



2019 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

Moldova

July 2020



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Cover Photo: Members of the Beresan Youth Bank present their achievements at the 2018 Annual Civil Society Development Forum, an event organized by Ednannia with support from USAID. The Forum is the largest national platform for learning, communication, and experience sharing among nonprofit organizations in Ukraine, typically bringing together approximately 2,500 participants from the non-profit and private sectors, donor community, media, governmental bodies, and local authorities.

Photo Credit: Ednannia, Ukraine

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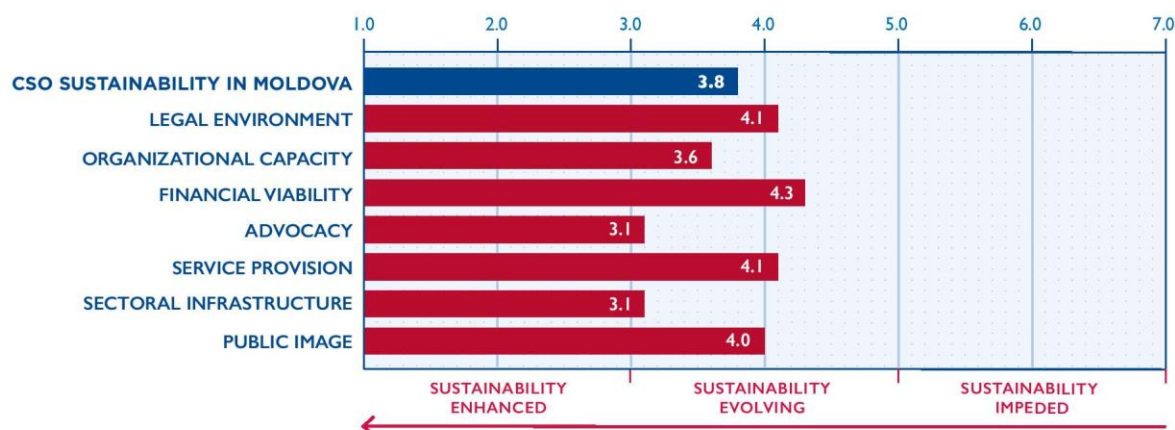
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OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 3.8



Parliamentary elections were held in Moldova on February 24, 2019. For the first time, elections were organized on the basis of a mixed electoral system in which fifty members of parliament (MPs) were elected on party tickets, while the other fifty-one were elected by first-past-the-post voting. The elections were followed by a three-month period of negotiations to form a governing coalition. Negotiations ended on June 8, 2019, when the Socialist Party and the pro-European political bloc ACUM agreed to form a new government. The Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM), which ruled the country while negotiations were underway, initially refused to recognize the new government, a move supported by the Constitutional Court. Following a period of instability and uncertainty, on June 14, the DPM accepted the new government and the Constitutional Court overturned its decision. The coalition government then assumed office until November 12, when it was dismissed by a censure motion. A new government was set up with the support of the Socialist Party and DPM that ruled until the end of the year. Throughout the year, CSOs actively monitored the elections and the activity of the three governments.

Despite this turbulent context, overall CSO sustainability remained unchanged in 2019. Three dimensions of sustainability—financial viability, service provision, and sectoral infrastructure—registered improvements. Foreign donors increased funding, which was largely concentrated outside of the capital, while the portfolio of CSO services diversified. The infrastructure supporting the sector strengthened with the growth of local grantmaking capacity. The legal environment, organizational capacity, advocacy, and public image of the sector did not change notably in 2019.

The exact number of CSOs registered in Moldova is not known. According to the State Register of Non-Commercial Legal Entities published by the Public Services Agency (PSA), there were 13,518 non-commercial organizations registered in December 2019. Of these, 12,404 can be considered CSOs, as defined by the CSO Sustainability Index. The majority of these (9,655) are public associations. The remainder includes religious groups, foundations, private institutions, patronage associations, unions of legal entities, non-commercial newspapers and magazines, trade unions, and entities registered under other forms, including local representatives of international non-profits, associations of water users, and others. During 2019, 477 new CSOs were registered. According to PSA representatives, the State Register of Non-Commercial Legal Entities is not very accurate because of inaccuracies in the information transferred from local public authorities (LPAs), which were responsible for registering local CSOs before PSA assumed this responsibility in 2018. The National Bureau of Statistics indicated that in 2019, only 26 percent of registered CSOs submitted financial statements or statements that they had no income in 2018. As all CSOs are required to submit annual financial statements, this may be considered an indicator of active CSOs.

