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VISEGRAID 4 MOLDOVA

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FOREWORD

Upon joining the EU, the new member states agreed to become more serious players in international development, and to raise their aid funding to 0,33 % of the GDP by 2015. None of the Visegrad countries will reach this goal, and within the international development aid budget, the level of bilateral aid remains minimal. This partly explains why the argument of these countries, to use their comparative advantage in local expertise on the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood and in the Western Balkans was approved by other EU member states. And this is the reason why they can concentrate their donor activities on these regions, despite the earlier commitment on reaching the Millennium Development Goals by a much more active presence in Africa.

The Eastern Partnership of the European Union was launched in 2009 during the Czech Presidency of the EU. Although formally sponsored by Poland and Sweden, this new EU policy was eagerly supported from all Visegrad Group countries. The initiative received most support from the new member states from Central Europe and Sweden. The main goal of the initiative was to give an Eastern alternative and dimension to the European Neighbourhood Policy and to institutionalise dialogue with post-Soviet countries with a very limited membership prospects. Although, originally Ukraine and Georgia were expected to become the frontrunners of the Eastern Partnership, following the civil unrest in early 2009 resulting in the formation of a new government coalition of former opposition parties under the name Alliance for European Integration, **in EU EaP Moldova became a flagship country.**

By 2014, Moldova had become the priority country in terms of bilateral aid among Eastern Partnership countries for **each of the V4 states.** Unfortunately recent polls show that support for intensified dialogue with the EU is decreasing in the country, and the upcoming elections in autumn can further strengthen the pro-Russian forces. The reason is that those programs implemented with EU support remained under the radar of the average citizen, their efficiency is low, and the pro-EU government is often accused of massive corruption.

The fact, that by joining forces the V4 countries can bring additional value was recognized by the Foreign Ministries, and this was reflected in their political commitments. The initiative of the V4EaP program within the International Visegrad Fund, and the launch of the program in 2012 was also a clear indication of this commitment. Also the Heads of International Cooperation Departments of the V4 meet on a regular basis. Unfortunately there is no indication that the representatives of Moldova were invited to such meetings and it is also clear that the most important NGOs implementing bilateral aid projects have also no platform to share experiences and avoid duplications.

The present study aims to summarize the activity of the V4 and to give recommendations on how and where to concentrate the bilateral aid of the V4 in Moldova.

THE CZECH POLICY ON MOLDOVA

Assessment of national foreign policy priorities of the Czech Republic with regards to Moldova

Moldova is a focus of Czech foreign policy in several respects. It is included in Eastern Partnership, an EU project that was launched by the Prague EaP summit in 2009, which has been strongly supported by the Czech Republic throughout its existence and which the Czechs consider as one of their most important objectives in the realm of EU external relations. The Czech interest in Moldova was definitely fostered due to its clearly pro-European orientation in recent years, and has fuelled some hopes inside the Czech diplomatic corps that it could be the pioneer in this respect among the Eastern partnership countries. There is a consensus inside the Czech MFA that the Eastern partnership and especially the countries with a hope to progress towards the EU (i.e. especially Moldova and Georgia) deserve most attention, both bilaterally and in terms of EU-wide activities. The Czech Republic claims to support the independence and territorial integrity of the EaP countries, supports political, social and economic stability with the emphasis on compliance with human rights commitments, rule of law, political pluralism, civil society and media freedom in all the EaP countries, shared values being the main criterion of the Czech support to these countries bilaterally and within the EU¹.

The Czech Republic has made some efforts to strengthen the EaP initiative also through regional co-operation. The Czechs have lobbied for an increase in funding by the International Visegrad Fund (IVF) for projects in the Eastern Partnership countries.² Other donors have joined the initiative apart from the Visegrad countries, including the Netherlands and the US Emerging Donors Challenge Fund, while Sweden and Japan have also showed interest in contributing. The Czech Republic has positioned itself particularly as a leader of local administration reform in the Eastern Partnership countries, including Moldova. For instance in May 2013 it has organized a workshop for the experts from Eastern Partnership countries in Chisinau, representing different levels of public administration, non-governmental organisations and academia.³

The following aspects of Czech foreign policy priorities with regards to Moldova are evaluated:

- bilateral ODA;
- transition co-operation;
- economic relations.

