

## 1512<sup>th</sup> meeting, 19 November 2024

2 Current political questions

### 2.4 Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2025-2028

Document prepared by the Directorate of Programme Co-ordination

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2025-2028 (the Action Plan) is a strategic programming instrument that aims to bring the Republic of Moldova's legislation, institutions and practice further into line with European standards in the areas of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Action Plan is intended to support the country's efforts to honour its obligations as a Council of Europe member State and will be implemented as part of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy whereby member States recommitted to "work together to protect and promote the three fundamental, interdependent and inalienable principles of democracy, rule of law and human rights, as enshrined in the Statute of the Council of Europe and in the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms".<sup>1</sup>

The Action Plan priorities take into account decisions, resolutions, recommendations, findings, conclusions of reports and opinions, notably of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (the Congress), the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe (the Commissioner), the European Commission for Democracy through Law (the Venice Commission) and the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), as well as the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (European Court) regarding the Republic of Moldova. It is based on the strategic priorities of the Council of Europe as reflected in the [Reykjavik Declaration – United around our values](#) and concentrates on areas where the Organisation can offer competitive advantages.

The Action Plan further reflects the recommendations of the European Commission's opinion on the Republic of Moldova's application for membership of the European Union (EU), issued in June 2022, as well as the analytical report on the country's alignment with the EU *acquis*, prepared by the European Commission in February 2023. The document furthermore incorporates the findings and recommendations of the European Commission's report on the Republic of Moldova issued in November 2023, in which the Commission recommends that the European Council opens accession negotiations with the country and will monitor progress and compliance in all areas related to the opening of negotiations. Finally, the Action Plan is in line with the priorities of the Republic of Moldova's national reform agenda. On 25 June 2024, the EU held the first intergovernmental conference at ministerial level and opened accession negotiations with the Republic of Moldova. This followed the decision of the European Council of 14-15 December 2023 to open accession negotiations with the country and the approval by the Council on 21 June 2024 of [the Negotiating Framework](#), in accordance with the revised enlargement methodology. By assisting the Republic of Moldova in implementing Council of Europe standards, the Action Plan will also contribute to supporting the EU accession process.

<sup>1</sup>. The Reykjavik Principles for Democracy are part of the "[Reykjavik Declaration – United around our values](#)", adopted at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe that took place in Reykjavik on 16 and 17 May 2023.

Under this Action Plan, the Council of Europe and the authorities of the Republic of Moldova have agreed to carry forward jointly, through co-operation programmes, reforms that aim to: enhance the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights (the Convention) and the European Court case law at national level, including through the integration of all relevant courses of the European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP); align national legislation and anti-discrimination practices with European standards; promote gender equality; enhance the independence and accountability of the judicial system; improve electoral legislation and practice; further reform the penal, probation and crime-prevention systems; improve healthcare provision in closed institutions, including mental healthcare and the treatment of civil and forensic patients; implement a comprehensive national drug strategy with human rights at its heart; advance the compliance of national practices with European standards in the field of the media and internet; improve the quality of local democracy; enhance the protection of economic and social rights; further develop youth policies; and facilitate civil society participation in decision making at all levels.

This will include, where appropriate, a parliamentary dimension aimed at increasing the impact of the actions of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and ensuring ownership by its members. Projects that aim for legislative change should benefit from peer-to-peer exchanges between members of parliament (MPs) of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova with MPs from other member States on their experience of the matter.

The implementation of the Action Plan may be complemented by projects from the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). The CEB can co-finance investment projects with a high social value that have been approved by the Moldovan Government. It already provides assistance to the in the form of grants and loans.

This Action Plan builds on the outcomes of the previous Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova for 2021-2024, which resulted in: the strengthened institutional capacity of the National Preventive Mechanism and the People's Advocate (Ombudsperson); the strengthened protection of human rights of refugees and migrants; improved measures to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence; improved capacities for protecting children from violence; the strengthened capacity of the Equality Council to combat discrimination in line with European standards; the improved evaluation of courts' functioning through better collection, analysis and reporting of court statistics; an improved legal framework in the field of preventing and combating corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing; enhanced management and healthcare provision in prisons and improved access to quality drug treatment services; improved general mental health and patient care in psychiatric institutions, as well as enhanced capacities of the probation service; the improved capacities of media stakeholders; improved electoral regulations, in line with the Council of Europe's electoral standards; enhanced social rights facilitating the access of persons from vulnerable groups to vocational education and training and subsequent employment; an enhanced dialogue between national and local authorities and an improved consultation mechanism; the advancement of the process to promote an open government agenda that also includes a local component; the enhanced capacities of the Congress of Local Authorities from the Republic of Moldova to monitor and evaluate the public administration reform in the country; the strengthened capacities of civic education and history teachers and integrated curricula on democratic citizenship in the secondary education system; the enhanced institutional capacity of the Office of the Government Agent to follow the enforcement of European Court judgments at national level; and the compliance of the national pre-trial detention and criminal sentencing framework with European standards.

The Action Plan aims to support the Republic of Moldova in its efforts to implement the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) of the [UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), notably Goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15 and 16.

The overall financing needs for this Action Plan are estimated to be €30 million. While funding to the amount of 8€ million (26,7% of the estimated needs) has been secured as of 10 October 2024, additional funding is essential to fully implement the priority actions identified for 2025-2028.

The Council of Europe and the Republic of Moldova will continue co-operation to improve existing legislative frameworks, to ensure their effective implementation and to enhance the capacities of national institutions to bring the country's legislation and practice closer to European standards in order to promote human rights, strengthen the rule of law and ensure democratic principles of governance.

## CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	1
CONTENTS.....	4
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	6
PART I – INTRODUCTION .....	8
1.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW .....	8
1.1.1 The Republic of Moldova and the Council of Europe.....	8
1.1.2 Added value of the technical assistance programmes of the Council of Europe .....	9
1.1.3 Main results of the previous action plan(s).....	10
1.1.4 Consultation process .....	13
1.2 ACTION PLAN GOALS .....	13
PART II – PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR 2025 TO 2028 .....	15
2.1 SECURING HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS .....	15
2.1.1 Execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights .....	17
2.1.2 Effective implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights at national level .....	18
2.2 ADVANCING SOCIAL JUSTICE, GOOD HEALTH AND A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT .....	19
2.2.1 Effective implementation of the European Social Charter .....	21
2.2.2 Human rights in biomedicine and health .....	23
2.2.3 Quality of medicines and healthcare .....	23
2.2.4 Protection of the environment and human rights .....	24
2.2.5 Business and human rights .....	25
2.2.6 Secretariat of the Council of Europe Development Bank (to be developed by the CEB Secretariat) .....	26
2.3 ACTING FOR EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND RESPECT .....	26
2.3.1 Gender equality – Violence against women and domestic violence – Human trafficking.....	28
2.3.2 Anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion – Roma and Travellers – National minorities, regional or minority languages – LGBTI – Migrants.....	32
2.3.3 Children's rights.....	35
2.4 BUILDING TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.....	37
2.4.1 Independence and efficiency of justice .....	37
2.4.2 Prisons, police and deprivation of liberty.....	39
2.5 UPHOLDING THE SAFETY, SECURITY AND INTEGRITY OF SOCIETY AND PERSONS .....	42
2.5.1 Corruption – Money laundering .....	42
2.5.2 Digital challenges: Cybercrime – Data protection .....	45
2.5.3 Integrity and governance of sport.....	46
2.6 ANCHORING DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN EUROPEAN SOCIETIES.....	47
2.6.1 Freedom of expression and information – Safety of journalists .....	49
2.6.2. Local Democracy.....	51
2.6.3. Democratic governance and dialogue – Civil society – Elections.....	53
2.6.4 Education.....	56
2.6.5 Youth .....	57
2.6.6 Culture and cultural heritage .....	58

<b>PART III – IMPLEMENTATION</b> .....	59
3.1 METHODOLOGY .....	59
3.1.1 HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH.....	59
3.1.2 LESSONS LEARNED.....	63
3.1.3 RISK MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY.....	65
3.2 CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS .....	65
3.3 CO-ORDINATION .....	69
3.4 FUNDING.....	69
3.5 GOVERNANCE .....	70
APPENDIX I: LOGICAL FRAMEWORK TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE ACTION PLAN FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA 2025-2028.....	72
APPENDIX II: RISK REGISTER.....	93
APPENDIX III: FINANCIAL TABLE AS OF 10 OCTOBER 2024 .....	99
APPENDIX IV: SOURCES/RELEVANT DOCUMENTS .....	100

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Action Plan	Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2025-2028
AML/CFT	Anti-Money Laundering/Countering Financing of Terrorism
Bern Convention	Council of Europe's Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats
Budapest Convention	Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime
CALM	Congress of Local Authorities from the Republic Moldova
CBM	Council of Europe's confidence-building measures
CCPE	Consultative Council of European Prosecutors
CEB	Council of Europe Development Bank
CEC	Central Election Commission
CEPEJ	European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice
Charter	European Social Charter
CM	Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe
Congress	Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
Convention	European Convention on Human Rights
CPT	European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CSO	Civil society organisation
DNFBPs	Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions
DPC	Directorate of Programme Co-ordination
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ECSR	European Committee on Social Rights
EDC/HRE	Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education
EDMQ	European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & HealthCare
EU	European Union
European Court	European Court of Human Rights
FIU	Office for Prevention and Fight against Money Laundering
GR-DEM	Rapporteur Group on Democracy
GRECO	Group of States Against Corruption
GRETA	Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
GREVIO	Council of Europe's Group on Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
HELP	Council of Europe Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals
Istanbul Convention	Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
JUSTAT/AIS	An automated information system (AIS), available online, which can be used for consulting and analysing statistical data on the judicial system
Lanzarote Committee	Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse
Lanzarote Convention	Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
Macolin Convention	Convention on the manipulation of sports competitions
MONEYVAL	Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism
MSMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
NGO	Non-Governmental organisation
NPM	National Preventive Mechanism
NPOs	Non-Profit Organisations
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OGP	Open Government Partnership
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Oviedo Convention	Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PMM	Council of Europe Project Management Methodology
Pompidou Group	Co-operation Group to Combat Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Drugs
PTEFs	Persons with top executive functions

RACs	Refugee Accommodation Centres
RFCDC	Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture
Saint-Denis Convention	Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events
SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
SLAPPs	Strategic lawsuits against public participation
SCJ	Supreme Court of Justice
StratCom	Centre for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation
Commissioner	Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe
Tromsø Convention	Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
Venice Commission	European Commission for Democracy through Law
VET	Vocational education and training

## PART I – INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

#### 1.1.1 THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Republic of Moldova became the 36th member State of the Council of Europe on 13 July 1995. Accordingly, it has entered into, and has agreed to honour, a number of specific commitments, which are listed in Parliamentary Assembly [Opinion 188 \(1995\)](#).

The Republic of Moldova accepted the obligations incumbent on all member States under Article 3 of the Statute:<sup>2</sup> compliance with the principles of pluralist democracy and the rule of law as well as respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons placed under its jurisdiction.

To date, the country has signed and ratified 110<sup>3</sup> conventions and protocols of the Council of Europe, including the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) and the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention), and is subject to a number of Council of Europe mechanisms, including those of the European Court of Human Rights (European Court), the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (the Congress), the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe (the Commissioner), the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL), the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR), the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), the Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Committee) and the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA). The Republic of Moldova has been a member of the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) since 1998. The Republic of Moldova has joined the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which was established by a resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in May 2023.

The Republic of Moldova has benefited from co-operation programmes with the Council of Europe since 2006. Past programmes backed by the European Union (EU) aimed to support the reform process of the judicial system, improve access to justice, combat economic crime, strengthen cyber-resilience and combat discrimination, hate speech and hate crime. Similarly, voluntary contributions by Council of Europe member States have made it possible to implement projects aimed at promoting a human rights-compliant criminal justice system, strengthening the prison and probation reforms, fighting corruption, improving electoral practices and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, including but not limited to women, children, migrants and refugees. The Action Plans set forth to support democratic reforms in the Republic of Moldova for the periods 2013-2016, 2017-2020 and 2021-2024 have provided a more strategic framework for co-operation with the Council of Europe.

On 3 March 2022, the Republic of Moldova applied for EU membership and was granted EU candidate status in June 2022. On 12 December 2023, the European Council commended the substantial progress the Republic of Moldova had made in meeting accession objectives in the face of the ongoing Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine and hybrid attacks against the Republic of Moldova itself. In its report, the European Council said further progress on reform, notably in the areas of the rule of law, justice and fundamental rights, would be needed for the Republic of Moldova to further advance on its accession path. The European Council meeting on 14 and 15 December 2023 decided to open negotiations with the Republic of Moldova. It invited the Council to adopt the accession negotiating framework for the Republic of Moldova once the steps set out in the Commission's recommendations of November 2023 were adopted.

<sup>2</sup>. Council of Europe constitutional document, <https://rm.coe.int/1680935bd0>.

<sup>3</sup>. Council of Europe Treaty Office, [Treaty list for the Republic of Moldova: signatures with ratification](#) and [Treaty list for the Republic of Moldova: signatures without ratification](#).

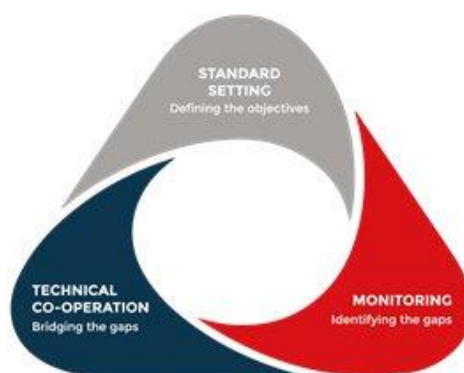


On 25 June 2024, the EU held the first intergovernmental conference at ministerial level to open accession negotiations with the Republic of Moldova. The EU's decision to grant candidate status to the Republic of Moldova paved the way for expanding the ongoing co-operation and launching new projects to assist the country in addressing the new challenges and to support its accession reform agenda based on the Council of Europe standards. The country's EU accession perspective and [the negotiating framework](#) agreed with the EU will be a major factor in setting the priorities for co-operation, focusing on the benchmarks it aims to achieve and based on the recommendations of the Council of Europe monitoring and advisory bodies and the case law of the European Court.

The Council of Europe remains best placed to support the integration of the country into the European Union and the implementation of ambitious reforms to progress towards this goal.

#### 1.1.2 ADDED VALUE OF THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

As emphasised in the "[Reykjavik Declaration – United around our values](#)", Council of Europe co-operation programmes form an integral part of the unique strategic triangle of standard setting, monitoring and co-operation: the development of legally binding standards is linked to their monitoring by independent monitoring bodies and other mechanisms and supplemented by technical co-operation to facilitate their implementation. The Council of Europe's actions are developed and implemented in areas where the Organisation has strong expertise and added value.



**Figure 1: Council of Europe strategic triangle**

This Action Plan builds, to a large extent, on the most recent decisions, resolutions, recommendations, findings, conclusions of reports and opinions of the Council of Europe's monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies in respect of the country, as well as the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (European Court) regarding the Republic of Moldova. It also takes into account the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy and the Secretary General's annual reports on the state of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe. In addition, it is developed on the basis of the results of the previous Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova for 2021-2024 and reflects the priorities of the country's reforms, including those put forth in the Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova as well as the European Commission's Opinion on the Republic of Moldova's Application for Membership of the European Union and the European Commission's Analytical Report as of February 2023. The document also incorporates the findings and recommendations of the European Commission's report on the Republic of Moldova issued in November 2023, in which the Commission recommends that the Council opens accession negotiations with the country and will monitor progress and compliance in all areas related to the opening of [negotiations](#).

In developing the present Action Plan and designing the technical co-operation support given to reforms, the gaps identified by the Council of Europe institutions, monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies have been taken into account, with the relevant source documents being included in Appendix IV.

Relevant Council of Europe conventions and other instruments of the Organisation have also been used as reference material for areas of co-operation included in this Action Plan.

### 1.1.3 MAIN RESULTS OF THE PREVIOUS ACTION PLAN(S)

The present Action Plan takes into account the outcomes of Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024 in six cross-cutting components, as summarised below.

#### Securing human rights and fundamental freedoms

- In the period 2021-2022, the Ministry of Justice received extensive expert support in the process of amending the Criminal Procedure Code and the Criminal Code in line with Council of Europe recommendations, bringing the framework for pretrial detention and criminal sentencing in the Republic of Moldova closer to European standards.
- In 2022, the parliament adopted amendments to the law to strengthen the capacity and efficiency of the Office of the People's Advocate. The Strategic Development Programme of the Office of the People's Advocate for 2023-2030, prepared with the assistance of the Council of Europe, was adopted in 2023.
- In 2023, the Council of Europe facilitated the establishment by the authorities of the Republic of Moldova of an interagency working group under the General Prosecutor's Office to prevent and combat torture and ill-treatment.

#### Advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment

- National authorities' knowledge of the gaps and shortcomings in the area of social rights has increased following a needs assessment carried out by the Council of Europe in 2023, with a particular focus on labour rights and employment rights of people from vulnerable groups.
- Judges, legal professionals and public officials in the Republic of Moldova have a better understanding of the case law of the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) and are able to apply it in practice.
- Labour inspectors increased their knowledge of national and international standards, including those of the European Social Charter, in the field of labour inspection.

#### Acting for equality, diversity and respect

- The Republic of Moldova ratified the [Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence \(Istanbul Convention\)](#), which entered into force in 2022. The policy framework for gender equality was further strengthened in 2023 with the adoption of the [National Programme for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Family Violence for 2023-2027](#) and the establishment of the National Agency for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. The Council of Europe has provided advice and support in this respect.
- Co-ordination for effective investigation and prosecution of child sexual abuse cases in a child-friendly manner was improved through the establishment of a specialised committee to co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of [the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse \(Lanzarote Convention\)](#).
- The Council of Europe supported the Moldovan authorities in dealing with the country's largest ever influx of refugees, caused by the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine, [by strengthening the capacities of public officials and legal practitioners](#) on statelessness and the European human rights standards on migration and asylum.
- In 2023, the Audiovisual Council of the Republic of Moldova adopted the methodology for assessing and dealing with hate speech in the media, based on a guide developed by the Council of Europe.
- In 2023, the Council of Europe contributed to the strengthening of secondary legislation in the field of equality by providing expertise for the revision of the internal regulations of the Equality Council in line with the recent amendments to the Law on Ensuring Equality (No. 121/2012) and the Law on the Equality Council (No. 298/2012).

- Four networks of local public and civil society organisations have been established to protect the rights of vulnerable groups (LGBTI people, women, Roma minority, persons with disabilities).
- A code of conduct to prevent and combat hate speech and discrimination in the context of local elections (2023) has been developed, contributing to the reduction of hate speech, including sexism, during political campaigns.

#### Building trust in public institutions

- Constitutional amendments increasing the independence of judges and judicial self-governing bodies, developed with the Council of Europe's support, were adopted and entered into force in 2022.
- The Superior Council of Magistracy developed, approved and implemented the concept of JUSTAT, which has aimed to assess the efficiency of the courts and judiciary based on a variety of statistical data and key performance indicators.
- The Superior Council of Magistracy and the Superior Council of Prosecutors, with expert assistance from the Council of Europe, developed and adopted important regulations on the appointment, evaluation and disciplinary procedures for judges and prosecutors.
- The Council of Europe contributed to the reform of the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ), which was initiated by legislative amendments adopted in 2023, marking a major overhaul of the SCJ's structure and functions to ensure consistent interpretation and application of the law within the national judicial system.
- The Council of Europe bolstered the prison and probation systems' capacity for better risk management and individualised treatment of offenders, thus facilitating the implementation of a progressive system for the enforcement of custodial and non-custodial sentences.
- New policies and standard operating procedures and sustainable methodologies on capacity building provided by the Council of Europe resulted in improved treatment of vulnerable groups of prisoners, combating interprisoner violence, promoting dynamic security, protecting the young and dealing with violent, alcohol-dependent offenders and developing a strategic response to prison overcrowding.
- The Council of Europe's support led to improved material conditions in medical units and prison hospitals and the adoption of new rules on prison healthcare, improved nutrition and hygiene standards for all categories of prisoners, including the most vulnerable, and the compassionate release of seriously ill prisoners, in line with long-standing recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT).
- The expertise provided by the Council of Europe contributed to the improvement of national legislation on mental healthcare, including new criteria for involuntary admission, as reflected in the new Law on Mental Health and Well-Being;<sup>4</sup> and provided input for improved psycho-social rehabilitation of prisoners and psychiatric patients, now included in the National Mental Health Programme for 2023-2027.
- With expert assistance from the Pompidou Group, the National Administration of Penitentiaries gained a better understanding of the obstacles to providing access to quality drug dependence treatment in their prisons and took steps to overcome them, through staff training and adjustments in the current treatment and rehabilitation provision.
- Knowledge and capacity of judges, law-enforcement officers, lawyers and legal professionals enhanced through thematic courses of the Council of Europe European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP), in particular the course "Quality of Justice – the work of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ)", developed and launched in 2023 in English and French, and translated into Romanian in 2024.

<sup>4</sup>. New Law on Mental Health and Well-being of the Republic of Moldova, approved by the parliament on 16 May 2024.

### Upholding the safety, security and integrity of society and persons

- The legal framework in the field of ethics, performance evaluation and disciplinary liability of inspector-judges has been improved after the Council of Europe provided substantial support to the authorities to advance the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) reports (4th and 5th evaluation rounds).
- The capacity of law-enforcement officials to conduct corruption risk assessments and management in high corruption prone areas was enhanced, while national authorities were provided with guidance on how to strengthen existing methodological tools for corruption risk assessments and management.
- The Law on the National Integrity Authority and the Law on the Assets Declaration System were amended, taking into account Council of Europe recommendations.
- In 2022, the Republic of Moldova signed the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention), marking an important milestone in improving international co-operation on cybercrime and electronic evidence and opening up further opportunities for capacity building to support the implementation of this new treaty.

### Anchoring democratic values in European societies

- In 2023, a new Law on Access to Information of Public Interest was adopted by the parliament, in line with the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (Tromsø Convention).
- Key media institutions, such as the Audiovisual Council and the national public broadcaster Teleradio-Moldova, strengthened their institutional capacities and became more independent, following expert advice provided to the parliament by the Council of Europe.
- In 2022, following the rising threat of disinformation in the Republic of Moldova in view of the regional context, the parliament adopted a new Law on Information Security in consultation with the Council of Europe.
- The electoral legislation was comprehensively amended in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission, and a new Electoral Code was adopted in 2022. Further amendments to the Electoral Code were adopted in July and October 2023, providing for the possibility of prohibiting members of political parties declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova from running for election. In conformity with the recommendations of the Venice Commission,<sup>5</sup> the Constitutional Court annulled the provisions on ineligibility of amendments.
- With the support of the Council of Europe, the Central Electoral Commission developed and adopted a road map on digitalising electoral processes and on alternative voting methods, including e-voting.
- The Council of Europe has strengthened the institutional capacities of the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM), which has prepared and launched its strategic plan for 2021-2027.
- Consultation with local authorities by central authorities has increased and multilevel institutional dialogue has improved, reaching the most satisfactory level in years, according to the 2023 Congress Post-Monitoring Report. The parliament, government, CALM and local authorities have jointly developed a policy and legal framework to further improve the consultation mechanism with the support of the Council of Europe.
- The Fifth Open Government Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova (2023-2025) was developed jointly by local and central authorities for the first time since the Republic of Moldova joined the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2011, and two local authorities – Causeni and Leova – became part of the Open Government Partnership Local Programme.

<sup>5</sup>. [www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2023\)048-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2023)048-e)

#### 1.1.4 CONSULTATION PROCESS

This Action Plan has been prepared following extensive consultations with the authorities of the Republic of Moldova and in an inclusive process involving permanent representations of Council of Europe member States. Relevant national strategic documents identifying priorities and/or main lines of action have also been consulted to ensure the Council of Europe's support matches the country's needs and priorities and is coherent with other national initiatives. Any reference in the current Action Plan to national legislation, strategies, policies, action plans or any other national document does not represent an endorsement of such documents by the Council of Europe.

In addition, consultations with international partners, especially the European Union, through co-ordination and project Steering Committee meetings, have taken place in the preparation of this document.

On 3 October 2023, the Committee of Ministers examined the progress review report (covering the period January 2021 to March 2023) on the implementation of the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024 and welcomed the progress made in implementing the Action Plan and encouraged the achievement of all the objectives set therein.

On 23 January 2024, representatives of the Council of Europe Secretariat and the Republic of Moldova authorities held a Steering Committee meeting in Chişinău in order to assess the implementation of the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024. More than 70 participants in the meeting, including representatives of civil society, confirmed the relevance and importance of the Action Plan in responding to the needs and priorities of the national authorities and in helping the Republic of Moldova to continue implementing democratic reforms in line with European standards on human rights, democracy and the rule of law, particularly in the context of its candidate status for EU accession.

Three parallel round-table consultations with the national partners and stakeholders, including representatives of civil society, were held in Chişinău on 22 March 2024, to identify priorities for co-operation under the new Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2025-2028, in line with relevant international commitments of the Republic of Moldova and the latest recommendations, resolutions and findings of the Council of Europe monitoring bodies.

On 22 April 2024, the Secretariat of the Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM) and DPC, in close co-ordination with the Republic of Moldova authorities, organised an information meeting with all interested delegations to the Council of Europe, in order to discuss and exchange views on the outline of the present Action Plan.

An external evaluation of the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024 was finalised in May 2024. The [evaluation report](#) concluded that all the interventions implemented within the Action Plan 2021-2024 were largely demand-driven and were clearly aligned with the Republic of Moldova's wide range of strategies and policies related to areas of reform. The relevance of the Action Plan has increased following the Republic of Moldova's EU candidate status and the opening of accession negotiations.

#### 1.2 ACTION PLAN GOALS

The present Action Plan is a strategic programming instrument for the period 2025 to 2028. The Action Plan aims to continue supporting the Republic of Moldova's efforts to fulfil its obligations as a Council of Europe member State and to bring the country's legislation, institutions and practice further into line with Council of Europe standards in the areas of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Its goal is to support the country in the implementation of key reforms that are important for the EU accession process. It will also help the national authorities to address the challenges posed by regional and global crises and the consequences of the ongoing war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

The Council of Europe will continue to support the authorities of the Republic of Moldova in progressing with (and completing where possible) the reforms undertaken in strategic areas, in particular the following:

## **Securing human rights and fundamental freedoms**

- Implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights (the Convention) at national level.
- Reinforcement of national capacities for full, effective and prompt execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.
- Embedding human rights in local policies and practices.

## **Advancing social justice, good health and sustainable development**

- Facilitating access to social rights for vulnerable groups through better implementation of the European Social Charter.
- Enhancing the protection of the human rights of people with substance-use disorders and other addictions and reducing the burden on the public health system through a comprehensive approach to their treatment and care.

## **Acting for equality, diversity and respect**

- Promoting gender equality and the fight against all forms of violence against women and domestic violence.
- Strengthening the fight against the sexual exploitation of children and the development of a strong child-friendly justice system.
- Combating trafficking in human beings.
- Fighting discrimination, hatred and racism on all grounds.
- Strengthening equality and protection of human rights of vulnerable groups (in particular, LGBTI people, women, Roma community, persons with disabilities) by combating discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes.
- Addressing the needs of refugees and migrants and building a resilient migration, asylum and reception system.

## **Building trust in public institutions**

- Strengthening the independence, professionalism, integrity and transparency of the judiciary.
- Enhancing the penal and probationary systems, including the health and mental care systems in prisons.
- Strengthening the treatment of patients in psychiatric institutions and advancing the transition from the medicalised model of treating patients to a model centred on patients' individual needs.
- Enhancing the organisation of forensic psychiatry by reviewing the approaches to the treatment of forensic patients, clarifying the status of forensic patients and fine-tuning the legislation on treatment by coercion with international best practices and Council of Europe standards.
- Contributing to criminal justice reforms, including regarding the prevention of torture and ill-treatment and the application of pretrial detention measures.
- Contributing to crime prevention and police reforms.

## **Upholding the safety, security and integrity of society and persons**

- Fighting corruption.
- Combating money laundering and terrorism financing.
- Fighting cybercrime.

## **Anchoring democratic values in European societies**

- Strengthening freedom of expression, through tackling disinformation and improving the media and information society landscape.
- Strengthening local self-government, in particular through fostering closer alignment of the local self-government framework with the principles enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government.
- Enhancing participatory democracy, promoting an open and inclusive environment at the local level, in particular through effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy-making processes.
- Improving multilevel dialogue across institutions at the local and central levels.
- Embedding a human rights-based approach in the work of local authorities, with a focus on under-represented groups, migrants and refugees.



- Supporting elections, referendums and political financing in line with international standards.
- Strengthening the parliamentary dimension of co-operation to increase the impact of actions of the parliament and ensuring ownership by MPs.
- Anchoring of education for democracy in the education system.
- Supporting confidence-building measures, in line with the national policy.

The Council of Europe and the authorities in the Republic of Moldova jointly identified new areas of co-operation on the basis of the more recent work carried out by Council of Europe institutions, monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies, in particular the following.

- Protecting of the environment through a human rights perspective.
- Integrating human rights into the design, implementation and evaluation of drug policy.
- Strengthening respect for human rights in the business sector.
- Ensuring human rights in the fields of biomedicine and health.
- Ensuring respect for human rights in the development and use of artificial intelligence systems.
- Safeguarding data protection.
- Strengthening state-guaranteed legal assistance for vulnerable groups.
- Supporting integrity and governance in sport.
- Promoting and strengthening meaningful youth participation in decision making.
- Preserving culture and cultural heritage.
- Promoting artistic freedom.

