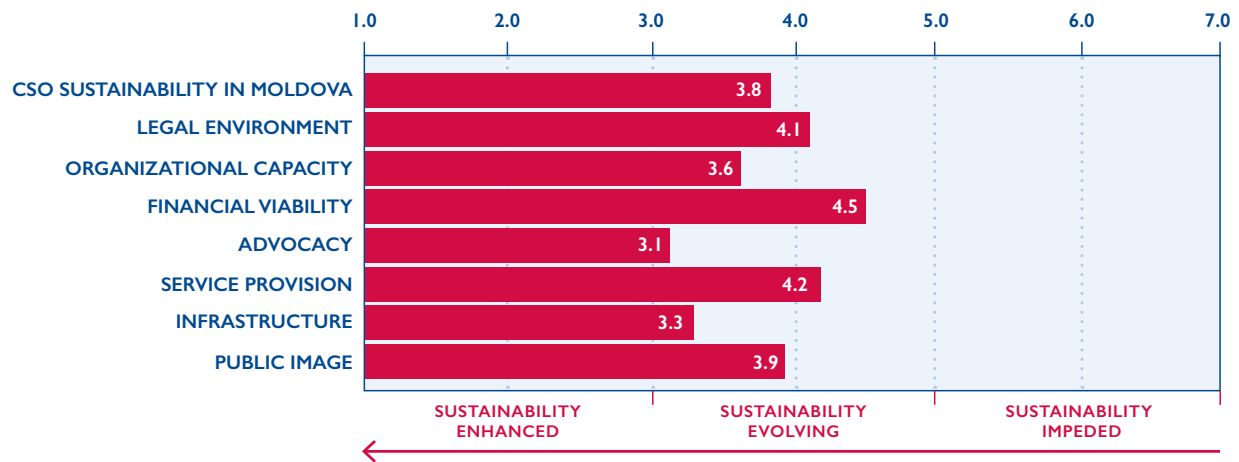


# MOLDOVA

**Capital:** Chişinău  
**Population:** 3,474,121  
**GDP per capita (PPP):** \$5,700  
**Human Development Index:** Medium (0.699)  
**Freedom in the World:** Partly Free (62/100)

## CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 3.8



The governing coalition of the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) and Liberal Party (PL) collapsed in May 2017, transforming PDM from a junior coalition partner into a dominant political force. As an objective of the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2016–2020, the number of ministries was reduced in 2017 from sixteen to nine and several national control and regulatory institutions were restructured in order to optimize the government's structure and increase salaries for the remaining positions.

Communication between the authorities and CSOs was tense after several CSOs criticized various legislative initiatives during the year, particularly one that would have excluded CSOs that receive foreign funds from decision-making processes and imposed additional reporting requirements on them. Although this initiative was not passed, the attempt to limit and persecute CSOs that do not share the governing party's vision alarmed CSOs.

After two years of consultations, the 2018–2020 Civil Society Development Strategy was completed and formally introduced in parliament at the end of the year. The strategy largely repeats the previous strategy's priorities, only 27 percent of which were achieved. Most of the recommendations formulated by the strategy's working group, which included civil society representatives, were incorporated into the final version of the draft. Parliament is expected to approve the Strategy in early 2018.

The more than 3,000 CSOs in the breakaway Transnistrian region are not allowed to monitor human rights or democratic processes; the regime only allows CSOs to work on social, medical, and environmental issues. The CSO sector in the Transnistrian region is still weak, both organizationally and financially.

According to the State Register of Not-For-Profit Organizations, there were about 11,653 CSOs registered in Moldova as of December 2017, an increase of 781 over the past year. Of the twenty-nine areas in which CSOs operate, the most common are education (1,774 organizations), sustainable development (1,742), human rights (1,035), and social assistance (1,007). The number of active CSOs is much smaller. According to a study by the Institute of Public Policy, only twenty-two out of 479 registered CSOs in the Autonomous Territorial Unit (ATU) of Gagauzia<sup>1</sup> are viable.<sup>2</sup>

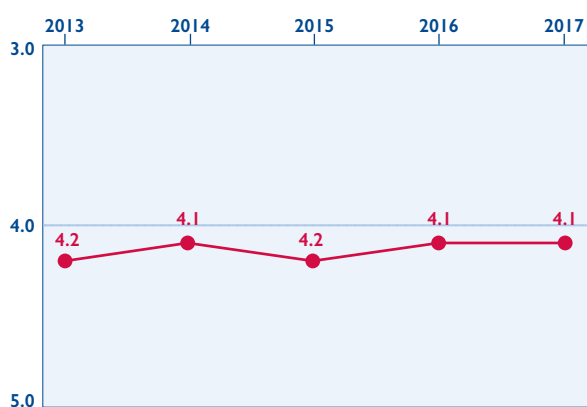
1. Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri) is an autonomous territorial entity within the Republic of Moldova with a special status that includes additional rights of self-determination.