In the Czech development co-operation strategy for the 2010 – 2017 period⁴, Moldova has become one of the *priority countries subject to a co-operation programme* (thus making it a **programme country**) for the following reasons:

- the need for development cooperation and the preparedness of the partner country to receive it;
- successful development cooperation results to date;
- coordination of the Czech development co-operation within the donor community;
- connection to other activities/aspects of Czech Republic's foreign policy (Transition Cooperation Programme, Eastern Partnership)⁵.

Development co-operation operates mainly in the following sectors:

- drinking water supply and sanitation;
- government and civil society;

¹ Foreign Policy Strategy of the Czech Republic, pp. 16, adopted by the Government of the Czech Republic on 20 July 2011, retrieved at:

http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/vyrocní_zpráva_a_dokumenty/koncepce_zahranicni_politiky_ceske.html

² See for instance: http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/evropska_unie/vychodni_partnerstvi/index.html

³ http://www.mzv.cz/chisinau/cz/cesko_moldavske_vztahy/seminar_pro_odborniky_ze_zemi_vychodniho.html

⁴ http://www.mzv.cz/file/762314/FINAL_Development_Cooperation_Strategy_2010_2017.pdf

⁵ http://www.mzv.cz/file/962031/Development_coop_programme_MD_2011_2017.pdf, p. 14

- education and other social infrastructure and services;
- agriculture, forestry and fishing;
- general environmental protection.

By virtue of the respective government decision⁶, the number of priority countries was to be reduced and divided into three categories: a) programme countries with the programme of mutual co-operation, b) project countries with specific project-based forms of co-operation and c) other countries (in the so-called phase-out mode, where development assistance is gradually being phased out). The inclusion of Moldova in the first group, alongside only four other countries, clearly illustrates the commitment of the Czech government to make the country one of its top priorities.

Apart from being one of the priority countries of Czech bilateral ODA, it is also a priority country of the so-called **Transition Promotion Program**⁷, a specific programme focused on sharing the Czech transition experience in building of democratic institutions, free media, supporting good governance and rule of law and supporting civil society in general. Moldova has been a priority country of this programme since its inception in 2005, and remained one of them even after the adoption of the new concept of transition co-operation in 2010.

Assessment of the Czech assistance to Moldova Bilateral ODA

The needs of Moldova when it comes to development assistance can be seen in its ranking in the Human Development Report, assessment of social prosperity within the UN Development Programme. Moldova's HDI⁸ ranked no. 113 out of 185 countries in 2012⁹, belonging to medium human development countries. Despite the fact that the HDI ranking of Moldova has risen by 0.008 compared to the previous year, its position in ranking among other countries of the world has actually worsened.

As was already mentioned, Moldova has been identified as one of five so-called programme countries of the Czech bilateral ODA¹⁰, which is the most intensive framework based on mutually agreed programmes with each of the recipient countries. The current framework of development co-operation with Moldova is determined mainly by a document called "Development cooperation programme Moldova"¹¹, adopted for the 2011-2017 period and it's coordinated by the Czech Development Agency.

Moldova has been a priority country of Czech development co-operation since the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union in 2004¹², but one can say that its relative importance as a development aid recipient has increased in more recent years. Before 2008, the number of priority countries was higher and development co-operation funds were disbursed by different line ministries and agencies. The rise of importance of Moldova as a target country can be illustrated by the following figures: In 2005 and 2006, Moldova did not feature among the top 10 recipients of bilateral Czech ODA. Between 2007 and 2009 it ranked between 6th and 9th place, with the absolute amounts of ODA rising (see the table below). In 2010 and 2011, Moldova already occupied third place in the level of bilateral Czech ODA received¹³. Finally

⁶ Government Resolution n. 1070/2007 of 19 September 2007 on the Transformation of the Development Cooperation System of the Czech Republic

⁷ http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign_relations/human_rights/transition_promotion_program/index_1.html

⁸ Human Development Index

⁹ http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/14/hdr2013_en_complete.pdf

¹⁰ The other programme countries are Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia and Mongolia

¹¹ http://www.mzv.cz/file/962031/Development_coop_programme_MD_2011_2017.pdf

¹² Government Resolution n. 302 of 31 March 2004

¹³ Developing open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trade relations with priority ODA recipients, pp. 46. Center for Economic Development. Sofia, 2013.

in 2012, Moldova occupied second place in terms of bilateral Czech ODA disbursed, reaching the sum of \$ 4,88 mil and representing about 7.35 % of bilateral ODA in the given year¹⁴.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Czech bilateral ODA to Moldova (in mil USD)	2.41	2.90	3.1	3.97	4.28	4.88
Rank	6.	8.	9.	3.	3.	2.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