Work undertaken in these areas will be based on the Council of Europe's conventions and/or recommendations by the relevant monitoring and advisory bodies. The Action Plan will provide expert and technical assistance in the practical implementation of the Council of Europe's standards in priority areas and in enhancing the capacity of relevant institutions to function effectively. This will also include measures for enhancing co-ordinated actions between stakeholders, which are a prerequisite for addressing complex governance challenges and for fostering dialogue with civil society.

The Council of Europe applies a human rights approach at all levels and stages of its activities. This approach incorporates human rights norms and processes into project management. At the same time, the human rights approach attempts to avoid any unintentional human rights harm, imbalance or negative impact in its work. This approach is a cross-cutting priority for the Action Plan. As part of the human rights approach, promoting gender equality and therefore gender mainstreaming remains a key component of the present Action Plan. Gender mainstreaming will help to address more effectively the needs of individuals living in the Republic of Moldova without discrimination and to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the implementation of the Action Plan.

In meeting its objectives, this Action Plan will also support the Republic of Moldova in its efforts to implement the [United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

## **PART II – PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR 2025 TO 2028**

The proposed actions are detailed below per operational pillar as defined by the structure of the Council of Europe Programme and Budget 2024-2027.

### **2.1 SECURING HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS**

The Republic of Moldova has ratified the major European and international human rights instruments, including the European Convention on Human Rights (the Convention). However, the effective national implementation of the Convention and the European Court's judgments, in particular in relation to systemic and structural human rights problems, remains the principal challenge to securing human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024, the Ministry of Justice received extensive expert support in the process of amending the Criminal Procedure Code and the Criminal Code in line with Council of Europe recommendations, bringing the framework for pretrial detention and criminal sentencing in the Republic of Moldova closer to the European standards. In 2022, the parliament adopted legislative amendments to strengthen the capacity and efficiency of the Ombudsperson's Institution.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the Strategic Development Programme of the Ombudsperson's Institution for 2023-2030, prepared with the support of the Council of Europe, was adopted in 2023. In the same year, the Council of Europe facilitated the establishment of a multi-agency working group by the authorities of the Republic of Moldova under the General Prosecutor's Office to prevent and fight against torture and ill-treatment.

Most cases under Committee of Ministers supervision, in particular the group of cases *Cosovan and ID v. Moldova*, concern, among other issues, violations of the prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment due to the lack of access to adequate medical care, including specialised medical treatment as well as poor conditions in detention. In this respect, the Council of Europe contributed to new rules on the medical examination of seriously ill prisoners, on improving the application of the procedure for release or substitution and on the revocation of pretrial detention. Furthermore, the Council of Europe provided the national authorities with comprehensive recommendations on a strategic approach to preventing and reducing prison overcrowding, including an analysis of the financial resources needed to address this challenge.

However, the lack of adequate institutional capacity, structures or legislation, limited public awareness, lack of know-how among legal and other relevant professionals and insufficient focus on human rights for legal professionals make the implementation of the Convention at the national level difficult. Serious challenges also remain in relation to the implementation of a number of the judgments of the European Court.

The aim of this operational pillar is to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention and the European Court's judgments at national level in order to secure human rights and fundamental freedoms. Accordingly, it comprises of the following sub-programmes.

- Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.
- Effective Implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights at European and National Level.

The actions taken under this operational pillar will contribute to the implementation by the Republic of Moldova of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs): Goal 5 (targets 5.1,<sup>7</sup> 5.2,<sup>8</sup> 5.b<sup>9</sup> and 5.c),<sup>10</sup> Goal 8 (target 8.7),<sup>11</sup> Goal 10 (targets 10.2<sup>12</sup> and 10.7),<sup>13</sup> Goal 13 (target 13.3)<sup>14</sup> and Goal 16 (targets 16.1,<sup>15</sup> 16.3,<sup>16</sup> 16.6,<sup>17</sup> 16.10<sup>18</sup> and 16.a).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>6</sup>. The Venice Commission had adopted an opinion on the draft law amending some normative acts relating to the People's Advocate (CDL-AD(2021)017) at its 126th Plenary Session (online, 19-20 March 2021).

<sup>7</sup>. Goal 5, target 1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

<sup>8</sup>. Goal 5, target 2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

<sup>9</sup>. Goal 5, target b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

<sup>10</sup>. Goal 5, target c: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

<sup>11</sup>. Goal 8, target 7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

<sup>12</sup>. Goal 10, target 2: By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

<sup>13</sup>. Goal 10, target 7: Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

<sup>14</sup>. Goal 13, target 3: Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

<sup>15</sup>. Goal 16, target 1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

<sup>16</sup>. Goal 16, target 3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.

<sup>17</sup>. Goal 16, target 6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.

<sup>18</sup>. Goal 16, target 10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

<sup>19</sup>. Goal 16, target a: Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international co-operation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.



### 2.1.1 EXECUTION OF JUDGMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The [Reykjavik Declaration](#) states that “the execution of the European Court’s judgments and effective supervision of that process are of fundamental importance to ensure the long-term sustainability, integrity and credibility of the Convention system”. The full, effective and timely execution of the European Court’s judgments is a crucial aspect of the collective guarantee established by the European Convention on Human Rights for protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe.

Under the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024, good progress was achieved in strengthening the institutional capacity of the Office of the Government Agent to follow the enforcement of the European Court’s judgments. This was achieved following the establishment of the Advisory Council on the execution of the European Court’s judgments under the Government Agent, following the approval of the amendments to the Regulation on the Advisory Council under the Government Agent by the Government of the Republic of Moldova in October 2023. Composed of representatives from public authorities, academia and civil society, the Advisory Council aims to ensure the effective representation of the Republic of Moldova before the European Court and the execution of its judgments against the Republic of Moldova. On cases concerning execution of judgment relevant to the prison system, please see section 2.4.2, Prisons, police and deprivation of liberty.

Nevertheless, the European Court’s judgments with respect to the Republic of Moldova constitute one of the largest groups of cases pending before the Committee of Ministers. They concern issues such as ill-treatment and torture in police custody, poor material conditions of detention, inadequate medical treatment in prisons and lack of domestic remedy in this respect, various breaches to the right of liberty and security in the context of unlawful detention, failure of the authorities to take effective measures to protect the victims of domestic violence and to ensure the punishment of the offenders, and violation of the right to freedom of expression.

As of March 2024, there were 163 Moldovan cases under ongoing supervision of the Committee of Ministers, which means that 27% of the judgments delivered by the European Court against the Republic of Moldova remain unexecuted, highlighting the need for significant criminal justice reform in the country.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies, which call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- execute the European Court’s judgments with respect to the Republic of Moldova and ensure visibility and transparency of the execution process;
- further ensure greater respect for human rights in the functioning of the criminal justice system, in line with European human rights standards.

#### Expected outcomes

- Enhanced execution of the European Court’s judgments with respect to the Republic of Moldova.
- Increased capacity of the Government Agent of the Republic of Moldova to represent the State before the European Court, adequately supervise the measures for the execution of judgments and implement the Convention standards at the national level.

**Main national partners:** the parliament, Supreme Court of Justice, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Superior Council of Magistracy, Superior Council of Prosecutors, Office of the General Prosecutor, Bar Association, Office of the People’s Advocate, National Council for the Prevention of Torture (National Preventive Mechanism), National Institute of Justice.

## 2.1.2 EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

The [Reykjavik Declaration](#) underlines “the primary obligation for all High Contracting Parties to the Convention to secure to everyone within their jurisdiction the rights and freedoms defined in the Convention in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the importance of taking into account the case law of the [European] Court in a way that gives full effect to the Convention”.

In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has undertaken significant legislative reforms aimed at enhancing the protection of human rights and improving the functioning of its public institutions. A notable achievement is the amendment of the Criminal Procedure Code and the Criminal Code by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova. These amendments brought the national framework for pretrial detention and criminal sentencing into line with European standards.

In 2023, the Council of Europe facilitated the establishment of a multi-agency working group<sup>20</sup> by the authorities of the Republic of Moldova, under the General Prosecutor’s Office, to prevent and fight against torture and ill-treatment and foster effective co-operation between different institutions on the matter. The working group is dedicated to preventing and combating torture and ill-treatment, exemplifying a proactive response to the Council of Europe’s expert recommendations.

Good progress was achieved on increasing the skills and capacities of both the Office of the People’s Advocate and the National Preventive Mechanism to exercise their mandates. The Strategic Development Programme 2023-2030 for the Office of the People’s Advocate, prepared with Council of Europe support, was approved in March 2023. This strategic document puts forward the priorities for the next eight years and represents a holistic vision for the Office of the People’s Advocate, positioning it as a stalwart defender and promoter of human rights in the country. As a testament to its increased institutional capacities, in October 2023, the Office of the People’s Advocate was re-accredited with “A” status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, confirming its compliance with the United Nations Paris Principles.

Moreover, the Council of Europe Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) has supported the judicial and law-enforcement authorities of the Republic of Moldova in implementing the Convention at national level, in accordance with the Committee of Ministers [Recommendation \(2004\)4](#) to member States on the European Convention on Human Rights in university education and professional training and the 2014 Brussels declaration.

However, despite positive developments, several challenges still need to be addressed by the authorities in the Republic of Moldova in order to ensure further compliance of national legal and policy frameworks with the Convention and European human rights standards. For example, the European Commission’s opinion on the Republic of Moldova’s application for membership of the European Union indicates that:

“more needs to be done concerning the right to fair trial and the adequate investigation and prosecutions of acts of ill-treatment. People deprived of their liberty do not enjoy all the fundamental legal safeguards from the outset of their detention. The inadequate investigation of alleged cases of ill-treatment leads to a sentiment of impunity.”

It also calls on the authorities to strengthen “the full functional independence of the Prosecution Service ... as well as the efficiency of the General Prosecutors Office”. Further need for building the capacity of the national authorities as well as enhancing the expertise of judges, prosecutors and other legal professionals should also be highlighted.

The Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) will continue to play a significant role in supporting the national capacity of the Republic of Moldova to implement the Convention and other Council of Europe standards as well as the recommendations of Council of Europe entities and monitoring mechanisms, in partnership with local institutions and relying on the expertise developed in different sectors of the Organisation. The relevant thematic HELP online courses will be integrated transversally into the capacity-building activities under the thematic sections below.

<sup>20</sup>. Formarea grupului de lucru pe domeniul prevenirii și combaterii fenomenului relelor tratamente, [Procuratura Generală a Republicii Moldova](#).

The Action Plan will also support the strengthening of the institutional capacity of the Office of the Government Agent to adequately monitor the measures taken to implement the judgments of the European Court and to implement the standards of the European Convention at the national level.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies, which call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- align criminal procedure and other relevant legislative and policy frameworks with the Convention;
- strengthen the institutional capacity of State authorities to effectively implement the Convention and the case law of the European Court and support the enforcement of the judgments of the European Court;
- ensure the professional training of legal professionals on the European Convention on Human Rights system through the implementation of the Council of Europe HELP Programme.

#### Expected outcomes

- Improved legislation, policies, and practices to better implement the European Convention on Human Rights at national level.
- Strengthened capacity of judicial, prosecutorial and law-enforcement authorities to ensure consistent application of the Convention and other related Council of Europe standards.
- Strengthened institutional capacity of the Office of the People's Advocate to better protect citizens' rights and effectively address human rights violations.

**Main national partners:** the parliament, Constitutional Court, Supreme Court of Justice, Ministry of Justice, Office of the Government Agent, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Superior Council of Magistracy, Superior Council of Prosecutors, Office of the General Prosecutor, Bar Association, Office of the People's Advocate, National Council for the Prevention of Torture (National Preventive Mechanism), National Institute of Justice, civil society organisations.

## 2.2 ADVANCING SOCIAL JUSTICE, GOOD HEALTH AND A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

The [Reykjavik Declaration](#) underlines “the urgency of taking co-ordinated action to protect the environment by countering the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity”, affirming that “human rights and the environment are intertwined and that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of human rights by present and future generations”.

The Council of Europe has developed several conventions recognising the right to a healthy environment and, although it is not explicitly enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter, the case law of the European Court and the conclusions of the Committee of the European Social Charter [affirm the undeniable interconnection between the environment and human rights](#). These standards have wide-ranging positive outcomes, such as combating extreme poverty and social exclusion and, as a vector of social cohesion, rebuilding social ties and trust in national institutions, and democratic resilience. However, serious weaknesses exist in the protection systems of a broad range of social rights and human rights in the health and environmental fields. The Council of Europe has a strong track record in protecting social rights, public health and the environment through a number of unique instruments that form the basis of its action.

The Republic of Moldova is a signatory to the Revised [European Social Charter \(the Charter\)](#), accepting 63 of its 98 paragraphs. At the national level, various strategies and programmes promote the protection of social and economic rights, particularly for young persons from vulnerable groups. Under the Council of Europe Action Plan for 2021-2024, a needs assessment in the field of social rights was conducted to guide the reform process. Also, the capacity of the national authorities, such as the State Labour Inspectorate, to implement the Charter, particularly focusing on labour rights, has been increased. However, according to the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR), significant challenges still remain in the Republic of Moldova in various areas, including but not limited to employment policies, access to education and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, and social security.

The Republic of Moldova has ratified several conventions related to protecting human rights in the health and biomedical fields, including [the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine \(Oviedo Convention\)](#), [the MEDICRIME Convention](#) and [the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs](#). The country is also a member of the Council of Europe International Co-operation Group on Drugs and Addictions ([the Pompidou Group](#)) aimed at providing knowledge, support and solutions for effective, evidence-based drug policies that fully respect human rights. Thanks to its new mandate adopted in 2021, the Pompidou Group will be able to provide the Republic of Moldova with assistance to improve the well-being and mental health of its citizens by addressing both substance-use disorders and behavioural addictions. In 2017, the Republic of Moldova ratified the [Convention on the Elaboration of a European Pharmacopoeia](#) and, accordingly, joined the European Pharmacopoeia Commission.

The country is also a party to [the Council of Europe's Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats \(the Bern Convention\)](#) for wildlife conservation and [the Council of Europe Landscape Convention](#) for landscape protection. It participates in the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement for disaster risk reduction. At national level, in August 2024, the Republic of Moldova adopted the National Climate Change Adaptation Programme until 2030, aligning with global efforts to mitigate climate change impacts.

The aim of the operational pillar "Advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment" is to advance social justice, good health and a sustainable environment for all. Accordingly, it comprises the following sub-programmes:

- Effective Implementation of the European Social Charter;
- Human Rights in Biomedicine and Health;
- Quality of Medicines and Healthcare;
- Protection of the Environment and Human Rights;
- Business and Human Rights;
- Secretariat of the Council of Europe Development Bank.

These actions will contribute to the implementation by the Republic of Moldova of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#): Goal 1 (targets 1.1,<sup>21</sup> 1.2<sup>22</sup> and 1.3),<sup>23</sup> Goal 3 (targets 3.5<sup>24</sup> and 3.8),<sup>25</sup> Goal 4 (targets 4.1,<sup>26</sup> 4.2,<sup>27</sup> 4.3,<sup>28</sup> 4.4,<sup>29</sup> 4.5<sup>30</sup> and 4.6),<sup>31</sup> Goal 5 (targets 5.1,<sup>32</sup> 5.a<sup>33</sup> and 5.c),<sup>34</sup> Goal 8 (targets 8.5,<sup>35</sup> 8.6<sup>36</sup> and 8.8),<sup>37</sup> Goal 10 (targets 10.2<sup>38</sup> and 10.3),<sup>39</sup> Goal 11 (targets 11.1,<sup>40</sup>

<sup>21</sup>. Goal 1, target 1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.

<sup>22</sup>. Goal 1, target 2: By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

<sup>23</sup>. Goal 1, target 3: Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

<sup>24</sup>. Goal 3, target 5: Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

<sup>25</sup>. Goal 3, target 8: Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

<sup>26</sup>. Goal 4, target 1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

<sup>27</sup>. Goal 4, target 2: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

<sup>28</sup>. Goal 4, target 3: By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

<sup>29</sup>. Goal 4, target 4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

<sup>30</sup>. Goal 4, target 5: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

<sup>31</sup>. Goal 4, target 6: By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

<sup>32</sup>. Goal 5, target 1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

<sup>33</sup>. Goal 5, target a: Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

<sup>34</sup>. Goal 5, target c: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

<sup>35</sup>. Goal 8, target 5: By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

<sup>36</sup>. Goal 8, target 6: By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

<sup>37</sup>. Goal 8, target 8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

<sup>38</sup>. Goal 10, target 2: By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

<sup>39</sup>. Goal 10, target 3: Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

<sup>40</sup>. Goal 11, target 1: By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

11.7<sup>41</sup> and 11.b),<sup>42</sup> Goal 13 (targets 13.1,<sup>43</sup> 13.2<sup>44</sup> and 13.3),<sup>45</sup> Goal 15 (targets 15.3,<sup>46</sup> 15.5<sup>47</sup> and 15.9)<sup>48</sup> and Goal 16 (target 16.3).<sup>49</sup>

## 2.2.1 EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER

The action of the Council of Europe is based on the [European Social Charter \(the Charter\)](#), a Council of Europe treaty that guarantees fundamental social and economic rights as a counterpart to the European Convention on Human Rights. The [Reykjavik Declaration](#) highlights the significance of social justice for democratic stability and security and reaffirms its “full commitment to the protection and implementation of social rights as guaranteed by the European Social Charter system”.

The Republic of Moldova ratified the Revised European Social Charter in 2001, accepting 71 of the 98 paragraphs of the Charter. The Labour Code, the national development strategy “European Moldova 2030”, the Employment Programme for 2022-2026, the development strategy “Education 2030” and the youth sector development strategy “Youth 2030” also contribute to upholding the social and economic rights of Moldovan citizens, especially young people from vulnerable groups.

In the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024, the Council of Europe focused on increasing the capacities of the national authorities to implement the European Social Charter and conducted a needs assessment in the field of social rights, with a specific focus on labour rights and employment rights of persons from vulnerable groups. The needs assessment report aims to serve as a tool for national authorities in implementing reforms, which are aligned to the country’s policy objectives of enhancing the observance of social rights in the Republic of Moldova. In addition, Council of Europe support was provided to the State Labour Inspectorate in the reform process on combating undeclared work, initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. The capacities in the Office of the People’s Advocate, as well as the Equality Council on the European Social Charter system, and the role of civil society organisations to engage with the monitoring procedure of the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) were also enhanced.

Additionally, the Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) course “Labour rights as human rights” was adapted to the national legal framework in co-operation with the National Institute of Justice, enabling judges, prosecutors and legal aid lawyers to develop their expertise and competence and better ensure the protection of labour rights.

<sup>41</sup>. Goal 11, target 7: By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

<sup>42</sup>. Goal 11, target b: By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.

<sup>43</sup>. Goal 13, target 1: Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

<sup>44</sup>. Goal 13, target 2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

<sup>45</sup>. Goal 13, target 3: Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

<sup>46</sup>. Goal 15, target 3: By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.

<sup>47</sup>. Goal 15, target 5: Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species.

<sup>48</sup>. Goal 15, target 9: By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts.

<sup>49</sup>. Goal 16, target 3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.

Nevertheless, while monitoring the implementation of the Charter in the Republic of Moldova, the ECSR has identified several gaps still present in the country. For example, the employment policy efforts have not been adequate in combating unemployment and promoting job creation. Limited access to education and employment, especially for persons with disabilities, has been observed as well. Moreover, the existing social security schemes do not provide coverage for a significant percentage of the population.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies, which call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- update legislation to ensure adequate social protection and assistance, including adjusting laws related to unemployment benefits and clarifying procedures for the transfer of social rights in the context of labour mobility;
- strengthen mechanisms for protecting workers' rights, including by modernising the State Labour Inspectorate and promoting legal employment and fair working conditions;
- enhance the capacity of the National Employment Agency to develop and implement new active labour measures, notably support for self-employment and support for the creation of jobs in rural areas, and set up a monitoring and evaluation system for employment services;
- enhance the professional capacity of personnel in the social protection system, including through digitalisation, to deliver social services more efficiently;
- strengthen social dialogue between the government and social partners on all social and economic legislation and practices;
- ensure equal access to education, vocational training and employment for all, including persons from vulnerable groups;
- ensure a better match between vocational education and training (VET) skills and labour market needs by improving interaction between VET institutions and industry, and between VET students and employers.

#### Expected outcomes

- Harmonised national legislation, policies and practices, including the Labour Code, with the provisions of the European Social Charter.
- Strengthened capacity of State and non-state stakeholders, including civil society, to pursue the protection of social rights, particularly the employment rights of persons from vulnerable groups, and address the challenges to social cohesion.
- Enhanced capacity of relevant social protection providers to ensure efficient delivery of social services.
- Enhanced capacity of State and non-state stakeholders to develop and implement labour market programmes in order to increase formal job creation and the availability of skilled labour.
- Improved access to education and employment for all, including persons from vulnerable groups.
- Strengthened capacity of VET institutions to facilitate access to VET and subsequent employment to persons from vulnerable groups, including young people not in employment, education or training, and persons with disabilities.
- Increased awareness of State and non-state stakeholders, including civil society, of the European Social Charter system, including the acceptance of the additional provisions of the European Social Charter and the collective complaints mechanism.
- Improved ECSR monitoring process as a result of better quality of national reports prepared by the national authorities.

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Education and Research, Parliamentary Committee on Social Protection, Health and Family, State Labour Inspectorate, National Agency for Employment, National Trade Union Confederation, National Agency for Employment, Office of the People's Advocate, Equality Council, National Institute of Justice, civil society organisations (CSOs).



### 2.2.2 HUMAN RIGHTS IN BIOMEDICINE AND HEALTH

The protection of human rights in the health and biomedical fields, including the right to health protection, is an essential element of life in society, as demonstrated by the Covid-19 pandemic, with a direct impact on other fundamental human rights and freedoms.

The Republic of Moldova is a party to [the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine \(Oviedo Convention\)](#), the only international legally binding instrument addressing specifically the protection of human rights in the biomedical field, including healthcare. In addition, the Republic of Moldova has been a member State of the [Council of Europe International Co-operation Group on Drugs and Addictions \(the Pompidou Group\)](#), contributing to developing and enhancing drug policies that guarantee a fair balance between the demands for public safety and the protection of the individuals' rights. Furthermore, the first and only international treaty addressing the issue of counterfeiting of medical products, [the MEDICRIME Convention](#), which aims to protect the rights of victims and prosecute counterfeiting of medical products and related crimes, has been in force in the Republic of Moldova since 2016.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- enhance national legislative and policy frameworks
  - to protect human rights in the fields of biomedicine and health;
  - to prevent and combat drug use and addictions;
- strengthen the capacity of stakeholders in the health sector, focusing on respecting patients' rights and combating discrimination in healthcare.

#### Expected outcomes

- Improved legislation, policies and practices to effectively protect human rights in the fields of biomedicine and health, in line with the European standards.
- Enhanced drug and addiction policies, legislation and practice in line with the Council of Europe's core values to address the risks of drug use and behavioural addictions.
- Increased capacity of national stakeholders and healthcare professionals to ensure adequate protection of human rights in the biomedical and health fields, including with regard to relevant challenges raised by new scientific and technological developments.

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, civil society organisations (CSOs).

### 2.2.3 QUALITY OF MEDICINES AND HEALTHCARE

As the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated, ensuring the availability of and access to good-quality medicines and healthcare, for better health for all, remains a challenge for the Council of Europe member States. Through its standard setting and co-operation activities, the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & HealthCare (EDQM) contributes to the right to the protection of health as enshrined in Article 11 of the [European Social Charter \(the Charter\)](#).

The Republic of Moldova has ratified [the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs](#). The convention identifies various activities constituting human organ trafficking; ratifying member States must consider these as criminal offences. The central principle of the convention is "the illicit removal of human organs". The convention includes measures to protect witnesses and victims and calls on signatory parties to co-operate in international investigations and prosecutions. Preventive measures are also foreseen, at both national and international levels, which will aim to ensure transparency, promote equal access to transplants and designate national contact points for the exchange of information pertaining to trafficking in human organs.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- enhance national standards aimed at improving the quality of medicines and healthcare;
- strengthen the capacity of health authorities and health professionals to prevent, detect and combat trafficking in human organs;
- ensure access to quality medicines and consumer health products on the market;
- ensure the capacity building of the national health authorities and other relevant stakeholders through engagement with the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & HealthCare (EDQM).

#### Expected outcomes

- Harmonised and further developed standards to improve the quality of medicines and healthcare at national level.
- Improved access to quality medicines and consumer health products on the market through co-ordinated action among the national health authorities and other relevant stakeholders.
- Improved legal, regulatory and policy frameworks to prevent and combat trafficking in human organs, in accordance with the standards of the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs.
- Enhanced capacity, credibility and decision making of national health authorities and other relevant stakeholders through engagement with the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & Healthcare (EDQM).

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

#### 2.2.4 PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights and the environment are intertwined, and a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of human rights by present and future generations. The [Reykjavik Declaration](#) underlines “the urgency of additional efforts to protect the environment, as well as counter the impact of the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity on human rights, democracy and the rule of law”, therefore it commits to “strengthening the work of the Council of Europe in this field”.

[Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)20](#) calls on member States to review their national legislation and practice in order to ensure that they are consistent with the recommendations, principles and guidance “on the nature, content and implications of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and, on that basis, actively consider recognising at the national level this right as a human right that is important for the enjoyment of human rights and is related to other rights and existing international law”.

The [Consultative Council of European Prosecutors \(CCPE\)](#) adopted a [new Opinion No.17](#) in response to the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on human rights and the protection of the environment. The CCPE Opinion highlights in particular the role of prosecutors as a key player in any strategy to protect the environment, public health and safety, through criminal, administrative and civil law. The Action Plan will strengthen the capacity of national authorities and law enforcement agencies to prevent, detect and combat environmental crime through a holistic approach and multi-stakeholder co-operation. Support will also be provided to strengthen the capacity of legal professionals to effectively address the linkages between environmental issues, criminal law and human rights at the national level. The Action Plan will also contribute to the alignment of the legal framework with European standards, including the relevant EU Directives on the protection of the environment through criminal law and the investigation of environmental crimes.



The Republic of Moldova is a party to [the Council of Europe Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats \(the Bern Convention\)](#), the only regional convention of its kind worldwide, which aims to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats, as well as to promote European co-operation in this field. In addition, [the Council of Europe Landscape Convention](#), the first international treaty promoting landscape protection, management and planning, entered into force in the country in 2004. Moreover, the Republic of Moldova is a member of [the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement](#) – a platform for co-operation aimed at improving the prevention of, and the protection of people against, major natural or technological disasters and promoting projects addressing the role of nature-based solutions in disaster risk reduction.

With a view to making the environment a visible priority for the Organisation, as set out in [Appendix V of the Reykjavik Declaration](#), the Republic of Moldova and other States are invited to actively participate in the Multidisciplinary Group on the Environment in order to prepare the Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment and its Action Plan.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- ensure that legal and policy instruments comply with European standards on a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and the protection of related human rights;
- develop the capacity of State and non-state stakeholders to better protect the human right to a healthy environment;
- raise public awareness of the human right to a healthy environment.

#### **Expected outcomes**

- Enhanced legislation, policies and practices at national level that contribute to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and protect related human rights.
- Improved legislative and regulatory framework to prevent, identify and combat environmental crimes.
- Strengthened capacity of relevant national authorities to protect the human right to a healthy environment.
- Increased public awareness of the importance of protecting the environment and related human rights.

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Environment and – in terms of landscape – the Ministry of Education and Research, Office of the People's Advocate, professional groups, civil society organisations (CSOs).

#### **2.2.5 BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

Building on the 2011 UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2016\)3](#) on human rights and business, providing specific guidance to assist member States in preventing and remedying human rights violations by business enterprises and insisting on measures to induce business to respect human rights.

In the Republic of Moldova, the effective implementation of business and human rights standards is limited due to the lack of awareness among business enterprises of their role in promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Besides, the human rights sphere has traditionally been equated with State obligation in the Republic of Moldova, and there is a lack of comprehensive policy frameworks, standards and practices in the area of business and human rights in the country.

The Council of Europe stands ready to support the authorities and business associations in the Republic of Moldova in developing and adopting legislative and policy frameworks aimed at more effective integration of the human rights-based approach in public policies and business practices, preventing human rights abuse by business enterprises and providing for appropriate access to remedy for victims of business-related abuses, when abuses occur.

**Expected outcomes**

- Harmonised national legislation and policies with international standards on preventing and remedying human rights violations by business enterprises.
- Raised awareness of business entities about their role in promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

**Main national partners:** Office of the People's Advocate, Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalisation, business associations.

## 2.2.6 SECRETARIAT OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE DEVELOPMENT BANK

The Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) invests in projects with high social added value that have been approved by the member State concerned and following a member State-driven application process. Such projects foster inclusion and contribute to improving the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations across Europe. With the Strategic Framework 2023-2027, the CEB has committed to strengthening its focus on member States where social needs and CEB's additionality tend to be higher. The CEB part-finances projects in the following lines of action: Investing in People and Enhancing Human Capital, Promoting Inclusive and Resilient Living Environments and Supporting Jobs and Economic and Financial Inclusion.

