

Taking Stock: Increasing the Integrity of Public Procurement

Our project aims to increase the integrity of public procurement in Moldova. Efforts to bring about such systemic improvements are a marathon, not a sprint – or actually maybe even closer to an “Iron Man” competition: they require high levels of energy and perseverance over the long haul, and in different disciplines. In the last quarter of calendar year 2023, we have entered the final third of our 58-months implementation period (September 2020 – June 2025). As important components have been started recently, it is a good time to take stock of where we stand.

The project is divided into incremental phases that build on each other: the Inception phase was completed in 2021 with the publication of a *Baseline Study on Public Procurement in Moldova*. In the subsequent Training phase, a curriculum was developed, and 34 CSOs and investigative journalists were trained over three months in 2022 to strengthen their capacity to monitor public procurement. The current Monitoring phase has seen 13 grants provided to ten CSOs and investigative journalists who conduct monitoring activities. The first batch of eight grants was concluded in 2023, while the second batch of five more grants is ongoing, with expected completion in mid-2024. The total number of monitored CAs was 71. The cumulative estimated financial worth of the monitored procedures was 93,339,581 USD. The development of tools under the project supports and guides CSOs in conducting such monitoring – particularly the [Monitoring Public Procurement Guide: A tool for Civil Society](#), and a website, to be launched in Q2 of 2024. All of these activities have been highly successful – noting that their implementation is largely within the control of the project team.

An additional key component is the building and fostering of an “infrastructure of CSO monitoring” in Moldova. Its main activities include establishing a Coalition of Monitors and a multi stakeholders' group as a cooperation platform and permanent communication mechanism: the National Platform for Public Procurement (NPPP). Both activities were initiated in the second half of 2023. Under the guidance and mentoring of the project team, a Coalition was formed consisting of 30 CSO monitors, including but not limited to sub-grantees of the overall project. Three meetings have been conducted, on 29 June, 29 September, and 13 December. Based on a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the Ministry of Finance and IDIS “Viitorul”, the project team has conducted bilateral consultations with 14 key stakeholders from all sectors and developed terms of reference as well as a strategy. Based on this preparation, a very successful [launch event was for the NPPP](#) took place on 19 December. All major stakeholders, including representatives of the Coalition of Monitors, were present. It was very encouraging to see a launch session and a following inaugural meeting of the platform that were both characterized by a positive spirit, indicating participants’ willingness to cooperate and jointly elaborate recommendations for improving the country’s public procurement system. Likewise, the successful meeting sessions of the Coalition of Monitors, the willingness to work together and learn from each other, are very positive developments. This is particularly encouraging, as these activities are mostly outside the project team’s sphere of control, but instead depend on the contribution of other actors and their willingness to work together.

In summary, we are very pleased with the results accomplished thus far. Over the remaining 18 months of the project, we plan on supporting and strengthening these positive initial achievements through additional activities that will build on and reinforce the current momentum. Hopefully, this will result in the implementation of

recommendations resulting from our project work to improve the system of public procurement. And, almost more importantly, we hope it is enough to strengthen and perpetuate this infrastructure to make it sustainable, lasting well beyond the project duration of June 2025.

Taking stock at present, the project team considers that on a solid basis built over the first phases, we are off to a splendid start of this challenging key component – but far from the finish line.