Until the adoption of the current programme of development co-operation, the activities of the Czech Republic in Moldova focused primarily on the following¹⁵:

- In the area of environment: reduction of negative environmental impacts of water management, water sources monitoring and environmental protection, flood prevention, waste management (e.g. oil waste management with respect to surface and underground waters).
- in the area of education: development of teaching modules at Moldova State University in Chisinau, focused on its approximation to EU standards, support to extracurricular activities and integration of pupils from state care
- in the area of social infrastructure: development of home care facilities, especially improving the quality of home care and community care
- in the area of support of public administration: increasing capacity of Moldovan administration to regulate migration flows, including re-integration of migrants readmitted from the EU
- in the area of aid for trade: support of trade policies creation and trade regulatory framework (including needs assessment for the development of SMEs)
- in the area of technical assistance: tax and tariff administration, financial control in public administration, management and control of pre-accession funds, public finances reform, state budget and state debt management, financing of social system and healthcare, selected issues relating to financial services, especially insurance.
- In the area of rural development: increasing capacity of National Agency for Rural Development (ACSA), stabilisation of agricultural production in the Braviceni district

Since the reform of the Czech development assistance which started in 2008, Moldova as a programme country has a clearly defined set of priority sectors into which the Czech development aid is being directed. Those priorities arise from the document issued by the Government of Moldova called: "Rethink Moldova – Priorities for Mid-Term Development"¹⁶ and they are included in the "Development cooperation programme Moldova 2011-2017", a document negotiated jointly between the Czech MFA and the Moldovan government. These specific priority areas for the 2011-2017 programming period include (according to DAC/OECD methodology): a) environment, namely water supply and sanitation and general environmental protection, b) social development, namely education and other social infrastructure and services and c) agriculture, forestry and fishing and d) government and civil society. The specific priorities in the individual sectors in the current programming period are the following¹⁷:

¹⁴ Česká republika pomáhá [The Czech Republic Helps], pp. 17, retrieved at: http://www.mzv.cz/file/1057319/CR_pomaha_zprava_k9_pro_web.pdf

¹⁵ Programme of Development Co-operation with Moldova, 2011-2017

¹⁶ <http://www.gov.md/doc.php?l=en&idc=447&id=2774>

¹⁷ For the entire list of running and completed Czech ODA projects in Moldova, please visit the website of the Czech Development Agency:

<http://www.czda.cz/cra/projekty/moldavsko.htm>, or the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic:

http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/rozvojova_spoluprace/dvoustranna_zrs_cr/programove_zeme/moldavsko/prehled_projektu_zrs_cr_v_moldavsku.html

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- A. In the area of water supply and sanitation:
- Protection and usage of water sources
 - Sanitation
 - Waste management
 - Environmental damages removal
- B. In the area of public administration and civil society:
- Increasing the capacity of Moldovan administration and transfer of experience in economic and social transformation and rule of law
 - Assistance in building e-Government as part of rule of law and direct communication between the government and citizens
 - Assistance in building of viable and stable civil society, enhancing the role of civic initiatives and non-governmental organisations
 - Support of more effective and faster community and regional development
 - Technical assistance in public finances management
 - Co-operation in migration management
 - Gender equality issues
 - Support to activities aimed at removal of women and children abuse
- C. In the area of education and other social infrastructure and services:
- Support of programmes for socially excluded groups
 - Support to interconnectivity of educational system and social programmes with employment policy
 - Support of development of homecare as effective means of service provision
 - Social care (support of organisations and institutions aiming at the development of the homecare system at national level and legislation in this respect)
 - Support to integration of physically disabled persons and other socially excluded persons
 - Assistance in the creation of a national concept of social care for abandoned children
- D. In the area of agriculture, forestry and fisheries:
- Support to small and medium-size farmers
 - Support of food security, with respect to the competitiveness of Moldovan products at foreign markets
- E. In the area of general environmental protection:
- Environmental education
 - Preparation of communities and local administration to natural disasters and elimination of its negative impact
 - Co-operation in flood prevention

In addition to development projects coordinated by the Czech Development Agency a specific set of projects represented by the so-called *aid for trade* projects are implemented as well. Unlike the bilateral ODA projects, they are managed and financed by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. So far, the Ministry has supported three aid for trade projects in Moldova, focused mainly on the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the creation of business clusters, and on the creation of a regulatory framework for trade and trade policies – both of these projects were implemented by the Chamber of Commerce of the Czech Republic. One ongoing project is focused on transfer of know-how in the construction, use and protection of groundwater resources, especially thermal and mineral¹⁸.