The Republic of Moldova became a member of the CEB in 1998.<sup>50</sup> Since then the CEB has played an active role in the country, in particular by co-financing the construction of a new prison; the refurbishment of buildings, such as social housing, student residences and elderly homes, including the improvement of their energy efficiency; construction of healthcare and emergency care facilities; and co-financing projects aimed at facilitating access to credit for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in order to support the creation and maintenance of viable jobs. The CEB also supported the Moldovan Government in its efforts to mitigate the spread and consequences of Covid-19 and to contribute to the alleviation of the crisis's impact on MSMEs. Overall, the financing approved has amounted to just over €290 million.

The CEB stands ready to consider applications from the national authorities of the Republic of Moldova for further social infrastructure development should there be any.

## 2.3 ACTING FOR EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND RESPECT

Equality of citizens is enshrined in Article 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova.

The 2023 report by the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) commended the Republic of Moldova on its efforts to combat violence against women and domestic violence, including the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) as well as the recent amendments to laws on the increased protection of women victims of violence and the prosecution of perpetrators.

However, GREVIO identified several areas requiring improvement to enhance compliance with the convention. These include dependence on international donors for the funding of essential services, inadequate numbers and distribution of shelters for women victims and their children, and a lack of judicial attention to violence against women in decisions on custody and visiting rights. GREVIO also highlighted gaps in responding to forms of violence other than domestic violence and stressed the need for sustainable funding for national institutions and women's NGOs dealing with gender equality and women's rights; and for better access to protection for women who are or may be at risk of intersectional<sup>51</sup> discrimination. Enhanced in-service training for first-line professionals and improved data collection also require the country's attention.

The Republic of Moldova has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. In 2022, a new guide on the identification of victims and presumed victims of trafficking in human beings was approved, and the Programme for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for 2024-2028 was launched in January 2024. Despite the progress made by the relevant authorities in the Republic of Moldova, including but not limited to the General Prosecutor's Office and the National

<sup>50</sup>. For more information about the Council of Europe Development Bank, please visit: <https://coebank.org/en/>.

<sup>51</sup>. [www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/intersectionality-and-multiple-discrimination#:~:text=Intersectional%20discrimination%20%E2%80%93%20happens%20when%20two,and%20specific%20forms%20of%20discrimination](https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/intersectionality-and-multiple-discrimination#:~:text=Intersectional%20discrimination%20%E2%80%93%20happens%20when%20two,and%20specific%20forms%20of%20discrimination)

Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings still remains prevalent, with labour and sexual exploitation representing the key issues in this regard.

In the area of anti-discrimination, the legal framework in the Republic of Moldova is comprehensive, as stated in the [Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#), with recent amendments providing harsher sentences for hate crimes. The Equality Council plays a vital role in combating discrimination and hate crimes; nonetheless, the Council's reach and scope are constrained, underscoring the necessity of appropriate reforms in this area. Despite Moldovan society being generally tolerant, ethnic and racial attacks persist, particularly against the Roma minority. Legal improvements have been observed in the area of LGBTI rights as well; however, discrimination directed at LGBTI people is still present in the country, which lacks legislation regulating civil partnerships for LGBTI persons and legal gender recognition.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova has demonstrated effective leadership in managing the refugee flow caused by the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine. The establishment of refugee centres and the creation of online platforms to easily access information and services illustrate the national authorities' and Moldovan society's commitment to welcoming refugees from Ukraine and ensuring their access to support services and facilities; however, the national capacities to address the challenges faced by refugees remain limited, highlighting the need for further assistance to the Republic of Moldova.

The protection of children's rights in the Republic of Moldova has been strengthened through programmes such as the National Programme for Child Protection 2022-2026, aimed at advancing the social protection system of children in the country. Moreover, the Council of Europe has supported capacity building for criminal justice professionals to handle cases of child exploitation and abuse. Nevertheless, [the 8th activity report of the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse \(Lanzarote Committee\)](#) outlines that challenges remain in the Republic of Moldova, particularly in respect of addressing the sexual exploitation of children and ensuring children's participation in decision-making processes.

The aim of this operational pillar is to ensure gender equality, protection of children's rights and the strengthening of inclusive societies, without marginalisation, exclusion, racism, intolerance and discrimination based on any ground. Accordingly, it comprises the following sub-programmes:

- Gender equality – Violence against women and domestic violence – Human trafficking;
- Anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion – Roma and Travellers – National minorities, regional or minority languages – LGBTI – Migrants;
- Children's rights.

These actions will contribute to the implementation by the Republic of Moldova of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs): Goal 1 (targets 1.1<sup>52</sup> and 1.2),<sup>53</sup> Goal 3 (target 3.8),<sup>54</sup> Goal 4 (targets 4.1,<sup>55</sup> 4.2,<sup>56</sup> 4.3,<sup>57</sup> 4.4,<sup>58</sup> 4.5,<sup>59</sup> 4.6<sup>60</sup> and 4.7),<sup>61</sup> Goal 5 (targets 5.1,<sup>62</sup> 5.2,<sup>63</sup> 5.3,<sup>64</sup> 5.4,<sup>65</sup> 5.5,<sup>66</sup> 5.6,<sup>67</sup>

<sup>52</sup>. Goal 1, target 1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.

<sup>53</sup>. Goal 1, target 2: By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

<sup>54</sup>. Goal 3, target 8: Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

<sup>55</sup>. Goal 4, target 1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

<sup>56</sup>. Goal 4, target 2: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

<sup>57</sup>. Goal 4, target 3: By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

<sup>58</sup>. Goal 4, target 4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

<sup>59</sup>. Goal 4, target 5: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

<sup>60</sup>. Goal 4, target 6: By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

<sup>61</sup>. Goal 4, target 7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

<sup>62</sup>. Goal 5, target 1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

<sup>63</sup>. Goal 5, target 2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

<sup>64</sup>. Goal 5, target 3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

<sup>65</sup>. Goal 5, target 4: Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

<sup>66</sup>. Goal 5, target 5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

5.a,<sup>68</sup> 5.b<sup>69</sup> and 5.c),<sup>70</sup> Goal 8 (targets 8.5,<sup>71</sup> 8.6,<sup>72</sup> 8.7<sup>73</sup> and 8.8),<sup>74</sup> Goal 10 (targets 10.2,<sup>75</sup> 10.3<sup>76</sup> and 10.7),<sup>77</sup> Goal 11 (targets 11.1,<sup>78</sup> 11.3<sup>79</sup> and 11.7)<sup>80</sup> and Goal 16 (targets 16.1,<sup>81</sup> 16.2,<sup>82</sup> 16.3<sup>83</sup> and 16.6).<sup>84</sup>

### 2.3.1 GENDER EQUALITY – VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – HUMAN TRAFFICKING

#### ➤ Gender equality and combating violence against women and domestic violence

The [Reykjavik Declaration](#) highlights the importance of gender equality, recalling that “gender equality and the full, equal and effective participation of women in public and private decision-making processes are essential to the rule of law, democracy and sustainable development” and underlining “the pioneering role of the Council of Europe, including through the Istanbul Convention, in the fight against violence against women and domestic violence”. The [Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029](#) puts forth further commitments to achieving the effective realisation of gender equality as well as preventing and combating violence against women and girls and domestic violence.

In 2022, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova ratified the [Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence \(the Istanbul Convention\)](#), the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle violence against women and domestic violence. In its [baseline evaluation report](#) published in November 2023, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) welcomed the significant commitment demonstrated by the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to combating violence against women and implementing the Istanbul Convention.

<sup>67</sup>. Goal 5, target 6: Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

<sup>68</sup>. Goal 5, target a: Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

<sup>69</sup>. Goal 5, target b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

<sup>70</sup>. Goal 5, target c: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

<sup>71</sup>. Goal 8, target 5: By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

<sup>72</sup>. Goal 8, target 6: By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

<sup>73</sup>. Goal 8, target 7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

<sup>74</sup>. Goal 8, target 8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

<sup>75</sup>. Goal 10, target 2: By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

<sup>76</sup>. Goal 10, target 3: Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

<sup>77</sup>. Goal 10, target 7: Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

<sup>78</sup>. Goal 11, target 1: By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

<sup>79</sup>. Goal 11, target 3: By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.

<sup>80</sup>. Goal 11, target 7: By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

<sup>81</sup>. Goal 16, target 1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

<sup>82</sup>. Goal 16, target 2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

<sup>83</sup>. Goal 16, target 3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.

<sup>84</sup>. Goal 16, target 6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.

These include the adoption of the Law on Preventing and Combating Family Violence, from 2007, and the recent amendments to a number of laws to increase the protection of women victims of violence and the prosecution of perpetrators by, for instance, providing free legal aid to victims of domestic and sexual violence in criminal proceedings and enabling law-enforcement officers to issue emergency barring orders on the spot. Moreover, at the policy level, a number of consecutive national programmes have provided the basis for a strategic approach to preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Also of great relevance are the steps that have been taken by the authorities to set up multi-agency co-operation mechanisms in respect of cases of domestic violence to ensure productive co-operation between all relevant stakeholders.

The Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine has forced women and girls to leave their country, increasing the risk of gender-based violence, sexual violence against women and human trafficking. Since the start of the war of aggression the government of the Republic of Moldova has shown effective leadership in managing the flow of refugees from Ukraine, in particular migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking women from violence. The Action Plan will support the strengthening of national capacities to protect the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, in line with the Council of Europe 2022 [Recommendation on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls](#) and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security. The Action Plan will also contribute to strengthening co-operation between national partners and stakeholders, including CSOs, in these areas.

In the area of protection and support for women victims of violence, GREVIO welcomed the establishment of the first sexual assault centre in Ungheni, which provides immediate medical care, trauma support, forensic examinations and psychological assistance by qualified professionals. GREVIO also commends the Moldovan authorities' efforts to provide support and protection to women fleeing the war in Ukraine.

At the same time, GREVIO observed several issues that require urgent action to achieve a higher level of compliance with the obligations under the Istanbul Convention. The report highlights the importance of enhancing the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in relation to all forms of violence against women, including its digital dimension. Many forms of violence, such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, forced sterilisation and forced abortion, are not currently addressed by policies. Moreover, GREVIO strongly encourages the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to include preventing and combating violence against women in policies, measures and programmes addressing the specific needs of groups of women facing intersectional discrimination, including but not limited to women with disabilities, Roma women, women from rural communities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women. Additionally, GREVIO identifies an urgent need for increased funding levels for national institutions and civil society organisations (CSOs) working on these issues, as well as an improvement in the criminal justice response to all forms of violence against women, improved data collection and the need to conduct capacity-building workshops for frontline professionals.

The new Committee of Ministers Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2024\)1](#) on the equality of Roma and Traveller women and girls is set to assist member States and other relevant stakeholders in promoting and achieving equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls and in protecting them against discrimination, hate and violence, with a specific focus on areas in which they are most exposed to intersectional discrimination.

The adoption of the National Programme for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Family Violence for 2023-2027 and the Action Plan for implementing GREVIO recommendations, with the support of the Council of Europe, strengthened the policy framework on gender equality in the country. In April 2024, a significant step towards addressing violence against women and domestic violence was also taken with the convening of the Specialised Commission on the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention under the National Council for Human Rights, where the Moldovan authorities presented a road map for implementing GREVIO recommendations.



Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- develop national legislation and a co-ordinated set of policies on preventing and combating all forms of violence against women and domestic violence, in line with Council of Europe standards;
- increase the capacity of relevant professionals on the application of the Istanbul Convention and Council of Europe standards on gender equality when dealing with cases of violence against women and domestic violence;
- enhance the understanding on the Istanbul Convention and of Council of Europe gender equality standards across organisations and sectors in the country;
- increase the quality of support services for women and girls victims of violence against women and domestic violence;
- develop common minimum standards related to perpetrator programmes in line with the Istanbul Convention and with recognised best practices.

Special emphasis will be placed on working with women who experience or may experience intersectional discrimination or who are at risk of such discrimination, for example domestic workers, migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking migrant women and girls, women with disabilities, older women, Roma women and girls, women from rural communities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women. Furthermore, particular attention will be paid to the development of policies to address the digital manifestations of violence against women. Alongside country-specific activities, the efforts to improve women's access to justice and support services for victims of violence will be complemented at regional and local levels as well. This will involve co-operation with multidisciplinary teams, allowing for the identification of best practices and the exchange of information and experiences among stakeholders within the region.

### ➤ **Combating human trafficking**

Trafficking in human beings is a grave violation of a person's dignity, reducing human beings to commodities. Currently, multiple crises arising from the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine represent key factors influencing the phenomenon of trafficking in the Republic of Moldova. The significant unforeseen trends and risks, particularly linked to the massive influx of refugees, along with the economic and energy crises, increase the vulnerability of the population, as well as the fact that the Republic of Moldova has become a destination country for trafficking in human beings with increased international attention on the issue. New forms of trafficking are constantly emerging and require continuous analysis and adjustment of the response by anti-trafficking bodies.

The Republic of Moldova ratified the [Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#), which is a comprehensive framework for combating human trafficking, following a human rights-based and victim-centred approach. At national level, the legal framework for the prevention of human trafficking, the assistance and protection of victims and the prosecution of traffickers is established by the Law on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. In 2022, the Ministry of Internal Affairs approved the guide on the identification of victims and presumed victims of trafficking in human beings in the context of mixed migratory flows. Moreover, the Government of the Republic of Moldova adopted the Programme for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for 2024-2028, which entered into force in January 2024.

As for the institutional framework for action against human trafficking in the Republic of Moldova, the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings was established as an advisory body of the government, aimed at co-ordinating the activity of preventing and combating trafficking in human beings. The Co-ordinating Council of law-enforcement bodies with duties in the field of combating trafficking in human beings was also created under the Prosecutor General for the purpose of co-ordinating the activity of law-enforcement authorities and other bodies competent in combating trafficking. In addition, a specialised unit – the Anti-Trafficking in Human Beings Section – has been established within the Prosecutor General's Office, which contributes to the unified implementation by the Prosecutor General's Office of the State policy in the field of combating trafficking in human beings, child trafficking, trafficking in organs and organised illegal migration.

Although it has recently become a destination country, the Republic of Moldova is mainly a country of origin and transit for trafficking. With 169 victims identified in 2023, the phenomenon remains prevalent in the country. An analysis of trafficking cases shows that the main form of exploitation of adult victims remains the same as in previous years – labour exploitation – and the destination countries where citizens of the Republic of Moldova are exploited are the countries of the European Union. The main form of exploitation of victims of child trafficking remains sexual exploitation, and the place of exploitation is the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Traffickers are adapting their business models to the “new normality” created by the Covid-19 pandemic, especially by abusing modern communication technologies, which is also particularly relevant in the context of Ukrainian refugees.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of GRETA, the relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanism, which in its most recent report<sup>85</sup> called on the Republic of Moldova to:

- facilitate access to compensation for victims of trafficking, including by reviewing the eligibility criteria and other conditions for State compensation;
- ensure that victims receive specialised legal assistance and free legal aid at an early stage;
- ensure that victims of trafficking receive adequate assistance and support, including by providing adequate funding to the centres for assistance of victims of human trafficking and setting up centres providing accommodation and other types of assistance to male victims;
- improve the prevention of child trafficking and the identification of, and assistance to, child victims, by strengthening the capacity and resources of child-protection professionals, and ensuring a protective environment for children in street situations and unaccompanied or separated asylum-seeking children;
- train labour inspectors to enable them to play a frontline role in the prevention and identification of trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation;
- raise public awareness of the risks of human trafficking at national and local levels.

### **Expected outcomes**

#### *Gender equality and combating violence against women and domestic violence*

- Improved legislative and normative frameworks to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women and domestic violence, including in their digital dimension, in line with GREVIO's findings and the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.
- Increased capacity of relevant national stakeholders to ensure a co-ordinated and effective implementation of the Council of Europe standards on gender equality and protection from violence against women.
- Enhanced expertise and capacity of frontline professionals, including legal professionals and social workers, to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence in line with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.
- Strengthened access to justice and support services for women, especially Roma women and women victims of violence, in line with the Istanbul Convention.
- Improved quality and availability of treatment programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence, in accordance with the principles of the Istanbul Convention.

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Office of the Prosecutor General, Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Agency on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, civil society organisations (CSOs).

#### *Combating trafficking in human beings*

- Strengthened national legislation and policies to effectively prevent and combat trafficking in human beings and protect the rights of victims, in line with the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.
- Enhanced operational and response capacity of relevant law-enforcement authorities and other bodies competent in combating THB at national and local levels.

<sup>85</sup>. GRETA's third evaluation round report on the Republic of Moldova was published on 3 December 2020: <https://rm.coe.int/greta-2020-11-fgr-mda-en/1680a09538>

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education and Research, National Institute for Justice, Ministry of Health, Office of the Prosecutor General, National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

### 2.3.2 ANTI-DISCRIMINATION, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION – ROMA AND TRAVELLERS – NATIONAL MINORITIES, REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES – LGBTI – MIGRANTS

#### ➤ **Anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion, Roma and Travellers, national minorities, regional or minority languages, LGBTI**

Discrimination represents a serious human rights violation. Inequalities, racism and intolerance deepen divides and destabilise democracies. The [Reykjavik Declaration](#) acknowledges “the need to ensure equality and combat any kind of discrimination, as well as the important role the Organisation plays in this regard”, and therefore commits to “strengthening work towards inclusive societies without marginalisation, exclusion, racism and intolerance”.

In the areas of anti-discrimination and equality, the national legal framework in the Republic of Moldova is comprehensive, as noted in the [Fifth Opinion](#) of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, published in 2023. The amendments to the Criminal Code and the Contraventions Code concerning hate speech and incitement to discrimination have been adopted, providing for harsher sentences for crimes motivated by stereotypes or prejudice based on race, colour, ethnicity, national origin, social background, citizenship, sex, gender, language, religion or religious beliefs, political views, gender identity, sexual orientation, health, age, disability or civil status. In addition, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities welcomed the active role of the People’s Advocate in combating discrimination and the role of the Equality Council in monitoring and addressing cases of discrimination.

While Moldovan society remains largely tolerant, cases of ethnic and racial attacks have been reported. Stigmatisation and stereotyping are still present, fuelling discriminatory attitudes towards Roma and other minorities. The Roma minority continues to face major obstacles with respect to their equal access to rights and basic services, particularly in the areas of education, employment, housing, access to healthcare and social services, as also highlighted in the 2023 Conclusion of the European Committee of Social Rights.<sup>86</sup> Accordingly, despite the fact that the authorities in the Republic of Moldova show a continuing commitment to the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities while also promoting their effective participation in public life, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities underlines the need for further guaranteeing the representation of national minorities not only in cultural matters but also in other policies and legislation relevant to their access to minority rights.

In respect of the LGBTI community, the Republic of Moldova climbed 14 places in the 2023 Rainbow Europe Index and registered a jump from 21% in 2022 to 39% in 2023,<sup>87</sup> as a result of the fact that sexual orientation and gender identity have been positively included in the national legislation, such as the 2022 law that makes anti-LGBTI hate speech and hate crimes a criminal offence. Nevertheless, LGBTI persons still face discrimination, including in the labour market, further highlighting the need for the authorities to implement standards and international practices on eliminating social segregation and discrimination to ensure that minority communities can feel safe as active participants in society. The General Police Inspectorate has an important role in this sense, to provide professional policing in a diverse society. To ensure sustainability in this direction, future police officers require initial educational programmes that include relevant topics on the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

<sup>86</sup>. The 2023 Conclusions of the European Committee of Social Rights found that Moldova is yet to ensure “economic protection of Roma families and single-parent families” and “access to housing for Roma families” in accordance with Article 16 of the European Social Charter and yet to ensure that “Roma children are enrolled in mainstream education”, especially to ensure the right to education of children in an irregular migration situation, to comply therefore with Article 17.2 of the Charter.

<sup>87</sup>. The Rainbow Europe Index reflects the legal policy and human rights situation of LGBTI persons in Europe. The maximum score is 100% for respect of human rights, representing full equality, with the minimum 0% representing gross violations of human rights and discrimination.



Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- enhance the effectiveness of the national authorities, including the Equality Council, the Office of the People's Advocate and the Agency for Interethnic Relations, to combat discrimination as well as promote equality, diversity and inclusion;
- better implement policies and programmes that promote the protection and social inclusion of people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, including Roma, and LGBTI persons to ensure their full participation in society;
- develop the legal framework by explicitly regulating the conditions and procedure concerning legal gender recognition and establish clear guidelines on the provision of gender-affirming healthcare;
- in the area of Roma inclusion, allocate appropriate funding to increase the number of community mediators, revise the salary scale and ensure adequate remuneration, develop a suitable policy for the recruitment and retention of community mediators, together with adequate working conditions and continuous professional trainings;
- strengthen the institutional and budgetary autonomy of the Agency for Interethnic Relations in order to develop public policies in its field of intervention and monitor their implementation;
- follow-up on the post-accession commitment to study with a view to ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;
- support the teaching of the Romanian language to national minorities and refugees, as well as the teaching of minority languages;
- raise public awareness of the dangers of discrimination, hate speech and hate crime and the importance of preventing and combating these phenomena.

#### ➤ **Migrants and refugees**

The need to address human rights challenges in the field of refugees and migration as a matter of priority is underlined in the [Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable People in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe \(2021-2025\)](#), providing a framework of measures to address the human rights challenges affecting the most vulnerable migrants and refugees, co-ordinated by the Council of Europe Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees.

The Republic of Moldova has been significantly affected by the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine and has faced the largest refugee inflow in its history. It represents one of the main refugee-hosting and transit countries in the ongoing crisis, with more than a million border crossings from Ukraine since late February 2022 and more than 100 000 refugees from Ukraine, mostly women, children and elderly people, recorded in the country.<sup>88</sup> Thus, the Republic of Moldova hosts the largest proportion of refugees from Ukraine relative to its population (2.6 million), posing a major logistical challenge and administrative burden for the authorities. The application of the Temporary Protection Directive in the European Union recently extended until March 2025, and the Republic of Moldova's Temporary Protection regime, which came into effect following the Government's decision No. 21/2023 in March 2023, have provided favourable frameworks to ensure protection and access to rights and services, as well as types of assistance in host countries for refugees from Ukraine, which reduce the immediate need to apply for asylum. Challenges remain, with differing approaches to the implementation of temporary protection, which can have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable groups and their ability to access their rights.

The consequences of the war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine led to expanding the co-operation portfolio in the Republic of Moldova. The Council of Europe Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees held a fact-finding visit to the Republic of Moldova in June 2022, focusing on the protection of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. In co-ordination with national authorities and international partners, in 2023 the Council of Europe introduced important initiatives in the areas of strengthening the protection of migrants and refugees. Support was provided to build resilient migration, asylum and reception systems in the long term, drawing on the Council of Europe's judicial expertise and the substantial case law of the European Court in the field of asylum and migration.

<sup>88</sup>. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/mda>.

Despite the challenging situation, the authorities in the Republic of Moldova have shown quick, effective and strong leadership in responding to the unprecedented crisis. The country adopted emergency policy and legal measures to allow all arrivals from Ukraine to enter the territory of the Republic of Moldova under a special entry and exit regime. The Government's Strategy on the development of the field of internal affairs for the years 2022-2030 outlines general objectives in the field of migration and asylum, including implementing and strengthening the integration mechanism for foreigners. Refugee accommodation centres (RACs) were also established across the country to provide accommodation to refugees. In addition, an [online platform](#) was created, providing up-to-date and consolidated information about legal protective status, housing (especially RACs), access to healthcare and education, other rights and benefits, and contacts of volunteers. Moreover, a framework for the schooling of refugee students, including those who have applied for asylum, was developed as well.

However, while the response of the central and local authorities, and society at large, to the influx of Ukrainian refugees has been particularly impressive, there is a need to strengthen the capacity of the national authorities, with a focus on protecting human rights and ensuring equal treatment of the most vulnerable groups, including Roma, and to address the needs of affected hosting communities and expand resources and services that remain strained by the presence of the refugee population in the country.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- advance the legal, policy and regulatory framework in the field of migration and asylum in accordance with European and international standards;
- develop the expertise of relevant authorities, the Office of the People's Advocate, as well as judicial and law-enforcement professionals in the field of migration and asylum, to better address the challenges faced by migrants and refugees;
- ensure the provision of support services and integration programmes to migrants and refugees at local level.

### Expected outcomes

*Anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion, Roma and Travellers, national minorities, regional or minority languages, LGBTI persons*

- Strengthened institutional capacity of the national and local authorities, including equality bodies, law enforcement and the judiciary, to address discrimination, hatred, racism and intolerance and protect the rights of persons belonging to minorities, in line with Council of Europe standards and best practices.
- Improved capacity of local authorities to design and implement policies aimed at sustainable social inclusion of disadvantaged communities, including Roma and LGBTI persons.
- Increased awareness among non-state stakeholders, including youth and civil society organisations, of the understanding of rights and discrimination as well as the dangers of hatred to societies.

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Institute of Justice, Equality Council, Office of the People's Advocate, Office of the Prosecutor General, General Police Inspectorate, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Culture, Audiovisual Council, Police Academy "Stefan cel Mare", Agency for Interethnic Relations, CALM – Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova, civil society organisations (CSOs).

### *Migrants and refugees*

- Enhanced national legislative and policy framework in the field of migration and asylum, in line with European and international standards.
- Strengthened capacity of relevant professionals, including but not limited to the judiciary, migration and asylum authorities, and the Office of the People's Advocate, to effectively respond to the needs of migrants and refugees.
- Improved access for migrants and refugees to support services and integration programmes at local level.

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Institute of Justice, Office of the People's Advocate, General Inspectorate for Migration at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, CSOs.

### 2.3.3 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Violence in different forms and settings, the lack of access to justice and participation opportunities, challenges in technological development, including artificial intelligence, poverty, social exclusion and discrimination significantly affect children. Weaknesses in legislation, family, social and child-protection services and children's access to justice, education and guardianship increase children's vulnerability to human rights violations. Because of children's limited access to both national and international justice and difficulties that they experience in having their voices heard, children's needs and rights are often overlooked. As reiterated in the [Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2022-2027\)](#), the Council of Europe is committed to ensuring the effective protection of children's rights, such as freedom from violence, equal opportunities and social inclusion, access to and safe use of technologies, child-friendly justice, giving a voice to every child, and children's rights in crisis and emergency situations.

The Republic of Moldova is a party to several legal instruments that protect children, such as the [Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse \(Lanzarote Convention\)](#), ratified in 2011. In May 2022, the government approved the creation of the Specialised Commission for the Co-ordination and Monitoring of the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention of the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse within the National Council for Human Rights. This includes representatives from relevant ministries responsible for the protection of children and for preventing and combating sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children.

The Republic of Moldova has been reinforcing its national legal and policy frameworks over the last few years to enhance the protection of children's rights. In 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection launched the National Programme for Child Protection for 2022-2026, aimed at strengthening the social protection system for children in the Republic of Moldova, in order to respond promptly and efficiently to the needs of each child. The programme's primary areas of intervention are good governance in the field of child protection, reducing the number of children in institutional care, preventing and combating violence in all environments and forms, and alternative care and assistance provided to families for the prevention of separation. More than 8 000 children were involved in the participative process of devising the programme.

Under the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024, the capacity and qualifications of criminal justice professionals to effectively investigate, prosecute and sentence perpetrators of crimes against children, including in the digital environment, have also been increased. In addition, with the Council of Europe's support, the guardianship authorities and non-legal professionals working with and for children are now better equipped with the gender-sensitive tools needed to identify and report child sexual exploitation and abuse.

However, shortcomings still remain. The [8th activity report](#) of the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Committee) issued in March 2024 underlines that the Republic of Moldova faces significant challenges in combating child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse due to persisting gaps in the criminalisation of sexual abuse, and that sexual exploitation in prostitution and trafficking is a serious risk for children, in particular boys living in street situations. The sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children facilitated by technology was also recognised as an increasing problem in the country along with the sexual exploitation of boys who appear to be less likely to seek support or redress following abuse. Many of these risks are exacerbated among Ukrainian refugee children who are being hosted in the Republic of Moldova.

Furthermore, although the participation of children and young people is provided for in the national legislation, there is a lack of effective mechanisms to ensure the participation of children in government activities and programmes, or in the creation of public policies and laws. There is a need for the Republic of Moldova to strengthen its efforts to ensure that the perspectives of children are heard in decision-making processes.

Following the publication of the 8th activity report in March 2024, the Government of the Republic of Moldova initiated the procedure to amend national legislation in line with the recommendations of the Lanzarote Committee and relevant EU directives. In order to ensure better protection of children from sexual exploitation and abuse, the Government intends to regulate specific issues related to: use of children for sexual performances, coercion of a child for sexual purposes, distribution of child sexual abuse material, making a person under the age of 16 witness sexual activities or acts of a sexual nature, and exploitation of children for prostitution.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- ensure the alignment of national legislation concerning the protection of children's rights, including aspects related to sexual abuse and child exploitation, with European standards;
- improve the access of child victims to justice and guarantee judicial processes adapted to the needs of minors;
- develop and strengthen specialised services, including tailored rehabilitation services, for child victims;
- improve mechanisms for ensuring children's active participation in the development and the implementation of State policies, programmes or other initiatives concerning the protection of children's rights, including the fight against sexual abuse of children;
- enhance its efforts in education and awareness raising regarding children's rights among both children and adults, including the implementation of educational programmes that promote knowledge of rights and necessary protection among minors.

