

Minutes of the Final Board Meeting

Programme for Improving the Quality of Moldovan Democracy through Parliamentary and Electoral Support

Date: Tuesday, 18 April 2017, 15:00

Venue: Hotel Jolly Alon, Conference Room

Participants:

1. Mrs. Liliana Palihovici, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Moldova
2. Mrs. Alina Russu, Chairwoman of the Central Electoral Commission
3. Mr. Stefan Liller, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP Moldova
4. Mrs. Valentina Buliga, Chairwoman, Committee on Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Parliament of Moldova
5. Mrs. Natalia Iuras, Director, Center for Continuous Electoral Training
6. Mr. Adam Amberg, Head of Development Cooperation, Embassy of Sweden
7. Mrs. Nina Orlova, Senior Programme Officer, Embassy of Sweden
8. Mrs. Ulziisuren Jamsran, Head of Office, UN Women in Moldova
9. Mrs. Barbara Jamar, Chief Child Protection, UNICEF Moldova
10. Mrs. Rodica Ciubotaru, Deputy Chair, Central Electoral Commission
11. Mr. Veaceslav Agrigoroae, Secretary, Central Electoral Commission
12. Mrs. Diana Tacu, Deputy Director, Civil Status Service
13. Mr. Roman Purici, Project Management Specialist, USAID Moldova
14. Mrs. Oleseaa Stamate, National Evaluation Consultant, UNDP Moldova
15. Mrs. Nina Catirev, Senior Adviser, Strategic Planning Unit, Parliament Secretariat
16. Mr. Evghenii Goloșceapov, Program Analyst, Justice and Human Rights, UNDP Moldova
17. Mrs. Svetlana Andries, Programme Manager, Women in Politics Programme
18. Mrs. Victoria Ignat, Component Manager, Women in Politics Programme
19. Mrs. Tanja Hollstein, Electoral Specialist, UNDP Moldova
20. Mr. Sergiu Galitchi, Programme Manager, UNDP Moldova
21. Mrs. Eva Bounegru, Senior Project Officer, UNDP Moldova
22. Mrs. Diana Zaharia, Senior Project Officer, UNDP Moldova
23. Mrs. Victoria Muntean, Senior Project Officer, UNDP Moldova
24. Mr. Iurie Mardari, IT Project Officer, UNDP Moldova

1. Opening of the meeting

Mr. Sergiu Galitchi, Programme Manager, UNDP Moldova

Mr. Galitchi opened the meeting by welcoming the participants to the Final Board Meeting of the Programme for Improving the Quality of Moldovan Democracy through Parliamentary and Electoral Support (Democracy Programme). He highlighted that the purpose of the final Project Board Meeting is to review and evaluate the results achieved by the UNDP Democracy Programme during 2012-2017 in the context of strengthening the institutional capacities of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and the Central Electoral Commission.

Mr. Sergiu Galitchi thanked the representatives of the beneficiary institutions, the Government of Sweden, as well as the development partners for all the support provided to making possible the achievement of the Programme results.

Mr. Stefan Liller, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP Moldova

Mr. Liller opened his statement by greeting the audience and thanked the Parliament and the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), for the excellent cooperation, strong ownership and leadership throughout the Programme implementation. Mr. Liller continued by expressing his acknowledgements to the Governments of Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands and Denmark for their commitment and support to modernise both the Parliament and the Central Electoral Commission. The Deputy Resident Representative noted the importance of the UNDP Democracy Programme for the Republic of Moldova, given that the beneficiary institutions, the Parliament and the Central Electoral Commission, work as the catalysts to empower ordinary citizens to contribute to policies and processes that shape their lives. Mr. Liller noted that during the 4.5 years of Programme implementation important results have been achieved. He highlighted that with the Programme's support the Parliament strengthened its capacities to review and adopt legislation related to EU integration and worked towards becoming more transparent, open and responsive to people's needs. Mr. Liller pointed that with the opening of the Parliamentary Territorial and Information Offices in Edinet, Orhei, Leova and Comrat the Parliament is now also physically closer to citizens. He also stated that both the Parliament and the Central Electoral Commission have undergone Gender Audits and successfully internalized gender sensitive approaches in their day to day work. Moreover, he acknowledged the fact that the Parliament voted, by an almost absolute majority in April last year, to approve Legislative Package 180, which introduced a 40% gender quota on political party lists.

