

The Public Procurement Monitoring Coalition held its fourth working meeting

On Friday, March 29, 2024, the fourth working meeting of the [Coalition for Monitoring Public Procurement](#) was held. During the event, sub-grantees of the project [Increasing the Integrity of Public Procurement](#), implemented by the [Institute for Development and Social Initiatives \(IDIS\) "Viitorul"](#), in partnership with the [Partnership for Transparency](#), reported on the state of their monitoring activities.

The meeting was also attended by a group of students from the Faculty of Economics of Moldova State University. **Carolina Ungureanu**, project coordinator and vice director of IDIS "Viitorul", told the young people that public procurement has become an area of great interest today and that there is a need to monitor how public money is used. She told them that, as a result, the Coalition, represented by NGOs, activists and experts in the field, is monitoring the use of public money to ensure it is spent transparently. "We are interested in disseminating this information and increasing the capacity of young people, of civil society, to have more experts and representatives overseeing the sector," said Carolina Ungureanu.

Olga Diaconu, project coordinator at the Association for Efficient and Responsible Governance (AGER), presented the activities of the project "Monitoring sectoral procurement in the Republic of Moldova" which monitors procurements under Law No. 74/2020 in the fields of energy, water, transportation, and postal services. Thus, several large contracting authorities were monitored on how they carry out procurements in these sectors in order to detect possible irregularities or risk indicators, as well as good or bad practices. The observations will later be reflected in a report, which will also include recommendations from AGER. This report will be shared with the contracting authorities to bring improvements to the legal framework. Five articles have already been published on certain suspect situations, with risk indicators in the monitoring of sectoral procurement carried out by Chisinau-Gaz, Chisinau International Airport, Termoelectrica, Moldova Railways and Apă-Canal Chisinau.

Ala Revenco, president of the Public Association "Parents in Solidarity", which implements the project "Increasing the integrity of low-value purchases made by the education directorates of the municipality of Chisinau" analyzed the way in which low-value purchases are carried out, under the conditions of the new regulation that came into force on July 1, 2023. As a result, it was found that non-competitive procedures predominate. 96% of the money spent, about 40.4 million lei (~8729292 USD), excluding VAT, was discretionary spending by the education directorates on low-value purchases made on the basis of fiscal invoices and direct contracts. In such cases, the risks of corruption and collusion are very high. At the same time, the contracting authorities monitored carried out 311 and 416 procedures in the third and fourth quarters of 2023 respectively through invoices and direct contracts. 7% of procedures were reported after the deadline in Q3 and 32% in Q4. Through MTender, eight procedures were carried out in the third quarter and four were carried out in the fourth quarter. The thresholds for purchases through tax invoices and direct contracts were exceeded for sixteen procedures in Q3 and eight procedures in Q4.

Ion Mazur, head of the Advocacy, Campaigns and Publications Department of the Public Association "Independent Press Association", which implements the project "Strengthening Integrity in Public Procurement through Media Contribution", said that several procurement

procedures of the National Programme's "European Village" and "European Village Express" projects have been monitored in order to carry out journalistic investigations and recommendations for authorities and economic entities, as well as to promote good local governance practices through the production of thematic articles. Three investigations and three articles on best practices were published. Concerning the Monitoring Report on the correctness of the use of public procurement procedures by the first level local public administration, with proposals to eliminate illegalities and recover public money, the expert contracted to make the report analyzed 29 contracts and procurement procedures out of the 65 planned.

Diana Grosu, president of the Association for Human Rights Lex XXI, which implements the project "Monitoring and promoting transparency of public procurement in the social assistance sector in the Republic of Moldova", said that the project monitors public procurement carried out by the general directorates of social assistance in the northern part of the Republic of Moldova and by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, and the results of the monitoring will be reflected in seven investigations and seven investigative reports. In the meantime, four investigations and three investigative reports have been carried out. The results of the investigations will be included in a monitoring report with recommendations to the contracting authorities/entities. "What we did kind of upset the authorities, given that we monitored how they use public money. As a result of these investigations, various threats were made, as the authorities are not used to someone monitoring them," said Diana Grosu.

Lilia Zaharia-Cravenco, Executive Director of Transparency International-Moldova, which implements the project "Public Procurement in the City Hall of the Municipality of Chisinau. Chisinau under the magnifying glass of transparency", said that information from the procurement plans of the Chisinau City Hall and municipal enterprises for 2023-2024 was collected and analyzed. She said that several procurements were selected for monitoring in 2023 and that the contents of the budgetary and procurement components of websites belonging to Chisinau City Hall, the Directorate of Architecture, Urbanism and Land Relations and the MQ Autoalubritate were analyzed. The following information was selected: information from M-Tender and www.achizitii.md on the purchases made by the contracting authorities monitored and data on awarded contracts registered with the Public Procurement Agency. Information was also requested from municipal enterprises on purchases made in 2023. "The focus was on procurements with vulnerability factors and increased risks of corruption, but also those with significant procurement value. Contracting authorities seem to be more tempted to cancel procedures than to remedy them, a finding that emerged from the analysis of the decisions of the National Agency for Solving Complaints. We had difficulties at some stages of the journalistic investigations, but these have been overcome. We will also produce a monitoring report and hold a journalists' club where we will invite the monitored institutions and the bidders who submitted complaints," said Lilia Zaharia.

During the meeting, Valeriu Ciorba, a monitor from Parents in Solidarity, presented the draft of a public appeal from civil society regarding low-value public procurement. According to Valeriu Ciorba, nowhere in the legislation is it stipulated that contracts from 150 thousand to 350 thousand lei, which are carried out by Mtender, must be published. Thus, it is

requested that certain interventions be made in the Government's decision regulating these procedures, so that those contracts that take place through Mtender are published.

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](#), 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.

So far, [Coalition for Monitoring Public Procurement](#) has held three meetings, where a number of topical issues in the field of public procurement have been discussed.

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. 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, and 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.