#### **Expected outcomes**

- Improved legislation, policies and practices to better respect, protect and promote the rights of the child, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights on the Child and relevant Council of Europe standards.
- Strengthened capacity of national authorities to protect and promote the rights of the child and effectively implement the National Programme for Child Protection 2022-2026 and subsequent national programmes.
- Improved access to justice for child victims, and child-friendly procedures for children in contact with the law, adapting the judicial procedures to the needs of minors.
- Improved and tailored rehabilitation services for children in conflict with the law.
- Increased engagement of children in drawing up and implementing policy frameworks and initiatives related to the protection of children's rights.
- Improved capacities of criminal justice professionals involved in multidisciplinary interagency responses to child (sexual) abuse (such as the Barnahus model).
- Strengthened frameworks and capacities of professionals working in the child-protection system, including on migration, guardianship and refugee services.
- Raised public awareness of the protection of children's rights in the Republic of Moldova.

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Internal Affairs, State Chancellery, National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Education and Research, Supreme Court of Justice, Superior Council of Magistrates, Prosecution Service, National Institute of Justice, Lawyers' Union, National Inspectorate of Probation, National Administration of Penitentiaries, Ombudsperson for Children's Rights, civil society organisations (CSOs).

## 2.4 BUILDING TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Under the Action Plan, the Council of Europe will continue assisting the Republic of Moldova to enhance the independence, professionalism, integrity and transparency of the judiciary, through bolstering the implementation of the justice reform in line with the recommendations included in the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) opinions and the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) compliance report, and other Council of Europe standards. The work on improving the efficiency of the judicial and prosecution systems in the Republic of Moldova, the modernisation of justice administration and the quality of judicial services will be provided through the application and further dissemination of the guidelines and tools of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ). The Council of Europe will continue addressing the systemic issues related to the efficiency of prison management and human resources development in prisons, healthcare (including mental health care) and rehabilitation provided to prisoners, those on probation and persons treated in closed institutions, from admission and through their reintegration upon release, in line with best international practices and Council of Europe standards. Following the Republic of Moldova's accession to the Pompidou Group in 2012, co-operation on the fight against drugs and addictions will continue under the new Action Plan. The Council of Europe will assist in implementing and upscaling preventive interventions, raising awareness among target groups and building capacity among relevant professions regarding drug use and addiction.

The Council of Europe will further assist the authorities in drawing up a code of conduct for parliamentarians, including rules for various situations of conflicts of interest, and for interactions with third parties/lobbyists. The code ought to be complemented by the establishment of a mechanism to secure its enforcement and raise awareness among parliamentarians.

The aim of this operational pillar is to build trust in public institutions. Accordingly, it comprises the following sub-programmes:

- Independence and efficiency of justice;
- Prisons – Police – Deprivation of liberty;
- Integrity of parliamentarians.

These actions will contribute to the implementation by the Republic of Moldova of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs): Goal 3 (target 3.5)<sup>89</sup> and Goal 16 (targets 16.1,<sup>90</sup> 16.3,<sup>91</sup> 16.4,<sup>92</sup> 16.5,<sup>93</sup> 16.6,<sup>94</sup> 16.a<sup>95</sup> and 16.b).<sup>96</sup>

### 2.4.1 INDEPENDENCE AND EFFICIENCY OF JUSTICE

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe report on the honouring of obligations and commitments by the Republic of Moldova, adopted in January 2023,<sup>97</sup> acknowledges that the authorities in the Republic of Moldova have made efforts to review the functioning of most State institutions and independent bodies and to appoint new officials following parliamentary assessment procedures, triggering questions about the transparency and speed of the selection process. The Assembly takes note of the necessity for quickly restoring the proper and transparent functioning of democratic institutions. However urgent and necessary the reforms may be, the Assembly urged the authorities to ensure that such changes are made in accordance with the rule of law and Council of Europe standards and are drawn up with the involvement of the parliamentary opposition and civil society so as to facilitate sound law making and enable sustainable and strong institutions to be established.

<sup>89</sup>. Goal 3, target 5: Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

<sup>90</sup>. Goal 16, target 1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

<sup>91</sup>. Goal 16, target 3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.

<sup>92</sup>. Goal 16, target 4: By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organised crime.

<sup>93</sup>. Goal 16, target 5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.

<sup>94</sup>. Goal 16, target 6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.

<sup>95</sup>. Goal 16, target a: Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international co-operation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.

<sup>96</sup>. Goal 16, target b: Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

<sup>97</sup>. Report on the honouring of obligations and commitments by the Republic of Moldova, Assembly debate on 26 January 2023 (8th sitting) (Doc. 15680, report of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by member States of the Council of Europe, co-rapporteurs: Mr Pierre-Alain Fridez and Ms Inese Lībiņa-Egnere). Text adopted by the Assembly on 26 January 2023 (8th sitting).



In this respect, it welcomed the close co-operation of the authorities in the Republic of Moldova with the Council of Europe, in particular with the Secretary General's High-Level Working Group on Justice Reform and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), as well as their constructive approach to ensuring that the restructuring of the State, and in particular the judicial overhaul, are in line with Council of Europe standards.

The Venice Commission and the Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DGI) of the Council of Europe provided continued support to the Moldovan authorities, notably on framing the legislation on vetting judges and prosecutors.<sup>98</sup> The Venice Commission and DGI underlined a series of procedural guarantees applicable to the vetting proceedings, including the right to effective participation in the proceedings, the right to request a private hearing and the right to a reasoned decision. Moreover, in such cases judges and prosecutors concerned should have a real chance to refute the presumptions related to unexplained wealth and must be able to put forward the "inaccessible evidence" or bona fide ownership defence. Also, it is essential that decisions on the dismissal of judges and prosecutors are appealable to the Supreme Court of Justice.

The European Commission's opinion on the European Union membership application by the Republic of Moldova<sup>99</sup> concluded with regard to the rule of Law that the Republic of Moldova "has undertaken a major overhaul of both its justice and anticorruption systems" since the 2014 banking fraud. The Commission's opinion presented nine steps that the Republic of Moldova needs to take to further progress on the enlargement path. Among these nine steps, the Republic of Moldova is expected to advance on a comprehensive justice reform, combat corruption, address shortcomings identified by the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODHIR, step up recovery of assets and reform the public institutions. On 2 February 2023, the European Commission published an analytical report of the country's alignment with the EU *acquis* (the collection of common rights and obligations that constitute the body of EU law). The analytical report evaluated the legal alignment, as well as the state of preparedness, of the Republic of Moldova to apply the EU *acquis*. This assessment was done based on the replies to the questionnaires from the applicant country, as well as on relevant information collected over many years as part of the intensive dialogues under the Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas. This analytical report complements the Commission's opinions adopted in June, which focused mainly on the political and economic criteria. On 14 December 2023, the European Council formally decided to open accession negotiations with the country, provided that three outstanding steps related to judicial reform, anti-corruption and de-oligarchisation were taken. Following its reassessment of progress made in March 2024, the European Commission declared on 7 June 2024 that the country had fulfilled all outstanding requirements for the opening of formal accession talks, paving the way for the adoption of the relevant negotiating framework.

The key objective of the justice sector reform is to increase transparency within the judiciary and improve the level of trust of beneficiaries in the work of the courts and the actors of the system. The mid-term priority for the justice sector is to continue efforts to implement a digitalisation agenda for the judiciary.

The Action Plan will contribute to increasing the independence, professionalism, integrity and transparency of the judiciary in the Republic of Moldova and support the implementation of the justice reform in line with European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) opinions, the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) compliance report and other Council of Europe standards. It will contribute to a stronger co-operation between judicial bodies and national authorities, as well as broaden networking with civil society institutions engaged in the reform of the judiciary in the Republic of Moldova and increase the transparency and accessibility of the courts for its end beneficiaries. Another important area of focus will be strengthening the institutional capacities of the Constitutional Court. The Council of Europe will also work towards enhancing judicial training and increasing compliance with European standards by legal professionals. Through these efforts the Action Plan will contribute to the process of consolidating the rule of law in the Republic of Moldova, with particular attention to strengthening the independence, impartiality and accountability of the Moldovan judiciary, as well as improving access to justice for all citizens.

<sup>98</sup> [www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2023\)005](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2023)005); [www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2023\)023-e](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2023)023-e); [www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2023\)035](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2023)035).

<sup>99</sup> European Commission Opinion on the Republic of Moldova's application for membership of the European Union, 17 June 2022.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- strengthen the independence of the judiciary and the public prosecution service and to consolidate anti-corruption laws;
- ensure respect for the rule of law and inclusive democracy and to pursue reforms that are part of a clearly expressed desire for European integration.

#### Expected outcomes

- Enhanced knowledge and skills of the national authorities resulting in an improvement of the legal framework and implementation of the justice sector reforms, in line with Council of Europe standards.
- Strengthened culture of alternative dispute resolution through enhanced institutional capacities, raised awareness among stakeholders and increased use of mediation.
- The efficiency of the courts is enhanced through improved performance evaluation, enabling data-driven decision making and modernised court management using CEPEJ tools.
- Enhanced courts management through employing modern court management and CEPEJ tools.
- Enhanced collection, processing and analysis of judicial data in accordance with CEPEJ standards and tools.
- The judicial and prosecutorial self-governing bodies exercise their competences to select, appoint, promote, transfer, suspend and remove judges and prosecutors in an effective, objective and transparent manner in line with European standards.
- The human resources policy of the judiciary is updated to ensure stability and sustainability, efficiency and commitment of staff, non-discrimination, social inclusion and gender equality.
- Judicial and prosecutorial institutions implement modern communication strategies to increase institutional transparency and accountability, improve public confidence and contribute to awareness raising and legal education.
- The National Institute of Justice has an increased capacity to advance the quality of justice through enhanced judicial training.
- The Constitutional Court's strengthened capacity contributes to the delivery of constitutional justice through an increase in the quality of legal interpretation and transparency of the Court's functioning and rulings.
- The increased capacity of the Supreme Court of Justice contributes to ensuring the uniform application of the law and to improving the quality and coherence of the judicial decisions of the European Court.

**Main national partners:** the parliament, Ministry of Justice, Constitutional Court, National Institute of Justice, Superior Council of Magistracy, Superior Council of Prosecutors, Supreme Court of Justice.

#### 2.4.2 PRISONS, POLICE AND DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY

In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has made steady progress in aligning its criminal justice system with European standards.

One of the most notable achievements is the amendment of the Criminal Procedure Code, the Criminal Code and of the Enforcement Code by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova in 2023. These amendments aim to bring the national framework for pretrial detention, criminal sentencing and enforcement of criminal sentences<sup>100</sup> into line with European standards.

<sup>100</sup>. Enhanced safeguards for ensuring the right to petition by detainees; exclusion of the obligation to bear the costs of medical assistance following self-harm; abrogation of sanctions for self-harm; extended arrangements for short-term visits, including through videoconferencing; exclusion of the obligation for the prisoner or his relatives to pay the costs of long visits; remand prisoners/convicts whose sentence is not final have the right to be visited; life prisoners are transferred to more lenient regimes after 20 years of serving their sentence, can have unlimited meetings with the probation service and are entitled to one long-term visit per quarter.

The Republic of Moldova's imprisonment rate has been among the highest in Europe in recent years,<sup>101</sup> 242 inmates per 100 000 inhabitants. The prison population on 1 January 2024 was 5 695 inmates, constituting a decrease of 6.39% compared to 2022 and 29.29% since 2015.<sup>102</sup> Prison overcrowding remains a major challenge for the national authorities, particularly in remand prisons. The situation was exacerbated by the excessive use of pre-trial detention and custodial sanctions, which put additional pressure on the prison system. In 2023, there was a significant decrease in the overcrowding, especially in Prison No. 13;<sup>103</sup> as of January 2024 it was approximately 34% but a decrease compared to previous years,<sup>104</sup> due to both the reduced use of pretrial detention and the implementation of the Amnesty Law.

Although the latest report<sup>105</sup> from the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) recognised some improvements, it highlighted the problem of interprisoner violence that remains largely unaddressed, and prisons still generally fail to ensure a safe environment for incarcerated persons. A large number of persons held in prison describe an overall atmosphere of intimidation and violence created by the informal prison leaders and their close circles. The report identified numerous cases of persons held in prison who were found with injuries indicative of interprisoner violence. Due to the atmosphere of fear and the lack of trust in the staff's ability to guarantee safety, prisoners found with injuries refused to provide a plausible explanation as to the origin of their injuries. Moreover, although all cases of inmates bearing injuries were registered and reported to the prosecutor's office, in none of the cases was an investigation initiated. The CPT called upon the authorities in the Republic of Moldova to take resolute action, without further delay, to tackle the phenomenon of an informal prisoner hierarchy and to prevent interprisoner violence and intimidation throughout the prison system. To this end, the authorities should put in place a clear holistic strategy, with timelines for its implementation.

In line with the legal instruments of the Council of Europe, the case law of the European Court in cases against the Republic of Moldova and the latest recommendations of the CPT, the Action Plan will address several interrelated areas: pretrial detention, criminal sentencing, enforcement of criminal sentences and improving the effectiveness of control and monitoring mechanisms (including those available to the Ombudsperson Institution and the National Preventive Mechanism) of places and conditions of detention. These interventions will contribute to a reduction in prison overcrowding, notably by promoting the use of community sanctions and measures.

The Action Plan will also support strengthening of institutional capacity in the prison system and, beyond that, will support actions across the Action Plan, such as the implementation of the European Court judgments and the implementation of the standards of the European Convention on Human Rights at national level.

Further efforts are needed to enable the national authorities to pursue reforms in the criminal justice sector, given the deep and long-term structural and systemic problems in the criminal justice system. This includes the implementation of strategic documents developed under the previous Action Plan on prisons and effective human resource management, combating interprisoner violence, overcrowding, and health and mental healthcare for prisoners, forensic and civil patients.

This Action Plan provides a platform for multi-agency co-operation to ensure an integrated, risk and needs-based approach to the rehabilitation of these categories of citizens, leading to their reintegration into the community. The outcomes address prison, probation and mental health services in a comprehensive way, providing sustainable capacity building across the criminal justice system.

<sup>101</sup>. According to 2023 SPACE report, Moldova has one of the highest prison population rates among prison administrations in Council of Europe member States, with 242 inmates per 100 000 inhabitants, a significant increase in the prison population rates from 2022 to 2023 (from 159 inmates for 100 000 inhabitants or an increase of 52%). For more information see, Prisons and Prisoners in Europe 2023/2022: Key Findings of the SPACE survey: <https://wp.unil.ch/space/space-i/annual-reports/>; <https://infogram.com/incarceration-rates-across-europe-in-2023-1hxj48mmv881q2v?live>.

<sup>102</sup>. National Administration of Penitentiaries, "Statistical Reports", Rapoarte analitice, ANP – Administrația Națională a Penitenciarelor (gov.md).

<sup>103</sup>. Numărul deținuților din Penitenciarul nr. 13 a scăzut, Ministerul Justiției al Republicii Moldova (gov.md).

<sup>104</sup>. Figures are based on the reports and statistics of the National Administration of Penitentiaries (NAP) of the Republic of Moldova for the years 2018 – 2024, provided by consultants working within the framework of the Council of Europe project on the development of a strategy to combating overcrowding. The NAP reports indicate that the number of inmates in Chișinău Prison 13 on 1 January 2024 was 766 in a prison with 570 places, representing 34% overcrowding. This compares to 1 069 inmates in 2018, or an overcrowding rate of 87.5%.

<sup>105</sup>. Report to the Moldovan Government on the ad hoc visit to the Republic of Moldova carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 5 to 13 December 2022, published on 13 September 2023.



Technical co-operation to be implemented in these areas has been designed taking into consideration the outcomes of the previous Action Plan in the Republic of Moldova and will aim to do the following.

- Improve the management of the prison system, including: (i) individualised risk and needs-based management of offenders; (ii) addressing vulnerabilities in prison due to overcrowding and informal hierarchies, including prisoners at particular risk of abuse (such as those accused or convicted of sexual offences, LGBTI persons, persons with mental health problems or illicit drug-use problems, etc.) and those who do not (or no longer) wish to be involved in the informal prison hierarchy.
- Improve the integrated, multidisciplinary approach to general health care and mental healthcare in prisons.
- Strengthen the capacity of probation services to address the needs of medium and high-risk offenders, including through the development of new intervention methods and quality standards aimed at changing the behaviour of those on probation, including women in conflict with the law, family aggressors, sexual offenders, drug users, alcohol-dependent prisoners on probation and those with mental health problems.
- Promote greater co-operation between the probation service and all criminal justice actors in order to increase the use of community sanctions and measures.
- Improve psycho-social rehabilitation services for patients in psychiatric institutions, promoting the transition from the medicalised model to one based on the individual needs of patients.
- Support the reorganisation of forensic psychiatry in line with international standards and the best practices of Council of Europe member States.
- Improve the mechanism for reporting alleged cases of torture and ill-treatment in temporary detention and during escort to court, including healthcare measures in line with CPT recommendations.
- Ensure that opioid agonist therapy can be prescribed immediately upon admission to prison.

#### **Expected outcomes**

- Justice stakeholders in the Republic of Moldova use a better criminal sentencing framework, including more effective community sanctions.
- Enhanced application of multidisciplinary rehabilitative approaches to the enforcement of sentences and rehabilitation of offenders by prison and probation services.
- Improved access to and quality of healthcare services, including for mental health and addictions in prisons.
- Strengthened psycho-social rehabilitation of patients in psychiatric institutions and advanced transition from the medicalised model towards an approach centred on patients' individual needs.
- Improved organisation of forensic psychiatry, based on a revised model of coerced treatment in line with international best practices and Council of Europe standards.
- Skills and knowledge of criminal justice actors are strengthened to effectively apply fundamental safeguards in the context of criminal proceedings.

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Council for the Prevention of Torture, National Administration of Penitentiaries, National Probation Inspectorate, National Institute of Justice, CSOs.

## 2.5 UPHOLDING THE SAFETY, SECURITY AND INTEGRITY OF SOCIETY AND PERSONS

In order to guarantee the effective enjoyment of human rights, preserve democratic stability and keep citizens safe and their values intact it is crucial to counter all the threats to the rule of law. These include organised crime, money laundering, terrorism financing, corruption and cybercrime. The Council of Europe will advance effective measures for prevention of corruption in the Republic of Moldova, through delivery of legislative and policy advice, aiming to address the pending recommendations from the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO). Support for enhancing the effectiveness of measures against money laundering and terrorism financing, while at the same time consolidating the capacities of dedicated structures in the field of asset recovery and parallel financial investigations, following the recommendations of the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL), will be another priority of the new Action Plan. The Council of Europe will further contribute to enhancing the capacities of the Moldovan authorities to provide for a more effective criminal justice response to cybercrime, more effective use of electronic evidence and an increase in cyber-resilience, particularly through implementation of the Council of Europe Budapest Convention to better address the challenges of cyber threats and to improve internet security.

The aim of this operational pillar is to ensure the safety, security and integrity of society and individuals. Accordingly, it comprises the following sub-programmes:

- Corruption – Money laundering;
- Digital challenges: Cybercrime – Data protection;
- Integrity and governance of sport.

The new areas of co-operation will include artificial intelligence and human rights, data protection and support for the principles of integrity and governance in sport.

These actions will contribute to the implementation by the Republic of Moldova of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#): Goal 16 (targets 16.3,<sup>106</sup> 16.4,<sup>107</sup> 16.5,<sup>108</sup> 16.6<sup>109</sup> and 16.10).<sup>110</sup>

### 2.5.1 CORRUPTION – MONEY LAUNDERING

The Republic of Moldova is party to the Council of Europe's main anti-corruption<sup>111</sup> and anti-money laundering<sup>112</sup> instruments, and as such is subject to monitoring and evaluation by the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) in the anti-corruption field and the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL) and the Conference of Parties to CETS No. 198 in the anti-money laundering and countering of financing of terrorism area.

The Republic of Moldova has been a member of GRECO since 2001 and has undergone five evaluation rounds focusing on different topics related to the prevention of and fight against corruption. In summary, 93% of recommendations were implemented in the first evaluation round, 67% in the second evaluation round and 88% in the third evaluation round. In the fourth evaluation round, dealing with corruption prevention in respect of parliamentarians, judges and prosecutors, only 33% of all recommendations have been fully implemented to date. In its latest evaluation report on the Republic of Moldova<sup>113</sup> adopted in December 2023, GRECO acknowledged the progress achieved by the country in setting up an institutional and legal framework to promote integrity and prevent corruption in the most senior executive positions of central government and its law-enforcement agencies but has also called for improvement in several areas.

<sup>106</sup>. Goal 16, target 3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.

<sup>107</sup>. Goal 16, target 4: By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organised crime.

<sup>108</sup>. Goal 16, target 5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.

<sup>109</sup>. Goal 16, target 6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.

<sup>110</sup>. Goal 16, target 10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

<sup>111</sup>. Council of Europe Criminal Law Convention on Corruption ([ETS No. 173](#)) and the Civil Law Convention on Corruption (ETS No. 174).

<sup>112</sup>. Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism (CETS No. 198).

<sup>113</sup>. The [latest GRECO evaluation report](#) was adopted in December 2023 and relates to GRECO's fifth evaluation round on preventing corruption and promoting integrity in central government (top executive functions) and law-enforcement agencies.

The report noted that the Republic of Moldova has developed an institutional integrity framework consisting of the National Anti-corruption Centre, the National Integrity Authority and the Anti-corruption Prosecutor's Office. A National Integrity and Anti-corruption Program is also in place. Its integrity legal framework comprises several laws regulating issues such as the assessment of institutional integrity, the management of institutional corruption risks and the declaration and verification of assets and personal interests. A new law on access to public-interest information came into force in January 2024, and a law on the protection of whistle-blowers came into effect in October 2023. In addition, GRECO identified a number of areas where improvement is needed. The authorities should adopt a code of conduct for persons with top executive functions (PTEFs) to cover all relevant integrity matters and set up a credible and effective mechanism to monitor and enforce it. Dedicated awareness-raising training and confidential counselling must be made available to PTEFs.

In its 2023 opinion on limiting excessive economic and political influence in public life (de-oligarchisation),<sup>114</sup> the Venice Commission welcomed the Action Plan on some measures to limit excessive economic and political influence in public life (de-oligarchisation) and made a number of recommendations, including to carry out an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the existing systemic measures with regard to their shortcomings in terms of structure, powers and co-ordination, and to strengthen the independence and effectiveness of the key regulatory and controlling authorities and co-operation between them. Also, in another joint opinion of 2023 on the anti-corruption judicial system and the amendment of some normative acts,<sup>115</sup> the Venice Commission and DGI recommended that the authorities carry out a thorough impact assessment of the draft law, including an analysis of the root causes of the problems that this reform aims to address as well as of its advantages, disadvantages and effects, including in the light of the current vetting process. It was also recommended, *inter alia*, that the authorities continue and intensify their efforts to complete the vetting process for judges who may be assigned to corruption cases and to strengthen the efficiency of anti-corruption bodies and mechanisms, as well as of the courts dealing with corruption cases.

The European Commission's opinion on the Republic of Moldova's application for membership of the European Union<sup>116</sup> presented nine steps that the Republic of Moldova needs to take to further progress on the enlargement path, among which is "to complete ... the comprehensive justice system reform ... including through efficient use of asset verification", "to fight corruption at all levels by taking decisive steps towards proactive and efficient investigations, and a credible track record of prosecutions and convictions" and "to enhance the involvement of civil society in decision-making processes at all levels". On 8 November 2023 the European Commission recommended opening accession negotiations with the Republic of Moldova in view of "important progress" made on meeting the nine requirements.

The Republic of Moldova faces various money laundering threats, mainly deriving from corruption, tax evasion and smuggling committed internally and drugs trafficking and human trafficking for crimes committed outside of the country. The latest MONEYVAL follow-up report on the Republic of Moldova,<sup>117</sup> adopted in May 2024, mentioned the positive steps taken by the authorities of the Republic of Moldova and led to the upgrading of the country's rating from "partially compliant" to "largely compliant" in four areas related to the activities of designated non-financial businesses and professions, customer due diligence, politically exposed persons and higher-risk countries. The latest MONEYVAL report<sup>118</sup> noted steps undertaken for further alignment with international standards on targeted financial sanctions related to terrorism and terrorism financing as well as to proliferation. However, in the field of new technologies, where new international requirements for virtual assets have been introduced, the Republic of Moldova's rating remains only "partially compliant".

<sup>114</sup>. [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2023\)019-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2023)019-e)

<sup>115</sup>. [https://venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2023\)032-e](https://venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2023)032-e).

<sup>116</sup>. European Commission *Opinion on the Republic of Moldova's application for membership of the European Union*, adopted on 17 June 2022.

<sup>117</sup>. The *1st Enhanced Follow-up Report on the Republic Moldova* was adopted by the MONEYVAL Committee at its 63rd Plenary Session (Strasbourg, 16-20 May 2022).

<sup>118</sup>. The *2nd Enhanced Follow-up Report on the Republic Moldova* was adopted by the MONEYVAL Committee at its 67th Plenary Session (Strasbourg, 21-24 May 2024).

MONEYVAL highlights that although the Republic of Moldova did improve its technical compliance with respect to six of the 12 recommendations that were assessed as being partially compliant under its 2019 Mutual Evaluation Report, the country did not meet the expectation of addressing most of the technical compliance deficiencies within three years after the adoption of the mutual evaluation report. MONEYVAL urged the Moldovan authorities to do so by June 2025. In case of failure to meet this deadline, MONEYVAL will take action under its compliance enhancing procedures. The Republic of Moldova remains in enhanced follow-up and is expected to report back to MONEYVAL in May 2025.

The shortcomings identified by MONEYVAL still impact the effective application of risk-based supervision of the financial sector and in particular the designated non-financial businesses and professions (DNFBPs) sector, the application of risk-based preventive measures, transparency of beneficial ownership, the collection and use of financial intelligence, and investigation into and prosecution of money laundering. Regarding the collection and use of financial intelligence, the resources and capacities of law-enforcement agencies need to be expanded. In addition, there is a weak track record of convictions for money laundering in the Republic of Moldova and the country still needs to demonstrate further progress in this area. Concerning the recovery of illicit proceeds, the authorities have adopted and implemented several strategic documents and undertaken steps to introduce effective confiscation mechanisms. Nevertheless, the statistical data on the number and the value of confiscated assets do not appear to correspond to the scale of proceeds-generating crime in the country. In view of the modest results in recovering proceeds of crime, assistance is planned for increasing the effectiveness of the asset recovery system.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- introduce effective integrity mechanisms for top executive functions, including on integrity checks as part of recruitment and appointment, and develop and effectively apply relevant code(s) of conduct for persons with top executive functions on integrity-related matters and confidential counselling on integrity-related issues;
- strengthen the system for managing conflicts of interest of persons with top executive functions;
- develop and effectively apply legislation to regulate the receipt of donations by the police and the Border Police;
- establish an effective supervision mechanism to implement the rules on post-employment restrictions in respect of law-enforcement officers;
- enhance the risk review process in the police and the Border Police and the effective implementation of related mitigating approaches to strengthen integrity, including by proactive measures to increase the representation of women;
- enhance the effective supervision of integrity-related risks to outside activities, involving law-enforcement officers;
- maintain a thorough understanding of money laundering, terrorism financing and proliferation financing risks;
- enhance the understanding, knowledge and practical implementation by the financial institutions and particularly by the DNFBPs of their anti-money laundering and countering of terrorism financing obligations, including conducting enterprise-wide money laundering and terrorism financing risk assessments, and the implementation of anti-money laundering and countering of terrorism financing measures based on risk; reporting on suspicious activity is recommended as well;
- promote effective and risk-based supervision of non-profit organisations at risk of being involved in terrorism financing;
- assess the money laundering and terrorism financing risks related to new products and technologies (such as new payment methods or non-face-to-face verification systems for customers) and introduce effective measures to mitigate the risks associated with misuse of virtual assets and virtual assets service providers and evolving financial technologies;
- establish an efficient and effective mechanism, including provision of sufficient tools and capacity building of the relevant agencies, to enhance the transparency of beneficial owners of legal persons and legal arrangements, particularly in light of the introduction of the institute of “fiducia” (trust-like relationships) under the Civil Code;

- strengthen the knowledge and capacity of investigators and prosecutors to conduct investigations into and to prosecute money laundering and terrorism financing, including conducting parallel financial investigations in line with national risks, including corruption, and making full use of available financial intelligence;
- strengthen the application of asset recovery mechanisms in line with international standards and practices, and commensurate with national risks;
- implement the national strategy on criminal asset recovery intended to raise the effectiveness of seizing and confiscation of proceeds of crime measures, in line with the country's risks. Ensure that investigators, prosecutors and the judiciary possess the necessary capacities and expertise to improve effectiveness in the filing of proceeds of crime sequestration, confiscation and management.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe will support the Republic of Moldova to align its legislative and policy frameworks and practices with Council of Europe, EU and international standards in the area of fighting economic crime as well as asset recovery and management, to address emerging corruption and money laundering risks, and mitigate other vulnerabilities identified by the Council of Europe monitoring bodies with regard to preventing corruption and promoting integrity at the sub-national level and in the application of the developing anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing approaches.

#### Expected outcomes

- The national authorities effectively address corruption and perform integrity controls.
- The respective national authorities have increased capacities and implement strengthened measures for corruption prevention in top executive functions and law-enforcement agencies, as well as at sub-national level.
- The national supervisory authorities possess enhanced capacities and reporting entities to manage national and relevant cross-border money laundering, terrorism financing and proliferation financing risks.
- The national authorities, financial and non-financial institutions collaboratively apply robust and risk-based measures against money laundering and terrorist financing.
- National authorities implement enhanced practices for effective tracing, recovery, management and disposal of criminal assets.
- The national authorities, private sector and civil society in the Republic of Moldova co-operate to promote an environment of transparency of ownership and integrity.