The past 4+ years of strengthening capacities and making improvements to systems and frameworks helped the Central Electoral Commission to deliver, as ODIHR phrased it after the 2016 Presidential Elections, "well administered and professionally conducted" elections, "in line with international standards despite of the extremely limited timeframe for this election". Mr. Liller noted that the Central Electoral Commission, with the support of the Programme, also found new ways to improve the electoral process in the country, using new approaches and a strategy of intergovernmental cooperation, pointing out that Republic of Moldova became a best practice in the international context, pioneering the engagement of Population Registration Agencies under electoral support programs. He also used this opportunity to thank UN Women and UNICEF for their partnership and collaboration in the implementation of the Programme.

On behalf of UNDP, Mr. Liller highlighted the further support both the Parliament and the Central Electoral Commission are to receive, by means of the two follow up projects, built on the lessons learned and the needs that emerged following the implementation of the Democracy Programme. He continued by mentioning that the new Parliament Project was launched in 2016 with the support of the Government of Sweden whilst the new Project to support the Central Electoral Commission is to be launched soon with the support of the US Government and the Embassy of the Netherlands.

2. Retrospective on the Democracy Programme results achieved between 2012 – 2016

Parliament Component

Mrs. Liliana Palihovici, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Moldova

Mrs. Palihovici thanked the Government of Sweden and UNDP Moldova for the good organization and management of the Programme. The Deputy Speaker highlighted the importance of the Programme for the

Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, in particular in the context of the last 7-8 years during which the Parliament has passed through tense political times. Mrs. Palihovici noted that despite these, impressive results have been achieved in development of the Parliament's Secretariat and in providing support to capacities enhancement of the MPs.

Mrs. Palihovici listed the main results achieved with the Programme's support: induction trainings organized for newly elected MPs; the Guide for newly elected MPs produced; enhanced communication skills and higher visibility of the Parliament; launch of the open doors campaign; organization of public hearings of the Committees in the regions, better communication with the civil society; peer to peer visits to learn about the best practices of other national parliaments, enhanced quality of the MPs' legislative activities. The Deputy Speaker further referred to the risks pertaining to the technical support offered to MPs.

Given that MPs are elected for a 4 years' mandate, and there is no certainty that they will be elected in the next legislature, to ensure qualitative legislative processes, the support provided has to be sustainable. Hence, it is important that capacity building interventions are ensured for the staffers of the Parliament Secretariat. In this regard, Mrs. Palihovici listed the highlights in the support offered by the Programme for the Parliament Secretariat: carrying out the functional and institutional analysis of the Secretariat and design of the Anti-Corruption Action Plan that was approved by the Permanent Bureau. Moreover, she noted the activities aiming to enhance the parliamentary outreach activities: establishment of Parliament's Territorial and Information Offices (PTIOs), which significantly improved the communication with citizens and the civil society in the regions; development of a new version of the website, which is to be soon launched and will provide detailed information on the activities of MPs and of the parliamentary fractions. Additionally, Mrs. Palihovici acknowledge the Programme's support in establishing the National GOPAC Chapter in Moldova and the work aiming to support the activities of the Women's MPs Platform.

A great achievement for the Moldovan Parliament noted by Mrs. Palihovici was the fact that a mandatory 40% gender quota on political party lists was voted by an almost absolute majority. Nevertheless, the Deputy Speaker mentioned that this is a partial success, as with the potential change of the electoral system to the uninominal one, ensuring the quota will be a big challenge.

