

**PROVISION FOR POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
DEMOCRACY FUND
Contract NO.PD:C0110/10**

**UDF-MOL-11-469 - Civil Society to Monitor and Contribute to Transparency and
Anti-Corruption Policies in Moldova**

Date: 18 July 2015

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(i) Project data

The project, *Civil Society to Monitor and Contribute to Transparency and Anti-Corruption Policies in Moldova*

beneficiaries. Risks were clearly identified and efforts to make adjustments to project plans in the face of unexpected developments (though these were few) were realistic and well-informed.

Effectiveness: The project made a strong contribution in working towards all three outcomes. First, it supported the more effective functioning of ACA as a network, ensuring that all members, including those from outside Chisinau, were able to participate. Through intensive training, ongoing coaching and financial assistance with small sub-projects, the project also offered valuable support in building the knowledge and practical skills of smaller NGOs, both members and non-members, in the anti-corruption field.

EEF was particularly successful in its drive to strengthen and expand mechanisms for regular engagement between ACA and senior officials of public institutions. At the same time, project support for the preparation and dissemination of policy papers and petitions reinforced the position of the Alliance as a contributor to public dialogue on key issues. Its public visibility and credibility was also enhanced by EEF's shrewd focus on ensuring national, regional and local media coverage for all activities.

One output, worthy of note in demonstrating the kind of contribution which civil society might make to public policy, concerned the preparation and publication of three monitoring reports on progress made between late 2012 and December 2014 on the implementation of the government's National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS). The reports made a difference by facilitating more comprehensive, precise and reliable reporting on the progress made during the reporting period by the 36 state institutions responsible for implementation of the Strategy. It also encouraged and produced improved performance and proved 8 Tm[) Tm[icTBT12sBT/F7a7310(ed)3(8 Tm[) Tm2p

Impact: The essential contribution of the project was to re-establish the Alliance, to energize it and to bring it to greater public prominence. In addition, it strengthened the capabilities of a number of NGOs to take practical action in addressing corruption issues and building public awareness of the consequences of apathy in the face of corruption, both at high levels and in the transactions of daily life. Overall, the project ensured that civil society, through the ACA, had established a secure position as a valued contributor to public dialogue concerning anti-corruption legislation and policy and in monitoring implementation.

Sustainability: With the completion of the project, the Alliance continues to operate, though at a reduced level. For now, EEF has been able to provide the Alliance with modest, short-term support from its core funding, with the hope that it will succeed in obtaining additional international support to enable ACA to continue its work as before. In the absence of such support, it is unlikely that the alliance, per se, will survive, although core member organizations, which have their own sources of funding and core programs, will maintain their activities.

(iii) Conclusions

The project strategy for strengthening the Anti-Corruption Alliance (ACA) as a network, building the capacity of smaller and less-experienced NGOs engaging in anti-corruption work, and facilitating a more visible public presence in the public policy sphere for the Alliance, was well-defined, representing an effective response to the development problem described.

The project met the test of relevance by focusing on a core problem in Moldovan public life of both high-level and petty corruption, while also working to nurture the development of civil society in light of an appreciation of its current weaknesses and limitations.

The project did well in achieving the three outcomes set by the grantee in strengthening the organization of ACA, while also enhancing the quality and extensiveness of its work in advocacy and public dialogue with government. Its consistent attention to ensuring that attention was paid by the mass media to all aspects of the project greatly enhanced the public visibility of the Alliance and its work. Further, EEF was extremely successful in leveraging new openings for Alliance advocacy with senior government decision-makers.

A centrepiece of EEF's efforts to build the capacity of smaller NGOs (both members and non-members of ACA) was the small grants program. By providing preliminary

corruption work were piloted in the course of the sub-projects, and many of these could be considered as the basis for future initiatives undertaken under Alliance auspices.

All members of the Alliance gained from the greater prominence for its work and the higher profile with government it gained through the efforts of the project. However, there was a gap between the smaller and less-established members and the core set of better-resourced organizations. For its long-term viability, the network will be well-advised to seek to close this gap. What the Alliance lacks at present is an interest in devising national-level activities, beyond the capabilities of any individual member, which can engage local CSOs, as well as the core of well-established NGOs.

EEF was quite successful in assisting the Alliance to build stronger foundations in securing its place in the most important forums where it might engage at a high level with representatives of public institutions.