**Main national partners:** State Chancellery for PTEFs in Central Government, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, General Prosecutor's Office, National Integrity Authority of the Republic of Moldova, General Police Inspectorate, Customs Service, National Anti-corruption Centre, Office for Prevention and Fight against Money Laundering (FIU), National Bank of the Republic of Moldova, Public Service Agency (PSA), civil society organisations (CSOs).

#### 2.5.2 DIGITAL CHALLENGES: CYBERCRIME – DATA PROTECTION

The Republic of Moldova is a party to the Budapest [Convention on Cybercrime](#). It will be able to make use of the tools of the new [Second Additional Protocol to this treaty on enhanced co-operation and disclosure of electronic evidence](#) once the protocol enters into force. By March 2023, 36 countries had signed it (with one ratification), including the Republic of Moldova. The tools of the Second Additional Protocol include: direct co-operation with service providers in other parties for the disclosure of subscriber information and with registrars for domain name registration information; government-to-government co-operation for the production of subscriber information and traffic data; expedited disclosure of data and co-operation in emergencies; joint investigation teams and joint investigations; video conferencing. These tools are backed up by data protection and other safeguards that need to be implemented by parties. The criminal justice system of the Republic of Moldova can mobilise only limited resources and capacities to prevent, investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cybercrime and the growing number of other offences involving electronic evidence.

Under the Action Plan, the Council of Europe will enhance the capacities of the authorities in the Republic of Moldova to implement a more effective criminal justice response to cybercrime and electronic evidence and for increased cyber-resilience. Drawing on the results of past regional co-operation, the Council of Europe will assist the national authorities in promoting further compliance with the Budapest Convention. Special emphasis will be placed on making specialised cybercrime units more operational in both domestic investigations and international co-operation, to co-operate more efficiently with national and multinational internet service providers and to generally increase the capacity of criminal justice institutions to deal with cybercrime and electronic evidence. Given the recurring need for continuous training on cybercrime and electronic evidence due to rapidly changing realities, further training efforts will target the law enforcement, prosecution, judiciary and other State and private actors in the Republic of Moldova relevant to the fight against cybercrime. A particular emphasis will be placed on the need for policy makers (parliamentarians and government officials) to be more aware of the risks posed by cybercrime as a transversal and international issue and therefore be supportive of the legislative developments and allocation of resources to the criminal justice authorities who are on the front line. Coherent and more strategic approaches to address the challenges of cybercrime and electronic evidence as well as political engagement are needed.

The Council of Europe has played a crucial role in implementing of a number of reforms in the field of data protection in the Republic of Moldova, laying the groundwork with Convention 108. With the Republic of Moldova currently going through the European Union accession process, the country is further adapting the data protection legislation, attempting to reach important standards that are also set by the European Union, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The Action Plan will promote the Council of Europe's standards on the handling of personal data and solidify its role as the reference in terms of international expertise, and importantly will help to align the national legislation with the European Union (EU) *acquis*. The Council of Europe's network of data protection experts is well known and their active role in supporting member States in implementing the standards and guidelines that have been developed is vital. It is also vital to continue to foster links with other international organisations working in the field of data protection, including EUROPOL and EUROJUST.

#### **Expected outcomes**

- Legislation and policy framework on cybercrime and electronic evidence in stronger compliance with the Budapest Convention and its Second Protocol.
- Enhanced capacities of judicial and law-enforcement authorities and reinforced interagency co-operation on the fight against cybercrime.
- Enhanced co-operation on the basis of the Second Protocol to the Budapest Convention.
- Enhanced capacities of the staff of the National Centre for Personal Data Protection to implement data protection legislation.

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Office of the Prosecutor General, National Centre for Personal Data Protection, civil society organisations (CSOs).

### **2.5.3 INTEGRITY AND GOVERNANCE OF SPORT**

Sport is a major component of society, including in the Republic of Moldova. It is at the heart of communities and brings people together around values such as respect, equality, in particular gender equality, and fairness, and is thus an excellent vector and tool for promoting the Council of Europe's principles and values. Safeguarding its integrity is key to protecting its social and educational role. At the same time, sport faces complex and ever-evolving threats, such as doping, violence at sports events, manipulation of competitions, corruption and human rights violations. All these challenges can undermine the confidence of society in sport and increasingly expose sport to human rights infringements and to breaches of the rule of law. Upholding the integrity of sport requires a stronger emphasis on education and implementation of the existing standards, in particular concerning the protection of whistle-blowers and fair anti-doping disciplinary proceedings.



The Council of Europe contributes to the global response to these challenges through the promotion, implementation and monitoring of its sport conventions: the Anti-doping Convention (ETS No. 135), the Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (Macolin Convention, CETS No. 215) and the Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events (CETS No. 218, Saint-Denis Convention).

The Action Plan will contribute to the efforts of the national authorities in the Republic of Moldova to update its national legislation and practices for ensuring an ethical, inclusive, fair and safe environment for sport, in line with the Council of Europe's standards. At the same time, it will support and strengthen the capacities of the authorities to promote the integrity of sport as an instrument for social cohesion, notably in better fighting against doping in sport and manipulation of sports competitions, as well as improving safety, security and services at sporting events. The Council of Europe will ensure a strong European voice (facilitating the co-ordination of positions of European public authorities) throughout the world and towards relevant international partners on the World Anti-Doping Programme.

#### Expected outcomes

- The Republic of Moldova updates its policies, legislation and practices for ethical, inclusive, fair and safe sport in line with Council of Europe standards.
- The Republic of Moldova fulfils its obligations to ensure a fair, ethical, inclusive and safe sport and comply with the sport conventions.

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Education and Research, National Sports Federations, National Olympic Committee, civil society organisations (CSOs).

## 2.6 ANCHORING DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN EUROPEAN SOCIETIES

The Republic of Moldova has continued its reform efforts to strengthen democracy and the rule of law, despite numerous challenges related to the ongoing war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. In the area of electoral legislation, good progress has been made in addressing and implementing the remaining recommendations made by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (ODIHR) and the Venice Commission in their opinions of October 2020<sup>119</sup> and October 2022<sup>120</sup> respectively.

According to the Freedom House Freedom in the World 2024 report,<sup>121</sup> the Republic of Moldova achieved a global freedom score of 61 out of 100 and “has a competitive electoral environment, and freedoms of assembly, speech, and religion are mostly protected. Nonetheless, pervasive corruption, links between major political figures and powerful economic interests, and critical deficiencies in the justice sector and the rule of law all hamper democratic governance”.

The electoral legislation was comprehensively amended to remove inconsistencies and a new Electoral Code was adopted in December 2022. National capacity to revise electoral legislation in line with international electoral standards has been strengthened. The Central Electoral Commission (CEC) adopted about 40 regulations based on the new Electoral Code, including the nine regulations developed with the assistance of the Council of Europe on financing of political parties, resolution of electoral disputes by electoral management bodies, certification of electoral officials, reflection of electoral campaigns in the media and the status of the representative of electoral candidates. Further amendments to the Electoral Code were adopted in July and October 2023, providing for the possibility of prohibiting members of political parties declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court from running for election. In conformity with recommendations from the Venice Commission,<sup>122</sup> in March 2024 the Constitutional Court cancelled the provisions on ineligibility of amendments. A law on the partial implementation of postal voting was adopted in April 2024 and the Venice Commission was asked for an opinion.

<sup>119</sup>. [www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2020\)027-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2020)027-e).

<sup>120</sup>. [www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2022\)025-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2022)025-e).

<sup>121</sup>. Freedom in the world 2024 report by Freedom House, available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2024/mounting-damage-flawed-elections-and-armed-conflict>.

<sup>122</sup>. [www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2023\)048](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2023)048).

As stated in the 2023 European Commission's Report on the Republic of Moldova, the authorities need to implement the electoral legislation by strengthening the CEC with sufficient powers, resources and technical expertise to carry out its work effectively. The country needs to ensure transparency in the financing of political parties and accountability in campaign financing. To further reduce the risk of malicious interference, the country needs to regulate the involvement of third parties in election campaigns. This should be in line with the recommendations of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), the Venice Commission and the ODIHR.

The 2023 amendments to the Electoral Code and the adoption of the normative framework contributed significantly to the local elections in November 2023. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (the Congress) welcomed the revision of the 2022 Electoral Code, which closed some previously identified legal loopholes and addressed the recommendations of the Congress, in particular on campaign financing, independent candidates and gender quotas. The Congress also noted the authorities' proactive efforts to combat electoral corruption. At the same time, the Congress urged the authorities to adopt a new approach if the state of emergency is extended again, and to pay particular attention to the timing and application of restrictions as well as to the relevant application by the CEC of the legal provisions governing the process of authorising messages from public authorities during the electoral period.

The existing legal and financial framework provides an enabling environment for civil society organisations (CSOs). The legal framework is in line with international standards. The Republic of Moldova follows good practice by involving civil society in the decision-making process. Further efforts should focus on the adoption of the national strategy for the development of civil society and on improving the quality of public consultation processes in order to increase transparency and the involvement of CSOs in policy dialogue, in particular in parliamentary debates and at local level.

The aim of this operational pillar is to anchor democratic values in the Republic of Moldova. Accordingly, it comprises the following sub-programmes:

- Freedom of expression and information – Safety of journalists;
- Local democracy;
- Democratic governance and dialogue – Civil society. Elections;
- Education;
- Youth;
- Culture and cultural heritage.

These actions will contribute to the implementation by the Republic of Moldova of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#): Goal 1 (targets 1.1,<sup>123</sup> 1.2<sup>124</sup> and 1.5),<sup>125</sup> Goal 3 (target 3.8),<sup>126</sup> Goal 4 (targets 4.1,<sup>127</sup> 4.2,<sup>128</sup> 4.3,<sup>129</sup> 4.4,<sup>130</sup> 4.5,<sup>131</sup> 4.6,<sup>132</sup> 4.7,<sup>133</sup> 4.a,<sup>134</sup> 4.b<sup>135</sup> and 4.c),<sup>136</sup> Goal 5 (targets

<sup>123</sup>. Goal 1, target 1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.

<sup>124</sup>. Goal 1, target 2: By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

<sup>125</sup>. Goal 1, target 5: By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.

<sup>126</sup>. Goal 3, target 8: Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

<sup>127</sup>. Goal 4, target 1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

<sup>128</sup>. Goal 4, target 2: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

<sup>129</sup>. Goal 4, target 3: By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

<sup>130</sup>. Goal 4, target 4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

<sup>131</sup>. Goal 4, target 5: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

<sup>132</sup>. Goal 4, target 6: By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

<sup>133</sup>. Goal 4, target 7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

<sup>134</sup>. Goal 4, target a: Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

<sup>135</sup>. Goal 4, target b: By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.

<sup>136</sup>. Goal 4, target c: By 2030, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational

5.1,<sup>137</sup> 5.5,<sup>138</sup> 5.b<sup>139</sup> and 5.c),<sup>140</sup> Goal 8 (targets 8.5<sup>141</sup> and 8.6),<sup>142</sup> Goal 10 (targets 10.2,<sup>143</sup> 10.3<sup>144</sup> and 10.7),<sup>145</sup> Goal 11 (targets 11.3,<sup>146</sup> 11.4<sup>147</sup> and 11.7),<sup>148</sup> Goal 13 (target 13.3),<sup>149</sup> and Goal 16 (targets 16.3,<sup>150</sup> 16.5,<sup>151</sup> 16.6,<sup>152</sup> 16.10<sup>153</sup> and 16.a).<sup>154</sup>

## 2.6.1 FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND INFORMATION – SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

The Council of Europe has provided long-standing support to the public broadcaster in the Republic of Moldova. Significant progress has been achieved in terms of strengthening the capacities of the broadcaster to develop high-quality productions, such as award-winning documentaries, and setting up a training centre for the continuous training of journalists and media professionals from Teleradio-Moldova.

Comprehensive support was provided to the institutional strengthening of the country's main audiovisual regulatory authority, the Audiovisual Council, through targeted interventions, expert advice to the AC on the development of a methodology for monitoring and countering sexist language in the media during elections, addressing the threat of disinformation (due to the ongoing Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine) and new narratives affecting the work of the media and national regulatory authorities. Support was also provided to improve the regulatory framework for media ownership transparency through peer advisory support from the UK's audiovisual regulator.

The Republic of Moldova ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (Tromsø Convention, CETS No. 205) on 2 September 2016 and it entered into force on 1 December 2020. A new law on access to information of public interest, developed with the assistance of the Council of Europe, came into force in January 2024. It introduces numerous changes to the way in which the public will be able to access information held by public bodies, in line with European standards, in particular on aspects such as proactive transparency requirements, deadlines and communication rules, judicial review models and financial penalties.

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training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.

<sup>137</sup>. Goal 5, target 1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

<sup>138</sup>. Goal 5, target 5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

<sup>139</sup>. Goal 5, target b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

<sup>140</sup>. Goal 5, target c: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

<sup>141</sup>. Goal 8, target 5: By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

<sup>142</sup>. Goal 8, target 6: By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

<sup>143</sup>. Goal 10, target 2: By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

<sup>144</sup>. Goal 10, target 3: Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

<sup>145</sup>. Goal 10, target 7: Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

<sup>146</sup>. Goal 11, target 3: By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.

<sup>147</sup>. Goal 11, target 4: Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

<sup>148</sup>. Goal 11, target 7: By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

<sup>149</sup>. Goal 13, target 3: Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

<sup>150</sup>. Goal 16, target 3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.

<sup>151</sup>. Goal 16, target 5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.

<sup>152</sup>. Goal 16, target 6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.

<sup>153</sup>. Goal 16, target 10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

<sup>154</sup>. Goal 16, target a: Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international co-operation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.

The free, fair and transparent access to information for journalists remains a pressing issue in the media landscape in the Republic of Moldova. Efforts in the field of monitoring and improving media regulation include a focused approach to access to information and the associated normative acts and policies, and extensive tailor-made training for public officials from national and local authorities for an enhanced understanding of these provisions.

In April 2022, the authorities in the Republic of Moldova submitted a request by the Bloc of Communists and Socialists, a parliamentary faction, for an opinion from the Venice Commission on selected parts of Law No. 102 on Amendments to Some Normative Acts and Law No. 143 on Amendments to the Audiovisual Media Services Code. The request focused on two aspects of recent legal amendments: first, the ban on the use of certain symbols under the Law on Countering Extremist Activity and the Contravention Code; second, certain restrictions imposed on the media under the Audiovisual Media Services Code.

According to the opinion of the Venice Commission,<sup>155</sup> issued in October 2022, the amendments introduced by Law No. 102 concerning the ban on the use of certain symbols in principle met the conditions of lawful restrictions to the right to freedom of expression – as protected by Article 10 of the Convention and Article 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova – but some further legal clarifications were recommended. Concerning certain restrictions imposed on the media under the Audiovisual Media Services Code, the Venice Commission noted that the Republic of Moldova has been heavily exposed to external sources of information and is a constant target of disinformation activities from external sources. In this context, the Venice Commission considered that Law No. 143 pursued a legitimate aim and that its adoption responded to a pressing social need. However, as some of the terms and expressions used in its text were not precise enough for the media to know which programmes the prohibition of some symbols applies to, Law No. 143 could have a chilling effect on the media in the country. Moreover, the combination of the content-based and the origin-based approach used in defining the prohibited programmes risked extending the prohibition of the broadcasting to programmes that do not threaten information security in the Republic of Moldova.

The Action Plan will enhance and expand upon the accomplishments of the previous co-operation, while consistently addressing emerging needs. To achieve this goal, the Council of Europe will support the implementation of activities focused on legislative reforms in the audiovisual sector, including the alignment of the national audiovisual legislation (Audiovisual Code) with EU requirements, directives and acts, as well as the Venice Commission recommendations on the autonomy and independence of the national regulatory authority and the public broadcaster and support for public consultations in this area, and the establishment of effective protection mechanisms to ensure the safety of journalists, de-oligarchisation of the media market and extension of the ownership transparency requirements to online and print media. The Action Plan will also ensure capacity building for media professionals and promote diversity of content within the national public broadcaster through production of high-quality documentaries on human rights and social issues. Support will also be provided for the process of implementation of the new legislation on access to information and online media regulations in the Republic of Moldova. The Action Plan will continue to support the institutionalised efforts of the Centre for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation (StratCom) under the President's Office of the Republic of Moldova and the Audiovisual Council to counter information disorder, improve media literacy and strengthen society's resilience to disinformation campaigns, which became a major challenge for the country with the start of Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine. It will raise awareness of the use of artificial intelligence to counter disinformation. It will also support civil society organisations and major national media outlets to address disinformation challenges and narratives and increase media literacy among the population. The Action Plan will contribute to strengthening the media and information society landscape in the Republic of Moldova through the efficient implementation of the improved audiovisual legislation and stronger, independent institutional guarantees.

The Action Plan will also promote two new instruments – Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2024\)2](#) on countering the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) and [the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law](#) – by focusing on raising awareness of these new instruments among national stakeholders in the Republic of Moldova.

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<sup>155</sup> [www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2022\)026](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2022)026) .

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- enhance the capacities of the staff of the media regulatory authority to implement legislation in line with the EU accession process requirements, developing by-laws, guidelines and instructions for its implementation and ensuring effective oversight and monitoring of its implementation by the parliament as well as other relevant stakeholders;
- strengthen the capacity of the Centre for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation (StratCom) under the President's Office, the Audiovisual Council and civil society to counter disinformation and increase media literacy;
- increase the capacity of the public broadcaster to maintain professional levels of reporting, including election coverage;
- enhance the capacities of journalists and media organisations in the field of ethical coverage and safety of journalists' standards;
- facilitate implementation of the new legislation on access to information and the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (Tromsø Convention).

#### Expected outcomes

- Relevant national authorities have the capacities to improve and implement the existing legal framework in line with Council of Europe standards.
- The public service broadcaster and media outlets have enhanced capacities for content diversification, increased independence and professionalism.
- Increased alignment of the key legal and policy instruments in the Republic of Moldova in the fields of safety of journalists, media regulation, countering disinformation and access to information with the standards of the Council of Europe and the best European practices.
- Relevant authorities and stakeholders strengthen their capacities and expertise to implement the audiovisual and access to information legal framework.

**Main national partners:** State Chancellery, Audiovisual Council, Parliamentary Committee on Mass Media, Centre for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation (StratCom) under the President's Office, Ministry of Culture, Teleradio-Moldova, Telefilm Chişinău, civil society organisations (CSOs).

#### 2.6.2. LOCAL DEMOCRACY

In the last few years, the Republic of Moldova has made some progress in preparing for public administration reform. In particular, the new public administration reform strategy for 2023-2030 was adopted in March 2023 and its implementation programme for 2023-2026 in June 2023. The documents were prepared with the contribution of local government represented by the Congress of Local Authorities from the Republic of Moldova.

At the local level, the Republic of Moldova's ambition to strengthen local democracy remains one of the country's obligations as a member State of the Council of Europe and one of the conditions for European Union membership. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (the Congress) is assisting the country in this endeavour by monitoring the situation of local democracy and working together to promote closer alignment of the local self-government framework with the principles enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova has showed strong commitment to implementing the revised [Post-Monitoring Roadmap for Local Democracy in the Republic of Moldova](#), signed in 2021 with the Congress as a follow-up to Recommendation 436 (2019) and thereby addressing the main steps to be taken to implement the Congress recommendations. As a result of the work of the Council of Europe, the priority areas of the road map are reflected in the new public administration reform strategy for 2023-2030.

The consultation mechanism and multilevel dialogue between local and central authorities have been strengthened in the Republic of Moldova. The national authorities and the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM) jointly developed a policy and legal framework to further improve the consultation mechanism and enshrine it in law. These interventions contributed to the most satisfactory level of consultation of local authorities by higher levels of government in years, according to the [2023 Congress Post-Monitoring Report](#).

The [5th Open Government Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2023-2025](#) was developed jointly by local and central authorities for the first time since the [Republic of Moldova joined the Open Government Partnership \(OGP\) in 2011](#). This is a concrete example of multilevel dialogue on open government and the involvement of the local level in the development and implementation of the OGP action plan.

The current Action Plan aims to provide further support to local and central authorities in the implementation of these commitments. Interventions will aim to further strengthen political dialogue, support the improvement of the quality of local governance through integrity, inclusivity and civic participation, prevent corruption at the local level, strengthen human rights, promote open government, public ethics and gender equality at the local level, and assist the authorities with migration management. Together, these efforts will ultimately help to improve the quality of local democracy and ensure that citizens of the Republic of Moldova benefit from local policies and practices that are ethical, fair, inclusive and open.

#### Expected outcomes

- Multilevel governance stakeholders have enhanced capacity, knowledge and skills to improve the existing legal framework in line with European Charter of Local Self-Government.
- Relevant authorities at central and local levels implement the commitments of the Public Administration and Territorial Reform in the Republic of Moldova in line with European standards.
- Political dialogue and co-operation between local and central authorities is strengthened.
- The quality of local governance provided by the authorities is improved through integrity, inclusivity and civic participation, the prevention of corruption, open government, public ethics and gender equality at local level.
- Local authorities deliver enhanced public services in line with European standards.
- Local authorities implement inclusive and human rights-based local policies and strategies for the benefit of citizens of the Republic of Moldova.
- The Office of the People's Advocate and local authorities enhance their dialogue and promote the respect for human rights at the local level.

**Main national partners:** pilot municipalities, the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova – CALM, State Chancellery, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, the parliament, Office of the People's Advocate, civil society organisations (CSOs).



### 2.6.3. DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND DIALOGUE – CIVIL SOCIETY. ELECTIONS

#### ➤ Democratic governance and civil society

Civil participation in decision making is an important element, alongside elections, of ensuring good democratic governance at local level, as it gives a voice to citizens and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and is one of the democratic principles shared by all Council of Europe member States.

To help member States implement standards in the area of civil participation and to ensure that civil participation has a real impact on decision-making processes, the Committee of Ministers has adopted standards such as the Guidelines on civil participation in political decision making, Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2018\)11](#) on the need to strengthen the protection and promotion of civil society space in Europe and Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2018\)4](#) on the participation of citizens in local public life. To the same end, the Conference of INGOs and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities have adopted the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-making Process (revised in 2019).

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- strengthen democratic processes, in particular the openness and transparency of public authorities;
- enhance the role and capacity of civil society, leading to greater social cohesion and improved civic oversight of the activities of public authorities;
- facilitate the participation of citizens, civil society organisations and stakeholders in the formulation of policies, action plans and decisions, which will help the authorities to respond to real needs and improve the quality, relevance and impact of services.

#### Expected outcomes

- Local authorities and civil society actively use participatory mechanisms, demonstrating awareness and commitment to collaborative decision-making and participation in public life.
- Citizens and civil society organisations in the pilot municipalities are better involved in decision-making processes and participate in public life beyond their participation in elections.
- Political decisions and policies are informed by recommendations developed jointly by different sectors of society, including women, youth and marginalised groups, and better reflect the real needs and opinions of all citizens.
- Improved legislation on citizen participation enables and requires public authorities to ensure effective citizen participation in decision making through the use of improved or new innovative methods.

**Main national partners:** pilot municipalities, the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova – CALM, State Chancellery, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalisation, the parliament, civil society organisations (CSOs).

#### ➤ Elections

Democratic elections are a cornerstone of democracy and are decisive for ensuring the legitimacy of democratic institutions. In the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024, the Council of Europe assisted the country in bringing its electoral legislation and practices in line with the European standards. The Central Electoral Commission (CEC) approved around 40 by-laws based on the new Electoral Code, which entered into force in January 2023, including nine regulations developed with the Council of Europe's support on financing political parties, electoral dispute resolution by electoral management bodies, certification of electoral officials, reflection of electoral campaigns in the media and the status of the representative of the electoral candidates. In addition, the capacity of relevant electoral authorities to operate in a professional, transparent and inclusive manner has been increased. The Council of Europe's expertise in strategic planning helped the CEC, the Centre for Continuous Electoral Training and the Central Electoral Council of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia<sup>156</sup> to assess the implementation of their strategic plans for 2020-2023 and to develop follow up plans for the period of 2024-2027.

<sup>156</sup>. Since December 2023, the Central Electoral Council of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia operates as an ad-hoc electoral management body.

Furthermore, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) in their joint opinion<sup>157</sup> also welcomed a number of developments in the new Electoral Code, pointing out that several of the prior recommendations from the Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE/ODIHR “are fully or mostly addressed”.

With the Council of Europe’s support, the capacity of the CEC, police and civil society organisations to better prevent and combat sexism, harassment and gender-based violence against women in elections has been also significantly reinforced. Moreover, dedicated electoral officials, judges, prosecutors and investigation officers improved their knowledge and skills to investigate and settle issues on financing political parties, initiative groups and electoral campaigns.

The latest [Congress election observation report](#) and the OSCE/ODIHR’s final report<sup>158</sup> following the local elections in the Republic of Moldova held on 5 November 2023 underlined that “overall the CEC worked professionally, collegially and in an open manner” and “enjoyed the confidence of most ODIHR EOM interlocutors”.

However, in [its opinion on the Republic of Moldova’s application for membership of the European Union](#), the European Commission noted that “while the latest rounds of parliamentary elections in July 2021 were well administered and competitive, and fundamental freedoms were largely respected, several further recommendations by ODIHR remain to be addressed in areas such as effective campaign finance oversight, political bias of news outlets and the impartiality of the Central Election Committee”. These issues were also observed and highlighted in the final reports of the Congress and the OSCE/ODIHR during the local elections held on 5 November 2023.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- improve the electoral legal framework, including on alternative voting methods, in line with European standards;
- ensure the transparency of electoral campaign financing as well as the accountability of political party financing through efficient supervision and oversight;
- promote impartial, balanced and unbiased media coverage of elections without sexism and hate speech;
- enhance the transparency and impartiality of the Central Electoral Commission;
- prevent and investigate cases of misuse of administrative resources as well as vote-buying and illegal inducements for voters.

#### **Expected outcomes**

- Harmonisation of the domestic electoral legal framework and practices with European standards.
- Strengthened capacity of the election administration at all levels and professionals to ensure transparency, fairness and integrity of electoral processes and practices, in line with Council of Europe standards.
- Improved competence of the election administration at all levels and professionals in using ICT in the electoral process, e-voting and other alternative voting methods, in line with Council of Europe standards.
- Improved capacity of legal professionals and election administrations in electoral dispute resolution, in line with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights in the electoral field.
- Raised awareness of the media, political parties and other electoral stakeholders, including voters, to properly identify, prevent and fight against disinformation, hate speech, sexism, gender-based violence and other negative phenomena during elections.
- Increased level of engagement of women, first-time voters, national minorities and other vulnerable groups in electoral process, leading to more inclusive and participatory electoral processes and practices.

<sup>157</sup> [www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2022\)025](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2022)025) .

<sup>158</sup> [www.osce.org/odihr/elections/moldova/564934](http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/moldova/564934) .

**Main national partners:** Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova, Central Electoral Council of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, Centre for Continuous Electoral Training, media outlets, National Institute of Justice, civil society organisations (CSOs).

### ➤ Parliamentary co-operation

Parliamentary co-operation, as a key pillar of democratic governance, is of crucial importance to this Action Plan. It aims to ensure the active participation of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova in policy formulation and implementation, as well as promoting transparency, accountability and inclusiveness within society. Parliamentary engagement strengthens the effectiveness of the Action Plan by reflecting on a range of different perspectives and reinforcing democratic values in the country, particularly on its European integration path.

As highlighted in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe [report](#) on the honouring of obligations and commitments by the Republic of Moldova, adopted in January 2023, the country, since July 2021, has had a stable parliamentary majority committed to European integration, has continued a profound reform process of its institutions, in particular the restoration of the independence and integrity of the judiciary and the Public Prosecutor's Office, and has strengthened its efforts in the fight against corruption. The Monitoring Committee also welcomed the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and the progress in the field of gender equality.

However, the Monitoring Committee underlines the challenges the Republic of Moldova faces in eradicating the roots of "state capture", in the context of an economic, energy and humanitarian crisis following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the enormous influx of refugees. This regional context and the hybrid war threaten the functioning of democratic institutions, including the parliament, in the country.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova to:

- support the country's efforts and encourage the authorities to consolidate the reform process in co-operation with the Council of Europe, its Parliamentary Assembly and the Venice Commission;
- urge the authorities to ensure respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law by involving the parliamentary opposition and civil society in order to guarantee good-quality laws and the establishment of sustainable and solid institutions;
- accelerate the process of amending the Rules of Procedure, to strengthen its rules on integrity and adopt a code of conduct for members of parliament and a code of parliamentary rules and procedures to help eradicate party switching and ensure a wider engagement of civil society.

### **Expected outcomes**

- The Republic of Moldova's parliamentary work and democratic procedures have improved in line with European standards and practices.
- Transparency is improved through oversight activities, consultations and public hearings with all relevant stakeholders, and the accountability of members of parliament is increased.