Mrs. Palihovici, on behalf of the Parliament, expressed her appreciation for the work of the Programme Team and thanked the Governments of Sweden and Norway and UNDP for all the support offered during these years. The Deputy Speaker expressed her hope that the currently ongoing Parliament Project will successfully build on the work started in the Democracy Programme's Parliamentary Component and will continue the initiatives that have been deployed.

Mr. Galitchi thanked Mrs. Palihovici for the presentation and offered the floor to Mrs. Nina Catirev, Senior Adviser in the Strategic Planning Unit, Parliament Secretariat, who presented the results achieved by the Secretariat of the Parliament.

Mrs. Nina Catirev, Senior Adviser, Strategic Planning Unit, Parliament Secretariat

Mrs. Catirev highlighted the main results achieved by the Parliament Secretariat with the Support of the UNDP Democracy Programme implemented with the financial support of the Government of Sweden. Mrs. Catirev delivered a detailed presentation on the results achieved in the following areas: institutional and professional capacity building of the MPs and parliamentary staffers; support to institutional development of the Parliament Secretariat by means of improving internal processes and procedures; better visibility to the public on the law making activities and citizens involvement in decision making; support in upgrading Parliament's information systems to facilitate implementation of the e-Parliament concept.

(A detailed PPT presentation available upon request)

Mr. Galitchi thanked Mrs. Catirev for her presentation and invited Mrs. Russu, Chairwoman of the CEC to present the results.

Electoral Component

Mrs. Alina Russu, Chairwoman of the Central Electoral Commission

On behalf of the CEC Mrs. Alina Russu welcomed the audience and expressed her highest appreciation towards the initiative, support and assistance offered by the UNDP Democracy Programme, the financial support of the Government of Sweden and Norway for their flexibility and adaptability to the real needs of

the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), crucial for the improvement of the electoral processes and legislation of the Republic of Moldova.

The CEC has built strong in house capacities to deliver and manage elections in a timely and professional manner, by increasing the level of transparency, accuracy and credibility in the electoral processes in Moldova which was visible in the past elections.

Mrs. Russu presented the main results achieved by the Electoral Component of the Democracy Programme in line with the Programme Outputs:

- Regulation on accessibility of persons with disabilities to the electoral processes developed, approved and implemented during the 2016 Presidential Elections;
- The CEC became the Regional Champion in gender mainstreaming and providing sex - disaggregated data on the electoral processes for all types of elections;
- The CEC became the first public institution with ISO certification in quality management and data security since 2014 – a best example in the government structure;
- Feasibility study on remote voting tools, specifically Internet Voting, undertaken and possibilities conceptualized – widely shared within the Government;
- A modernized Concept for an IT-based Integrated System of the Civil Status Acts for the Civil Status Service developed, as final aim for the future being the improved data import to the State Register of Voters;
- Fully functioning State Automated Information System “Elections” developed and upgraded that enhanced the transparency of electoral processes, being also internationally recognized as best practice;
- Strongly enhanced Voters Lists - 100% elimination of data duplications due to the development and implementation of the State Register of Voters;
- Real time display of results during the Election Day that increased the transparency of the electoral process;
- New Address Law and IT System of the Address Register developed in collaboration with Agency for Land Relations and Cadastre and State Enterprise “Cadastru”;
- Further important registers developed and adjusted to ensure accurate data for electoral processes (Ministry of Defence/ Ministry of Justice);
- Real time data exchange and interoperability among central public authorities supported through the development of the Law on data exchange and interoperability;
- Technical Specifications of the Political Party Finance and Reporting IT Module developed;
- Large scale public information/voter information campaigns for the 2014 Parliamentary Elections, 2015 General Local Elections and 2016 Presidential Elections supported, which reached 80% of the population, as per the Surveys conducted, with the Programme’s support.

(A detailed PPT presentation available upon request)

Mrs. Russu offered the floor to Mrs. Natalia Iuras, Director of the Centre for Continuous Electoral Training (CCET), who provided an overview of the results achieved in strengthening the systems for electoral training, which she said was recognized as the best practice in the region.