¹⁸ <http://www.mpo.cz/dokument105236.html>

Along with the mentioned programs, small local projects implemented by the embassy in Chisinau¹⁹ are funded and Czech government scholarships are offered to Moldovan students. In the academic year 2013/2014, 37 scholarship holders from Moldova have studied in the Czech Republic²⁰.

Transition co-operation

In 2005, the Czech Republic established the Transition Promotion Program, a democracy assistance financial instrument directed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Within this program, Moldova was identified as one of the 10 priority countries, belonging to the developing countries and the countries in transition group. Unlike the case of bilateral development co-operation, the transition co-operation with respect to Moldova does not have any pre-defined specific areas of support, but rather generally defined areas which are applicable to all target countries of the programme. The thematic priorities of transition policy as such include support to civil society and human rights defenders, media and access to information, rule of law and good governance, electoral processes and equality and non-discrimination²¹. The thematic priorities of the Transition promotion programme cover support to the development of civil society, co-operation with local administration, support to free media, youth and education and support to human rights defenders²². Projects within this program are implemented by Czech civil society organizations in cooperation with their local partners.

In 2013, there were 3 projects in Moldova financed by this programme with the total budget of cca \$ 270,000 (5.07 mil CZK). One project is implemented by People in Need foundation, and is focused on the support of small NGOs in the Transnistria region and civic initiatives in specific regions of Moldova. It represents a continuation of a long-term project run by People in Need which has been supported by the Transition promotion programme since 2006. The second project is implemented by Transitions online and is focused on the use of new media in addressing imminent social problems and increasing civic participation in decision-making processes. The third project is implemented by Charitas Czech Republic and is focused on the support of civic participation in the rural areas of the Cahul region, especially through dialogue with local authorities and is focused particularly on marginalised groups such as women or youth.

People in Need, Transitions online and Charitas CR also represent the Czech NGOs continuously working on transition issues in Moldova. Apart from them, other organisations implementing transition projects include Agora Central Europe (project focused on bridge building between local actors – youth and citizens – 2011), CzechInvent (project focused on transfer of Czech know-how in the area of innovation and development of entrepreneurial skills - 2010) and the Prague Security Studies Institute (sharing Czech transformation experience).

The amount of transition programme funds has also been increasing substantially throughout the existence of the programme²³. While in the initial years of the programme's existence, the annual sum allocated was only between 1 million and 1,6 million CZK (i.e. about €40,000 to €65,000) in the first three years of the programme (2005-2007). Since 2008 the funds have been raising to €84,000 in 2008, €178,000 in 2009 to as much as €247,000 in 2010, €282,000 in 2011 with a drop to €212,000 in 2012. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that there is no pre-determined funds allocated to any particular country within

¹⁹ http://www.mzv.cz/chisinau/cz/rozvojova_pomoc/index.html

²⁰ http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/rozvojova_spoluprace/dvoustranna_zrs_cr/programove_zeme/moldavsko/index.html

²¹ Concept of Transition Policy, adopted on 15 July 2010:

http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/lidska_prava/transformacni_spoluprace_1/koncepcie_transformacni_spoluprace.html

²² Annex I to the Concept of the Transition Policy

²³ For the detailed information of supported projects in target countries and their budgets please consult the following statistics provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic:

http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/lidska_prava/transformacni_spoluprace_1/obecne_TRANS/souhrnne_informace_o_aktivitach_programu/index.html

the programme, and their allocation depends merely on the quality of projects submitted, as well as the perceived topical needs within the territories where the programme operates. The overall annual budget of the programme is more or less stable, around 2 million €, and thus it is possible to draw a picture of the relative importance of Moldova within the scheme.

HUNGARIAN ENGAGEMENT IN MOLDOVA

The present analysis seeks to provide an overview of the evolution of Hungarian involvement in Moldova since Hungary's accession to the EU, more precisely from 2005, the first full year of EU membership, until 2012. It discusses how Moldova fits into the foreign policy agenda of Hungary and whether the outlined priorities were met with real activities. It looks at Hungary's international development cooperation (IDC) activities in relation to Moldova in depth, also discussing the involvement of non-governmental actors in this field. To see whether the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative had any effect on Hungary's IDC priorities, we compare the activities of 2005-2008 and 2009-2012.