One of the vehicles through which the project demonstrated the positive role which might be played by civil society in prevention of corruption was the preparation of three monitoring reports on progress made in implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy. The reports revealed the lack of attention given to implementation by most of the 36 state ministries and agencies responsible for fulfilling different priorities under the Action Plan. By the end of the project, and the publication of the third report, the quality of formal reporting had improved substantially, as had the overall performance of the state agencies in fulfilling their responsibilities.

The project supported two international study visits for members of the ACA: one to Romania and one to Georgia. Both activities were well-planned and effective.

The project was rated very highly for its efficiency and professionalism in the management of operations and its stewardship of the budget.

In the next few years, high-level external pressures, most notably from the EU, are likely to prod Moldova in the direction of more deep-seated reform. The achievements of the project in ensuring that civil society is now well-positioned with regard to

I. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

The project, *Civil Society to Monitor and Contribute to Transparency and Anti-Corruption Policies in Moldova*, implemented by the Chisinau-based NGO, the East Europe Foundation (EEF), took place between 1 December, 2012 and January 31, 2015 (including a two-month no-cost extension). The total grant was \$200,000, including \$20,000 for UNDEF monitoring and evaluation.

The grantee, EEF, is a well-established non-government organization, which has established a significant place for itself in civil society in Moldova. It was formed in 1998 by the US-based Eurasia Foundation as its representative office in Moldova. It began operations as an autonomous, Moldovan organization in 2010, with all staff, programs and funding transferred from the representative office. EEF received its last grant from the Eurasia Foundation in 2013.¹ It continues to receive project-by-project funding from USAID, via its contractors, as well as from the EU, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and UN Women, among others, but its core support is now provided by Sweden (SIDA) and Denmark (DANIDA). Its annual budget is around \$US 2 million. Judging by information provided on its website, it has a staff of around 20, a majority of whom are women, and is governed by a Board of Directors, including representatives from the Eurasia Foundation. It has a substantial track record of project implementation in the civil society, media, youth engagement, and elections fields.²

The centrality of corruption as a fundamental deficiency of governance in Moldova, along with the general weakness of provisions for accountability of government, provided a strong argument for the value of a project which sought to build civil society and media capacity to monitor government, with a focus on the local government level, where the presence of civil society has been weakest, as well as at the national level. EEF took the adoption in 2011 by the Parliament of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) 2011-2015, which foresaw a key role for civil society groups and the media, as providing an opening for the project, which sought to address the inertia and lack of a capacity of both civil society and the media in addressing and monitoring corruption.

In its problem analysis, set out in the Project Document, EEF highlighted a short list of core issues which it sought to address through the project:

- The absence of a solid civil society platform for addressing corruption and the need to address major gaps in the capacity of individual civil society organizations, enabling them to contribute effectively in monitoring the effectiveness of the implementation of anti-corruption policies and programs by local authorities, and to identify cases of corruption;
- The weakness of media capacity in investigative reporting and organizing advocacy campaigns; and,
- Poorly developed relationships among public agencies and civil society in coordination of anti-corruption efforts.

Information provided through interviews conducted for the evaluation with EEF management.

Accordingly, the **Project Strategy** defined its objective as: *to increase civil society and media engagement against corruption, enabling them to*

Romanian descent, with those of Russian origin forming the largest minority, followed by Ukrainians. In terms of both its national income per capita and its ranking on the Human Development Index, Moldova stands out as the poorest country in Europe.

Most of the territory of the country consists of an area once known as Bessarabia. It was formerly part of Romania, but was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. The country also includes within its borders an unrecognized secessionist territory, "**Transnistria**"⁸, which unilaterally declared independence from the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic in 1990, prior to the formal establishment of Moldovan independence in 1991 and following the dismantling of the USSR.⁹

This territory had once been an autonomous region within Ukraine, but, in 1940, was joined with the former Bessarabia to make up the Moldovan Socialist Republic. The pro-Russian leadership of the breakaway region, (located along the Ukrainian border), whose population consists predominantly of Russian- and Ukrainian-speakers, wished to maintain Soviet-style governance and rejected the nationalism of the Moldovan leadership, along with the primacy given to the Moldovan (Romanian) language. Armed conflict broke out in April 1992, costing hundreds of lives. A ceasefire came into effect two months later, and Russian military peacekeepers were installed. Subsequent efforts to resolve the situation through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), supported by the EU and US, and more recently (since 2011) by a larger bloc of stakeholders, including Russia and Ukraine,

have been unsuccessful. Moldovan NGOs are not permitted to operate in Transnistria. Consequently, no project activities took place there.