2. For the purposes of this study, viability was defined to mean that CSOs had at least one employee, volunteer, or expert working with them; that they were active or wrote at least one project application during the 2014 to 2016 period; and that they had a budget above zero in one of the years in the same period.

## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 4.1

The legal framework regulating the work of CSOs did not change significantly in 2017. While authorities attempted to limit the participation of foreign-funded CSOs in the decision-making process, this effort ultimately failed, while other positive changes were introduced.

The CSO registration procedure did not change in 2017. CSOs can register either at the national level with the Ministry of Justice, or at the local level with local public authorities (LPAs). In general, the registration process is straightforward and relatively simple, although LPA representatives have limited knowledge about the legislation governing CSOs, which complicates registration and processes for adjusting CSOs' bylaws. As a result, some CSOs choose to register at the national level or operate without making necessary adjustments to their bylaws. At the end of 2017, a draft law that would amend the CSO registration process was submitted to the parliament; this law was adopted at the beginning of 2018. According to these amendments, political parties, periodicals, press agencies, civic association, foundations, employers' organizations, trade unions, mediation organizations, and religious groups will register with the Public Services Agency, rather than the Ministry of Justice. This is expected to improve the registration process and make data on the number of registered organizations more accurate. In addition, the amendments reduce the registration period from thirty to fifteen days.



### LEGAL ENVIRONMENT IN MOLDOVA

framework for civil society participation, strengthening the financial sustainability of CSOs, and developing a sense of active citizenship and volunteering. The document provides for a number of institutional changes, including the creation of a new governmental unit responsible for cooperation with civil society and changes to improve and simplify the 2 percent mechanism, which was implemented for the first time in 2017. Parliament is expected to pass this strategy in early 2018.

The most striking development during the year was the Minister of Justice's attempt to introduce new provisions in the draft law on not-for-profit organizations. These provisions would have prohibited CSOs that receive funding from abroad from participating in the elaboration and promotion of public policies. In addition, these organizations would have been subject to additional reporting requirements related to their income and the members of their governing bodies. While the original draft law on not-for-profit organizations was developed by a working group with CSOs, these provisions were added at the last minute without the engagement of the working group. After more than eighty CSOs publicly expressed their indignation, the entire draft was withdrawn and was not revisited during the year.

CSOs protesting or voicing critical public positions were harassed by authorities in several instances during the year. For example, the Presidential Administration prevented a journalist who worked for an independent press association and was critical of some of the president's decisions from attending several public meetings with the president. In response to practices like these, in October a group of media CSOs launched an appeal to the public and Western diplomatic missions in Chisinau, informing them of the alarming situation faced by Moldova's independent media institutions.

During 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment set up a national working group to identify a legal form for the registration of Local Action Groups (LAGs). These groups are made up of representatives of local CSOs, public institutions, and the business community and seek to implement the LEADER concept, which engages local actors in the design and delivery of strategies, decision making, and resource allocation for the development of rural areas.

At the end of the year, a draft law approving the 2018–2020 Civil Society Development Strategy was submitted to the parliament. The Strategy, which was developed through several working sessions during the year, has three general objectives: strengthening the

In November, the parliament passed the Law on Social Entrepreneurship, which defines social entrepreneurship as an activity that prioritizes social or community-related objectives over profit-making. Social enterprises can be established by civic associations, foundations, private institutions, and individuals. Even though the tax breaks that the original draft proposed were not included in the final law, CSOs still welcomed the legislation, which is expected to spur the development of social enterprises. The National Commission for Social Entrepreneurship will be created in the near future to accredit social enterprises. Social enterprise status will be granted for a period of three years, with the possibility for extension.

