Pupils/students enrollment, completion and retention rates (disaggregated by sex, administrative sub-regions, location – urban/rural, wealth quintile,	National Statistics EMIS – Ministry of Education	<b>b1)</b> Baseline: GER 2019-20 <sup>34</sup> Preschool (sex aggregated): 93,9

<sup>34</sup> [https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala\\_07%20INV\\_INV010\\_INV010rev/INV010300rcl.px/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774](https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala_07%20INV_INV010_INV010rev/INV010300rcl.px/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774)

future professions;	etc.) <b>b2)</b> Drop-out rates of children with disabilities, disaggregated by sex <b>b3)</b> Number and dynamic of enrolment in VET and dual VET, with disaggregation by sex <b>b4)</b> Share of VET and higher education establishment students by specialties (fields of study), disaggregated by sex;	Preschool boys: 92,0 Preschool girls: 96,0 Primary education (sex aggregated): 106,2 Primary education boys: 105,2 Primary education girls: 107,3 Secondary education (sex aggregated): 105,4 Secondary education boys: 104,9 Secondary education girls: 106,0  Total school enrolment grade 1-12 (absolute figure 2019-20): 329230 <sup>35</sup>  Target: GER (Improvement compared with previous period) Total school enrolment: increase compared with previous period.  <b>b2)</b> Baseline: Not available (TBD) Target: TBD  <b>b3)</b> Baseline <sup>36</sup> : In VET in 2018-2019 total number of students: 44348 In 2019-2020: 43564. Dual VET: enrolled in 2019: 1295 enrolled in 2020: 1494 In secondary technical vocational education: in 2018-2019 total number of students: 15306, enrolled in 2018: 7746. In 2019-2020: total number of students 14673, enrolled in 2019: 7223
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<sup>35</sup> <https://sime.md/ords/f?p=201:79:14955901505823::NQ::>

<sup>36</sup> [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/accesul\\_la\\_invatamantul\\_profesional\\_tehnic\\_analiza\\_statistica\\_anul\\_de\\_studii\\_2019-2020.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/accesul_la_invatamantul_profesional_tehnic_analiza_statistica_anul_de_studii_2019-2020.pdf)



			Target: in addition to quantitative aspects, given the high demographic variability due to natality and migration rates, it is important to observe qualitative aspects of the process and involvement of the actors.
<b>c)</b> Increased availability and presence of qualified and motivated teachers and education staff	<b>c1)</b> Percentage of teachers in service who have completed nationally required training/qualification/certification program, disaggregated by sex <b>c2)</b> Pupil/qualified teacher ratio <b>c3)</b> Average qualification of teachers at each education level <b>c4)</b> Number of teacher's application and recruitment each year (disaggregated by sex)	National statistics EMIS - – Ministry of Education School registers	c1) Baseline: 2020, about 75% Target: 100% by 2027  c2) Baseline: in 2020 the average ratio across levels is 11,9 : 1 Target: ratio in the range 15-20 : 1 by 2027  c3) Baseline: in 2020 1170 graduates, 585 placed, 280 hired. Target: in 2027: 1500 graduates, 1000 placed, 500 hired.
<b>d)</b> Improved use of appropriate teaching and learning methods and resources, including digital resources	d1) Percentage of teachers trained and certified to use digital resources, disaggregated by sex d2) Percentage of teacher attending in-service training/refreshment pedagogical training, disaggregated by sex d3) Percentage of accredited teacher training programs	EMIS - Ministry of Education	d1) Baseline: 20.000 Target: 14.000/year  d2) Baseline: 24% Target: 35%  d3) Baseline: qualitative Target: qualitative
<b>e)</b> Improved access to, relevance and quality of lifelong learning	<b>e1)</b> number of people that validate prior learning, disaggregated by sex <b>e2)</b> NEET (people not in employment, education and training) rates, disaggregated by sex <b>e3)</b> Number of people who have benefited from institution or workplace based VET/skills development interventions supported by the EU (EURF), disaggregated by sex	Data from Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and ANACEC Data from Ministry of Labour	e1) Baseline: 2020: 47 in 10 qualifications Target: 2027: 500 in 30 qualifications  e2) Baseline <sup>37</sup> : 40% Target: 30%  e3) Baseline: TBD

<sup>37</sup> [https://www.oecd.org/countries/moldova/Youth\\_Well-being\\_Policy\\_Review\\_Moldova.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/countries/moldova/Youth_Well-being_Policy_Review_Moldova.pdf)