In addition to Transnistria, the territory of Moldova also includes the semi-autonomous **Gagauz Republic**. Gagauzia is the poorest region of Moldova. Ethnically Turkic, Christian Orthodox in religion, and predominantly Russian-speaking, the region was initially acquired by Russia from the Ottoman Empire in 1812, with other territory, after the Russian-Turkish War. Since the independence of Moldova from the USSR, like Transnistria, it tends to be favourable towards Russia, and shares its suspicion and distrust of the proussian

state.¹⁰ However, by contrast to the situation which emerged with regard to Transnistria, differences between the Gagauz, who make up about 4 per cent of the population of Moldova, and the Moldovan majority were settled peacefully. Following negotiations, in 1994, the Parliament of Moldova adopted the Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia. It is classified as “a national-territorial autonomous unit”, and includes three cities and 23 communes (local government units).¹¹ Both Gagauzia and Transnistria are exempt from the economic sanctions that Russia has imposed on Moldova. While it was not possible for the project to support activities in Transnistria, it did operate without difficulty in Gagauzia, and the evaluators visited Comrat, the principal city in the territory.

As will already be apparent, since independence in 1991, Moldova has had a troubled history. There are persisting high levels of unemployment and a substantial foreign debt as the country has struggled to find a place for itself in the global economy in the context of the loss of protected markets in the Soviet Union for its wine and other agricultural products. With limited employment opportunities, the country has experienced persisting high levels of emigration. According to UN Moldova (*Country Analysis* 2011), it is estimated that some 40 per cent of the Moldovan working-age population is working outside the country. With a further relaxation in EU border restrictions in recent years, high levels of migration, particularly of the young and the better-educated, have persisted. In terms of both its national income per capita and its ranking on the Human Development Index, Moldova stands out as the poorest country in Europe. Remittances from Moldovans living abroad account for approximately one-third of Gross Domestic product, exceeding by far the contributions of foreign direct investment and foreign trade.¹²

Politically, the country is divided between those supporting the Communist Party and other leftist, pro-Russian groupings, on the one hand, and those allying themselves with social-democratic and liberal parties, on the other.¹³ From 2001-2009, the Communist Party was in power and efforts at democratic reform stalled. With the election of a pro-reform coalition, matters have improved subsequently and relations with the EU and US have improved.

In June 2014, Moldova signed an Association Agreement with the EU. According to the European Commission, reforms specified under the earlier EU-Moldova Action Plan (2010), many of them in the democratic governance field, had proceeded well, resulting in the readiness of the EU to sign the formal Association Agreement. However, the position in the parliament of the 3-party, pro-Western governing coalition, which took control in 2009, and which was made up of the Liberal-Democratic, Liberal and Democratic Parties, was precarious, and relations among the members of the three parties were difficult.

In the parliamentary elections of November 30, 2014, the coalition won a narrow victory. However, the tensions among the partners came to a head, with the resignation of the Liberal Party from the coalition. The two remaining parties formed a new minority government,

¹⁰ See: Luke Coffey, “Is Gagauzia next on Russia’s List?” *Al Jazeera*, 21 March 2015.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/03/gagauzia-russia-list-150318052557225.html>

¹¹ See, Tony Rinna, “Moldova, the EU and the Gagauzia Issue” *New Eastern Europe*, 14 February 2014.

<http://neweasterneurope.eu/interviews/1097-moldova-the-eu-and-the-gagauzia-issue>

depending on support from the Communist Party, the largest single party in parliament, for its day-to-day survival.

The sad state of the country's divided politics revealed a political class unable to compromise and form an effective government, following the fourth parliamentary election since April 2009, and an electorate increasingly disgusted with its politicians, who are no longer trusted and seen as more concerned about their own enrichment than addressing the priorities of electors.¹⁴ The findings of national opinion polls provide further evidence of the depth of disenchantment of Moldovans with the state of their democracy and the performance of the country's institutions.¹⁵

Despite the adoption of a broad-based anti-corruption legislative and policy package inC4100B65005

II. PROJECT STRATEGY

i. Project strategy and approach

In support of its overall objective of seeking *to increase civil society and media engagement against corruption, enabling them to act as strong watchdogs and major contributors to anti-corruption policy in Moldova*, EEF sought to pursue three outcomes:

- i) Building an effective network of CSOs engaged in anti-corruption activities to ensure coordinated public oversight and efficient implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS);
- ii) Increased efforts by local civil society actors and local media to prevent corruption;
- iii) Consolidated and institutionalized cooperation between the anti-corruption agencies and civil society.