CSOs in the Transnistrian region, a separatist territorial unit in the east of Moldova, continue to operate in a hostile environment. The Law on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which entered into force in May 2018, places the work of CSOs under significant control and prohibits CSOs that receive foreign funding from engaging in so-called political activity, which is defined broadly and includes protests, interpretation of laws, and

criticism of the government's actions. Amendments adopted in November 2018 require CSOs to report to the tax structures in Tiraspol information on the volume of funding they receive, as well as information about the programs and actions that they plan to implement in the region. Violations of these legal provisions can result in sanctions or even the dissolution of an organization. CSOs in the Transnistrian region are also subject to other forms of pressure, including travel bans on human rights defenders, intimidation by local Security Service (MGB) representatives, and the initiation of criminal cases. CSOs in the region also are still subject to negative rhetoric that damages their public image. During 2019, the "official" media channels of the de facto administration in Tiraspol broadcast and published several articles and reports denigrating CSOs. According to data submitted by the self-proclaimed Ministry of Justice in the Transnistrian region, there were 2,479 CSOs registered as of December 2019, of which 10 were political parties and 15 were territorial representatives of these parties; only about 100 CSOs are thought to be active. In the Autonomous Territorial Unit Gagauzia (ATU Gagauzia), about 500 CSOs are registered of which only a few dozen are estimated to be active.

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 4.1



The legal framework governing CSOs did not change substantially during 2019. Parliament did not take action during the year on the Law on Non-Commercial Organizations, which passed the first reading in May 2018. The law, which has been under development for several years with substantial input from CSOs, would limit arbitrary interference by authorities in the activity of nonprofit organizations, clarify the terms and conditions for the registration of CSOs, abolish arbitrary foreign funding restrictions, and clarify the ways in which CSOs can be involved in political activities. The new law is expected to regulate public associations, private institutions, and foundations. Until its adoption, public associations are still regulated by the 1996 Law on Public Associations, foundations are regulated by the 1999 Law on Foundations, and private institutions are regulated by

the Civil Code.

The new Civil Code entered into force in March 2019, thereby creating some legislative gaps that affected CSOs. The updated version of the Civil Code does not mention unions of legal entities, a common form of associations of for-profit corporations. As a result, unions of legal entities can no longer register, forcing them to register instead as patronage associations until the new Law on Non-Commercial Entities is adopted. Legal entity unions registered before March 2019 can continue to operate legally.

CSO registration did not change in 2019. Public associations continue to register easily at the PSA's territorial offices, also known as multifunctional centers. To register other forms of CSOs, such as foundations or private institutions, however, applicants must submit documents to one of the multifunctional centers in Chisinau or wait for representatives of the territorial offices to send the documents to the office in Chisinau and then make changes if needed. While registration should be completed within fifteen days, this inefficient communication system can lengthen the registration process.

At the end of 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development, and Environment (MARDE) set up a working group to help draft a special law to regulate the activity of Local Action Groups (LAGs), partnerships between CSOs, enterprises, and LPAs that develop local development strategies for their local communities and then apply for grants to implement them. This would allow the official registration of LAGs in accordance with the practice in the European Union (EU).

Some CSO representatives were harassed by the authorities in 2019. In June, RISE Moldova released a report indicating that more than fifty people, including civil society representatives, had their phones tapped and were followed by authorities over the last two years. In some cases, the information collected was leaked by unknown people and used by various political groups to accuse civil society representatives of acting in coordination with

other political groups. Another example of harassment took place in February, when Orhei police arrested and fined three members of the Occupy Guguta community after they displayed a banner critical of Mayor Ilan Sor on the Orhei Town Hall building.

The tax treatment of CSOs did not change in 2019. CSOs may be exempted from income tax if they meet requirements specified in the Tax Code. In addition, some CSO projects are exempt from value-added tax (VAT). In April, the Platform for the Development and Promotion of Philanthropy in the Republic of Moldova submitted a set of proposals to the authorities to amend legislation in the field of philanthropy and sponsorship. The proposals would simplify the existing mechanism through which the tax authorities confirm corporate donations and make other changes to stimulate corporate donations to CSOs. The proposals are expected to be discussed and approved in 2020.