**Main national partners:** the parliament, academia, civil society organisations (CSOs).

### ➤ Confidence-building measures (CBM)

The Council of Europe has extensive experience of building relationships and bridges across the Nistru River since 2010. The Council of Europe's confidence-building measures (CBM) programme in the Republic of Moldova has involved a variety of sectors and areas of interest, including the media, drug prevention and treatment, education and higher education, support for civil society, human rights in places of detention and in the social sphere, and architectural heritage. The ability to implement CBM activities remains contingent on the wider political environment, including in the context of the security situation created by the effects of the ongoing Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine. While the level of activities in the field of CBM has been limited in recent years, the Council of Europe stands ready to implement actions at an appropriate moment and fully in line with the Moldovan authorities' policy on the matter.

CBM activities can be addressed to populations, civil society and local decision makers, from both sides of the Nistru River, with the aim of creating professional networks and various platforms for discussing initiatives aimed at restoring the image of the other as a valid and necessary interlocutor in the process of solving the conflict. Thus, mutual knowledge, understanding and trust among both sides, as well as raising awareness of Council of Europe standards on human rights, democracy and the rule of law, could contribute to a general environment supportive of a positive political dialogue. CBM activities, where possible, should continue to focus on bringing civil society representatives and professional groups into dialogue across the dividing lines, while raising awareness and respect of human rights principles, with special attention paid to building resilience and strengthening the skills of professionals working with vulnerable groups.

#### Expected outcomes

- Engagement between youth, civil society representatives, professional groups, and decision makers from both sides of the Nistru River is increased
- Environment conducive to trust-building and dialogue is enhanced

**Main national partners:** Bureau for Reintegration Policies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, civil society organisations (CSOs), youth representatives, professional groups

#### 2.6.4 EDUCATION

The recent crises in Europe have exacerbated some of the existing shortcomings of education systems by further reducing equal opportunities for inclusive, quality education, especially for disadvantaged groups. The Council of Europe has considered education, including the right to quality education for all, in a broader human rights context, as a driving force for democratic culture and mutual understanding, the fight against intolerance and stereotyping, the promotion of inclusion and equality at all levels, and respect for diversity. [The Reykjavik Declaration](#) notes that "priority will be given to support the participation of young persons in democratic life and decision-making processes, including through education about human rights and core democratic values, such as pluralism, inclusion, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability".

Under the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024, the role of formal education in developing a culture of democratic participation has gained greater prominence in the Republic of Moldova in the past few years. The country developed a policy framework and implementation guidelines on education for democratic citizenship and democratic governance of schools, in line with the principles of the [Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education \(EDC/HRE\)](#) and the [Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture \(RFCDC\)](#). The Council of Europe also assisted the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research in drafting the "Education for Society" curriculum, which has been taught in schools since September 2018. In addition, professionals working at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research have increased their capacity to develop and implement the policy framework and methodological guidelines on civic education and digital citizenship education, in line with Council of Europe standards. Additionally, head teachers, teachers and students in the pilot schools in the Republic of Moldova have a better understanding of the principles of democratic school governance.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- support initiatives aimed at developing inclusive and participatory school environments;
- strengthen academic integrity and ethics by developing codes of ethics in line with European standards;
- support programmes aimed at eliminating bullying and promoting diversity, tolerance and intercultural dialogue in schools;
- support the capacity building of education professionals, including with the support of European universities.

#### **Expected outcomes**

- Improved national policies and methodological frameworks to ensure the provision of quality education at all levels that empower learners as active and responsible citizens, in line with European standards.
- Enhanced capacity of national authorities and education professionals to effectively apply human rights education principles in practice.
- Strengthened competences of relevant stakeholders to advance education through a human rights-based digital transformation.
- Support the teaching of Romanian language to the general population, with a particular focus on linguistic minorities and refugees.
- Improved access of young people to quality education for democratic citizenship.

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Education and Research, higher education institutions, primary and secondary schools, civil society organisations (CSOs).

#### 2.6.5 YOUTH

As stressed in the Reykjavik Declaration, supporting the participation of young people in democratic life is vital for a democratic future and ensures that everyone is able to play their role in democratic processes. The Council of Europe action in the youth sector is guided by a comprehensive [Youth sector strategy 2030](#), engaging young people with the Council of Europe's values.

The Republic of Moldova promotes a youth policy anchored in the policies of the Council of Europe, including the [Youth sector strategy 2030](#), and emphasises the role of young people and youth organisations in the construction of participatory democracy. Following its EU accession path, the Republic of Moldova also aligns itself with the youth work development standards adopted by the European Union through the [European Youth Work Agenda](#) and the [EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#), and envisages young people as important participants in the process of implementing the national development strategy "European Moldova 2030" and achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. At national level, the country implements the youth sector development strategy "Youth 2030", aimed at developing an ecosystem of institutions and responsible bodies that co-ordinate their activities and base their interventions on the real needs of young people. In addition, responsibility for the domain of volunteering lies with the central authority. Efforts to strengthen civic engagement and youth participation are also being pursued through the ongoing revision of the current legal framework on volunteering, as well as the improvement of tools and mechanisms that support and facilitate volunteering activities.

Nevertheless, there is a lack of investment for strengthening the youth sector in the Republic of Moldova, especially in rural areas. At the same time, the level of participation of young people in decision-making processes remains low. Despite the efforts to stimulate the democratic participation of young people in the Republic of Moldova, less than 20% of young people participate in activities to influence the decision-making processes in the country.

Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- further develop measures to ensure an increased level of democratic engagement of youth in the decision-making processes;
- strengthen the capacity of relevant authorities and stakeholders to promote meaningful youth participation at national and local levels.

#### Expected outcomes

- Enhanced mechanisms and tools for the democratic participation of young people at the national and local levels, in line with Council of Europe standards.
- Improved capacity of relevant stakeholders, including youth organisations, to advance youth work policies and practices aimed at removing barriers to youth democratic participation.
- Increased capacity of youth workers to advocate citizenship and human rights education for young people.
- Increased level of democratic participation of young people in decision-making processes.
- Improved access of young people to social rights, in particular those in vulnerable situations, in co-operation with local authorities.
- Enhanced capacity of youth leaders to act as multipliers, including in dialogue and confidence-building initiatives, through participation in the Youth Peace Camp or other activities organised in the European Youth Centre as a neutral space, and in co-ordination with national partners, including the Bureau for Reintegration Policies.
- Strengthened capacity of relevant stakeholders from both sides of the Nistru River, identified in co-ordination with national authorities, including the Bureau of Reintegration Policies, to provide democratic citizenship and human rights education to young people.

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Education and Research, National Youth Agency under the Ministry of Education and Research, Bureau of Reintegration Policies, National Youth Council of the Republic of Moldova, youth organisations, youth centres, youth CSOs, young people.

#### 2.6.6 CULTURE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

The lack of mutual understanding and appreciation of European histories, identities and diversities compromises the sharing of democratic values. Attempts to distort the notions of culture and cultural heritage, used as instruments of polarisation or stigmatisation, undermine democratic values. The [Reykjavik Declaration](#) reaffirms the commitment “to developing mutual understanding among the peoples of Europe and reciprocal appreciation of our cultural diversity and heritage”.

The Republic of Moldova is a party to the [European Cultural Convention](#), the [Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe](#), the [revised Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe](#) and the [Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society](#). Since 2023, the Republic of Moldova has also been a member State of the [Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes](#), which seeks to reinforce the potential of Cultural Routes for cultural co-operation, sustainable territorial development and social cohesion, with a particular focus on themes of symbolic importance for European unity, history, culture and values.

However, at national level, there is a lack of a strategic approach to the development of cultural and creative industries and limited capacity within the Ministry of Culture to develop, co-ordinate and implement policies and regulations in the area of culture and cultural heritage.



Technical co-operation to be implemented in this area has been designed taking into consideration the reports and conclusions of relevant Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies that call on the Republic of Moldova to:

- establish a new legal entity with the ultimate mission to create a well-co-ordinated, consistent, enabling environment for development and enhancement of cultural and creative industries in the Republic of Moldova;
- strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Culture to propose regulations supporting the development of cultural and creative industries as well as co-ordinate activities in an efficient manner.

#### Expected outcomes

- Improved cultural heritage policies at national level, in line with the Council of Europe's cultural heritage conventions and the European Strategy for Cultural Heritage in the 21st century.
- Increased capacity of the Ministry of Culture to develop and implement regulations supporting the development of cultural and creative industries.

**Main national partners:** Ministry of Culture, civil society organisations (CSOs).

## PART III – IMPLEMENTATION

### 3.1 METHODOLOGY

The overall co-ordination of technical co-operation carried out by the Council of Europe falls within the remit of the Directorate of Programme Co-ordination (DPC), which steers programming of and fundraising for co-operation actions while ensuring the proper functioning of Council of Europe Offices in the field.

Substantial responsibility for co-operation projects lies with the Council of Europe “major administrative entities” who have the relevant expertise. In accordance with the Organisation's decentralised implementation of technical assistance and co-operation, the Council of Europe Office in Chişinău<sup>159</sup> ensures project implementation in the field. As of June 2024, 44 staff members were working in the office in Chişinău.

The implementation of Action Plan projects can include, but is not limited to, needs assessments, legislative expertise, capacity building, awareness raising, peer-to-peer reviews and gender analyses. The implementation methodology, in line with the [Council of Europe Project Management Methodology](#) (PMM), reinforces ownership by national stakeholders and ensures the sustainability of the outcomes. The PMM enhances the quality of project implementation in terms of planning and monitoring, cost efficiency and effectiveness. It also allows for improved risk assessment, incorporation of a human rights approach and greater attention to the gender dimension.

In addition, the co-operation developed by the Council of Europe follows a “multi-institutional approach”, which allows different Council of Europe institutions and bodies to reach out to government actors, parliaments, civil society, academia, professional associations, independent governance institutions, such as the Office of the People's Advocate, and local and regional authorities. This creates unique leverage for comprehensive, inclusive and successful reforms that lead to stability and sustainable growth in the countries.

#### 3.1.1 HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH

The Council of Europe applies a human rights approach at all levels and stages of its activities, integrating human rights principles into its policies and programmes, and empowering rights holders to exercise their rights and strengthening duty bearers to fulfil their human rights obligations and duties in all thematic areas of intervention. Its *acquis*, including Council of Europe legal instruments and institutions, combined with the principles of participation and inclusion; equality and non-discrimination; accountability; and transparency and access to information, brings further added value to the Council of Europe activities. Together with its governmental and non-governmental partners, the Council of Europe integrates human rights principles into the design, preparation, implementation and monitoring of its programmes and projects.

<sup>159</sup> [www.coe.int/en/web/chisinau/office-in-chisinau](http://www.coe.int/en/web/chisinau/office-in-chisinau) .

The [Council of Europe Human Rights Approach – Practical Guide for Co-operation Projects](#) aims to enhance the understanding of the realisation of human rights as the ultimate objective of the Council of Europe's co-operation activities and to apply the core principles to all interventions of the Council of Europe as part of project cycle management and strategic orientation.

As a central component of this human rights approach, the Council of Europe emphasises gender mainstreaming throughout its project activities in line with its [Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029](#). The strategy underlines the need to ensure that gender equality policies and relevant instruments benefit in particular disadvantaged groups of women but also persons facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. To this end, and in line with the Reykjavik Declaration, greater emphasis has been placed on an intersectional approach to ensuring an inclusive Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029 for the Council of Europe, and ultimately in each of the 46 member States, including the Republic of Moldova.

The [Council of Europe Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for Co-operation Projects](#) provides practical guidance on the implementation of the gender dimension in co-operation activities within the Organisation as well as by national partners and other stakeholders. It aims to assist the Council of Europe in identifying the priorities, key objectives and actions of the Action Plan, and to support the national authorities of the Republic of Moldova in mainstreaming gender into reforms in order to maximise efforts to achieve both gender equality and poverty reduction. The implementation of the toolkit will be accompanied by gender mainstreaming training provided by the Organisation to all staff working on co-operation activities, as well as to national partners and stakeholders. Gender-balanced participation will be ensured subject to limitations in terms of sectoral knowledge and experience. For example, gender equality and women's rights standards will be taken into account when revising the various national laws and frameworks in the light of European standards. Gender equality will also be included in training activities and programmes. Gender impacts will be analysed in the design, implementation, reporting and evaluation of projects. In addition to gender mainstreaming, specific actions to promote gender equality will be considered.

Prior to and during the implementation of the Action Plan, project teams will rely on the expertise of a gender mainstreaming adviser covering the Eastern Europe and South Caucasus region. The gender mainstreaming adviser will ensure that gender is mainstreamed in the projects of the Action Plan by promoting usage of tools such as gender analysis and gender impact assessments, and subsequently advise on implementing relevant recommendations to further integrate the gender dimension. The adviser will contribute to developing tools and mechanisms aimed at this purpose and to building the capacities of Council of Europe project staff in the region to facilitate a gender-sensitive approach in the projects of the Action Plan.

As part of its long-standing commitment to putting the child at the centre of its work, the Council of Europe is committed to advancing the protection and promotion of children's rights across Europe, in line with its [Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022-2027](#), which was developed within the framework of the programme "Building a Europe for and with children" launched in 2006. The strategy includes, *inter alia*, a focus on children's rights in the digital environment, which is reinforced by Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2018\)7](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment.

Similarly, the Council of Europe promotes the active participation of civil society in project activities in accordance with the [Guidelines on civil society organisations' participation in Council of Europe's co-operation activities](#). The [online resource for civil society](#) gives easy access to its handbook entitled "[Working with the Council of Europe: a practical guide for civil society](#)", which provides in-depth information on the different forms of access, co-operation, input, participation and/or partnership that are possible and relevant for non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The [Secretary General's Roadmap on the Council of Europe's engagement with civil society 2024-2027](#) marks a significant step in the follow-up to the [Reykjavik Declaration – United around our values](#) and presents proposals aimed at shaping a policy for meaningful and effective participation of civil society, including youth civil society, in all aspects of the intergovernmental standard setting, monitoring and co-operation activities of the Organisation. In recent years, strengthening civil participation in democratic processes has been one of the main priorities of the Council of Europe's assistance to the Republic of Moldova.

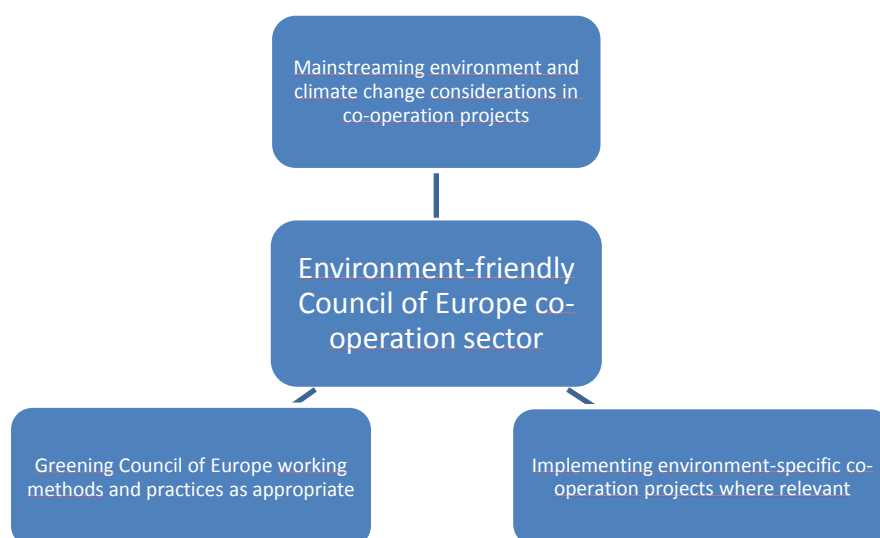
Civil society and NGOs will continue to play a direct role in the implementation of Council of Europe projects in the Republic of Moldova through the provision of services, thematic expertise, grant implementation, monitoring of reforms and the preparation of analytical reports, thus contributing to ensuring the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the country.

The [Council of Europe “Speak up” policy](#) on reporting wrongdoing and protection from retaliation entered into force on 1 June 2023 and forms part of the Organisation’s ethical framework.

The [Reykjavik Declaration – United around our values](#) is also committed to strengthening the work on the human rights aspects of the environment and initiating the Reykjavik process of focusing and strengthening the work of the Council of Europe in this field, as laid out in its Appendix V, “The Council of Europe and the environment”. This appendix underlines the “urgency of taking co-ordinated action to protect the environment by countering the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity” and affirms “that human rights and the environment are intertwined and that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of human rights by present and future generations”. The Reykjavik process is expected to “focus and streamline the Organisation’s activities, with a view to promoting co-operation among member States”. It will also “identify the challenges raised by the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity for human rights and contribute to the development of common responses thereto, while facilitating the participation of youth in these discussions”. This will be done “by enhancing and co-ordinating the existing Council of Europe activities related to the environment” and the establishment of a new intergovernmental committee on environment and human rights.

The Council of Europe co-operation sector has the potential to introduce a climate and environmental dimension into discussions in sectors and among stakeholders not traditionally used to considering these themes. In doing so it can rely on the Council of Europe’s binding commitments and treaties directly or indirectly addressing environmental concerns, its well-established working methods that include intergovernmental dialogue and co-operation, and its extensive and diverse networks of expertise across Europe.

Within this context, the Council of Europe co-operation sector aims to make the fight against climate change and environmental degradation an integral and more explicit part of its action. This can be done through: 1) mainstreaming environment protection and climate change considerations in the co-operation projects; 2) conceiving and designing co-operation projects with environment-specific objectives; 3) improving Council of Europe working methods and practices to be more environmentally sound and climate neutral.



### 1) Mainstreaming environment protection and climate change considerations in Council of Europe co-operation projects

Through mainstreaming, consideration is systematically given as to whether it would be possible to contribute to the environmental cause by adjusting the implementation of the project without changing its very nature and its objectives. Mainstreaming relies on a simplified project environmental assessment to be conducted by project managers at the project planning stage and in co-operation with local partners and stakeholders, in order to: 1) assess to what extent environment and climate change questions are relevant in the project context; 2) enquire about the possible negative impact that the project could have on the environment; and 3) identify the opportunities that the project could seize in order to contribute positively to fighting climate change and environmental degradation. The identified activities are then integrated into the project implementation as much as possible.

### 2) Conceiving and designing co-operation projects with environment-specific objectives

The enjoyment of human rights, access to justice, effective democratic procedures and environmental protection are intrinsically linked. Basic human rights such as the right to life, food, water, health and shelter are threatened globally by environmental disruptions. Furthermore, environmental degradation disproportionately affects people in vulnerable situations, with gender-specific and intergenerational dimensions. Although the rationale for Council of Europe involvement in specific areas is clear, it is important to recall that the Council of Europe is not an environmental organisation aiming at a radical or general change in its co-operation sector. Some extra-budgetary resources proposed in the Programme and Budget already relate to projects with environmental objectives that go beyond the “traditional” scope of the Council of Europe. These projects serve as a “laboratory” to test the Council of Europe’s added value in this area and inform the organisational policies in the future. It is important to recall that projects should be based on the case law of the European Court or the recommendations of the Council of Europe’s advisory and monitoring bodies. As such, it is expected that they will remain rather limited for the time being and concentrate on specific areas of intervention. Specific co-operation projects could cover the following aspects.

- a) Legal and regulatory framework/sustainable policies – to harmonise national legislation on environmental protection with international and European environmental standards, in line with the Council of Europe’s human rights-based approach.
- b) Institutional framework and implementation – to develop institutional capacities, know-how and resources in order to effectively implement existing legislation and halt environmental degradation.
- c) Co-operation and co-ordination – to reinforce co-operation among States and institutions.
- d) Environmental awareness and education – to enhance understanding of environmental challenges among authorities and increase awareness about mitigation measures that could be employed to address them.

### 3) Improving Council of Europe working methods and practices

Improving working methods in line with environment-friendly good practices is usually referred to as a greening process, through which an organisation engages in a transition to greater environmental sustainability in the management of its facilities and operations (procurement, human resources, facilities management, travel, events, information and communication technologies).

Within the context of its overall reform process, the Council of Europe has been looking into its working methods and practices in order to reduce its overall environmental impact. Concrete actions cover energy efficiency, paper consumption, catering, waste management and pollution reduction measures as well as information campaigns encouraging staff to adopt healthy and environment-friendly behaviours.

The policies and measures mentioned above are discussed and have been put in place for the Council of Europe as a whole and not specifically for the co-operation sector. However, the co-operation sector, due to its highly operational nature in the field, may become a laboratory for the development.

The Council of Europe has maintained its leading role in developing standards in the digital age to protect human rights both online and offline and in many contexts. With artificial intelligence (AI) being the most compelling technology of our time, the adoption in May 2024 of the [Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law](#), based on Council of Europe and other relevant international standards and with potential global application, was a major achievement of the Organisation. The Framework Convention was opened for signature on 5 September 2024.

The Council of Europe recognises the positive impact and opportunities created by new and emerging digital technologies while also recognising the need to mitigate the risk of the negative consequences of their use on human rights, democracy and the rule of law, including new forms of violence against women and vulnerable groups generated and amplified by modern technologies. This first global legally binding instrument aims to ensure that AI respects common standards of human rights, democracy and the rule of law and minimises the risk of undermining them. The treaty and its implementation framework also provide new opportunities for co-operation with States and will be taken into account, as appropriate, throughout the implementation of the Action Plan.

### 3.1.2 LESSONS LEARNED

The European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme Partnership for Good Governance – Phase II and the Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024 have been evaluated by independent evaluators who found, *inter alia*, that:

- the Action Plan's interventions are demand-driven, respond to the needs and priorities of the Republic of Moldova in different areas of co-operation and are relevant to the ongoing reform process, in particular on the path to EU accession;
- the results of the Action Plan have contributed or are likely to contribute to the institutional capacity of national partners, followed by improvements in legislation and policies in priority areas of co-operation;
- the implementation of the Action Plan has addressed the unique challenges posed by the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine, in particular the emerging needs of national authorities to respond rapidly and in a co-ordinated manner to the refugee crisis;
- the implementation of the Action Plan benefited from and was enhanced by good co-operation with a number of bilateral donors, international organisations and specialised international non-governmental organisations (INGOs);
- results-oriented monitoring should be strengthened, focusing more on the subsequent use of new knowledge, skills and competences; qualitative indicators can play a productive role in this regard;
- the visibility and quality of the application of the human rights approach should be further developed, building on good experiences and practices, ensuring that gaps, progress and impact in terms of human rights are measured against human rights standards, identifying duty bearers and rights holders, and that targets and indicators are well defined;
- the gender mainstreaming approach should be further strengthened through the more systematic promotion and integration of gender equality (practical IT tools, training, indicators) in projects and programmes, complementing the work done in priority areas of co-operation;
- human resources needs, recruitment and management in the framework of the Action Plan should remain high on the agenda to ensure effective implementation of the Action Plan and should be addressed in the framework of a human resources strategy at different levels;

- the added value of the Council of Europe as a programme implementer and its unique role in facilitating the EU accession agenda is widely recognised.

The present Action Plan also takes into account the lessons learned during the implementation of the Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024, including the following:

- The implementation of the Action Plan in 2021 in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic with the increased reliance on online activities had the unexpected benefit of increasing the Council of Europe's ability to reach more beneficiaries in the regions. The Council of Europe project teams learned about the cost-effectiveness of the online activities. Nevertheless, the experience gained may only to a certain extent be transferred to future implementation practice, as challenges remain regarding the full efficiency of online and hybrid modes, in particular for knowledge transfer, which the projects had to address throughout the period.
- Following the consequences of the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine and the emerging needs of the national authorities to address the refugee influx in 2022, the Council of Europe expanded its portfolio in the Republic of Moldova, focusing on the protection of the refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. Later in 2023, the relevance of the Action Plan increased following the Republic of Moldova's EU candidate status and the opening of accession negotiations. While keeping in mind the intended impact of the Council of Europe's interventions, the flexibility and adaptability of the activities under the Action Plan remains important to respond to the new challenges and to support the Republic of Moldova's accession reform agenda based on Council of Europe standards.
- As a result of strong partnerships with the Action Plan stakeholders, the intensity of co-operation can be expected to be very high and to grow, even exceeding the originally defined number of project activities. Therefore, it is necessary to consider possible increases in project budgets to cover the emerging needs of the partners in expertise and other areas.
- Regular engagement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in project activities is vital to strengthen the human rights protection of vulnerable groups, as CSOs continue to play a key role in prevention, provision of services and protection. Co-operation and co-ordination between authorities in the Republic of Moldova and international and local organisations strengthens the response to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable.
- During the Action Plan Steering Committee meetings, participants reiterated the importance of the flexibility and adaptability of the Action Plan. The granting of candidate status to the country by the European Union required adjustments to the Action Plan in line with its overall objectives so as to provide support to the country in its accession reform agenda, based on Council of Europe standards.
- Continuous co-ordination with the national stakeholders and partners on the progress made in the implementation, identifying risks and finding mitigating solutions are crucial for the identification of measures to address emerging needs and to achieve lasting and meaningful results. Maintaining open communication channels among the authorities and partners on issues that are intersectional and involve multi-agency co-operation allows for the creation of synergies in the form of cross-fertilisation and mutualisation of certain tools or promotion efforts.
- Meetings and exchanges with local stakeholders in the regions revealed that the level of understanding and preparedness of local stakeholders varies, and the presence and engagement of local CSOs is important for ensuring meaningful results. Joint meetings between local partners for sharing experiences constitute good practice for enhancing effectiveness.



- There is a need for a sustained focus on mindset changes. Strategies aimed at changing convictions, for example in relation to the predominant application of punitive approaches in the criminal justice system, need to be pervasive across all levels of the criminal justice field and go beyond the improvement of the legal framework. Ideas such as resocialisation, more humane sentencing, gender balance and behavioural change faced initial reluctance from partners. That is why acknowledging the long-term nature of these challenges is crucial and why emphasising the importance of persistence and consistent engagement to encourage acceptance and understanding is key. Understanding that transformative initiatives require time, the Council of Europe needs to emphasise the significance of a long-term commitment to behavioural change.
- In specific cases the provision of grants to national stakeholders, notably CSOs, was an efficient and effective measure.

### 3.1.3 RISK MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Owing to the nature of its mandate, the Council of Europe operates in complex and unstable environments that expose it to risks. The risk analysis of the Action Plan and possible mitigation strategies are identified in Appendix II of the present Action Plan on the basis of the Council of Europe's Risk Management Policy<sup>160</sup> and Risk Management Guidelines. All projects implemented within the Action Plan have their own risk-assessment and mitigation strategies. The risks identified within the co-operation activities feed into the organisational risk register, which is periodically brought to the attention of the Secretary General and the Senior Management Group of the Council of Europe. Internal audit, external audit and the Oversight Advisory Committee will be analysing the results.

The Council of Europe mitigates funding risks through continued fundraising activities with donors, the inclusion of funding for action plans in the Ordinary Budget and through diligent strategic planning and constant communication with all the stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Action Plan.

The volatile situation caused by the proximity of the war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine results in numerous risks, which are set out in the risk register in Appendix II below. These risks include, *inter alia*, a possible spillover of the war to the Republic of Moldova, subversive action of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Moldova to influence elections, the increased polarisation of society due to such influence, a further massive influx of refugees and high turnover of governmental and non-governmental staff and other key partners.

### 3.2 CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Council of Europe has long been committed to promoting the domestic implementation of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). In addition, the [Reykjavik Declaration – United around our values](#), adopted at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, calls for increased co-operation and the development of further synergies with the United Nations (UN), notably when it comes to the implementation of the SDGs. Against this background, the implementation of the Action Plan will sustain the efforts of the authorities of the Republic of Moldova in achieving the following SDGs, especially Goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15 and 16.

<sup>160</sup>. The revised Risk Management Policy was adopted by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on 15 December 2023 and came into force immediately. To foster a pragmatic, consistent and transparent approach to risk management at the Council of Europe, this version updates the provisions of the previous policy (adopted in 2016) by: placing risk management in a wider institutional perspective; ensuring complementarity with the other components of the Organisation's governance system (such as internal control, data protection, ethics, crisis management and business continuity); implementing recommendations from the Directorate of Internal Oversight and the Oversight Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe; and clarifying roles and responsibilities throughout the Organisation. By contributing to a greater maturity in managing risks that may affect the Council of Europe, the revised policy will also strengthen the Organisation's governance system.

- **Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere**

The Council of Europe's actions to be implemented in the Republic of Moldova in the areas of: (2.2) advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment acting for equality, diversity and respect (2.3) and anchoring democratic values in European societies (2.6) will contribute to the achievement of Goal 1, notably targets 1.1,<sup>161</sup> 1.2,<sup>162</sup> 1.3<sup>163</sup> and 1.5.<sup>164</sup>

- **Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**

The actions taken under the new Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2025-2028 in the areas of advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment (2.2), acting for equality, diversity and respect (2.3), building trust in public institutions (2.4) and anchoring democratic values in European societies (2.6) will contribute to the achievement of Goal 3, in particular targets 3.5<sup>165</sup> and 3.8.<sup>166</sup>

- **Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**

The Council of Europe's support to the Republic of Moldova in the areas of advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment (2.2), acting for equality, diversity and respect (2.3) and anchoring democratic values in European societies (2.6) will contribute to the achievement of Goal 4, more specifically targets 4.1,<sup>167</sup> 4.2,<sup>168</sup> 4.3,<sup>169</sup> 4.4,<sup>170</sup> 4.5,<sup>171</sup> 4.6,<sup>172</sup> 4.7,<sup>173</sup> 4.a,<sup>174</sup> 4.b<sup>175</sup> and 4.c.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>161</sup>. Goal 1, target 1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.