Foreign policy priorities

Moldova gradually rose on Hungary's foreign policy agenda along with the European Union's (EU) approaching 'Big Bang' enlargement round of 2004, but the breakthrough came when the country became an immediate EU neighbour following Romania's EU accession in 2007. Two factors that likely contributed to the increasing Hungarian interest in Moldova are worth mentioning. Firstly, due to its small size and relative proximity, Moldova was considered to be a country where Hungary could appear not only as a policy-taker following the EU-line, but also as a policy-maker having an individual impact.²⁴ Additionally, it is likely that minority politics considerations played a role in putting Moldova on the Hungarian foreign policy agenda. The same year Romania joined the EU, it reintroduced the policy of granting citizenship to Moldovans requesting it. This resulted in an increase in the number of Romanian citizens having the opportunity to influence the political landscape of the country, and therefore the position and relative weight of the Hungarian minority living in Romania. Moreover, voices calling for the unification of Romania and Moldova have never disappeared completely in either country. Due to the above mentioned considerations, Hungary does not support this potential unification, and consequently it supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Moldova.

Accordingly, the general priorities towards Moldova developed as follows: supporting Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity, its European aspirations and, the development of institutions helping transition to democracy and market economy. Hungary is also interested in the security of the region and emphasizes the importance of stepping up measures against smuggling, illegal migration and organized crime. In its bilateral relations, Hungary seeks to deepen economic cooperation with Moldova.²⁵ The foreign policy strategy of Hungary, which was adopted in 2008 and was meant to guide foreign relations until 2020, mentioned Moldova *per se* in the context of the European neighbourhood policy. In this document, the Hungarian government expressed its wish that the EU kept the possibility of membership open for Moldova (and also for Ukraine). The strategy also set out that Hungary would raise its presence in the EaP partner countries in general and would help them by political and practical measures to prepare for their potential EU membership.²⁶

The current strategic document defining Hungary's foreign policy priorities, adopted in 2011, no longer refers to Moldova directly but considers it as part of the EaP region. According to the document, Hungary's main goals in the region are securing and developing transport and transportation routes of energy, products and people. Furthermore, apart from supporting all countries' territorial integrity in the region, the document expresses, as a new element, Hungary's willingness to contribute to the resolution of frozen conflicts in the EaP region.²⁷ The current security policy strategy, adopted in 2012, also makes reference to regional conflicts and the frozen conflicts of the post-Soviet space; however, Hungary does

²⁴ As it has been previously argued in: András Rácz (n.d.). "Hungary and the Eastern Partnership". In: Izabela Albrycht (ed.). "The Eastern Partnership in the Context of the European Neighbourhood Policy and V4 Agenda." The Kosciuszko Institute: Cracow. pp. 19-35.

²⁵ Magyarország Nagykövetsége, Chisinau, Moldova. "Kétoldalú Kapcsolatok." Source: http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kulkepviselet/ML/hu/Bilateralis/politikai_kapcsolatok.htm Last accessed: December 1, 2013.

²⁶ "1012/2008. (III. 4.) Korm. határozat Magyarország külkapcsolati stratégiájáról"

²⁷ , Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Hungarian foreign policy after the EU Presidency." 2011. p.23.

not commit itself to direct contribution. The document only states that Budapest supports conflict resolution initiatives in the region. Specific operative plans, roadmaps or annual plans have not been developed to reach the goals set out by the two strategies.

Priorities in practice

The lack of detailed implementation plans, however, does not mean that Hungary was not an active partner of the Republic of Moldova in implementing the established goals. Hungary has made considerable efforts to put its foreign policy priorities into practice. Important contributions have been made in the field of transition support, Europeanization and conflict resolution through confidence building both in multilateral fora and in bilateral relations.