According to Article 30 of the Law on Public Associations, a CSO can obtain public benefit status if it has been registered as a public association and operated for more than one year; its statutory purposes are public benefit activities; and there are no conflicts of interest between the CSOs and the beneficiaries of the public benefit activities. As this status does not offer many benefits, only a few CSOs obtain it. In 2019, for example, only sixteen CSOs newly obtained public benefit status.

Individuals can direct 2 percent of their income tax to an accredited CSO. Due to fiscal reforms in October 2018 that introduced a flat income tax, the funds accumulated through this mechanism are expected to decrease as individuals' income tax will decrease.

The existing legal framework allows CSOs to seek financial resources from both public and private sources. CSOs can earn money through statutory economic activity, social entrepreneurship, and the provision of social services to central and local public authorities. As a result of a study presented in 2018 by the Institutum Virtutes Civis Association regarding the direct financing of CSOs by the state, a joint meeting was organized in December 2019 between representatives of the State Chancellery and civil society. At the meeting, participants discussed the possibility of developing a regulation to standardize conditions and procedures for funding CSO projects from the public budget.

Outside of Chisinau, CSOs can receive legal advice from the University Legal Clinic in Balti, Caroma Nord, Contact Cahul, and other organizations. Legal capacity in the regions continues to be lower than in the capital. However, as foreign funding for CSOs increased in 2019, the capacity of CSOs to provide primary legal advice to CSOs in the regions also increased.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 3.6

The organizational capacity of CSOs did not change substantially in 2019.

The vast majority of CSOs in Moldova still struggle to identify and develop relationships with their constituents. Because of CSOs' high dependence on donor funding, CSOs are largely focused on writing proposals and reports and allocate much less time to communicating with the people, communities, and groups of which they are part. Over the last two years, however, CSOs have focused on strengthening their relationships with their constituents to persuade people to direct 2 percent of their owed income tax to them. In 2019, 34,066 taxpayers supported CSOs through the 2 percent mechanism, an increase of 20 percent over the past year.

Many residents in rural areas have either created new initiative groups or become more actively involved in existing CSO activities in order to raise funding for community projects. As part of the Incubator program implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Moldova and the government of Switzerland, for example, initiative groups were created in twenty-eight localities to identify and solve problems faced by their communities. Also, informal online groups with



close connections with their members, such as Parinti Solidari (Solidarity Parents), Ask a Mom, and Save Chisinau, are increasingly developing.

Officially registered CSOs are required to indicate their statutory purposes in their founding documents. Generally, CSOs try to pursue their statutory missions and goals, but in many cases, the availability of donor funding drives their scope of work. For example, over the last two years the increase in funding for media literacy has led many CSOs to focus on this area even if they had other priorities previously.

Strategic planning practices did not change substantially in 2019. Some CSOs continue to develop strategic plans with financial support from donors, although funding instability continues to discourage other CSOs from undertaking strategic planning processes. In many cases, informal initiatives are far more consistent in adhering to their strategic goals than formal CSOs.

The Law on Public Associations does not prohibit members of a CSO's board from also being employees, except in organizations with public benefit status. While this provides CSOs with greater flexibility to determine their internal management structures, it also allows internal conflicts of interest to emerge. This is especially a problem in small organizations, which frequently employ members of their governing bodies. A growing number of CSOs develop policies and procedures to guide their internal operations, but these documents are rarely followed.

Although Moldova is experiencing a mass exodus of the population that affects employers in all sectors, large CSOs are able to attract professionals because they can often offer salaries that are more competitive than those in the public or private sectors. On the other hand, small CSOs, especially those in rural areas, are unable to offer high salaries and therefore lack qualified personnel. Often, staff involved in local CSOs have other primary jobs, with their CSO involvement providing them with supplementary income.