Mrs. Natalia Iuras, Director, Centre for Continuous Electoral Training

Mrs. Natalia Iuras noted that since 2014 the Democracy Programme provided support towards improving the systems and processes and enhanced the capacities of CCET to provide improved trainings every year. The main results achieved during these years were mentioned as follows:

- Creation of innovative approaches to reach out young electorate – mock elections, public lessons, interactive presentations for high school and university students, master program in political and electoral management, programs for Volunteers etc. More than 5,000 young people were trained in 77 schools throughout the country;

- Training of electoral officials at all levels – (around 45,000 persons) - over the lifetime of the Democracy Programme, thousands of electoral professionals have learned to organize, manage and observe elections to ensure more transparent and inclusive electoral processes;
- E-learning Platform: The Programme helped the CCET in developing and then upgrading the E-learning Platform to be used and accessed by any interested in learning persons to be certified in electoral management. Currently, the Platform has 33 training courses in both Romanian and Russian languages for different types of election actors. The Platform has integrated off-and on-line approach to achieve better and extended impacts; such as reduced training costs, rapid deployment of content, opportunities to easy access information about the electoral management;
- The IT-based Register of Electoral Officials was developed and connected to the E-learning Platform and the State Register of Voters. The Register of Electoral Officials is constantly updated, currently counting more than 31,000 electoral officials.

Mrs. Russu thanked Mrs. Iuras and expressed her hopes towards maintenance of the collaboration between the institutions.

Mr. Galitchi thanked the ladies for the detailed presentation and gave the floor to Mrs. Olesea Stamate, National Consultant to the Final Evaluation of the Democracy Programme to present the evaluation report developed jointly with the International Consultant Mrs. Sue Nelson.

3. Presentation of the Democracy Programme Evaluation Report for 2012 – 2016

Mrs. Olesea Stamate, National Evaluation Consultant, UNDP Moldova

Mrs. Olesea Stamate thanked the participants in the evaluation process for their contributions to the report and for taking time to discuss and share the views on the Programme implementation. She noted that as part of the evaluation process, using differed means and tools, 87 persons were interviewed.

Mrs. Stamate mentioned that the Parliament Component of the Programme has been reflected in the report more critical than the Electoral Component, noting that in terms of political interest, agenda, complexity of the structure, and other circumstances the Parliament shall not be compared to the CEC, which is much smaller as institution and had a change oriented chairperson who was drive of change towards achieving the results.

Parliament Component Findings:

In terms of capacities building - although the Programme initially focused on human rights and gender equality, it provided a broader range of expertise and capacity building activities, which strengthened the institutional structures of the Parliament's Secretariat and the professional expertise and knowledge for some of its staff and Members of Parliament. Broadening of the scope was found as *appropriate and relevant*. Results included increased awareness on issues of EU approximation, gender equity, child rights and anticorruption.

Strengthening legislative and oversight functions – the offered support helped strengthen the work of the Legal Department and parliamentary committees through the development of standardized procedures, such as those for the legal review of the legislation and public hearings. The sector knowledge has increased and a better understanding of the potential of the oversight process was ensured. If continued, these types of efforts should substantially increase the effectiveness of Parliament's legislative and oversight efforts and eventually increase the accountability of the executive.

Strengthening representational functions - development of four Parliamentary Constituency Outreach Offices (PCIOs) under the program created a useful tool for MPs' and parliamentary outreach, as well as for constituents. The potential impact is far larger than the budget they use (their budget is only 1% of the budget of the Parliament). However, the evaluation identified that these offices are underutilized by some MPs who prefer to use their own channels in the outreach campaigns. The Parliament's communications strategy and some MPs and staff skills were strengthened through strategic communications planning, training and equipping Parliament for the live streaming of sessions.

However, Mrs. Stamate noted that all outreach efforts have not translated to an increase in citizen trust in Parliament which has been affected by the general political and economic environment, and which fell from 22% in 2012 to 6% by the end of the Programme.