			Target: TBD
<b>f)</b> Improved integration between higher education, VET, and research and innovation;	<b>f1)</b> number and type joint projects between universities and research institutes <b>f2)</b> number of international publications with joint authorship from universities and research institutes <b>f3)</b> technological transfer of research results to practical applications <b>f4)</b> number of technology transfer roadmaps developed	Data from Ministry of Education, Culture and Research  Data on participation of Moldova in Horizon [RTD] 2020	<b>f1)</b> Baseline: 52 Target: 80 <b>f2)</b> Baseline: in Horizon 2020, Moldovan entities have participated 97 times to 67 signed grants of collaborative, MSCA, ERC and SME Instrument actions of Horizon 2020, receiving 7.4 million euros of direct EU contribution Target: an increase by 40% for Horizon Europe <b>f3)</b> Baseline: 12 in 2020, 8 in first quarter 2021 Target: at least 30 by 2027 <b>f4)</b> Baseline: 0 Target: 1
<b>g)</b> Research-industry partnerships are fostered. The diversification of the economy is increased thanks to the growth of innovative sectors;	<b>g1)</b> Number and type of existing PPP in R&I <b>g2)</b> Number and type of projects promoted by / involving PPP consortia	Data from Ministries  Data on participation of Moldova in Horizon Europe	<b>g1)</b> Baseline: 23 partnerships between public research organisations and entrepreneurs Target: at least 50 partnerships by 2027 <b>g2)</b> Baseline: 23 applied research projects and technology transfer projects Target: TBD

<b>h)</b> Capacity of civil society organisations, including social partners, youth organisations and grassroots organisations in rural areas, strengthened to engage meaningfully in policy-making processes and policy dialogue	<b>h1)</b> Number of government policies developed or revised with civil society organisation participation through EU support		
<b>i)</b> Strengthened media, information and digital literacy and critical thinking skills of citizens	<b>i1)</b> amount of time dedicated to media and information literacy and development of critical thinking skills in school curricula <b>i2)</b> number of NGOs involved in MIL and critical thinking skills involved in the education process <b>i3)</b> number of fact-checking NGOs and project supported and working in the country	Reports of MoE NGOs reports	
<b>j)</b> Strengthened media independence and pluralism.	<b>j1)</b> Market share and number of media with sound editorial policies and transparent ownership structures <b>j2)</b> transparent system of audience measurement and advertising market <b>j3)</b> efficient and transparent regulatory bodies monitoring the information space <b>j4)</b> independent Public Broadcaster fulfilling its public service role	Media markets reports, Audiovisual Council reports, EU, CoE monitoring reports	
<b>k)</b> Capacity of civil society organisations strengthened to address disinformation, including monitoring, training and awareness raising activities.			
<b>Specific objective 2: To ensure mobility and people-to-people contacts, and reduce brain drain by strengthening social inclusion and quality of life;</b>			
<b>Expected Results</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Means of verification</b>	<b>Baseline and Targets</b>
<b>a)</b> Migration-sensitive approaches are promoted horizontally in all strategic sectors of the EU-MD AA and bilateral cooperation programmes	<b>a1)</b> Number of migration-sensitive EU projects/programme implemented in Moldova <b>a2)</b> Number of EU funded assistance interventions reporting improvement of compliance of Border and Security Systems with EU/Schengen Acquis (Result indicator 5.1.2, IPA PF 2.14) <b>a3)</b> Number of formal high level dialogues at ministerial level per year (including on migration) (Result indicator 4.3.1)	Projects' reports  Data from Ministry of Interior and from European Commission DG HOME	a1. TBD a.2 TBD a.3 TBD
<b>b)</b> Moldovan economy and society benefit from diaspora engagement, in-country investments from migrant remittances, labour migration and integration of returning migrants	<b>b1)</b> Emigration and migration-returning rates, disaggregated by sex;	Data from Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Economy, and EU services	b1)

