



Public procurement reform is progressing, but concrete results are lagging: digitalization and centralization remain the main challenges

The reform of the public procurement system in the Republic of Moldova has made progress during 2023–2026, particularly in terms of the regulatory framework and the professionalization of specialists. However, the implementation of measures aimed at delivering concrete results is lagging, particularly in the areas of digitalization and procurement centralization. This is one of the key conclusions of an assessment note prepared by IDIS "Viitorul" on the implementation of reforms under the Growth Plan Reform Agenda, as part of the EU-funded project "Supporting Moldova's public procurement reform in the EU accession context."

According to Diana Enachi, a procurement expert at IDIS "Viitorul" and author of the assessment note, the Reform Agenda of the Growth Plan for 2025–2027 establishes three major directions for modernizing the system: the digitalization of procurement, the professionalization and certification of specialists, and the development of centralized procurement. The targets include piloting the new electronic procurement system—with modules such as eTendering, eAwarding, eInvoicing, and eComplaint—with 70% of procurements conducted through the system; having at least three centralized procurement bodies operational and 25% of procurements carried out centrally; and certifying at least 200 specialists and implementing at least 10 training programs by June 2027.

Regarding digitalization, progress is considered limited. Although the concept for the new e-procurement system and the terms of reference have been developed, its actual development has not yet begun. Of the three planned actions, only one has been fully completed, while two had not been initiated as of August 2026. The assessment highlights the risk of delays, as the development and operationalization of the new system are scheduled for 2026–2027, while the technical development is estimated to take approximately 18 months. The priority must therefore be to move from merely conceptualizing the system to implementing an end-to-end digital procurement process that includes contract management, integrated e-forms, e-invoicing and e-complaint systems, as well as electronic catalogs.

The professionalization and certification component is the only one showing moderate progress. The relevant legal framework has been approved, and the certification mechanism has been launched, with 13 specialists certified in the first round and a 65% pass rate. Of the six planned actions, three have been completed, while the other three are partially implemented. However, the assessment emphasizes that certification should not merely verify knowledge; it should also ensure quality and contribute to the development of professional competencies. The certification mechanism and the list of questions require significant improvements to ensure clarity and relevance to actual procurement practice, including practical scenarios rather than purely theoretical questions, as well as the publication of a clear methodology outlining the competencies being assessed. The review and improvement of the question list should be carried out through a participatory public consultation process involving relevant stakeholders.

The assessment also includes the results of a survey conducted by IDIS "Viitorul" in August 2026 among 27 public and sectoral procurement specialists. The data show that 48.1% of respondents rate the certification process as poorly or very poorly organized, while only 7.4% consider it well or very well organized. At the same time, 81.4% believe that the exam assesses specialists' practical skills only partially, to a limited extent, or not at all, while 74% point to problems related to the clarity and unambiguity of the questions. The findings indicate a need to revise the mechanism so



that certification better evaluates applied professional competencies rather than merely testing knowledge of legislative provisions.

Progress regarding centralization has been limited, although some preparatory actions were partially carried out or initiated during 2026, including a feasibility study, preliminary analyses, consultations, an examination of institutional models, and preparatory activities for piloting. Of the six actions, only one was fully implemented (17%), one was partially implemented (17%), one remains unimplemented (17%), one has not been initiated (17%), while the remaining two have been initiated (33%). The categories of procurement—goods, services and specific works—to be centralized remain unclear, and no legal framework has yet been developed and approved to institutionalize centralized procurement.

For the centralization component, prompt action, extensive public consultation, clear institutional decisions, and the development of regulations and pilot projects are required. This could involve selecting 2–3 categories of goods, services or works for piloting and subsequently scaling up the approach. Given the target of having 25% of public procurement conducted centrally by the end of 2027, and the time required for analysis, category selection, institutionalization, piloting, procurement execution, savings measurement and scaling up, there is a risk that implementation may fall behind the established timeline.

The assessment finds that much of the progress achieved to date has focused on adopting legislation, developing concepts and establishing procedures. By contrast, the development and operationalization of tools capable of bringing about concrete changes in the functioning of the system are lagging behind. According to the assessment note, the success of the reform should be measured by concrete results: fully digitized procurement processes, efficient risk-monitoring tools, competent and certified specialists, centralized procurement that generates savings, and open data—available in real time—that can be used both for public policy development and by civil society for monitoring purposes.

For 2026–2027, the assessment recommends recognizing the role of public and sectoral procurement specialists within the Unified Classification of Public Positions; allowing training programs to be delivered by accredited training centers rather than by a single designated center; accelerating the implementation of the new e-procurement system; clarifying institutional responsibilities; continuously developing specialists' skills; moving toward centralized procurement pilot projects; and establishing a common system of performance indicators. At the same time, the assessment proposes creating a public dashboard to monitor progress in the three areas—digitalization, professionalization and centralization—using indicators such as electronic system usage, interoperability, contract management, the number of certified specialists, savings achieved, procedure duration, the level of competition and beneficiary satisfaction.

Overall, public procurement reform has strengthened the regulatory and institutional framework, but the main challenge remains translating these formal gains into measurable operational and economic results. For the Republic of Moldova, 2026–2027 represents a decisive period for achieving the targets set out in the Growth Plan's Reform Agenda: three operational centralized procurement institutions, 25% of the value of public procurement conducted through them, 200 certified specialists, and the piloting of the new e-procurement system by the end of 2027.



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