<sup>162</sup>. Goal 1, target 2: By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

<sup>163</sup>. Goal 1, target 3: Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

<sup>164</sup>. Goal 1, target 5: By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.

<sup>165</sup>. Goal 3, target 5: Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

<sup>166</sup>. Goal 3, target 8: Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

<sup>167</sup>. Goal 4, target 1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

<sup>168</sup>. Goal 4, target 2: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

<sup>169</sup>. Goal 4, target 3: By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

<sup>170</sup>. Goal 4, target 4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

<sup>171</sup>. Goal 4, target 5: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

<sup>172</sup>. Goal 4, target 6: By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

<sup>173</sup>. Goal 4, target 7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

<sup>174</sup>. Goal 4, target a: Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

<sup>175</sup>. Goal 4, target b: By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.

<sup>176</sup>. Goal 4, target c: By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.

- **Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

The actions taken under the new Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2025-2028 in the areas of securing human rights and fundamental freedoms (2.1), advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment (2.2), acting for equality, diversity and respect (2.3), building trust in public institutions (2.4), upholding the safety, security and integrity of society and individuals (2.5) and anchoring democratic values in European societies (2.6) will contribute to the achievement of Goal 5, notably targets 5.1,<sup>177</sup> 5.2,<sup>178</sup> 5.3,<sup>179</sup> 5.4,<sup>180</sup> 5.5,<sup>181</sup> 5.6,<sup>182</sup> 5.a,<sup>183</sup> 5.b<sup>184</sup> and 5.c.<sup>185</sup>

- **Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**

The Council of Europe will contribute to achieving Goal 8, particularly targets 8.5,<sup>186</sup> 8.6,<sup>187</sup> 8.7<sup>188</sup> and 8.8<sup>189</sup> by supporting the relevant stakeholders in the Republic of Moldova in the areas of securing human rights and fundamental freedoms (2.1), advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment (2.2), acting for equality, diversity and respect (2.3) and anchoring democratic values in European societies (2.6).

- **Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries**

The Council of Europe's actions to be implemented in the Republic of Moldova in the areas of securing human rights and fundamental freedoms (2.1), advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment (2.2), acting for equality, diversity and respect (2.3) and anchoring democratic values in European societies (2.6) will contribute to the achievement of Goal 10, more specifically targets 10.2,<sup>190</sup> 10.3<sup>191</sup> and 10.7.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>177</sup>. Goal 5, target 1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

<sup>178</sup>. Goal 5, target 2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

<sup>179</sup>. Goal 5, target 3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

<sup>180</sup>. Goal 5, target 4: Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

<sup>181</sup>. Goal 5, target 5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

<sup>182</sup>. Goal 5, target 6: Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

<sup>183</sup>. Goal 5, target a: Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

<sup>184</sup>. Goal 5, target b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

<sup>185</sup>. Goal 5, target c: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

<sup>186</sup>. Goal 8, target 5: By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

<sup>187</sup>. Goal 8, target 6: By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

<sup>188</sup>. Goal 8, target 7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

<sup>189</sup>. Goal 8, target 8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

<sup>190</sup>. Goal 10, target 2: By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

<sup>191</sup>. Goal 10, target 3: Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

<sup>192</sup>. Goal 10, target 7: Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

- **Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**

The actions taken under the new Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2025-2028 in the areas of advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment (2.2), acting for equality, diversity and respect (2.3), upholding the safety, security and integrity of society and individuals (2.5) and anchoring democratic values in European societies (2.6) will contribute to the achievement of Goal 11, notably targets 11.1,<sup>193</sup> 11.3,<sup>194</sup> 11.4,<sup>195</sup> 11.7<sup>196</sup> and 11.b.<sup>197</sup>

- **Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**

The Council of Europe will contribute to achieving Goal 13, particularly targets 13.1,<sup>198</sup> 13.2<sup>199</sup> and 13.3<sup>200</sup> by supporting the relevant stakeholders in the Republic of Moldova in the areas of securing human rights and fundamental freedoms (2.1), advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment (2.2) and anchoring democratic values in European societies (2.6).

- **Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss**

The Council of Europe's actions to be implemented in the Republic of Moldova in the area of advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment (2.2) will contribute to the achievement of Goal 15, more specifically targets 15.3,<sup>201</sup> 15.5<sup>202</sup> and 15.9.<sup>203</sup>

- **Goal 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**

The Council of Europe's support to the Republic of Moldova in the areas of securing human rights and fundamental freedoms (2.1), advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment (2.2), acting for equality, diversity and respect (2.3), building trust in public institutions (2.4), upholding the safety, security and integrity of society and individuals (2.5) and anchoring democratic values in European societies (2.6) will contribute to the achievement of Goal 16, notably targets 16.1,<sup>204</sup> 16.3,<sup>205</sup> 16.4,<sup>206</sup> 16.5,<sup>207</sup> 16.6,<sup>208</sup> 16.10,<sup>209</sup> 16.a<sup>210</sup> and 16.b.<sup>211</sup>

<sup>193</sup>. Goal 11, target 1: By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

<sup>194</sup>. Goal 11, target 3: By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.

<sup>195</sup>. Goal 11, target 4: Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

<sup>196</sup>. Goal 11, target 7: By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

<sup>197</sup>. Goal 11, target b: By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.

<sup>198</sup>. Goal 13, target 1: Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

<sup>199</sup>. Goal 13, target 2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

<sup>200</sup>. Goal 13, target 3: Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

<sup>201</sup>. Goal 15, target 3: By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.

<sup>202</sup>. Goal 15, target 5: Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species.

<sup>203</sup>. Goal 15, target 9: By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts.

<sup>204</sup>. Goal 16, target 1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

<sup>205</sup>. Goal 16, target 3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.

<sup>206</sup>. Goal 16, target 4: By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organised crime.

<sup>207</sup>. Goal 16, target 5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.

<sup>208</sup>. Goal 16, target 6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.

<sup>209</sup>. Goal 16, target 10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

<sup>210</sup>. Goal 16, target a: Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international co-operation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.

<sup>211</sup>. Goal 16, target b: Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

### 3.3 CO-ORDINATION

Co-ordination to ensure efficient use of resources and the relevance of the Council of Europe's actions is performed at different levels and in different forums, including the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The Council of Europe's activities are defined and implemented in such a way as to focus on areas where the Organisation has strong expertise and added value. Joint co-operation with the authorities in the Republic of Moldova will be developed on the basis of a thorough analysis of the objectives pursued by other international organisations and actors in the field, and of their activities undertaken and/or planned to achieve these objectives.

The European Council granted EU candidate status to the Republic of Moldova on 23 June 2022. In December 2023, the Council opened accession negotiations with the Republic of Moldova, commending its progress in meeting the objectives under its candidate status. To ensure the relevance of its actions, the Council of Europe works in close co-ordination with relevant international partners, notably the European Union (EU) and in particular the European Union Delegation to the Republic of Moldova. The present Action Plan will be implemented in the context of the National Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova's accession to the EU for 2024-2027, which was prepared in co-operation with numerous institutions and in active consultation with civil society and adopted by the Government of the Republic of Moldova in October 2023.

Co-ordination is also ensured with other international partners, including United Nations (UN) agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UN Women, as well as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the EU Partnership Mission.

Whenever appropriate, co-ordination platforms with other international organisations are set up and joint activities undertaken.

To ensure efficiency and avoid the overlapping of activities, the Council of Europe also co-ordinates its work with its member/observer States' development agencies and the embassies.

### 3.4 FUNDING

The overall financing needs of the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2025-2028 are estimated at €30 million. Funding amounting to €8 million (26,7 % of estimated needs) has been secured as per 10 October 2024.

Projects within the Action Plan are to be funded from multiple sources. Funding is to be provided from the Ordinary Budget of the Council of Europe, voluntary contributions from donor countries and from the European Union/Council of Europe joint programmes such as the Partnership for Good Governance.<sup>212</sup>

As a direct result of the [Reykjavik Declaration – United around our values](#), which recognises the importance of the Council of Europe's co-operation dimension, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe included for the first time in its Ordinary Budget 2024-2027 a contribution for the co-operation dimension. Providing a more stable and predictable source of funding for co-operation activities ensures a more effective and efficient implementation of Action Plans. Moreover, this approach ensures that co-operation projects can be designed, implemented and evaluated for their impact over the long term without interruptions. Notably in its first year, 2025, the Action Plan will benefit from a strong injection from this contribution to enable a timely and sustained start to its projects.

As a consequence of this contribution, reporting on this Action Plan, as for other Action Plans, will be enhanced as compared to the previous Action Plans through an annual written report on the progress of implementation.

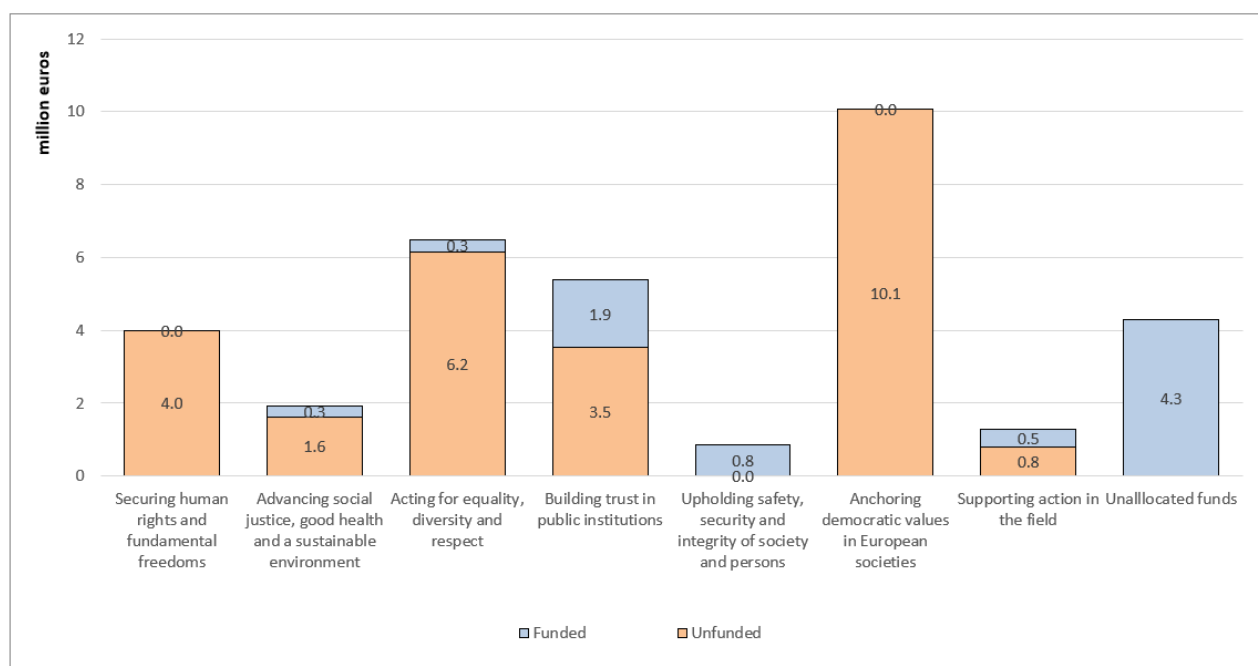
<sup>212</sup>. The Republic of Moldova now benefits from the third phase of the European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme Partnership for Good Governance for Eastern Partnership countries.

The co-ordination of the implementation of the Action Plan incurs general management costs amounting to not more than 7% of the Action Plan's direct costs.

In line with the resource mobilisation strategy of the Council of Europe, fundraising efforts under the co-ordination of the Directorate of Programme Co-ordination (DPC) are concentrated on the Action Plan as a whole. Action Plan-level funding, in particular, allows flexibility for allocating funds where they are most needed (such as when addressing emerging co-operation needs) and where they are most likely to contribute to the sustainability of key policy and institutional reforms. The Council of Europe also promotes longer-term framework co-operation agreements and multi-annual contracts with key partners and donors to facilitate strategic and effective partnerships and ensure predictable and flexible funding.

Continued financial support for the present Action Plan will allow the Organisation to build on and create activities that support the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights (the "Convention") and other legal instruments and Council of Europe standards. The Council of Europe increasingly seeks to deliver on agreed strategic priorities rather than on individual projects and activities.

The structure of the present Action Plan 2025-2028 is aligned with the structure of the Council of Europe Programme and Budget and its two biennial budget cycles in order to increase consistency, complementarity and co-ordination.



**Figure 2:** Estimated needs per pillar of the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2025-2028 (in millions of euros)

### 3.5 GOVERNANCE

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe assesses the overall results of the implementation of the Action Plan through its Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM).

The Council of Europe will provide regular updates on the progress and outcomes of the Action Plan. To this end, the Directorate of Programme Co-ordination (DPC) will submit annual, interim and final reports to the Committee of Ministers as follows:

- an oral report 12 and 36 months after the implementation start date of the Action Plan to present the state of advancement after its official launch;
- a written mid-term Progress Review Report, 24 months after the implementation start date of the Action Plan;



- a written final Progress Review Report after the end of the implementation of the Action Plan;
- annual written reports on the progress of the implementation of the Action Plan by 30 June each year.

In addition, information meetings with all interested permanent representations to the Council of Europe, the DPC Director and the Head of the Council of Europe Office in Chişinău may be organised as appropriate in close co-ordination with the authorities in the Republic of Moldova. These meetings will provide an opportunity for exchange and discussion on the progress of the implementation of the Action Plan on the one hand, and on the outline of its successor on the other.

On the part of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, the implementation of the Action Plan will be overseen by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The co-ordination of the Action Plan's implementation will be carried out in close consultation with line ministries and relevant bodies.

Progress made under the Action Plan will also be jointly assessed by the Council of Europe and the authorities in the Republic of Moldova. For this purpose, an Action Plan Steering Committee is to be established, composed of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other national stakeholders, including civil society, involved in the implementation of the Action Plan as well as of Council of Europe representatives.

This Steering Committee will assess the implementation of approved projects, discuss challenges and proposals for future co-operation and recommend, if appropriate, measures to improve the effectiveness of the Action Plan. Meetings will take place within 24 months of the start date of the implementation of the Action Plan, to assess the mid-term implementation, and before the end of the Action Plan, to assess the overall implementation.

In addition, the DPC will address annual Action Plan reports to those donors contributing to the funding at the level of the Action Plan, in line with reporting requirements.

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## APPENDIX I: LOGICAL FRAMEWORK TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE ACTION PLAN FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA 2025-2028

	Objective	End beneficiary / target group	Indicator	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	A more inclusive, just, democratic, and resilient society with enhanced legislative and institutional practices that will further bring the Republic of Moldova in line with European Standards on human rights, rule of law, and democracy	Right-holders in the Republic of Moldova, notably court users, journalists; youth and vulnerable groups, such as women, children, people with disabilities, Roma minority, LGBTI persons, unemployed, migrants, and refugees; prisoners; offenders under probation, patients in psychiatric institutions, residents of supported municipalities	Level of treatment and protection of rights-holders, assessed against specific criteria: - Level of rights-holders' access to the information on their rights - Level of rights-holders' access to specific services and supports - Level of equal treatment and non-discrimination of the right-holders - Level of participation of the rights-holders in the processes that affect the enjoyment of the rights	ECtHR case law Council of Europe bodies monitoring/advisory reports EC annual reports Inception reports Project reports	Not applicable
			Level of access to justice for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups assessed against the following criteria a) affordable b) physical c) social	Project level report on assessment of progress and expert surveys	
			Level of public confidence in the protection of human rights and freedoms, the rule of law, democratic governance and public administration at all levels	Public opinion surveys	
			Level of civic and youth engagement in the local communities against the following criteria: - Willingness to act for Human-rights - Willingness to act for social action - Willingness to participate more in local governance	Project level report on assessment of progress, expert surveys and focus groups	
			Level of advancement in the EU accession process, notably in fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria relating to the stability of institutions guaranteeing human rights, democracy, the rule of law and respect for and protection of minorities	Council of Europe bodies monitoring/advisory reports National authorities and EC annual reports	

### 2.1 Securing human rights and fundamental freedoms

2.1 Securing human rights and fundamental freedoms					
Objective		Target group	Indicator	Sources of data	Assumptions
Results	Ensuring consistent application of the Convention and other related Council of Europe standards and enhancing role of national human rights institutions and CSOs in this application	Public officials, members of parliament, Office of People's Advocate, the Prosecutor's Office, and the Office of Government's Agent, judicial, prosecutorial and law enforcement authorities, legal professionals and CSOs	Number of leading cases closed by the Committee of Ministers	Committee of Ministers' Annual Reports on supervision of the execution of the European Court's judgments and decisions	The authorities of the Republic of Moldova remain committed to ensuring the execution of the European Court's judgments with respect to the Republic of Moldova as well as improving legislation, policies and practices to better implement the European Convention on Human Rights at national level for the benefit of the right-holders
			Level of execution of judgments of the European Court assessed against the following criteria a) number of judgements executed; b) average time for taking execution measures; c) systematic and/or structural changes resulting from issues identified by European Court; d) number of new cases communicated by the European Court	HUDOC and HUDOC-Exec databases, Committee of Ministers' Annual Reports on supervision of the execution of the European Court's judgments and decisions	
			Level of co-ordination among relevant agencies for the execution of judgments of the European Court at the national level assessed against a) number of co-ordination meetings; b) measures taken by the execution stakeholders as a result of co-ordination activities	Action plans/ reports of the Government agent to the Committee of Ministers, reports of specialised CSOs, HUDOC-Exec database and the Committee of Ministers' Annual Reports on supervision of the execution of the European Court's judgments and decisions	

		Level of co-operation between the Office of the Government Agent and the Committee of Ministers assessed against a) number of action reports submitted; b) number of action plans submitted; c) number of co-ordination meetings conducted with execution stakeholders and CSOs	HUDOC-Exec database, the Committee of Ministers' Annual Reports on supervision of the execution of the European Court's judgments and decisions, project level reports	
	Improving legislation, policies, and knowledge to enable implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights at national level	Number of legal acts and policy documents adopted that support the relevant agencies' execution of judgments of the European Court at the national level.	HUDOC-Exec database, the Committee of Ministers' Annual Reports on supervision of the execution of the European Court's judgments and decisions	
		Level of knowledge of the European Court's case-law by legal professionals assessed against the following criteria a) perceptions about the role of European Convention on Human Rights and case law of the European Court of Human Rights in national context; b) accessibility and quality of information and knowledge on the ECHR practices; c) application of the ECHR practice in work and challenges associated with it	Project level reports on assessment of level of knowledge among legal professionals	
<b>Outputs</b>	Providing legal assistance, guidelines, recommendations, methodologies, expert advice, and technical support for human rights institutions about strategies and protection mechanisms in line with Council of Europe standards and good practices	Number of recommendations provided	Project level activity reports	Willingness of the relevant authorities to receive and use increased knowledge and capacity in practice
		Number of entities supported	Project level activity reports	
		Number of public policies/acts drafted and/or with drafted amendments in consultation with national partners and stakeholders	Project level activity reports	
		Number of users of the Council of Europe HELP Platform	Project level activity reports	
		Number of individuals from institutions and other actors involved	Project level activity reports	
		Number of individuals trained	Project level activity reports	

2.2 Advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment					
Objective		Target group	Indicator	Sources of data	Assumptions
Results	Enhancing protection of human rights related to social justice, good health, and a sustainable environment in the biomedical and health fields	National stakeholders and healthcare professionals, business entities and CSOs	Number of institutions that adopt and implement policies in the fields of biomedicine and health that are based on Council of Europe standards	Official statistics, monitoring reports, project level reports on adherence to Council of Europe standards by the healthcare professionals in everyday practice	The authorities of the Republic of Moldova remain committed to improving legislation, policies and practices for the benefit of the right-holders
			Number of regulatory actions taken against professionals for non-compliance with Council of Europe standards		
			Number of data breaches or incidents reported that involve personal health information		
			Number of formal complaints related to environmental issues (e.g., pollution, deforestation, land degradation) that have been resolved in favour of affected communities or individuals		
	Level of knowledge of the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention) and its additional protocols among the national stakeholders assessed against the following criteria: a) awareness of the Oviedo Convention; b) awareness of the respective case law; c) knowledge of standards of the Convention		Project level report on assessment of level of knowledge on Oviedo Convention among national partners and stakeholders		
	Enhancing national legislation, policies, and knowledge on advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment and protecting related human rights	Level of knowledge of the European Social Charter system among the national stakeholders assessed against a) awareness of the European Social Charter (ESC) system (existence and function of the document); b) awareness on the scope covered by the ESC; c) knowledge of respective procedures among stakeholders (working on shadow reports); d) awareness on the European Committee on Social Rights' case law	Project level report on assessment of level of knowledge on ESC among national partners and national partners and stakeholders		

The authorities of the Republic of Moldova remain committed to improving legislation, policies and practices for the benefit of the right-holders

			Level of knowledge of content and implications of the right to a healthy and sustainable environment among the national partners and stakeholders assessed against a) awareness of <a href="#">the Council of Europe's Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention)</a> and its standards; b) awareness of the <a href="#">Council of Europe Landscape Convention</a> and its standards, c) awareness on the <a href="#">EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement</a> , its approach and implementation procedures	Project level report on assessment of level of knowledge on European standards for human rights and sustainable environment among national partners and stakeholders	
Outputs	Providing legal assistance, policy advice, thematic training and methodological support to government officials, health care professionals, business entities and CSOs		Number of recommendations provided	Project level activity reports	Willingness of the relevant national partners and stakeholders, including the business entities and civil society, to receive and use expert assistance and advice
			Number of entities supported	Project level activity reports	
			Number of public policies/acts drafted and/or with drafted amendments in consultation with national partners and stakeholders	Project level activity reports	
			Number of individuals from institutions and other actors involved	Project level activity reports	
			Number of individuals trained	Project level activity reports	



### 2.3 Acting for equality, diversity and respect

Objective		Target group	Indicator	Sources of data	Assumptions
Results	Strengthening fight against violence against women and domestic violence, discrimination, hatred, racism, and intolerance, and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, including women, children, people with disabilities, Roma minority, LGBTI persons, and migrants	National authorities, legal professionals, law enforcement, including equality bodies and judiciary; non-state actors, such as CSOs and youth; members of the Parliament, human rights defenders, media and journalists	Number of prosecutions related to bias motivated offences, including those targeting vulnerable groups and minorities (disaggregated by types of vulnerable and minority groups), (disaggregated by cases reported, sent to courts and judgments issued)	Official statistics, reports of CSOs, ECRI reports	The authorities of the Republic of Moldova remain committed to improving legislation, policies and practices including their communication with victims of violence, discrimination, hate speech, and hate crime and to protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, including women, children, people with disabilities, Roma minority, LGBTI persons, and migrants
			Level of application by the legal professionals of gender equality standards assessed against a) consideration of specific needs of victims and survivors of VAW and DV (time spent on understanding context, assessing risks and importance given to this aspect by the legal professional); b) usage of gender-sensitive approach (e.g. preventing secondary victimisation)	Project level report on assessment of application of the gender equality standards by the legal professionals	
			Level of integration of gender-sensitive content in media content assessed against the following criteria a) use of gender-neutral terms b) representation of all genders, b) avoidance of stereotypes c) positive and respectful language	Project level report on assessment of gender-sensitivity in the media content	

	Improving national legislation, policies, and knowledge in the field of gender equality, anti-discrimination and the protection of rights of vulnerable groups, including women, children, people with disabilities, Roma minority, LGBTI persons, and migrants		Level of alignment of the legal and policy framework with the Council of Europe standards assessed against the following criteria a) Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) recommendations and the provisions of the Istanbul Convention; b) Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA); c) recommendations of Council of Europe monitoring bodies, such as ECRI	Project level report on assessment of alignment of the legal and policy framework, GREVIO reports, GRETA reports, ECRI reports	
			Level of knowledge on gender equality standards among of the professionals assessed against the following criteria: a) recognition of gender stereotypes; b) perception of gender roles; c) impact of stereotypes on behaviour; d) perception of gender equality; e) exposure to gender stereotypes; f) attitudes towards challenging stereotypes	Project level report on assessment of knowledge on gender equality standards among the professionals	
Outputs	Providing legal assistance, policy advice, training, expert assessment, recommendations, and technical expertise provided to the equality bodies, government officials, judiciary, education professionals, social and community workers, CSOs, media, and young people		Number of recommendations provided	Project level activity reports	National authorities, judiciary and law enforcement bodies are open to sensitive trauma-informed approach and response action
			Number of entities supported	Project level activity reports	
			Number of public policies/acts drafted and/or with drafted amendments in consultation with national partners and stakeholders	Project level activity reports	
			Number of individuals from institutions and other actors involved	Project level activity reports	
			Number of individuals trained	Project level activity reports	

### 2.4 Building trust in public institutions

2.4 Building trust in public institutions				
Objective	Target group	Indicator	Sources of data	Assumptions
Result Implementing the Justice Sector Reform Strategy in line with the Council of Europe standards in particular for the criminal justice	Legal professionals, representatives of law enforcement agencies, judges, prosecutors, staff of court secretariats, mediators, prison and probation management and respective operational staff, private sector reporting entities, members of the Parliament, political parties, CSOs.	Level of implementation of the Justice Sector Reform Strategy against the following criteria assessed against a) curriculum implemented in line with European standards on the independence, impartiality, and accountability of the judiciary; b) number of judicial officials effectively applying new standards and practices; c) number of new and improved internal procedures in line with European standards and best practices; d) number of references to European standards and practices in the national courts' ruling over time; e) level of improvement of database tools to facilitate accessibility to the users	Ministry of Justice report on progress on Justice Sector Reform Strategy, project level report on assessment of implementation of Justice Sector Reform Strategy.	Judiciary, law enforcement and prosecution are committed to act in a transparent and accountable manner and willing to apply the European standards on independence, impartiality, and accountability in their daily work
		Number of legal acts and policy documents /administrative acts/measures implemented with the objective of increasing independence and impartiality, efficiency, quality, and/or accountability of the national justice system	Ministry of Justice reports on progress on Justice Sector Reform Strategy, project level reports on assessment of implementation of Justice Sector Reform Strategy	
		% of justice sector-related recommendations (advice) provided included in final policies, laws and regulatory frameworks	Project level report on assessment of implementation of Justice Sector Reform Strategy	
		Level of knowledge on Justice Sector	Ministry of Justice report on progress on	

		Reform Strategy among national partners and stakeholders, assessed against a) curriculum developed in line with European standards on the independence, impartiality, and accountability of the judiciary; b) number of judicial officials trained on how to effectively apply new standards and practices; c) number of new and improved internal procedures in line with European standards and best practices; d) number of references to European standards and practices in the national courts' ruling over time; e) level of improvement of database tools to facilitate accessibility to the users	Justice Sector Reform Strategy, project level report on assessment of implementation of Justice Sector Reform Strategy.
Improving independence, efficiency, and quality of the judiciary, system of execution of sentences, and modernised court, prison, probation, closed institutions management in line with European standards		Level of application by the courts and prosecutorial bodies' management and judicial data of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) methodologies and tools assessed against: a) evaluation of the usage of judicial performance indicators; b) analysis of data collection, reporting, and decision-making methods applied by the courts and justice sector stakeholders; c) usage of a backlog reduction mechanism by the courts; d) number of implemented recommendations on improving the communication, the management of human resources by the courts and prosecutorial offices; e) progress in the recourse to mediation, including the effect on the workload of courts	Court statistics, reports on the implementation of justice sector reforms/strategies, reports by national authorities to the Council of Europe and the European Union (in the framework of accession negotiations), Council of Europe and EU reports assessing the progress in the justice sector, project level report on assessment of application of CEPEJ methodologies and tools
Consolidating alternative dispute resolution, with capacitated mediators and increased		Number disputes resolved with support of mediators	Official statistics

	recourse to mediation			
	Using a better criminal sentencing framework, including more effective community sanctions		Number of sentences involving appropriate community sanctions	Court statistics
	Strengthening skills and knowledge of criminal justice actors to effectively apply fundamental human rights safeguards and rehabilitative approaches in the context of criminal proceedings and enforcement of sentences	Level of knowledge on fundamental safeguards in the context of criminal proceedings among the criminal justice actors assessed against a) understanding of Human Rights standards in all criminal justice institutions including prisons and probation; b) principles of fair trial; c) safeguards against torture and ill-treatment, inter-prisoner violence and application of dynamic security in prisons; d) safeguards during police custody detention on remand and house arrest, as well as alternatives to detention on remand; e) standards of protection of vulnerable groups; f) ethical standards and g) alternatives to detention		Official statistics, Annual reports of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, project level report on assessment of knowledge on fundamental safeguards of criminal proceedings among the criminal justice actors
		Number of inmates, offenders under probation, civil and forensic patients engaged in probation, closed institutions in educational, therapeutic, reintegration and psychosocial rehabilitation programmes in supported entities		Official statistics, annual reports of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health

Strengthening rehabilitative approach for offenders, including more effective community sanctions to ensuring reintegration in detention and closed environments.	Public officials, Prison and probation staff, medical and non-medical staff in prisons and psychiatric institutions	Number of entities piloting tools regarding safety, security and human rights safeguards in prisons and closed institutions in the Republic of Moldova in line with Council of Europe standards	Project level reports on assessment of application of tools regarding safety, security and human rights by independent / external consultants	Adherence of partner institutions to agreed priorities, implementation methodology, and co-operation modalities. Allocation and management of necessary funding.
		Number of units with upgraded material conditions in prisons' medical service and prison hospital; psychosocial rehabilitation spaces in psychiatric institutions, and pilot probation Day Centres	Annual reports of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, reports of the local authorities and Community Mental Health services	
		Number of joint initiatives between justice and health authorities / stakeholders	Annual reports of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, reports of the local authorities and Community Mental Health services	
		Percentage of medical and non-medical staff of prisons and psychiatric institutions gaining qualification in professional development initiatives	Annual reports of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, reports of the local authorities and Community Mental Health services	