Many CSOs rely on volunteers to carry out activities. In 2019, a total of 173 entities had status as host institutions for volunteering activity, which allows them to issue volunteer cards, nationally-recognized documents that confirm work experience. In total, 353 volunteer cards were issued in 2019, slightly more than the 312 issued in 2018. According to the Charities Aid Foundation's 2019 World Giving Index, during the last ten years, an average of 16 percent of Moldovan people have volunteered, which places the country in 72nd place out of 126 countries. Volunteering in Moldova is still primarily associated with young people, although an increasing number of programs and platforms are being created to involve the elderly in volunteer work. In December 2019, the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection launched the Grandparents Volunteer Program to increase the participation of elderly people in social and economic life. In June, the International Conference on Civic Engagement through Intergenerational Volunteering was held in Tiraspol with representatives from Belarus, Ukraine, Romania, and Moldova, including the Transnistrian region.

Most CSOs in rural areas cannot afford to pay for their own offices and instead operate in available spaces in town halls, schools, and other local public institutions. In the capital and other larger cities, CSOs have better technical conditions due to the existence of resource centers, as well as CSOs' ability to raise more funds. Money collected through the 2 percent mechanism serves as an important source of funding for the technical endowment of CSOs, as some of these funds can be used for organizational needs. The Family and Child Protection and Support Association, for example, partially financed the purchase of a physical space with the resources collected through this mechanism.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 4.3

CSOs' financial viability improved slightly in 2019, largely due to the increase in funding from foreign funders. At the same time, social entrepreneurship and crowdfunding continue to develop. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, the 2,223 CSOs that submitted financial statements in 2019 reported total revenues of approximately \$175 million in 2018, about \$16 million more than in 2017.

The vast majority of the sector's revenue continues to come from foreign donors. According to the CSO Meter presented in 2019 by the Promo LEX Association, in 2017-2018 75 percent of surveyed organizations reported that they received foreign funding. Other sources of income reported by the CSOs participating in this study were donations from individuals (36 percent), percentage designation mechanism (41 percent), membership fees (30 percent), state funding (20 percent), corporate support (20 percent), and economic activities (21 percent).



CSOs can receive funds directly from the public budget through grants, subsidies, and service contracts. The Ministry of Culture, Education, and Research is the central public authority offering the most grants to CSOs. In 2019, it awarded a total of \$395,000 in grants to twenty-six youth CSOs for projects targeting youth participation, services, and economic opportunities, and strengthening the youth sector, an increase of about \$50,000 over 2018. In 2019, the same ministry provided \$204,500 in grants to eighty-one cultural CSOs, approximately \$32,000 less than in 2018. Other central public authorities that provide funding for CSOs are MARDE, the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection, and the Diaspora Relations Bureau in the State Chancellery.

For the third year, individual taxpayers had the right to redirect 2 percent of their income tax to an accredited CSO in 2019. Revenue collected through this mechanism in 2019 reached MDL 7.6 million (approximately \$434,000), a 37 percent increase over 2018. A total of 732 CSOs were accredited to receive funding through this mechanism in 2019, an increase of 138 compared to 2018. However, 23 percent of the total amount directed to CSOs in 2019 went to the Association of Veterans and Pensioners of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, which has been the largest beneficiary for the last three years. Both this organization and others at the top of the list have direct connections to state authorities or commercial companies, which have many employees. This may indicate that employers have been able to influence their employees to direct 2 percent of their taxes to their affiliated CSOs, which could discredit the 2 percent mechanism.

CSOs continue to collect money through crowdfunding mechanisms, especially for community projects. The main national platforms are Sprijina.md and Caritate.md (which is mostly focused on collecting money for health-related causes). UNDP Moldova actively used national crowdfunding platforms such as Sprijina.md and Guvern24 within its projects. Between 2015 and 2018, UNDP helped its beneficiaries develop fifty-five crowdfunding campaigns, through which more than 10,000 people donated about \$166,500.

Corporate philanthropy continues to be limited. In 2019, Contact Center organized four regional meetings between CSOs and local companies to promote the concept of corporate philanthropy.

The EU and USAID continue to be the primary foreign donors to CSOs in Moldova. The EU significantly increased its funding for CSOs in 2019. During the year, four EU-supported projects that benefit CSOs with total budgets of about EUR 11 million began to be implemented, compared with just one project with a budget of EUR 2.1 million in 2018. USAID disbursed \$15 million in funding for projects in the field of governance and civil society in 2019, up from \$12 million in 2018. Another major donor is the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), which provided \$3.2 million in support to nineteen CSOs in 2019.

