

Sub-grantees of the Increasing the Integrity of Public Procurement project had a meeting with the Project Director of PTF

[The Institute for Development and Social Initiatives \(IDIS\) Viitorul](#) on Thursday, December 21 held a mentoring session with the sub-grantees of the [Increasing the Integrity of Public Procurement](#) project, in the presence of Hady Fink, Project Director of the [Partnership for Transparency - PTF](#) from the USA, who was visiting the Republic of Moldova. During the meeting, eight organizations of the first round of the sub-grantee program presented the results and impacts of the implemented projects. At the same time, five organizations implementing projects under the second round of the sub-grants program reported on the results of the first three months of public procurement monitoring.

The mentoring session also aimed to assess the status of the recommendations addressed to the monitored authorities and decision-makers as a result of the implementation of the first round projects, the reactions of the contracting authorities to the recommendations made, and the extent to which the procurement process has been improved.

Hady Fink: *"For us, the results of the projects are very important, but we are also interested in what happens after you have implemented the projects, which is sustainability. For us, immediate actions are important, but also the long-term results of your activities. We want to see what changes have occurred, whether some monitoring authorities have taken or are taking into account your recommendations. If some are more reluctant, we need to know this so that we can analyze the current situation and know how to move forward."*

Carolina Ungureanu, project manager, deputy director of IDIS Viitorul: *"This meeting is important for us from several points of view. To see how other civil society organizations work and what tools they use when monitoring certain entities or contracting authorities. It is an exchange of experience and the lessons that some organizations have presented can be taken back. Some of the topics covered by monitoring organizations may be the subject of future journalistic investigations"*.

Contact Centre Cahul monitored, in the first round of sub-grants, some public procurement carried out by Cahul City Hall and Cahul District Council. Mihail Cucereanu, project coordinator at the Centre, admitted that he did not have much knowledge in the field of monitoring initially, but in the framework of the project he participated in trainings, where he was trained by specialists in the field. *"As part of the project we formed a monitoring group. We were able to hire a highly experienced technical officer, who taught us what to look out for when monitoring how the works are going. At each monitoring stage we tried to make proposals, which were included as recommendations to the authorities, and we had more openness from Cahul City Hall than from the Cahul RC. One of the members of our monitoring group was included in the public procurement group of the City Hall. At the District Council it is a bit more difficult. During our work on this project there were several comments on the specifications, which were very superficially drafted and not signed by the person who drafted them. As a continuation of what we started, a local transparency council was recently established and members of our monitoring group with whom we worked, now some of them*

are members of this transparency council and monitor the decision-making process at Cahul City Hall, including the procurement process," said **Mihail Cucereanu**.

The Public Association Localinvest from Riscani district, in the first round of grants, monitored the purchases carried out by the Riscani District Council and the Riscani District Hospital. Alexandru Crigan, president of the association, said that during the monitoring procedures a number of deviations from legal norms were detected. *"With the completion of the project, our work on these monitored procurements was not completed. We made recommendations at the end of the monitoring stages, and along the way we continued to receive replies to letters we sent during the project and to which we did not receive a timely response. We had high expectations from the state institutions, in particular the control bodies, to react more promptly. We received answers to the recommendations, but they were quite evasive"*, said **Alexandru Crigan**.

The Public Association Prospect, from the city of Cimislia, monitored, also in the first round, the public procurement of road repairs carried out by the authorities of the city and district. Andrei Bargan, director of the association, said that it was the first time in the history of local government activity that an organization was included in the working group on public procurement. *"They received us coldly at first, but we managed to collaborate. Doing follow-ups at all stages, we noticed that they had a specialist who was good at project documentation, but with planning they were worse. They were planning more based on political factors. They were choosing where to repair certain roads and who to do roads for. We sent all our recommendations and comments to the local administration to adjust the project, because it is not good to plan one thing and do another. In the discussion they say they will consider our recommendations but they do not implement them. Then they are outraged if we insist and they ask why we care. We tell them they have not implemented their planning. I noticed that in actelocale.md, in the protocol services section, everything that is placed is shaded in black and you can no longer understand what information is contained there. I understand from their words that if they cross-hatch no one punishes them. If they leak a name that is not hashed or something, they can be sued and punished for publishing personal data. But this is not about individuals"*, said **Andrei Bargan**.

The media project "With Sense", recipient of the first round of grants, produced five journalistic investigations and five explainer stories to inform the public about how they can access information on public procurement. Liuba Shevciuc, the project manager, said that the investigations checked several contracts with the participation of several economic agents, low-value purchases, high-value purchases, purchases that were made many years ago and were not completed. *"The problem we faced was that some public institutions did not provide us with the requested information. Usually, journalists' work ends when we publish an investigation. These are our competences which work in the contexts in which we collaborate with civil society, because they can take our material and put public pressure on the authorities to make certain adjustments to the law, to implement certain things"*, said **Liuba Shevciuc**.

Organizations implementing projects in the second round of sub-grants started work in September this year. They reported the difficulties they encountered during this project implementation period.