CSOs are exempt from income tax on grants, and some projects are exempt from VAT. CSOs can earn income through the provision of goods and services, as long as such activities are explicitly stated in their bylaws. CSOs accredited as social service providers can also earn income by providing services for the government. The government exempts CSOs from tax on income from economic activities if they request such an exemption from the local subdivision of the tax authorities. However, tax authorities have interpreted the law regarding tax exemptions on earned income differently, causing confusion among CSOs.

Corporate taxpayers can deduct philanthropic or sponsorship donations up to 5 percent of their taxable income. Donations can only be deducted if they have philanthropic or sponsorship purposes, in accordance with Government Decision 489. The procedure for getting such determinations continues to be outdated and complicated, potentially discouraging possible donors. Beginning in 2017, individuals can designate 2 percent of their income taxes to eligible CSOs. The Ministry of Justice approves the list of potential beneficiaries of the 2 percent mechanism on an annual basis; among the main criteria are that CSOs deliver services in the public benefit and do not owe funds to the government.

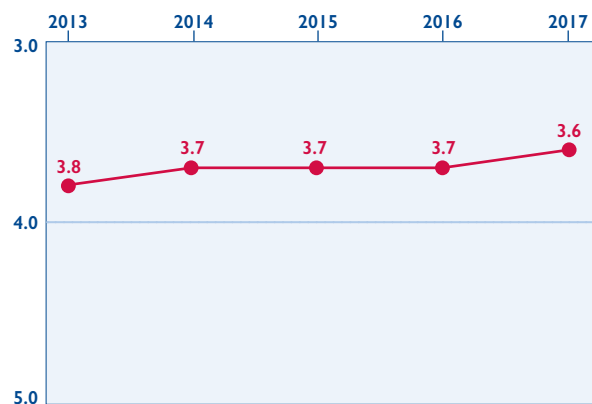
Local legal capacity remains fairly limited. Most lawyers with knowledge of CSO legal issues are based in the capital, while there is limited capacity in rural areas. The legal clinics at Balti and Cahul Universities provide CSOs with some limited legal services with the assistance of law students.

The legal environment governing CSOs in the Transnistria region did not change in 2017. However, in October, the authorities created a new working group to analyze the regulations for CSOs and design ones giving them more control over CSOs. The authorities justified this measure by claiming that some CSOs are destroying the region from within and disregarding the laws and constitution.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 3.6

Organizational capacity improved slightly in 2017. Despite the fact that CSOs continue to lack sufficient financial resources for organizational capacity building, CSOs improved their connections with their constituents and increasingly developed internal management systems during the year.

Constituency building improved in 2017. With the launch of the 2 percent mechanism during the year, CSOs sought to communicate more actively with their constituents. Several CSOs organized campaigns to inform and consult with their constituents. Such efforts may have contributed to the fact that 46 percent of those who directed 2 percent of their taxes to CSOs in 2017 were not required to file income tax statements, but chose to do so anyhow in order to support particular CSOs. Religious organizations were amongst those organizations receiving the most funds through the 2 percent mechanism. In addition, Local Residents Associations managed to actively involve members of the diaspora in the development of their home towns; through the Migration and Local Development Project (MiDL) implemented by UNDP Moldova, twenty-three settlements raised funds through a crowdfunding platform from more than 4,000 emigrants for community projects.



ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY IN MOLDOVA

Few CSOs have strategic action plans. Such plans are largely developed to satisfy the requirements of donors who aim to ensure the long-term viability of their beneficiaries. In 2017, the Embassy of Sweden continued to implement its core support program, which provides CSOs with funding to implement actions outlined in their strategic plans. The instability of funding and the limited number of long-term support programs deter CSOs from developing strategic plans on their own.

Large CSOs have more developed internal management systems consisting of internal governance regulations, clearly defined organizational charts, human resource policies, and financial procedures, while smaller ones have rudimentary internal procedures. The development of internal management systems improved slightly in 2017. The approximately twenty CSOs that participated in Moldova Partnerships for Sustainable Civil Society (MPSCS), implemented by FHI 360 with USAID support, demonstrated improved capacities on the project's institutional development assessment in 2017. In 2017, the Center for Organizational Training and Consultancy (CICO) and FHI 360 also launched several online institutional assessment tools focused on not-for-profit management.