	<b>b2)</b> Number of returning nationals benefitting from reintegration support; <b>b3)</b> Volume of remittances, investments from remittances and migrants savings		Baseline <sup>38</sup> : The return rate in 2019 decreased to 63% (compared to 86% in 2018), with 4,720 Moldovan nationals effectively returned. Target: Increase in return rate.  b2) Baseline: Remittances in 2019 (1.9 Billion USD = 16% GDP) Target: TBD
<b>c)</b> Data management capacities of the national authorities (including in statistics services) are strengthened, and sex-disaggregated migration data are mainstreamed for evidence-based policy planning in all sectors	<b>c1)</b> Number of migration management or forced displacement strategies or policies a) developed/revised, or b) under implementation with EU support (Result indicator 5.1.1, EURF 2.18, IPA PF 2.13)	Data from Ministry of Interior and from European Commission DG HOME National statistics	TBD
<b>d)</b> Social inclusion is enhanced through strengthened legal and policy frameworks of social protection and safety nets for minorities and groups at risk of marginalisation	<b>d1)</b> Number of individuals directly benefiting from EU supported interventions that aim to reduce social and economic inequality (Result indicator 3.4), disaggregated by sex	National statistics	TBD
<b>e)</b> Enhanced capacities on migration and mobility, including to enhance border management, also via cooperation with Frontex, to prevent irregular migration and fight against migrant smuggling, to reinforce the effectiveness of return and readmission procedure and their sustainability, to decrease the number of unfounded asylum applications, and to promote legal migration	<b>b1)</b> Number of capacity building projects on integrated border management, including with Frontex; <b>b2)</b> Qualitative and quantitative data on readmission cooperation; <b>b3)</b> Number of travel documents issued following requests submitted by Member States (issuance rate); <b>b4)</b> Number of Moldovan nationals in the EU with no right to stay on the EU territory; <b>b5)</b> Number of Moldovan nationals effectively returned following a return decision issued by a Member State (return rate); <b>b6)</b> Number of unfounded asylum applications; Number of initiatives supported to promote legal migration; <b>b7)</b> Number of persons prevented from irregularly crossing the border;	Frontex reports  EUBAM reports Eurostat	2020/2019: 1. Issuance rate: 60% (40%)  2. Irregularly staying nationals: 24 610 (16 480)  3. Return rate: 39% (63%)  2020: 1. Rejected applications at first instance: 3,535  2. 1 pilot project on legal migration between Slovakia and Moldova

<sup>38</sup> COM(2020) 325 final 'THIRD REPORT UNDER THE VISA SUSPENSION MECHANISM', July 2020

	<b>b8)</b> Number of institutions supported to prevent and fight against irregular migration (through capacity building, technical equipment).		
<b>f)</b> Continued fulfilment by Moldova of the visa liberalisation benchmarks, including addressing the recommendations in the regular Visa Suspension Mechanism Reports issued by the European Commission.	<b>g1)</b> Actions taken to ensure the continuous fulfilment of the visa liberalisation benchmarks and to address the Commission recommendations of the annual reports under the Visa Suspension Mechanism	EC Visa Suspension Mechanism Annual Reports National statistics	<b>g.1)</b> Baseline: findings from the European Commission 4 <sup>th</sup> Report on Visa Suspension Mechanism (2021) Target: implementation of recommendations from the European Commission Annual reports on Visa Suspension Mechanism (2021)
<b>Specific objective 3: To contribute to the facilitation of the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict by increasing confidence between both sides of the Nistru River through joint initiatives involving local authorities, civil society organisations and other stakeholders, and to address specific security-related concerns of men and women through the Women, Peace and Security Process.<sup>39</sup></b>			
<b>Expected Results</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Means of verification</b>	<b>Baseline &amp; targets</b>
<b>a)</b> Improved livelihood on both sides of the Nistru River through strengthened connections and cooperation between the population, for economic development and decent job creation for women and men.	<b>b1)</b> Number of individuals directly benefiting from EU supported interventions that specifically aim to support civilian post-conflict, peace building or conflict prevention. (NDICI 9 bis, EURF), disaggregated by sex  <b>b2)</b> Proportion of population below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural) (NDICI 2)	EU projects' reports National statistics WB and UN International Organizations data	<b>a1)</b> Baseline: TBD Target: at least 250 individuals benefitting directly and at least 25,000 indirectly from EU supported interventions by 2027  <b>a2)</b> Baseline: ~15% Moldovan population below the poverty line in 2020 Target: ~ 9 % Moldovan population below the poverty line by 2027
<b>b)</b> Community development is enhanced through capacity building, small-scale initiatives by existing platforms for civil society organisations cooperation, and having specific security-related concerns of men and women identified and addressed.	<b>c1)</b> Number of grassroots civil society organisation benefitting from (or reached by) EU support (Result indicator 4.4.3)	EU projects' reports	<b>b1)</b> Baseline: TBD Target: At least 5 CSO sectoral platforms supported, for a total of at least 20 grassroots level organizations involved in EU support