CSOs increasingly generate their own resources, both through statutory economic activities and social enterprises. The nine social enterprises selected in 2018 by the East Europe Foundation have already started to generate results. The Deaf Children Association of Moldova, for example, began to sell honey from the fifty bee families it purchased under the project.

A limited number of CSOs have strong financial management systems. The financial capacities of regional CSOs are especially limited. Donor-funded capacity-building projects often address financial management and financial sustainability. The USAID-funded Media Enabling Democracy, Inclusion and Accountability (MEDIA-M) project implemented by Internews, for example, has a special focus on developing financial policies and procedures for its beneficiaries.

ADVOCACY: 3.1

In 2019, CSOs were unable to achieve any major advocacy results as a result of the rapidly changing governments during the year. Rather than promoting their own initiatives, CSOs focused most of their attention on the government's proposed programs. For example, the program of the government of Ion Chicu, which assumed power in November, called for "strengthening the watchdog role of civil society organizations and forbidding them to engage in political activities." CSOs reacted to this with great concern, especially given previous governments' attempts to limit CSO participation in public policy activities.

According to the CSO Meter, 68 percent of respondents have participated in national decision-making processes and 59 percent have participated in local decision-making processes. Three-quarters (75 percent) of those who participated in these processes found them to be difficult or very difficult. Furthermore, 63 percent of respondents noted that public authorities did not provide feedback on their proposals and 47 percent said that their contributions were not reflected in final policy documents.

Formal mechanisms to ensure CSO participation in decision making continue to develop. A subdivision was created within the State Chancellery in 2018 to ensure cooperation with civil society. In 2019, a person was hired within this subdivision to promote cooperation with civil society. In December, a consultative platform of civil society representatives was set up in the parliament that will contribute to the drafting, adoption, monitoring, and evaluation of all laws and decisions.

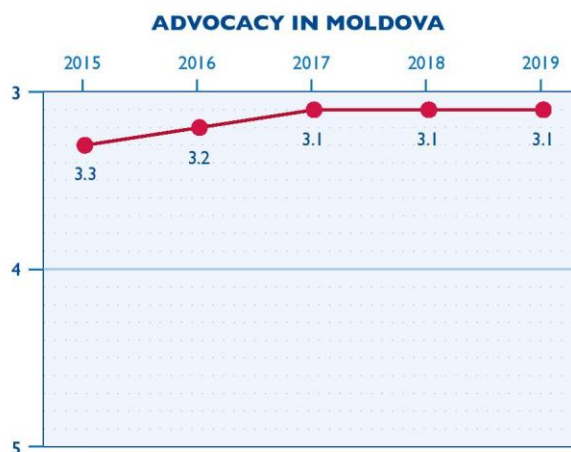
The NGO Council remains the main representative structure of CSOs in Moldova. Among its main objectives are monitoring laws that impact CSOs, facilitating collaboration between CSOs and authorities, and increasing the degree of transparency and visibility of the non-governmental sector. While the NGO Council only holds general meetings every two years, an elected board meets almost every month.

The National Participation Council (NPC) is tasked with promoting the participation of CSOs in decision making. In April, all members of the NPC completed their mandates; however, elections for new members were not held during the year. The State Chancellery developed a set of proposals to increase the effectiveness of this structure, including the exclusion of representatives of the private sector, the inclusion of additional tasks such as the development of alternative reports on the implementation of government programs, and giving the NPC President the right to attend meetings of state secretaries. However, no formal steps were taken to adopt this initiative due to the change in governments.

Some CSOs do not believe the NPC should exist at all, as they fear that the government will treat the NPC as the only participatory body in public policies and will therefore exclude individual CSOs with expertise in various areas. In addition, as the NPC lacks the capacity to react to every public policy and decision, some CSOs feel that it is more important for individual CSOs to take the initiative to advocate in their areas of expertise.

As a result of an advocacy effort that started in 2017, the Solidarity Fund in Moldova together with other CSOs successfully introduced the LEADER concept—an EU method for supporting rural development at the local level in order to revitalize rural areas and job creation—on the public agenda. At the end of 2019, parliament voted in the first reading on a series of amendments that would allow the official registration of LAGs and the allocation of up to 5 percent of the Agriculture Subsidies Fund to these structures.