Staff turnover within CSOs remains high. Because of the temporary nature of CSOs' project-based funding, staff members frequently leave CSOs to take jobs in other sectors, particularly the private sector. In addition, many people leave the country either to study or to work in more developed countries. CSOs are attracting more and more volunteers to their organizations, especially by offering volunteer cards, a nationally-recognized document confirming work experience.

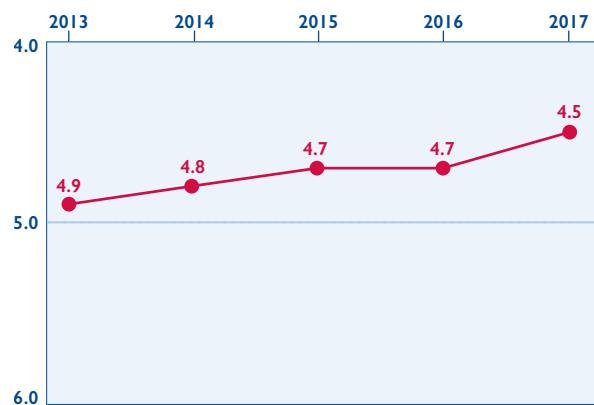
Approximately 138 organizations and institutions have the status of Host Institution of Volunteering Activity and are therefore able to issue volunteering cards. During the annual Volunteering Week in 2017, 23,186 volunteers—fourteen times more than in 2014—participated in about 1,000 voluntary activities across the country. According to the World Giving Index 2017, 17 percent of respondents reported volunteering in 2016, the same as in the previous year.

CSOs' technological capacities are still modest, especially in rural areas. Most of the software used by CSOs is unlicensed. Although CSOs can access licensed software for free or discounted prices through TechSoup Moldova, few know about this opportunity.

## FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 4.5

CSOs' financial viability improved in 2017. Even though CSOs continue to be very dependent on funding from foreign donors, new sources of income for CSOs emerged and developed in 2017.

The 2 percent mechanism was implemented for the first time in Moldova in 2017, constituting a completely new source of funds for CSOs. At the end of 2016, the Ministry of Justice published a list of the 484 CSOs accredited to participate in the mechanism. In the first few months of 2017, 21,201<sup>3</sup> individuals directed 2 percent of their 2016 income taxes to the accredited CSOs; approximately \$159,000 was collected in total.



### FINANCIAL VIABILITY IN MOLDOVA

A positive trend in philanthropy was noted in 2017. According to the World Giving Index, 24 percent of Moldovan respondents said they donated money to charity in 2017, compared to 20 percent in 2016 and 17 percent in 2015. Youth funds collected money from individuals and companies to implement youth projects in their communities. The Rascani Youth Fund, for example, collected over \$4,350 from individuals, legal entities, and local authorities, which they used to co-fund fourteen projects in seven settlements. Corporate philanthropy did not improve in 2017. The bureaucratic system for reporting donations continues to be an obstacle to the development of corporate giving. In 2017, a working group facilitated by the

3. Of this total, 5,075 forms were declared invalid because incorrect information (fiscal code) about the beneficiary organizations was provided.

European Center for Non-Profit Law (ECNL) evaluated the existing mechanism and prepared some initiatives to improve it in 2018.

In 2017, the use of crowdfunding platforms grew, with many people contributing to CSO projects on platforms such as [www.caritate.md](http://www.caritate.md) and [www.guvern24.md](http://www.guvern24.md). Under the MiDL project implemented by UNDP Moldova, 4,000 individuals from abroad gave approximately \$100,000 through [www.guvern24.md](http://www.guvern24.md) for community projects in twenty-three settlements. Similarly, CSOs actively used social networks such as Facebook and Odnoklassniki to raise funds for projects. CSOs also use SMS giving to raise funds; this has proved to be a particularly successful means of raising money for medical treatments for sick people.

Several ministries continue to organize grant competitions for CSOs at approximately the same level as in 2016. In 2017, the Ministry of Culture funded fifty-two projects worth a total of \$117,000. The Ministry of Youth and Sports provided support to twenty-nine national and regional youth CSOs. For the first time, the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection provided four grants totaling \$5,800 for four projects in the field of active aging. Local government support did not change notably in 2017, and is still moderate due to LPA's limited resources and capacities. However, in 2017, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (formed by the merger of the Ministry of Culture with the Ministry of Youth and Sports as part of the administrative reform process) launched a three-year national support program for youth centers that will increase local youth CSOs' opportunities to receive grants and contracts. In November, nine LPAs signed partnership agreements and will start implementing the project in 2018.