Electoral Component Findings:

Building capacity

- Strengthened institutional capacity of the CEC and the CCET as a result of the Programme support;
- Facilitated the CEC to achieve International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certification for the quality of its management systems and data security;
- Notable achievements in mainstreaming gender and promoting gender equality;
- Efforts to increase the accessibility of persons with disabilities (PWD) and marginalized groups.

Strengthening strategic and legal frameworks

- Impressive and comprehensive IT electoral management system with its State Automated Information System "Elections" (SAISE);
- The Programme supported the development of a Feasibility Study for Internet Voting that is expected to be piloted for out-of-country voting;
- Some notable electoral legal reforms were undertaken with Programme support but a comprehensive look at the legal framework should be taken.

Strengthening state IT systems

- Strategic and comprehensive approach to improve the quality of the State Register of Voters;
- Supported the Civil Status Service, Ministry of Defence, SE "Cadastru" on improving their data bases, and ensuring interoperability between them and the State Register of Voters. If completed, this will decrease the burden on citizens for obtaining various documents, reduce time for these administrative processes, provide more accurate information for policy makers and reduce opportunities for corruption.

Strengthening public trust, participation and information

- The standardization of ballot boxes and booths added fairness to the elections by eliminating the partisan nature of some voting set ups;
- The Programme contributed with voter information efforts undertaken by the CEC/CCET and two networks of civil society organizations (CSOs) targeting people with disabilities and marginalized groups;

However, as with other state institutions, the level of trust in the CEC has also decreased from 70% (2010) to 49% (2015). Although this level is significantly higher than that found for Parliament, much work still should be done with civic education and communications.

In conclusion, Mrs. Stamate pointed out that the Democracy Programme was needed and highly relevant within the Moldovan context and timeframe, as it strengthened Parliament's legislative and oversight functions for the areas assisted; increased the degree to which gender and the human rights dimensions were taken up by Parliament and within the CEC; increased the opportunities for outreach by Parliament and MPs; and improved the electoral administration of the electoral process in several areas.

(A detailed PPT presentation available upon request)

Mr. Galitchi thanked Mrs. Stamate for the comprehensive presentation and offered the floor to Mrs. Tanja Hollstein, the Electoral Specialist UNDP Moldova.

4. Programme Assets disposal

Mrs. Tanja Hollstein, Electoral Specialist, UNDP Moldova, suggested to the Board to consider the approval of a no-cost extension of the Electoral Component of the Programme until end of July, 2017. Due to the delays in the finalisation of some complex IT development activities, specifically for the Address Register

IT System and SAISE-Admin, not all payments towards the Contracts signed with the developers had been done.

Mrs. Palihovici noted that this question could only be considered as a request for further approval by all the members of the Project Board.

Mr. Evghenii Goloșceapov, Program Analyst, Justice and Human Rights, UNDP Moldova, suggested to include this issue in the Minutes of the Final Board Meeting, and if there will be no objections from the Board members, it will be considered as approved.

Mr. Sergiu Galitchi suggested the members of the Board approve the transfer of the assets of the Electoral Component in the amount of USD 15,033.21 to the implementing partner – Central Electoral Commission, as specified below:

UNDP Tag ID (UNDP bar-coded label)	BU (currently in ATLAS)	Description (Item name/ model/manufacture)	Serial Number (Not applicable for furniture)	Year of Purchase	Purchase Value (USD)	Net Book Value (USD)
00000000834	MDA10	Xerox Work Centre 4250	3846211259	24/07/2012	2,200.00	1,114.45
00000001020	MDA10	WorkCentre 5325	3322506090	24/12/2014	2,688.00	2,128.00
00000001026	MDA10	NISSAN X-TRAIL CLASSIC	JN1TANT30U0150625	06/08/2009	23,481.84	8,968.76
00000001058	MDA10	HP EliteBook840 G2	5CG5456M1Q	22/12/2015	1,632.00	1,411.00
00000001059	MDA10	HP EliteBook840 G2	5CG5456M1Z	22/12/2015	1,632.00	1,411.00
Total						15,033.21

The assets (non-UNDP assets) purchased for the Programme Team use amounting to USD 11,227.57 (furniture - USD 6,445.67; communication accessories – USD 2,511.39; office machineries – USD 1,158.12; IT Equipment Hardware – USD 882.80; office equipment – USD 229.59) will be transferred to the new Elections Project.