CSOs such as Promo Lex, ADEPT, and the Independent Press Association actively monitored the candidates and media coverage of the campaigns during both the parliamentary elections in February and the local elections held in March. The Coalition for Free and Fair Elections, a platform of thirty-five CSOs, also played a key role in monitoring the electoral process and media behavior and developing advocacy efforts for inclusive elections. Some minor irregularities were identified during the parliamentary elections, but these did not have a significant effect on

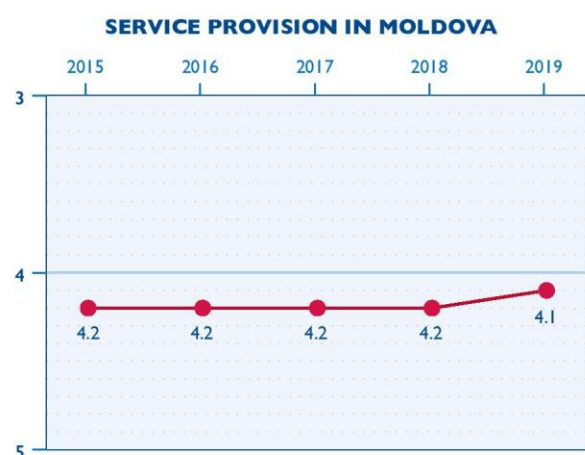


the overall results of the elections. In February, RISE Moldova launched a platform with profiles of political figures, including political candidates, with information about their connections, assets, and other relevant information.

Mechanisms for the participation of CSOs in local decision-making processes continue to develop. Since 2018, LPAs have been required to include in the State Register of local acts all decisions of local and district councils, the orders of the mayor and the district president, the acts of the praetor, and other acts. In this way, all citizens, including CSOs, have the opportunity to monitor the activity of local authorities. By the end of 2019, about 295,338 documents had been published.

CSOs were unable to advocate around the Law on Non-Commercial Organizations during the year, which passed its first reading in May 2018. Some CSOs expressed concerns that negative amendments may be inserted to the law at the last minute without consultations.

SERVICE PROVISION: 4.1



CSO service provision improved slightly in 2019. A growing number of CSOs, particularly mutual benefit associations, diversified their services during the year. For example, the Beekeepers Association from Moldova received accreditation from MARDE to provide trainings for beekeepers and issue training certificates that are recognized by public institutions. By offering such services to its members, these organizations were able to more than double their revenues.

CSOs continue to provide services in areas such as education, entrepreneurship, legal assistance, institutional development, assistance for people with disabilities, and home health services. Services provided by CSOs largely address the needs of beneficiaries and are offered without discrimination. In order to determine

beneficiaries' needs, CSOs generally either address their beneficiaries directly, or carry out surveys, analyses, or other types of studies in the field. In addition, CSOs have access to other studies that assess community needs. For example, the "Baseline study on social services for people with intellectual and psycho-social disabilities and children from vulnerable groups," which was published in April 2019 with funding from the EU and Soros-Moldova, documented and identified the needs of vulnerable people and the regions of Moldova where social services are needed. In November, the Contact Center published the document "Study on social contracting," which contains useful information about challenges in the social contracting process and the legislation that regulates these aspects.

Several CSOs, including CasMed, Keystone, Eco-Razeni, and Dorinta, provide services for a fee or conduct economic activities through social enterprises. There are currently more than twenty social enterprises and a growing number of initiatives and programs support both existing and new social enterprises. In September 2019, the fifth edition of the National Conference for Social Entrepreneurship was organized, which was dedicated to assessing the impact of social enterprises and promoting good practices.