CSOs continue to depend on foreign donors for more than 80 percent of their funding. The EU, UNDP and other UN agencies, USAID, the Swedish Agency for Cooperation and Development (Sida), and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) are among the international donor institutions that funded CSOs in 2017. Embassies also played a key role in providing financial support, including the Embassies of the United States of America, United Kingdom, and Slovakia. Private international donors supporting CSOs in 2017 included the Soros Foundation Moldova, the East European Foundation, the IM Swedish Development Partner, and Swiss Church Aid (HEKS). Larger CSOs have more access to these funds than smaller groups. In 2017, small and medium CSOs' access to grants from foreign donors decreased further. However, a number of large EU-funded projects with sub-granting components were launched that small CSOs will be able to access in the future.

Only a small portion of CSOs have developed revenue-generating activities. With the passage of the Law on Social Entrepreneurship, CSOs are likely to generate more revenue through the development of social enterprises in the coming years.

Public authorities contract social and health services from CSOs through different mechanisms. For example, in 2017, the National Health Insurance Company signed contracts with three foundations, eight civic associations, and one private institution to provide healthcare services amounting to a total of \$470,500. However, according to research published in 2017 by the Center for Legal Assistance for Persons with Disabilities (CAJPD), local contracting mechanisms are almost nonfunctional. The government—at both the central and local levels—can also contract CSOs through public procurements. During the last few years, however, procurements were used only four times, twice by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection and twice by the Chisinau Municipality.

The financial management practices of CSOs are still quite rudimentary. Even though CSOs understand the role of financial management procedures, very few CSOs have payroll policies or financial sustainability plans. In 2017, CICO organized a set of financial management trainings for Russian-speaking CSOs both in the Transnistria region and the rest of Moldova.

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## ADVOCACY: 3.1

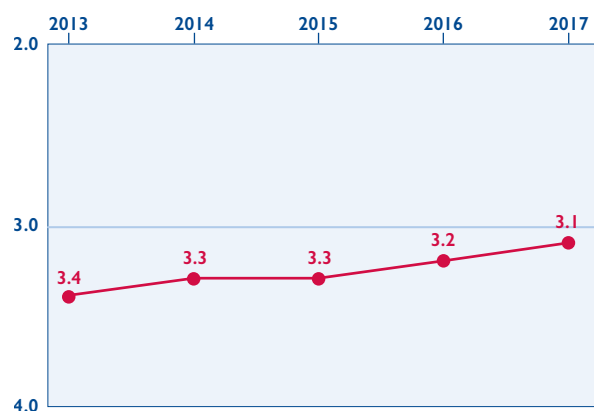
CSO advocacy improved in 2017. Civil society made its voice heard throughout the year, although CSO campaigns to prevent or promote legislative initiatives were not always successful.

In 2016, a working group of representatives from parliament, the central government, and civil society worked on amendments to the Law on Transparency in the Decision-Making Process and other laws that affect parliament's

cooperation with civil society. No progress was made in pursuing these initiatives in 2017, largely due to institutional bottlenecks caused by public administration reforms that were taking place during the year. The reform consolidated the sixteen ministries that previously existed into just nine.

On April 18, the government approved the members of the National Participation Council (NPC), the body tasked with promoting the participation of CSOs in decision making. However, the platform was not very active during the year due both to the weak involvement of the twenty-six members and the council's limited leverage to influence the public agenda.

In July, the parliament passed Law No. 154 on the transition from the proportional electoral system to the mixed electoral system. Previously, all members of parliament (MPs) had been elected on party tickets, but according to the new mixed electoral system, 50 percent of MPs will be elected on party tickets, while the other 50 percent will be elected by first-past-the-post voting. A group of CSOs and extra-parliamentary political parties launched public appeals and organized protests against the bill. They argued that the change was carried out without taking into account the key recommendation of the EU and the Venice Commission, both of which advised against replacing the proportional voting system with a mixed one in Moldova. The parliament did not revisit its decision, however, and the next parliamentary elections will be held in accordance with the new voting system. According to the Public Opinion Barometer from December 2017, only 16 percent of respondents support the mixed electoral system.