5. Questions and Answers

Mr. Galitchi opened the floor to comments, questions and answers.

Ms Svetlana Andries, Programme Manager, Women in Politics Programme on behalf of the Programme expressed appreciation for the results achieved by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and the Central Electoral Commission within the Democracy Programme and expressed her gratitude for the joint activities.

Mr. Goloșceapov was interested to hear about key ideas for the future, regarding the online voting, as this would be an important issue for Moldova due to the big number of Moldovan citizens abroad. Online voting will give the possibility to engage those people in the electoral processes in the country.

Mrs. Russu stated that the e-voting is included in the Strategic Development Plan of the CEC to be tested as a pilot in the next 2018 Parliamentary Elections. Mrs. Russu mentioned that this activity will be supported by the new Elections Project which will be launched with the support of UNDP and development partners.

Mrs. Iuras mentioned that CEC together with CCET would like to establish District Electoral Commissions in the regions, that will act as permanent bodies, and asked Mrs. Palihovici for some good practices that helped the Parliament in the establishment of the PTIOs.

Mrs. Palihovici responded that there are different opinions about the benefits of the regional offices in the Parliament. Some consider the PTIOs as useful, whilst others state that they don't need them. The Deputy Speaker shared a positive example of the work of the PTIOs, undertaken jointly with UN Women and UNDP, which is the organisation of the Regional Forums. These offered the platform for women MPs to meet people in the regions and hear about the problems in the regions and then bring these to discussions in the Parliament in order to find solutions. Mrs. Palihovici appreciated this activity as a successful one, and noted that even though in the beginning only women MPs attended the forums, over time men MPs joined the discussions as well. She noted the PTIOs' staff involvement in the organization of the Forums.

To conclude, the Deputy Speaker stated that to enhance the role of the PTIOs, a more strategic vision should be applied and a strong connection between the offices and the Parliament should be ensured to allow efficient functioning of the offices and to increase their impact in the regions.

Mr. Galitchi thanked all members of the Board for their presentations, active participation, inputs, and declared the meeting closed.

Decisions:

1. Approve the no cost extension for Electoral Component until the end of July, 2017;
2. Transfer the Electoral Component assets to the Central Electoral Commission;
3. Transfer non-assets to the new Elections Project.

Approved by:

Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Moldova
Mrs. Liliana Palihovici



Chairwoman of the Central Electoral Commission
Mrs. Alina Russu



Deputy Resident Representative UNDP Moldova
Mr. Stefan Liller



Director of the Center for Continuous Electoral
Training

Mrs. Natalia Iuras

MR. PAVEL CABACENCO



Senior Programme Officer, Embassy of Sweden
Mrs. Nina Orlova

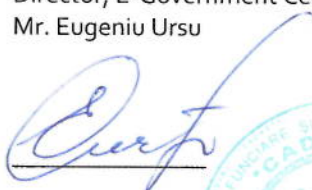


Head of Development Cooperation, Embassy of
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Mr. Adam Amberg



Director, E-Government Center
Mr. Eugeniu Ursu

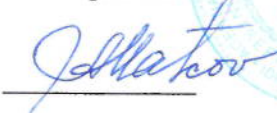


Head of e-Transformation Service, Ministry of
Defence

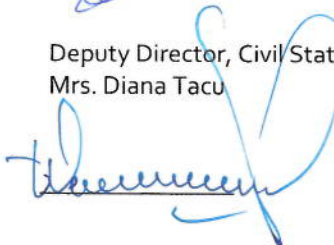
Mr. Alexandru Buruc



Director, SE "Cadastru"
Mrs. Angela Matcov



Deputy Director, Civil Status Service
Mrs. Diana Tacu



Secretary, Coalition for Free and Fair Elections
Mr. Nicolae Panfil