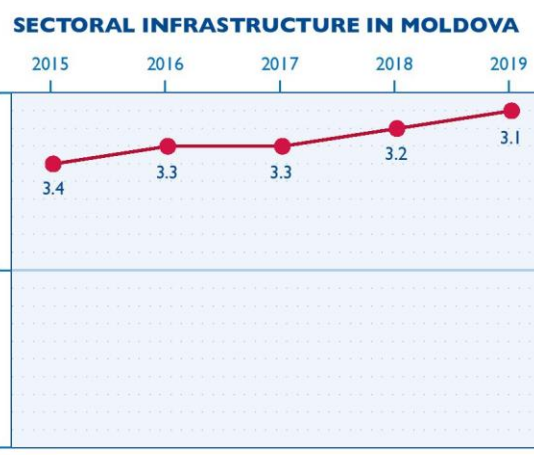
As in previous years, foreign donors finance the majority of the costs of CSO service provision. In addition, there are examples of social contracting by the state at both local and national levels through procurement or tender procedures. During 2019, for example, the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection provided the International Center La Strada with a contract of approximately \$51,500 to manage the telephone hotline for victims of violence. However, there were also instances when the authorities cancelled contracts that had been awarded to CSOs. In the autumn of 2019, the State Chancellery cancelled three of the eight contracts that had been awarded by the previous government in February and decreased the budgets of the other five contracts. For example, the Resource Center for Human Rights (CReDO) received only about 60 percent of the initially awarded sum of MDL 1.2 million (approximately \$68,500). The State Chancellery stated that the reason for these decisions was that the procedures to award the contracts were not transparent.

The use of contracts by central and local authorities is limited by various factors. First, according to official estimates, more than 80 percent of LPAs are not financially viable and therefore have limited capacity to set up or procure new services. At the same time, current regulations regarding public procurement procedures and public-private partnerships are not adapted to the field of social service contracting or the specificities of nonprofit providers. Despite this fact, CSOs make efforts to provide these services. For example, in 2019 CasMed, one of the most active service providing organizations in the north of Moldova, provided over 108,000 visits to provide medical and social care at home, serving over 2,000 beneficiaries. The National Health Insurance Company fully covered the costs of 1,252 of these visits, while the rest were covered partially by LPAs (about 30 percent of remaining costs), patients (10 percent), and various local and international donors (60 percent).

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 3.1

The infrastructure supporting the CSO sector improved slightly in 2019 as local grantmaking capacity has improved, which has increased the amount of funding that reaches local CSOs.

Organizations that provide institutional support and respond to the basic needs of CSOs and active citizens operate in Chisinau municipality and regions outside the capital. Among the main support organizations are ProCoRE and CasMed, which operate in the northern region of the country, Contact Cahul for the southern region, and the Pro-Europe association and Pilgrim-Demo Center for ATU Gagauzia. National support organizations include the Contact Center and the Center for Organizational Consultancy and Training (CICO). These organizations provide small grants to local CSOs, organize thematic events and trainings, and provide support and advice focused on capacity building, policy and procedure development, and legal advice on how to create or reorganize CSOs.



Support programs for CSOs in specific areas also continued to operate throughout the year. Producers and farmers associations continued to receive institutional support and grants through the USAID-funded Moldova High Value Agriculture Activity (HVAA), implemented by Chemonics International, while media CSOs received institutional support and training through the MEDIA-M project.

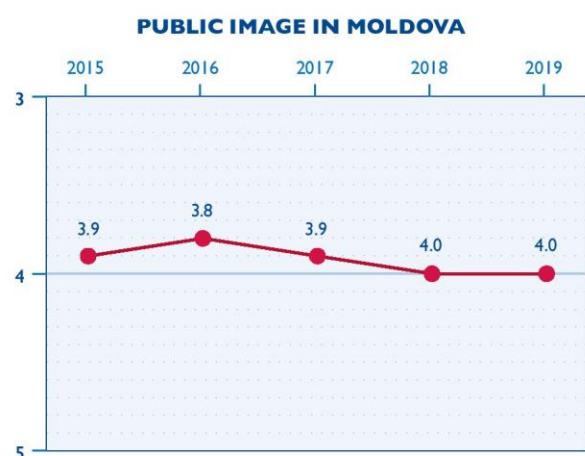
Local grantmaking capacity continues to grow. At the beginning of the year, the Citizens' Empowerment in the Republic of Moldova project, funded by the EU and implemented by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (GIZ), was launched. The EUR 4.9 million project aims to empower citizens by increasing CSO participation in decision-making processes at the local, regional, and national levels. Local CSOs will sub-grant funds under this program. For example, CasMed and ProCoRe will provide financial and technical support to at least twenty-five local CSOs in the northern part of the country to support innovative ideas for sustainable socio-economic development of local communities in four priority areas: water and sewerage infrastructure, waste management, energy efficiency, and environment and climate change. The same approach will be applied in the center and south of Moldova. In April 2019, the project Development of Local Civil Society in the Republic of Moldova was launched. The project is funded by the EU and implemented by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) in partnership with four local CSOs. More than 80 percent of the project's EUR 3.7 million budget will be distributed as grants to smaller CSOs based outside of the capital for projects that stimulate the involvement of citizens in solving community problems.