#### ADVOCACY IN MOLDOVA

parliament to approve the Law on Social Entrepreneurship in October. Also, due to the efforts of CSOs involved in working groups, the 2018–2020 Civil Society Development Strategy was submitted to the parliament. The draft law on not-for-profit organizations, in the works since 2016, was withdrawn in 2017 after CSOs and development partners strongly opposed several articles introduced by the Minister of Justice related to foreign-funded CSOs, as described above.

In December, the Platform for Active Citizenship and Partnership for Human Rights organized the National Volunteering Conference in partnership with the parliament. At the conference, the Platform advocated for a variety of actions to promote volunteering, including the creation of a National Volunteering Center, more public funding to support volunteering, and the delegation of a state representative to cooperate with the Platform to promote volunteering.

In 2017, several advocacy campaigns were organized in the Transnistria region to promote human rights. Joint advocacy efforts by local CSOs and OHCHR in the area of rights of people with disabilities led to the declaration of 2018 as the Year of Equal Opportunities in the Transnistrian region, with a special focus on opportunities for people with disabilities.

Several effective advocacy campaigns were organized at the local level during 2017. The Pilgrim-Demo Association of Gagauzia carried out an advocacy campaign to promote a local law on transparency in decision making; it was ultimately adopted by local authorities in ATU Gagauzia. Motivation Association, a CSO working to improve the lives of people with disabilities, trained eighteen individuals with and without disabilities to engage in public decision making. Among other results, a group from Edineț managed to influence the Civil Registration Office and town hall to build ramps for people with disabilities.

Thanks to efforts made by CSOs, some regulatory acts favorable to CSOs were approved in 2017. The Initiative Promoting Social Entrepreneurship in Moldova played an important role in getting the



## SERVICE PROVISION: 4.2

Service provision did not change significantly in 2017. The most common areas of service provision in Moldova are social assistance for disadvantaged people, education, and capacity building. Services provided with foreign support are generally based on needs assessments conducted by the CSO or the donor. CSOs that provide services for a fee regularly adjust their services to meet market needs. For example, CICO, which provides 30 percent of its services for a fee, has adjusted its portfolio to focus on fundraising support in response to the number of requests for services in this area.

As a rule, most CSOs provide services to target groups beyond their members. For example, the National Youth Council of Moldova provides trainings and other services to its more than sixty members, as well as other youth organizations in Moldova. Think tanks such as Expert-Grup and IDIS Viitorul develop and make their analyses and research available to the public. In contrast, business associations, like the Moldova Business Persons' Association (MBPA) and the Small Business Association (SBA) of Moldova, focus their efforts mostly on their members.

Through the Libraries and NGOs Collaborative Community Development Grants program, Novateca supports the establishment and advancement of sustainable partnerships between libraries and CSOs in the development of modern library services that address community needs and interests. Through this program, Novateca has offered financial and technical support to four CSOs to implement projects in financial education and project writing and management. As a result of these activities, more than 300 women and young people have received training in financial education and employment, strengthening their skills in writing a professional CV and letter of intent, and preparing for a job interview; 70 of these were employed. Another 25 percent of the 152 library users who attended business management courses started their own businesses.

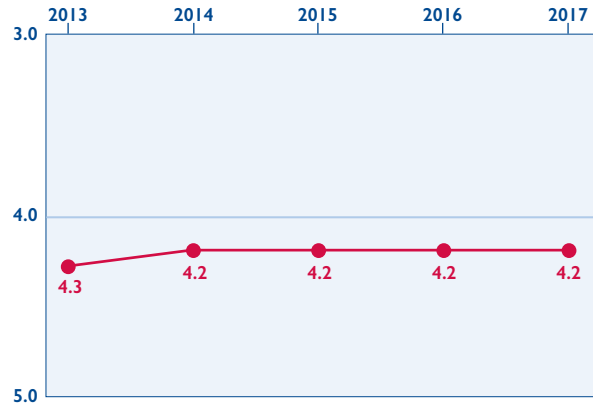
More than twenty social enterprises operate in Moldova. They have created about 120 jobs over the last three years. Almost 40 percent of the employees in social enterprises are people with disabilities. The adoption of the Law on Social Entrepreneurship is expected to contribute to the development of service provision by CSOs by encouraging them to set up businesses that will direct revenue back to the CSOs.