Through earlier initiatives, EEF had facilitated the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Alliance (ACA) as an umbrella organization for concerned civil society organizations.²¹ The UNDEF project sought to build on this earlier work, further enhancing the capacities of ACA and its members, while also focusing on building up the membership of ACA and strengthening anti-corruption activities at local level. The **direct beneficiaries** of the project were: the 16 organizational members of the ACA (NGOs and think tanks, mostly based in Chisinau); selected local NGOs; and, journalists from national and regional media. It should be noted that, in designing and managing the project, EEF was able to draw on its wider experience in nurturing the establishment and strengthening of NGO networks, most notably in the elections and election monitoring sphere.

The main activities undertaken included the following:

The organization of an initial 2

First inspection of the list of activities undertaken through the project might suggest as a possible weakness in design the adoption of a “menu” approach to devising the programming plan. However, in practice, this did not prove to be the case. Ongoing engagement with beneficiaries by the project management team in all facets of programming held the project together, ensuring that each activity built on its predecessors, enhancing overall results achieved.

ii. Logical framework

The chart is based on detailed information included in the project’s framework, as set out in the Project Document, as well as the final report. Some activities are not captured well in either document. Accordingly, additions have been made to the Project Activities column, based on interviews conducted for the evaluation.

<p>1.1 Organization and delivery of 2-day strategic planning workshop for 25 participants (actual, 21); inputs and facilitation provided by EEF;</p> <p>1.2 Organization of 18 meetings of ACA during the project period; Recruitment & selection of ACA General Secretary</p> <p>1.3 A 2-day training workshop organized and delivered</p> <p>1.4 A 3-day study visit to Romania organized by EEF for 12 NGO representatives; meetings to be held with relevant Romanian NGOs and state agencies dealing with anti-corruption matters.</p> <p>1.5 *ADDED ACTIVITY which took place during project extension, utilizing funds saved elsewhere: A study visit of 4 days(+2 days travel) organized by EEF to meet relevant NGOs and state agencies engaged in anti-corruption work</p>	<p>Joint civil society anti-corruption agenda drafted.</p> <p>Regular meetings of Anti-Corruption Alliance (ACA) held to strengthen the CSO AC platform (in practice, 22 held).</p> <p>At least 25 ACA member organizations & local CSOs trained to effectively implement anti-corruption campaigns delivered (in practice, 21 rather than 25 participants took part)</p> <p>Study visit to Romania held to enable ACA members to identify intervention models for replication by partner NGOs</p> <p>(In practice, 9 ACA representatives and 2 project team members took part in a study visit which was extended to 4 days).</p> <p>Study Visit to Georgia for ACA Leadership and project Coordinator</p> <p>(in practice, 6 ACA representatives, plus the Project Coordinator, took part)</p>	<p>1. Establishment of an effective nationwide network of CSOs engaged in anti-corruption activities to ensure coordinated public oversight & efficient implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy.</p>	
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2.1 A small grants scheme is developed to support those local NGOs trained under 1.3 in undertaking small projects; Proposals are developed by NGOs, and those which meet published criteria and selected by an independent expert panel are recommended for funding; EEF staff members conduct pre-award site visits to all short-listed candidate NGOs; Awards are announced and grant contracts signed, following UNDEF approval; EEF project management provides ongoing monitoring and coaching to the NGOs implementing the initiatives

2.2 Applications for participation are disseminated widely through media networks and journalism associations. As a follow-up, the project team facilitated contacts between NGOs implementing small grant initiatives and local media from the same localities to encourage synergy and provide greater visibility to project results (see also 2.5)

2.3 An initial request made to ACA for it to take on responsibility for researching and producing the 3 NACS monitoring reports; Subsequently. A call for proposals is organized for a writer/researcher with relevant expertise to prepare the reports;

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organizations were fully engaged in other work. Very few were well-placed to take on a national campaign, and most found the additional funding available - \$10,000 – insufficient to tempt them to try something new.