Over ten local and national platforms and coalitions including the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, Platform for Gender Equality, and Platform for Social Entrepreneurship, continued to be active in 2019. In addition, some new networks were created. In July, the Platform for the Development and Promotion of Philanthropy in the Republic of Moldova was founded by over twenty-five CSOs. The platform will promote the development of philanthropy and advocate to improve the normative framework in the field.

CSOs have access to training opportunities, but there is still a lack of training and experts in some fields, such as financial management and media relations. At the same time, donors do not usually finance trainings in areas such as foreign languages and computer classes from which CSOs would benefit.

Several events took place during the year that encouraged collaboration between CSOs and other sectors. In April, the LEADER National Network and Solidarity Fund PL organized the EU-Moldova LEADER Conference, which brought together about 500 representatives of different institutions and organizations interested in the LEADER approach. In addition, in April, the LEADER National Network, which brings together LAGs from Moldova, joined the European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD), which brings together over 2,500 LAGs from twenty-six countries. This is expected to contribute to the implementation of the LEADER methodology in Moldova and increase cooperation between business actors, LPAs, and CSOs at the local level.

PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.0



The CSO sector's public image did not change significantly in 2019.

CSOs were quite visible in the media throughout the year. Changes made to the media legislation and the Audiovisual Code that require media channels to broadcast at least eight hours of local media products a day spurred the creation of new programs and talk shows that frequently included CSO representatives as guests.

During the year, the number of verbal attacks against civil society decreased. However, specific organizations that opposed certain legislative changes or government initiatives were targeted during certain events, such as the parliamentary and local elections.

The population's confidence in CSOs is improving. According to the Institute for Public Policy's Barometer of Public Opinion (BPO) from December 2019, 24 percent of the population expressed confidence in NGOs, an increase from 19 percent in 2018. In 2019, the BPO introduced a chapter on civil society aimed at increasing understanding on how NGOs are perceived. According to the information collected through these new questions, the public's knowledge of civil society is quite low: less than 20 percent of surveyed people have good knowledge about civil society, while 34.3 percent do not know what civil society means. Only 12.5 percent know to some extent about the activities of different NGOs and only 11.6 percent of the total have interacted with an NGO during the last three years.

None of the three governments that held office during 2019 demonstrated an openness to civil society. Except for the attempts to revitalize the NPC, there was no other visible progress in the relationship between government and civil society. However, businesses increasingly perceive CSOs as platforms that can help solve their problems and useful resources for developing their own businesses. During 2019, some new associative structures, such as the Honey Exporters Association of Moldova, were registered. Representatives of CSOs and businesses came together for the Corporate Social Responsibility Workshop, which was organized in November by Diaconia Social Mission, to learn more about corporate social responsibility.

CSOs increasingly promote their work and image on social media, with Facebook being the most used platform. In 2019, however, amendments were adopted to the fiscal legislation that will require international companies providing electronic services in Moldova, such as Facebook and Google, to register in Moldova and pay taxes. This is expected to increase the prices for promoting services on these platforms, which could decrease the amount of online promotion CSOs can afford. CSOs also promote their activity by organizing public events. In 2019, the Mass-Media Forum brought together representatives of media organizations and CSOs. In 2019, TV8 launched an online platform to encourage, promote, and informally support the initiatives of active organizations and citizens.

Most organizations still do not understand the need or importance of implementing and adhering to ethical standards and norms in their work. The majority of CSOs do not publish annual financial reports with financial

statements, as this is only legally required of CSOs with public benefit status. Generally, only large organizations publish financial statements and activity reports, often in order to meet donor requirements.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed herein are those of the panelists and other project researchers and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or FHI 360.

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