CSO services are mostly provided free of charge to beneficiaries, with international donors covering the costs on a project basis. Few service providers conduct cost benefit analysis and the majority cannot provide even basic information about cost, limiting their ability to develop strategic plans to sustain their services.

In 2017, the government was expected to approve quality standards for youth-focused services. However, due to the government's emphasis on reforming the central public administration, the standards were not approved and youth centers continue to provide services without minimum quality standards.

Legislation in Moldova allows public authorities to contract social and health services from CSOs through different mechanisms, including direct payments to accredited CSOs, public procurements, and public-private partnerships. However, according to a study by CAJPD in 2017, the existing mechanisms for contracting CSO services have many flaws. The lack of designated financial support for social services, legislation that fails to recognize the specific nature of non-profit providers, and the lack of financial sustainability of local authorities are among the key issues highlighted in the study. Some LPAs do not contract with CSOs as they believe foreign donors should fund their services.

CSOs intending to provide social services on behalf of the state must be accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Social Service Providers. The main criteria for accreditation include technical capacity, financial management, staff background, and compliance with the minimum standards of quality established



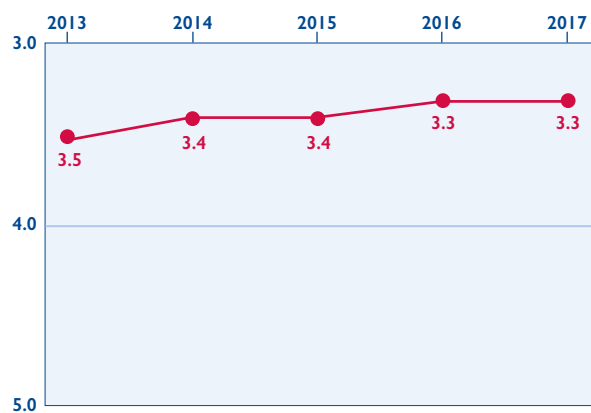
SERVICE PROVISION IN MOLDOVA

by the government. Fourteen out of twenty applicant organizations received accreditation to provide social services in 2017. According to the CAJPD study, half of accredited CSOs (50 percent) did not think there were any difficulties in the accreditation process, while 33 percent thought the requirements were exaggerated or irrelevant to the nature of the services to be provided. The other 17 percent of respondents said that CSOs experience difficulties in the accreditation process because they do not know the minimum quality standards for that service.

## SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 3.3

Sectoral infrastructure did not change significantly in 2017. Resource centers, such as those run by CONTACT, offer informational and technical support for CSOs, including libraries with resource materials. However, demand for their services has decreased as most of the information they provide is also available online.

Twenty-eight youth centers in Moldova continued to provide support services to young people and youth CSOs during the year. In 2017, the Ministry of Youth and Sports launched the 2017–2022 Youth Center Development Program comprising three basic pillars: professional development of human resources in youth centers, support for the development of infrastructure in youth centers, and support for the development of competitive district and municipal grants programs for the financing of youth initiatives and projects of youth CSOs. In November, the ministry signed agreements with nine district councils to begin implementation of the program.



### INFRASTRUCTURE IN MOLDOVA

Larger CSOs that have greater fundraising capacities and LPAs provide local grants. For example, the Varnita Youth Fund provided grants of up to \$500 to regional youth CSOs. In 2017, Balti City Hall launched the Civic Budget 2017 Grants Competition for CSOs, under which projects of up to \$7,000 were funded.

The National CSO Council remains one of the most active and representative platforms of Moldovan CSOs. In 2017, it was steered by the eight members of its governing body; its next General Forum is to be held in 2018. In 2017, the National Youth Council of Moldova expanded its membership to more than sixty youth CSOs. In September, nineteen CSOs focused on the rights of people with disabilities, including thirteen from the Transnistria region, signed a partnership agreement

and developed the Platform for Sustainable (Community) Development. This platform will monitor the rights of people with disabilities and work to improve their living standards.