In the judgment of the evaluators, EEF demonstrated its appreciation of the limitations of civil society capacity, while also trying to nurture its further development, and also encouraging both established and new members of ACA to

with students without the administration being present. In this way, they were able to draw on the experience of the students in documenting problems that they faced. An informal Student Alliance was formed, and the cadre of young lecturers worked with small groups of students in developing a summary of current concerns, along with a set of guidelines presented to the university administration for their consideration.

One further output was particularly effective in demonstrating the kind of contribution that an independent civil society could bring to strengthening the implementation of public policy. *Output 2.3*, concerned the preparation and dissemination between 2012 and December 2014 of three reports, monitoring the performance by state bodies of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS). The three reports were all carefully and expertly researched and written, and each was launched at a public event.²³

for the two study visits, as well as in media expenditures. The quality and number of media products delivered by the project was impressive, and the overall cost was relatively modest

Overall, good judgment was shown in balancing the allocation of the budget across different categories of expenditure and the different project components.

EEF managed the budget centrally, except for small allocations to the grantees under the small grants and national campaign programs. During the life of the project, the organizational home of the ACA Presidency changed and with it the location of the General Secretary position. Given the limited experience of ACA in managing finances and logistics, along with the organizational shift, it proved to be a sensible decision to centralize financial controls. However, it is noteworthy that, in a

small follow-up, bridging grant to ACA by EEF from its core funding, the budget has been transferred to the Presidency (currently held by the NGO, Credo) to manage.

EEF took great care in managing the process of selection and monitoring of grantees under both the small grants and national campaign schemes. An expert selection committee panel provided advice on the selection of NGO candidates to receive small grants, with members drawn from Moldovan governance and civil society specialists working with international organizations and projects, including the Soros Foundation, the Council of Europe, the American Bar Association and a USAID rule of law contractor. Minutes of meeting made available to the evaluation team demonstrate the detailed consideration given to each of the twelve applications received in the process through which the panel developed its recommendations on a short-listing of proposals.

(v)Sustainability



IV. CONCLUSIONS

(i) With the adoption of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy by the Moldovan Parliament in 2013, the grantee, the East Europe Foundation, recognized that there was an opportunity for civil society to play a more central role in this sphere. The project was designed to take advantage of the opening.

(ii) The project strategy for strengthening the Anti-Corruption Alliance (ACA) as a network, building the capacity of smaller and less-experienced NGOs engaging in anti-corruption work, and facilitating a more visible public presence in the public policy sphere for the Alliance, was well-defined, representing an effective response to the development problem described.

(iii) The project met the test of relevance by focusing on a core problem in Moldovan public life of both high-level and petty corruption, while also working to nurture the development of civil society in light of an appreciation of its current weaknesses and limitations.

(iv) In terms of its contribution to ac

accepted were conceptually imaginative and innovative, providing signposts to possible future activities which might yield stronger results.

(xiii) The evaluation team rated the project very highly for its efficiency and professionalism in the management of operations and its stewardship of the budget. Beyond the care and attention given to all aspects of project administration and operations, it is quite apparent that the grantee, EEF, made a substantial contribution of staff time, over and above that which was funded by the project.

(xiv) Despite the adoption by Moldova of a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework for anti-corruption, there has been little evidence of a commitment by the country's elites to put new laws into effect, and few serious cases of corruption have been prosecuted. There is little doubt that the political and social context of the project has had a negative effect in terms of "results on the ground". However, more positively, high-level external pressures, most notably from the EU, are likely to prod Moldova in the direction of more deep-seated reform. The achievements of the project in ensuring that civil society is now solidly positioned with regard to the architecture of anti-corruption will enable it to play a significant role in the shaping of legislation and policy, and to monitor implementation, in the future.

(xv) In the short-and medium-term, the continuation of international funding will be essential to enable the Alliance to sustain the gains it has made through the project and to continue to ensure that the voices of civil society are heard in policy debates on addressing corruption. In the absence of such funding, it is unlikely that the network, per se, will be able to maintain its work.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

(i) EEF and ACA continue to work together to support the development of the capacity of smaller and less-experienced CSOs, while also providing guidance in the development of work focused on issues in anti-corruption at local and district government levels throughout Moldova. (based on Conclusions, ii, iii, v and viii)

ANNEXES
ANNEX 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

DAC criterion	
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ANNEX 4: LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACA	Anti-Corruption Alliance
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
EEF	East Europe Foundation
EU	European Union
NAC	National Anti-Corruption Centre
NACS	National Anti-Corruption Strategy
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SIDA	Swe