The Association for Efficient and Accountable Governance (AGER), was awarded grants in both sub-grant rounds to monitor sectoral public procurement. During the implementation of the first round, amendments were made to the law on sectoral public procurement. And to see the impact of these, it also applied for the second round. Olga Diaconu, project coordinator at AGER, highlighted the results of the first round of project implementation. *"The activities carried out from April to July 2022 included: monitoring procurement in the energy, water, transport and postal services sectors; organizing a round table with stakeholders to discuss the main issues related to the interpretation and application of the provisions of Law 74/2020; drafting and publishing articles; drafting a public policy note; and drafting a monitoring report. As activities are carried out, we are talking about monitoring sectoral procurement, publishing articles on problematic situations in sectoral procurement, etc."*, said **Olga Diaconu**.

The non-profit association Parents in Solidarity was also a beneficiary in both rounds of sub-grants. Valeriu Ciorba, monitor of the association, spoke about the activities planned in the implementation of the project in the second round. *"We are keeping an eye on education in Chisinau municipality. We are monitoring the education directorates of the City Hall, namely how they report on the conduct of low-value public procurement through the Mtender system, a mandatory process since July 1 this year. Information about the procedure, reporting mechanisms, although introduced since July 1, started to appear in September. The presentation of information on small value purchases is rather hidden. There are procurements that, as a procedure, should be carried out on Mtender, but it ends up that in Mtender only the winner is declared. The actual contract does not end up on Mtender. There are a lot of complicated exceptions in the government decision, and the contracting authorities, we believe, misuse them for certain things. The new system does not provide for the link with the e-invoice system and here the percentage of human errors is quite high."* said **Valeriu Ciorba**.

The Public Association Independent Press Association, has been implementing the project Strengthening integrity in public procurement through media contribution since September. Ion Mazur, head of the Advocacy, Campaigns and Publications Department of the association, pointed out that selected procurement procedures within the national programs European Village and European Village Express from 2023-2024 are being monitored. *"We aimed not only to reveal certain shortcomings, violations of public procurement processes, but also to promote good practices, to show that there are local authorities that carry out the processes correctly and to be an example for other authorities and in this way improve the procurement process. Two journalistic investigations have been carried out but not yet published. The authorities concerned were candidates in the local elections this November and the publication of an investigation has been delayed. The second investigation is dragging on because identifying the subject matter is complicated. Some sources, including those involved from the authorities, refuse to provide information in time,"* said **Ion Mazur**.

The Association for Human Rights Lex 21 from Balti municipality is also participating in both rounds of sub-grants. Valeria Ciolac, coordinator of anti-corruption programs in the association, mentioned the planned activities and achievements in the second round. *"We chose to monitor transparency of public procurement in the social assistance sector because with the war and the refugee crisis, the sector has received large funds in the form of*

*humanitarian aid, and where there are more funds there is a greater need for monitoring. In the three months of the project implementation we sent 29 requests for access to information to the Social Assistance Directorates in the North of Moldova and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. The main problem we face is that when it comes to access to information, some authorities do not respond at all. In the second round, LEX 21 expanded its monitoring area. In addition to the municipal authorities of Balti, all current procurement procedures carried out by the Social Welfare Directorates of Edinet, Soroca, Briceni, Dondușeni, Drochia, Fălești, Florești, Glodeni, Ocnîța, Râșcani, Sângerei and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection are analyzed", said **Valeria Ciolac**.*

Transparency International-Moldova in the second round of sub-grants is monitoring public procurement in the Chisinau City Hall, Architecture, Urban Planning and Land Relations Department and the Self-Sanitation Agency. Lilia Zaharia, executive director of TI-Moldova, said that there are a lot of procurement procedures carried out by municipal enterprises and the Chisinau City Hall, but the procedures were selected that concern areas with vulnerability factors and increased risks of corruption, or procurement that concern controversial and problematic issues. *"Colleagues have identified that there were many promotional advertising materials purchased by the Auto-Sanitation and Architecture Directorate and we want to see the reasons why a lot of money has to be spent to promote the services provided by the Directorate. We looked gradually from 2020 to 2023 and there is an increase in these purchases of services. Being in the election campaign, when we asked for information, we were asked "but who made you write journalistic investigations?". They would come with accusations that we were acting on the instructions of a political party. And that was one of the reasons why the publication of journalistic material was delayed: that we didn't get enough information in time. This activity of ours is not to punish or point fingers at public authorities, but we want to come up with some recommendations, to help them", said **Lilia Zaharia**.*

The project [Increasing the Integrity of Public Procurement](#) is implemented by the Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) Viitorul, in partnership with the American organization Partnership for Transparency Fund. The project aims to support public procurement reforms in Moldova that will increase transparency and fairness in public procurement by empowering citizens to hold relevant institutions accountable.

[IDIS Viitorul](#) is an independent think tank established in 1993 that combines social, political and economic research with strong advocacy components. The institution conducts applied monitoring research in several areas: economics, social policy, EU policies, regional development, but also security and foreign policy risks.

[Partnership for Transparency](#) (PTF) is based in Washington DC and its mission is to promote innovative civil society-led approaches to improving governance, increasing transparency, promoting the rule of law, and reducing corruption in developing and emerging countries. Since 2000, PTF has supported over 250 projects aimed at promoting NGO involvement in decisions, processes, and laws that enforce transparency and accountability in public procurement.