Programs with an organizational capacity-building component, such as the USAID-funded MPSCS and the Embassy of Sweden's Organizational Development Program, continued in 2017. Russian-speaking CSOs in the Transnistrian region and the ATU of Gagauzia had more access to institutional capacity-building programs during the year. The Soros Foundation, in partnership with the CONTACT Center and the Pilgrim-Demo Association, launched a two-year capacity building project for local and regional CSOs, local and central public authorities, and mass media institutions in the region. CICO developed a six-month intensive program for Russian-speaking CSOs, including twelve from the Transnistria region. The program consisted of five trainings and 205 hours of individual consultations in organizational management.

In 2017, the development of LAGs responsible for managing local development in Moldova continued. The LAGs are partnerships between CSOs, businesses, and LPAs where none of the three stakeholders has more than 50 percent of the decision-making power. With the help of the Support for Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) program that is implemented by UNDP Moldova, declarations establishing eight LAGs representing forty-four rural settlements from the ATU of Gagauzia and Taraclia district were signed by the future members of these LAGs.



## PUBLIC IMAGE: 3.9

The public image of CSOs deteriorated in 2017 due to smear campaigns run by authorities and related institutions.

Government-affiliated mass media launched a defamation campaign against CSOs that opposed the new electoral system. Two polls ordered by the PDM and conducted by IMAS during 2017 presented civil society in a negative light. According to the polls, approximately 31 percent of respondents believed that the activity of CSOs in Moldova is politically biased, and 32 percent thought that these organizations are used for money laundering. Over a quarter (27 percent) were convinced that civil society supports specific political forces. CSOs harshly criticized these surveys, the results of which were spread widely in the media, because of the manipulative manner in which questions were worded.

Authorities also directly criticized the work of CSOs in 2017. Speaking during a TV show, the speaker of the parliament said that CSOs should not be involved in issues related to the electoral system of Moldova, and that CSOs that do so are politicized and aligned with the opposition. In a message posted on a social network, the president of Moldova accused CSOs of receiving funds from the National Endowment for Democracy, money laundering, and political partisanship. Although none of the CSOs were ever contacted to clarify or respond, these accusations were widely shared on channels affiliated with the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova.

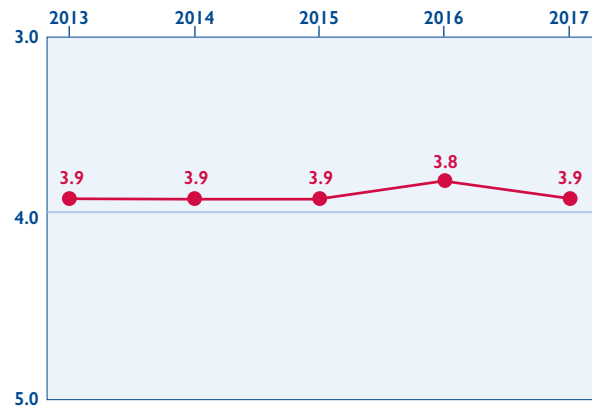
Despite these attacks, the Public Opinion Barometer developed by the Institute of Public Policy indicated a slight increase in public trust in CSOs, although trust remains very limited. In November, the Barometer reported that 17 percent of those surveyed said they trusted CSOs, compared to 15 percent in the fall of 2016. As in previous years, people aged thirty-three to forty-four trusted CSOs more (19 percent), with those above sixty years of age trusting them the least (12.9 percent).

Communication between CSOs and the business world was positive. In December, CAJPD organized the third edition of the Remarkability Gala during which awards were given to companies hiring people with disabilities and providing favorable working conditions for them.

The fifth Civil Society Festival (CIVIC FEST 2017) was organized in October. Over two days, more than 300 CSOs presented their organizations and projects at the conferences, presentations, and fairs within CIVIC FEST 2017. About 4,000 people attended the events and about ninety projects were presented.

CSOs increasingly use social networks like Facebook and Odnoklassniki to promote their organizations and activities. According to the April 2017 Public Opinion Barometer, these two social networks are the key sources that Moldovan citizens use to get information on a variety of topics, including CSOs.

At a workshop in February, CSOs discussed the reasons they have limited public trust. The minimal transparency of some CSOs, the involvement of some of their members in politics, and the emergence of some CSOs defending the interests of the business sector were identified as key problems in this regard. The workshop culminated in a decision to set up a working group to develop a new Code of Ethics for CSOs.



**PUBLIC IMAGE IN MOLDOVA**