<sup>39</sup> Please refer to UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

			b2) Baseline: TBD Target: TBD
c) Progressive rapprochement or alignment in pilot sectors (to be identified).	d1) Identified focal sectors and number and type of interventions successfully implemented (qualitative)	EU projects' reports	c1) Baseline: no specific pilot sector identified under CBM 2019-22, except two flagship projects in the area of cultural heritage. Target: at least 2 pilot sectors identified and 2 pilot projects implemented by 2027.

**Annex 2. Donor matrix showing the current indicative allocations per sector 2021-2024**

Sector of intervention	AT	BG	CH	CZ	DE	EIB	ES	FI	FR	HU	IT	LT	LV	NL	PL	RO	SK	SE	Total
1. Democratic Governance and Public Administration				x					x				x	x	x	x	x	x	8
2. Financial sector and Economic Governance						x						x	x	x	x			x	6
3. Economic Development			x	x	x	x							x		x		x	x	8
4. Local Governance	x		x		x				x				x		x	x	x	x	9
5. Justice and Home Affairs				x					x			x	x	x	x			x	7
6. Social Protection and Health	x		x	x		x			x				x		x	x	x		9
7. Employment and Education	x		x	x	x	x			x						x	x			8
8. Culture and Media			x					x	x			x	x	x	x			x	8
9. Civil Society	x		x					x	x			x	x	x	x			x	9
10. Environment and climate change	x			x		x		x							x	x		x	7
11. Energy and Transport				x		x						x			x				4
12. Agriculture, Food safety and Rural Development				x		x							x		x		x	x	6
13. Transnistria (cross cutting)			x	x	x			x							x		x	x	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	

### **Annex 3 Flagship Initiatives for Moldova**

#### **Flagship 1: Supporting a sustainable, innovative, green and competitive economy — direct support for 50 000 SMEs**

*Equity investments will accelerate the integration of Moldovan SMEs into wider EU value chains and help SMEs comply with EU standards. From 2021, the EU will roll out programmes to foster the overall competitiveness of the Moldovan economy, with a focus on the green and digital transitions. Simultaneously, investments in flanking measures will further develop the food testing system (laboratories) to adapt to DCFTA requirements. Overall support reaching SMEs: EUR 500M.*

#### **Flagship 2: Boosting EU-Moldova trade — construction of an inland freight terminal in Chisinau**

*In order to facilitate trade and reduce bottlenecks, and building on the logistics centre identified in the TEN-T investment plan, an inland freight terminal will be constructed in Chisinau (where 80% of all import/export operations take place), allowing for customs clearance and the provision of other essential freight services closer to the consumption and production centres. Estimated cost: EUR 30M.*

#### **Flagship 3: Increasing energy efficiency — expanding the refurbishment of district heating systems in residential buildings in Chisinau and Balti**

*Building on similar investments in the energy efficiency of public buildings, the heating grid will gradually be replaced to allow residents to regulate the heating in their own apartments. In addition, thermal insulation will be provided to further improve energy performance. This will boost energy efficiency and reduce CO2 emissions, create jobs, improve people's quality of life and reduce their electricity bills. Estimated investment: EUR 300M.*

#### **Flagship 4: Improving connectivity — anchoring Moldova in the TEN-T**

*A combination of technical assistance and investment in new and existing infrastructure will improve the roads and railways. From 2021, the Connectivity Facility will provide advisory services and technical assistance to help the partner countries plan, prepare and implement infrastructure projects relating to the TEN-T. The Road IV programme will cover Moldova's main road infrastructure, facilitating trade with the EU and strengthening the Government's capacity to maintain roads and protect physical assets through efficient axle load controls. Estimated investment: EUR 780M.*

#### **Flagship 5: Investing in human capital and preventing 'brain drain' — modernisation of school infrastructures and implementation of the national education strategy**

*Human capital underpins the sustainability of economic recovery and competitiveness. The EU will provide assistance to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research in its efforts to implement the national education strategy. The aim is to improve access, relevance and quality of education via technical assistance, supply of equipment (analogue and digital learning materials in line with the updated curriculum) and the refurbishment of school infrastructure. Estimated cost: EUR 25M.*