

The Public Procurement Monitoring Coalition held its third working meeting

At the third meeting of the [Coalition for Monitoring Public Procurement](#) on December 13, the [Open Spending EU](#) Coalition related their experience on a systemic approach to transparency in public spending. Another topic addressed was the shortcomings identified by the Association for Efficient and Accountable Governance (AGER) in the monitoring process for health procurements carried out by the Center for Centralized Public Procurement in Healthcare (CAPCS).

The [Coalition for Monitoring Public Procurement](#) was created at the initiative of [the Institute for Development and Social Initiatives \(IDIS\) Viitorul](#), within the project [Increasing the Integrity of Public Procurement in Moldova](#), implemented in partnership with [Partnership for Transparency](#). The coalition aims to support public procurement reforms in the Republic of Moldova. More than 20 civil society organizations, investigative journalists, experts and independent monitors from the Republic of Moldova are members of the Coalition.

Carolina Ungureanu, the project coordinator and vice director at IDIS Viitorul, said at the beginning of the meeting that it is important for the members of the Public Procurement Monitoring Coalition to know the good practices of other organizations that monitor public procurement. *"It is important for us as members of civil society to have additional tools and knowledge about how public procurement should be monitored and how public money is spent. It is important for us to know exactly the most appropriate ways, so that we can then have qualitative monitoring and come up with recommendations to improve the public procurement system, for contracting authorities, but also for decision makers, who are responsible for public procurement policies."*

In attendance at the meeting was **Gina S. Lentine**, Program Officer, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Office of Global Programs, said that civil society in Moldova has always had a role to play in strengthening democracy, in promoting open and constructive discussions with the government, and in helping to hold the government accountable for failures, regardless of who is in power. *"You really have a very important job in advancing efforts in this direction. I am delighted to hear about your efforts and the solutions that you are proposing. After all the work that you are doing, I have seen that you have been able to make progress, like in increasing the integrity of public authorities at the national level. We see that they have started to respond to some of your recommendations. They are not simply taking them into consideration, but are actually actively working with you to address some of these important issues that you have identified. We are very proud to be able to support these efforts of yours in this important work aimed at advancing anti-corruption efforts here in the Republic of Moldova at this vital time for the country, for its growing democracy."*

Krzysiek Izdebski, co-leader of the Open Spending EU Coalition, gave an online presentation of the Open Spending EU Coalition. According to the co-leader, the Coalition brings together academics, experts and specialists working in different EU Member States for the transparency of public procurement spending and EU funds. At the same time, the legislation

and regulations of the public procurement systems of EU member countries were analyzed and it was found that there are many laws and many regulations, but the important thing is that there is transparency in the spending of EU funds. *"Public procurement is an important part of our work, but there are other ways in which EU money is spent. We want to make sure that the whole system is absolutely transparent. We want to follow the money that comes directly from the EU budget to subcontractors."*

Krzysiek Izdebski also said that while there are differences in European countries' procurement legislation, they are trying to influence the legal provisions to make the right changes. In the coming years, says the Coalition co-leader, members will also focus on monitoring countries at the pre-accession stage of EU membership, as there are different transparency rules for different funds managed by the EU and the aim is to support countries in the pre-accession process. *"Here we are not talking about monitoring for the sake of monitoring, but we want to check whether or not there has been corruption in spending. We very much support the pre-accession process, but we need to come up with some key rules for transparency of EU funds."*

Another of the Coalition's activities, says Krzysiek Izdebski, is to ensure that all public procurement and spending is public. This means that member states are required to publish public procurement data in real time. *"In recent years we have focused on bringing more transparency to the recovery and resilience funds that have been distributed by the EU in the pandemic. We found that there was no provision for transparency in the regulation behind these funds, nor in Member States' regulations. There was no obligation to publish data on actual expenditure. From the very beginning it was a problem to understand where this money went. And there was the problem of trust in public institutions, which is decreasing and we are trying to be very vocal about these issues. There are major discrepancies between countries. We need to create policies to increase the quality of human rights. We need to understand how money is spent in the EU member states as well. We are trying to intervene, and to get in touch with decision-makers to generate those necessary changes."*

Olga Diaconu, Project Coordinator at the Association for Efficient and Accountable Governance (AGER), presented the shortcomings identified by AGER in the monitoring process of centralized procurements in health carried out by CAPCS. Double standards were found in the procurement of medicines and major problems were identified in the procurement of ambulances. Diaconu said that in the Republic of Moldova there are medicines and medical devices of poor quality because the government always chooses the lowest-priced offers. *"This is the criterion most often used in public procurement in Moldova, including in the procurement of medicines. We pay a lot of money, but the quality is not always the best. In some cases medicines that are authorized in Moldova are accepted, in other cases medicines unauthorized in countries with high quality standards are purchased. There are also situations where medicines are accepted that have been authorized only in the country of origin of the medicine. There are exceptions in the legislation that allow authorities to juggle. In some cases they buy authorized medicines, in other cases - unauthorized"*.

Discussing ambulance procurement, Diaconu said that this year there were two procurements for ambulances, worth €5 million (~\$5,493,750), in two lots. The procurement specified four by four ambulances because it is difficult to reach some villages with a four by two type vehicles. However, most of the ambulances offered in the two lots were four by two types. In both lots a Romanian company would have been the favored awardee because the company is owned by a state dignitary. Diaconu stated, "*CAPCS, although it indicated in the tender specifications that ambulances meeting EN1789 standards were being procured and reference was made to European directives, nevertheless left it to the discretion of the economic operators to choose how to verify that the ambulances met these criteria.*"

At the meeting, three civil society organizations were assigned to be part of the National Platform for Public Procurement: AGER, Public Association Local Invest, and Transparency International Moldova.

So far, the [Coalition for Monitoring Public Procurement](#) has held two meetings, where several topical issues in the field of public procurement were discussed including: the national program on development of public procurements system for the years 2023-2026, transparency and reporting of low-value procurements, and procurement rigging, among other topics.

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.