			Level of integration of the Council of Europe standards in legal and regulatory framework on managing prisons assessed against the following criteria a) new/upgraded rules, standard operating procedures, and guidelines on the individualised approach to the management and treatment of offenders in prison and probation; b) psychosocial rehabilitation programmes, and c) information on safeguards during treatment for civil and forensic patients in psychiatric institutions	Project level report on assessment of alignment of the legal and regulatory framework on managing prisons with Council of Europe standards	
			Project level activity reports	Members of the judiciary and prosecution, representatives of law enforcement are willing to participate in capacity building activities and apply knowledge gained in their daily work	
Outputs	Providing expertise, methodological and technical support targeting the regulatory provisions, tools, rules, protocols and standard operating procedures; material conditions, performance and quality standards in probation, prisons and psychiatric institutions; physical and mental health treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for offenders with increased	Number of recommendations provided	Project level activity reports	Members of the judiciary and prosecution, representatives of law enforcement are willing to participate in capacity building activities and apply	
		Number of entities supported	Project level activity reports		
		Number of public policies/acts drafted and/or with drafted amendments in consultation with national partners and stakeholders	Project level activity reports		

	vulnerability in prison, probation, and civil and forensic patients in psychiatric institutions; staff capacity to apply new standards and methods of work; and about inter-institutional co-operation among the criminal justice actors in the Republic of Moldova.	Number of individuals from institutions and other actors involved	Project level activity reports	knowledge gained in their daily work
		Number of individuals trained		

2.5 Upholding safety, security and integrity of society and persons					
Objective		Target group	Indicator	Sources of data	Assumptions
Results	Strengthening fight against corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing, as well as cybercrime	Representatives of judicial and law enforcement entities, anti-corruption bodies, AML/CFT supervisory and reporting entities, members of the Parliament, CSOs	Level of effectiveness of law enforcement authorities to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate corruption, money laundering, financing of terrorism, and cybercrime cases using operational procedures and tools assessed against the following criteria a) financial investigations; b) interagency co-operation and information sharing; c) asset tracing, recovery and management	MONEYVAL reports, GRECO reports, CPT reports, recommendations of the Venice Commission, OECD reports, EU reports, official statistics, Project level report on assessment of inter-agency co-operation, Project level report on assessment of alignment of legislative and institutional frameworks	The authorities of the Republic of Moldova are committed to improving legislation, policies and practices for the benefit of the protection of the victims
	Reinforcing interagency co-operation on fight against corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing, as well as cybercrime		Level of inter-agency co-operation on corruption, money laundering, financial terrorism, and cybercrime cases assessed against the following criteria a) Specialised systems and databases; b) International co-operation; c) co-operation cases; d) Recovery of assets		
	Improving national legislation, regulatory framework and policies in the area of fighting corruption, money laundering, terrorism financing, and cybercrime in line with the European standards		Level of alignment of the legislative and institutional frameworks and practices to fight corruption, money laundering (ML), terrorist financing (TF) and proliferation financing (PF) and cybercrime with the European and international standards assessed against a) number of legislative changes aimed at aligning with FATF recommendations and the EU anti-money laundering directives; b) presence of national and sectoral ML/TF/ risk assessments; c) number of tools adopted or implemented to manage the identified risks that the country is exposed to; d) number of MONEYVAL and GRECO recommendations adopted or implemented by respective authorities		

	Enhancing knowledge on European and international standards on preventing and combating corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing, as well as cybercrime among national partners and stakeholders		Level of knowledge on European and international standards on preventing and combating corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing, as well as cybercrime among the representatives of judicial and law enforcement authorities assessed against the following criteria a) Specialised systems and databases; b) International co-operation; c) Co-operation cases; d) Recovery of assets	Project level report on assessment of knowledge on European and international standards on preventing and combating corruption, money laundering, terrorist financing and cybercrime among judicial and law enforcement authorities	
	Enhancing knowledge and capacity on the Council of Europe's standards for ethical, inclusive, fair, and safe sport among the national partners and stakeholders	Ministry of Youth and Sport, sport associations	Level of alignment of the legislation and policy on ethical, inclusive, fair, and safe sport with the Council of Europe's standards	Council of Europe's website, Project level report on assessment of alignment of legislation and policy with Council of Europe standards	
			Level of knowledge on the Council of Europe's standards for ethical, inclusive, fair, and safe sport among the national partners and stakeholders (disaggregated by target groups)	Project level report on assessment of knowledge on the Council of Europe standards for ethical, inclusive, fair, and safe sport among the national partners and stakeholders	
	Ensuring better data protection based on the Council of Europe's standards for	Data Protection Authority	Level of inter-agency co-operation on data protection on the Council of Europe's standards for personal data protection among national partners and stakeholders (disaggregated by target groups)	Project level report on assessment of inter-agency co-operation on data protection	Willingness of the national authorities to ratify Protocol amending the Convention for the Protection of

	personal data protection among national partners and stakeholders		Level of alignment of the personal data protection policies at national level with the Council of Europe's Convention	Project level report on assessment of alignment of the personal data protection policies with Council of Europe standards	Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (CETS No. 223)
			Level of knowledge on the Council of Europe's standards for personal data protection among national partners and stakeholders (disaggregated by target groups)	Project level report on assessment of knowledge on the Council of Europe standards for personal data protection	
Outputs	Reviewing the legislative, regulatory and institutional frameworks provided; Legal assistance, recommendations, training, and technical expertise provided to the representatives of law enforcement entities, anti-corruption bodies, AML/CFT supervisory and reporting entities, the representatives of Data Protection Authority and other relevant state entities		Number of recommendations provided	Project level activity reports	Readiness to align legislation with European standards and practices
			Number of entities supported	Project level activity reports	
			Number of public policies/acts drafted and/or with drafted amendments in consultation with national partners and stakeholders	Project level activity reports	
			Number of individuals from institutions and other actors involved	Project level activity reports	
			Number of individuals trained	Project level activity reports	

## 2.6 Anchoring democratic values in European societies

Objective		Target group	Indicator	Sources of data	Assumptions
Results	Ensuring effective safety of journalists, media regulation and access to information with the Council of Europe's standards	State Chancellery, Audiovisual Council, Parliamentary Committee on mass media, Centre for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation (StratCom) under the President's Office, CSOs, Journalists, representatives of media outlets	Level of implementation of Council of Europe standards against the following criteria a) the safety of journalists; b) media regulation; c) countering disinformation and d) access to information with the Council of Europe standards such as the Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and the report on the state of freedom of expression in the Council of Europe member States	Reports of the Council of Europe monitoring and advisory bodies	The authorities of the Republic of Moldova remain committed to improving legislation, policies, and practices
			Level of integration in legal and policy instruments of Council of Europe standards against the following criteria a) the safety of journalists; b) media regulation; c) countering disinformation and d) access to information with the Council of Europe standards such as the Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and the report on the state of freedom of expression in the Council of Europe member States	Project level report on assessment of alignment of the legal and policy instruments on safety of journalists, media regulation and access to information with Council of Europe standards	
	Enhancing knowledge of the public service broadcaster and media outlets for	Public service broadcaster and media outlets	Level of knowledge among the public service broadcaster and media outlet staff assessed against following criteria: a) safety standards; b) professional journalistic standards; c) content diversification strategies	Project level report on assessment of knowledge on safety standards, professional journalistic standards and content diversification among media representatives	



	Strengthening co-operation and multilevel dialogue between central and local authorities on aligning the democratic procedures with European Standards	Parliament, State Chancellery, public officials, civil servants, local elected representatives, national association of local authorities, civil society organisations, National Youth Agency under the Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Youth and Sports, National Youth Council of the Republic of Moldova, youth organisations, youth centres.	Number of multi-level consultations including national partners and stakeholders held between local and central authorities	Project level reports on assessment of collaboration among local and central authorities	Permanent co-operation of central, regional and local authorities to strengthen and develop local self-governments is in place
	Enhancing openness, transparency, and participatory level of governance anchored on human-rights based approaches at local level		Number of focused initiatives led by the supported entities at national and local level (of which: human-rights approach, youth participation, vulnerable groups participation, intercultural)	Project level reports on assessment local government initiatives	
	Enhancing cultural heritage policies at national level, in line with the Council of Europe's Cultural Heritage conventions and the European Strategy for Cultural Heritage in the 21st century		Number of focused initiatives led by the supported entities about Cultural Heritage (of which: green deal, digital agenda, intergenerational, intercultural)	Project level reports on assessment local government initiatives	
	Improving legislation, mechanisms, and tools for the democratic participation of citizens, including young people and vulnerable groups, in decision-making processes		Level of integration in the legal and policy framework of Council of Europe Standards about public's engagement assessed against the following criteria: a) human-rights approach; b) local participation; c) youth participation; d) vulnerable groups participation; e) cultural heritage; f) intercultural	Project level report on assessment of alignment of legal and policy framework on public's engagement with Council of Europe Standards	

	Enhancing the capacity of national authorities and education professionals to effectively apply human rights education principles into practice	Ministry of Education and Research, Higher education institutions, Primary and secondary schools, CSOs, curriculum developers, History teachers and academics, educators (in formal and non-formal contexts), academics, and public authorities	Level of use in the education curriculum and textbooks of the standards and the guidance by the education professionals against the following criteria: a) ethics and democracy; b) plurilingual; c) intercultural; d) culture of non-discrimination	Project level report on assessment of use of the human rights education principles in the education curriculum and textbooks	Access of young people to quality education for democratic citizenship, culture and creativity is improved and promoted
			Number of focused initiatives led by the supported entities (of which: democratic citizenship, democratic governance of schools, human rights-based approach, digital transformation)	Project level report on assessment of initiatives by the supported entities	
			Level of alignment of the national policies and methodological frameworks with the European standards to ensure the provision of quality education at all levels that empower learners as active and responsible citizens against the following criteria: a) ethics and democracy; b) plurilingual; c) intercultural; d) culture of non-discrimination	Project level report on assessment of alignment of national policies and methodological frameworks for quality education with European standards	
	Strengthening the competences of relevant stakeholders to advance education for democratic citizenship and democratic governance of schools, including through a human rights-based digital transformation		Number of qualified education professionals in the field of inclusive quality education	Project level report on assessment of knowledge on democratic citizenship and democratic governance among education professionals	

	Increasing knowledge of the Ministry of Education and Research to develop and implement regulations supporting the development of cultural and creative industries		Level of knowledge on regulations for cultural and creative industries among the staff of the Ministry of Education and Research assessed through a) knowledge on the regulations and b) application of the standards for cultural and creative industries among the staff of the Ministry of Education and Research.	Project level report on assessment of knowledge on regulations for cultural and creative industries among the staff of the Ministry of Education and Research	
	Reinforcing the participation of the Republic of Moldova to the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (OHTE) quality history education in alignment with Council of Europe standards.		Level of engagement in the OHTE activities	OHTE general and thematic reports, OHTE meeting reports	Full access and participation of the Republic of Moldova to the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (OHTE)
	Fostering open government and advancing innovative and human rights-based democratic approaches to policymaking and residents' engagement	Local and central authorities staff, youth organisations, women and underrepresented groups, CSOs	Number of initiatives by relevant stakeholders aimed at advancing human rights and open government	Project level report on assessment of usage of open governance and human rights-based democratic approaches by local and central authorities	Civil society, including the youth, is active and willing to be actively involved in decision-making processes

	Improving policies and practices aimed at removing barriers to civic democratic participation at all levels		Number of initiatives by relevant stakeholders aimed at promoting civic democratic participation	Project level report on assessment of promoting civic democratic participation by local and central authorities	
	Enhancing knowledge of public authorities at central and local levels about multilevel dialogue, and with the public, including CSOs, youth and vulnerable groups		Level of knowledge of public officials and civil servants, assessed against knowledge of Council of Europe standards and best practices for good democratic governance, civic and youth participation	Project level report by a consultant on assessment of level of knowledge and capacity on application of European standards	
Outputs	Providing legal assistance, policy advice, co-operation mechanisms, training, technical expertise, as well as necessary hardware and software equipment provided to national, regional, and local authorities, civil society organisations, media, education institutions, and youth organisations		Number of recommendations provided	Project level activity reports	Relevant authorities, officials and civil society representatives are committed to acquiring and applying new knowledge and skills
			Number of entities supported	Project level activity reports	
			Number of public policies/acts drafted and/or with drafted amendments in consultation with national partners and stakeholders	Project level activity reports	
			Number of individuals from institutions and other actors involved	Project level activity reports	
			Number of individuals trained	Project level activity reports	

## APPENDIX II: RISK REGISTER

### Context

The Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine has dramatically changed the Republic of Moldova's geopolitical environment and poses significant challenges to the country's stability and security. The Republic of Moldova is the second most affected country by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and a hybrid front in it. The country continues to request international support and provide assistance to over 113 000 refugees from Ukraine – more per capita than any other country. The number of these registered for temporary protection is rising steadily.

Russia's ongoing war of aggression in Ukraine and the resulting large influx of refugees from Ukraine have also contributed to the growing economic and social pressures on the country. The worsening socio-economic situation, exacerbated by high energy prices and high inflation, risks undermining the popularity of the national pro-reform government and emboldening the political opposition.

In December 2023, the European Union decided that the Republic of Moldova could start accession negotiations to join the EU. On 25 June 2024, the European Union held the first Intergovernmental Conference at ministerial level and opened accession negotiations with the Republic of Moldova. The country's reform agenda is largely based on accession agreements with the European Union.

Since August 2019, parliamentary elections have been based on a proportional representation system. Local elections were held in October 2023. Their first round was dominated by excessive Russian interference, through illegal financing and propaganda funded by exiled oligarchs. Two days before the elections, the Republic of Moldova banned candidates from the Chance party – *de facto* successor to the outlawed Sor party – from taking part. This came a few days after the Republic of Moldova suspended media outlets for spreading disinformation. Presidential elections and a referendum on EU accession will be held on 20 October 2024. The next parliamentary elections are scheduled for 2025.

The deteriorating geopolitical context has raised new concerns about the risks to the country's stability in terms of the Transnistrian conflict, which has remained unresolved since 1992 and challenges the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. While the "5+2" format has been suspended since February 2022, exchanges continue in functional 1+1 settings (including in related working groups aimed at strengthening confidence-building measures between the two banks of the Nistru) as well as within the Joint Control Commission, enabling to maintain peace and stability, overcoming incident-related crisis, and resolving urgent issues.

The Action Plan will be implemented in a challenging environment. It has been prepared with an awareness of the existing and future challenges in the Republic of Moldova and an understanding that these might change abruptly. The main risks and proposed mitigation strategies are outlined in the Risk Assessment Matrix below.

The Action Plan takes full consideration of the volatile context and offers a level of flexibility to respond to emerging needs. The Council of Europe understands the need to adapt the priorities of the Action Plan to changing conditions and to leverage available resources in order to ensure successful implementation of the Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova.

Risks and mitigation strategies will be continuously evaluated, co-ordinated and discussed internally in the Council of Europe and with national authorities. Should the implementation of activities under the Action Plan be prevented or slow down for any reason, the Directorate of Programme Co-ordination, in close communication with its Office in Chişinău, will communicate to all entities of the Council of Europe, as well as national partners and stakeholders in the Republic of Moldova, about the reasons and potential impact and jointly identify ways forward.

Risk description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation actions
<b>Political and governance risks</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine continues.</b></li> </ul> <p>The consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine may have a negative impact on the ability of the relevant actors and the availability of resources (human, technical, financial) to implement reform processes in the country and on the Council of Europe's planned activities under the Action Plan.</p>	High	Medium	<p>The situation will be closely monitored by the Council of Europe to ensure the continuation of activities in the field.</p> <p>The Council of Europe Office in Chişinău will remain in close contact with the national authorities and will take effective and efficient measures for the implementation of the Action Plan.</p> <p>If the situation requires, the Council of Europe will put in place adaptability measures that will enable it to rapidly adapt the Action Plan's strategic priorities and objectives to meet changing needs.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine spills over into the Republic of Moldova.</b></li> </ul> <p>This could affect the Council of Europe's ability to implement the Action Plan (at least temporarily) and lead to a significant increase in needs and, consequently, funding.</p>	Low	High	<p>The Council of Europe will continue to closely monitor the situation and co-ordinate with partners in the country. Mitigation measures will be identified, and their implementation will be discussed and agreed with the national authorities.</p> <p>The security and resilience of the Council of Europe Office in Chişinău will be strengthened.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A continued influx of refugees may further strain public services and infrastructure and dilute the government's reform focus.</b></li> </ul> <p>This could lead to introducing additional activities/components under the Action Plan and an increase in the relevant budget costs.</p>	Low	Medium	<p>Implementation modalities will be continuously revised and adapted in light of the country's situation.</p> <p>Project budgets have been revised to cover additional costs for insurance premiums related to in-person activities and travel.</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>A shift in the priorities of the Republic of Moldova's Government and the parliament may lead to diminished national support for reform.</b></li></ul> <p>This could put on hold planned activities and lead to the revision of the Action Plan's priorities and the Council of Europe's support to the country overall.</p>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	<p>Continue extending visible political support to the Republic of Moldova through Council of Europe-specific channels (the Organisation's leadership, political bodies), in addition to relevant financial, technical and expert support. Close interaction with the European Union and other international partners.</p> <p>Continue close communication and co-ordination with a broad spectrum of national and international partners, notably the European Union, on the Council of Europe's support for the Republic of Moldova's process of acceding to the European Union.</p> <p>Promote dialogue between authorities and civil society on the application of Council of Europe standards.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of sufficient co-operation between national and local levels or difficulties in sharing information with other stakeholders and partners at national and local levels.</b></li> </ul> <p>This could lead to delays in the implementation of projects.</p>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<p>Facilitate interagency dialogue among key stakeholders, focus on seeking accessible and practically oriented remedies for the most vulnerable groups of war-affected people, include civil society in the process of developing the national legal framework and court practices through donor-government co-ordination groups, platforms for dialogue and interagency thematic working groups.</p> <p>Enhance the capacities for advocacy of local authorities and their national associations in protecting the interests of local self-government.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increased polarisation of society.</b></li> </ul> <p>This could lead to an unsupportive environment vis-à-vis reforms and a mixed perception among citizens of the Republic of Moldova and civil society organisations about the Council of Europe's role and mandate.</p>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<p>Raise awareness among target groups to sensitise them as to the importance of applying the standards of the Organisation.</p> <p>Focus on the protection of rights of vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Facilitate contact and co-operation between supporters of reforms within different branches of the authorities and within civil society and promote dialogue between the authorities and civil society at all levels of governance on the application of Council of Europe standards.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Change in the priorities of donors.</b></li> </ul> <p>This could lead to reduced voluntary contributions for the Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova.</p>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<p>Maintain regular dialogue and communication with donors on the priorities, challenges and results of the implementation of the Action Plan.</p>
<b>Project/programme delivery-related risks</b>			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Financial constraints on the implementation of the Action Plan.</b></li> </ul> <p>This could result in the discontinuation of co-operation in a number of fields and loss of momentum, affecting the pace of implementation and the perceived relevance of the Council of Europe.</p>	Medium	Medium	<p>Ensure effective resource mobilisation efforts in co-ordination with headquarters and the Council of Europe Office in Chişinău.</p> <p>Maintain maximum communication channels with all existing donors and explore new funding sources. Organise dedicated donor events.</p> <p>Devise a revised resource allocation strategy taking into account the potential for synergies and overall effectiveness.</p> <p>Continue to address feedback from partners and donors to improve project design, implementation, results-based monitoring and reporting practices, so as to attract and retain donors.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of co-ordination with national and international partners.</b></li> </ul> <p>This could lead to overlaps, missed synergies, wasted resources and reputational issues.</p>	Medium	Low	<p>Strengthen co-ordination efforts at national level, including through donor-government working groups, thematic working groups, the Action Plan and project-level Steering Committee meetings, to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication or mixed messages.</p> <p>Maintain regular co-ordination with the European Union and other international organisations at a more technical level, through various donor co-ordination groups and at bilateral level, to ensure that the Council of Europe's work is implemented in line with Moldova's EU accession agenda.</p> <p>Use available Council of Europe discussion forums to promote co-ordination and ensure the relevance of support.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate communication between stakeholders on plans and co-ordinated implementation, as appropriate.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High turnover, loss of productivity and motivation, and deterioration in the well-being of the local staff.</b></li> </ul> <p>This could lead to a decrease in productivity and in the capacity to implement the Action Plan.</p>	Medium	High	<p>The DPC, in co-ordination with the relevant units of the organisation, will ensure that regular thematic training (PMM, results-based reporting, ethics, procurement, security, etc.) is provided to local staff in order to improve their knowledge and practical skills and to enhance their professional growth and motivation.</p> <p>Regular staff meetings/capacity-building events will be organised to motivate staff and strengthen team spirit.</p> <p>Finally, special attention will be paid to the health, safety and well-being of staff through a variety of measures, including but not limited to, ensuring that office infrastructure (premises, equipment, software) meets the Organisation's standards.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High turnover of governmental and non-governmental staff and other key partners.</b></li> </ul> <p>This can lead to the loss of know-how, institutional memory and networking contacts and disruption to the Action Plan's implementation.</p>	Medium	Low	<p>Close monitoring of staff changes and swift re-establishment of contacts.</p> <p>Support long-term institutional memory at partner institutions' level and contribute to sustainable knowledge-management practices.</p> <p>Encourage a shared leadership approach on project implementation to enhance beneficiaries' ownership and commitment to results.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of capacities and application of a rights-based approach, notably gender mainstreaming and a gender-sensitive approach among beneficiary institutions and partners.</b></li> </ul> <p>This could lead to reducing the impact of the Action Plan.</p>	Medium	Medium	<p>A gender-sensitive approach will be applied in all projects and at all stages of the implementation of the Action Plan, with the support of the Regional Gender Adviser.</p> <p>Training of project staff, national partners and stakeholders will be offered by the Council of Europe to further increase their knowledge on gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the implementation of the Action Plan.</p> <p>Gender-sensitive communication will be ensured in-house and externally, with national partners and stakeholders.</p>
<b>Communication-related risks</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Insufficient or ineffective communication.</b></li> </ul> <p>This could lead to poor knowledge among the main international and national partners, target groups and general population about the benefits of the reforms and the Council of Europe's contribution to the ongoing reform process, notably implementation of the EU accession agenda.</p>	Low	High	<p>Ensure every project develops its communication strategy to inform stakeholders and foster interest in the activities of the Council of Europe in the Republic of Moldova.</p> <p>Ensure timely and effective communication, reaching out to different target groups with clear messages about the Council of Europe's contribution to reforms in the Republic of Moldova and its impact on the daily lives of its citizens.</p> <p>Ensure the availability of the relevant information in the Romanian language.</p>

## APPENDIX III: FINANCIAL TABLE AS OF 10 OCTOBER 2024

Sectors	Estimated needs in euros
Securing human rights and fundamental freedoms	4 000 000
Advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment	1 933 333
Acting for equality, diversity and respect	6 484 445
Building trust in public institutions	5 382 480
Upholding safety, security and integrity of society and persons	857 639
Anchoring democratic values in European societies	10 066 667
Supporting action in the field	1 275 436
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30 000 000</b>

## APPENDIX IV: SOURCES/RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

**Council of Europe documents**

## 1. Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Annual report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe 2024 – Our rights, our future  
 Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe 2023 – State of democracy, human rights and the rule of law  
 Secretary General's Roadmap on the Council of Europe's engagement with civil society 2024-2027

## 2. Technical co-operation with the Republic of Moldova

Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024  
 Progress Review Report, January 2021 to March 2023  
 Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2017-2020  
 Final Report 2017-2020  
 Progress Review Report, January 2017 to October 2019

## 3. European Court of Human Rights

European Court of Human Rights case law in relation to the Republic of Moldova  
 European Court of Human Rights, Facts and figures by state  
 Execution of judgments by the Republic of Moldova, country factsheet

## 4. Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

Mission Report 2022  
 Report following the visit to the Republic of Moldova in 2020

## 5. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Information note by the co-rapporteurs on their fact-finding visit to Chişinău and Comrat – February 2024  
 Resolution 2484 (2023) "The honouring of obligations and commitments by the Republic of Moldova" – January 2023

## 6. Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

European Charter of Local Self-Government  
 Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority

## 7. Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Reykjavik Declaration – United around our values  
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)13 on the impacts of digital technologies on freedom of expression  
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7 of the Committee of Ministers – Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment  
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)11 on principles for media and communication governance  
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)1 on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership  
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)2 on the roles and responsibilities of internet intermediaries  
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity  
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)1 on intercultural integration  
 Rec(2000)21 on the freedom of exercise of the profession of lawyer  
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 on participation of citizens in local public life  
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)3 on human rights and business  
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 – the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education  
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)6 on protecting youth civil society and young people, and supporting their participation in democratic processes



## 8. Monitoring mechanisms and expert advisory bodies

### **European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission)**

Joint amicus curiae brief of the Venice Commission and ODIHR on the ineligibility of persons connected to political parties declared unconstitutional, approved by the Council for Democratic Elections at its 79th meeting (Venice, 14 December 2023) and adopted by the Venice Commission at its 137th Plenary Session (Venice, 15-16 December 2023)

Joint Follow-up Opinion of the Venice Commission and ODIHR to the Joint Opinion on amendments to the Electoral Code and other related laws concerning ineligibility of persons connected to political parties declared unconstitutional, approved by the Council for Democratic Elections at its 79th meeting (Venice, 14 December 2023) and adopted by the Venice Commission at its 137th Plenary Session (Venice, 15-16 December 2023)

Joint opinion of the Venice Commission and the Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DGI) of the Council of Europe on the draft Law on the anti-corruption judicial system and on amending some normative acts, adopted by the Venice Commission at its 136th Plenary Session (Venice, 6-7 October 2023)

Follow-up opinion to the opinion on the draft law on the intelligence and security service as well as on the draft law on counterintelligence and intelligence activity, adopted by the Venice Commission at its 136th Plenary Session (Venice, 6-7 October 2023)

Joint follow-up opinion of the Venice Commission and the Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DGI) of the Council of Europe to the joint opinion on the draft Law on the external assessment of judges and prosecutors, adopted by the Venice Commission at its 136th Plenary Session (Venice, 6-7 October 2023)

Final Opinion on limiting excessive economic and political influence in public life (de-oligarchisation), adopted by the Venice Commission at its 135th Plenary Session (Venice, 9-10 June 2023)

### **European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)**

ECRI report on the Republic of Moldova (sixth monitoring cycle) – 2024

### **Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA)**

Report on the third evaluation round 2020

### **Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)**

Baseline evaluation report November 2023

Recommendation of the Committee of the Parties December 2023

### **European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR)**

Ad hoc report on the cost-of-living crisis, January 2024

Conclusions of the European Committee of Social Rights 2022 concerning the Republic of Moldova (Thematic group Labour rights)

Conclusions of the European Committee of Social Rights 2021 concerning the Republic of Moldova (Thematic group Health, social security and social protection)

Conclusions of the European Committee of Social Rights 2019 concerning the Republic of Moldova (Thematic group Children, families and migrants)

### **European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)**

Ad hoc visit to the Republic of Moldova carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) – December 2022

### **Group of States against Corruption (GRECO)**

Fifth Round Evaluation Report on the Republic of Moldova – March 2024

## **Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism**

The Second Enhanced Follow-up Report and Technical Compliance Re-Rating on the Republic of Moldova  
- May 2024

### **9. Guidelines**

Council of Europe Project Management Methodology  
Council of Europe human rights approach – Practical guide for co-operation projects  
Council of Europe gender mainstreaming toolkit for co-operation projects  
Guidelines on civil society organisations' participation in Council of Europe's co-operation activities  
Online resource for civil society  
Working with the Council of Europe: a practical guide for civil society  
Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making  
Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029  
Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022-2027  
Council of Europe "Speak up" policy on reporting wrongdoing and protection from retaliation  
UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

### **National policy documents of the Republic of Moldova<sup>213</sup>**

The National Development Strategy (European Moldova 2030)  
The Strategy on Ensuring Independence and Integrity of the Justice Sector 2022-2025  
The National Programme for Ensuring the Respect of Human Rights 2024-2027  
The National Programme for Promoting and Ensuring Equality between Women and Men 2023-2027  
The National Programme for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Family Violence for 2023-2027  
The National Programme for Child Protection 2022-2026 and its Action Plan  
Programme for Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking 2024-2028  
The National Strategy "Education 2030"  
The National Plan "Building a European Moldova"  
The Strategy on the development of the field of internal affairs for the years 2022-2030  
The National Information Security Strategy 2019-2024  
The National Programme for Integrity and Anticorruption for 2024-2028 and the Action Plan for Integrity and Anticorruption for 2024-2028  
The National Climate Change Adaptation Programme until 2030 and its Action Plan  
National Action Plan for the Accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union 2024-2027

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213. Relevant national strategic documents identifying priorities and/or main lines of action have been consulted to ensure the Council of Europe support matches the country's needs and priorities and is coherent with other national initiatives. Any reference in the current Action Plan to national legislation, strategies, policies, action plans or any other national document does not represent an endorsement of such documents by the Council of Europe.