In the multilateral domain, Hungary's membership in the "Friends of Moldova Group" is worth mentioning. This is an informal forum launched in January 2012 with the aim of helping Moldova's European aspirations. Budapest is also active in the Community of Democracies, where Moldova has been selected as a target country for the Democracy Partnership Challenge initiative (DPC), and where a Task Force on Moldova was set up in December 2011. On this inaugural meeting of the Task Force, Hungary took up the coordination of a working group sharing experiences on and helping the transition of the security sector of Moldova. This includes support in the reform process of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence, the armed forces and the secret services.²⁸ The Budapest-based International Centre for Democratic Transition (ICDT) has been named supporting organization of the DPC for Moldova and now chairs the Working Group on Security Sector Reform.²⁹

Hungary also showed continued commitment to its goals in Moldova in bilateral relations. An important initiative in this regard is the Common Visa Application Centre, functioning at the Hungarian Embassy in Chisinau, where Moldovan citizens can apply for a visa for 14 EU member states plus two non-EU countries which have no diplomatic representation in Moldova.³⁰ Given how important visa facilitation, liberalization and mobility are for Moldova in its relations with the EU, it is indeed a significant and tangible contribution reaching the population directly. Furthermore, Hungary provided technical assistance in the form of training for Moldovan officials on several occasions as part of its bilateral and multilateral international development activities. These development activities directly contributed to Moldova's Europeanization and transition process, and will be further discussed below.

Hungarian development assistance to Moldova³¹

Moldova is among the recipient countries of Hungarian international development assistance since the re-launch of the policy in 2003. The decision of the International Development Cooperation Inter-ministerial Committee on June 6, 2003, listed the country as official partner of Hungary's IDC policy and it

²⁸ Community of Democracies. "DPC for Moldova" Source: http://www.community-democracies.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=333:dpc-for-moldova&catid=59:democracy-partnership-challenge&Itemid=172
Last accessed: December 1, 2013.

²⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Minister Martonyi at the Community of Democracies Meeting in New York." September 24, 2011. Source: <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/kulugyminiszterium/a-miniszter/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/minister-martonyi-at-the-community-of-democracies-meeting-in-new-york> Last accessed: December 1, 2013.

Although they do not fall within the studied time period, it has to be mentioned that as part of the Task Force activities, the ICDT has implemented two projects in 2013. One was titled "Supporting the Activities of the Community of Democracies and its Task Force on Moldova", while the other "Supporting the Revision of the Law on the Ombudsman Service in Moldova within the Framework of the Community of Democracies."

³⁰ These countries are Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden as well as Norway and Switzerland.

Source: http://www.cac.md/about_en.html Last accessed: November 29, 2013.

³¹ The overview of activities and projects supported from official development sources is based on the official annual reports of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs publicly available on the MFA's pre-2011 and current website.

remained so until 2008.³² In 2008, Moldova received special partner status and its mid-term country strategy for 2009-2011 was developed.³³ However, unlike other country strategies (e.g. that of Vietnam or Bosnia and Herzegovina), this document was not made public, so comparing results to the plans is not possible here. Therefore, what we can evaluate is whether the projects implemented from official bilateral IDC sources are in line with the official foreign policy agenda of Hungary as it appears in the official foreign policy strategies. Additionally, it is worth considering whether the start of the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative had an impact on the policy. For this reason, the activities of the 2005-2008 and the 2009-2012 periods will be compared.

In the period between 2005 and 2008, technical assistance in the form of training activities dominated the policy in relation to Moldova. The main issue areas targeted were agriculture, rural development and good governance (e.g. legal harmonization in the field of law enforcement, criminal law, crime prevention, social reintegration, migration or asylum policy). Apart from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Justice were active organizers of these trainings. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education supported the studies of some Moldovan students in Hungary over the years. In 2006, the MFA introduced a micro-grant scheme managed by the Hungarian Embassy in Chisinau that could be used to address grassroots development needs of the society. The scheme remained operational throughout the period in question and micro-grants were allocated for the modernization of computer labs, the reconstruction of a diagnostic centre and the creation of a civic library in Chisinau in cooperation with the local NGO, IDIS Viitorul.

Table 1. Hungarian ODA in Moldova and in relation to total ODA

Million USD (2011 constant prices)

	2005	2006*	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total ODA	125.30	190.15	108.92	102.27	123.86	121.92	139.73	128.71
Total bilateral ODA	49.41	107.28	34.77	14.77	31.36	30.24	33.15	23.67
Bilateral ODA for Moldova	0.06	...	0.27	0.42	0.17	0.23	0.10	0.11
Bilateral ODA for Moldova in % of total ODA	0.05	...	0.25	0.41	0.14	0.19	0.07	0.09
Bilateral ODA for Moldova in % of total bilateral ODA	0.12	...	0.78	2.84	0.54	0.76	0.30	0.46

Source: OECD DAC database

*Data missing from OECD DAC database.

³² Here, we need to clarify a few characteristics of Hungarian IDC policy. Ever since its launch in 2003 Hungarian IDC has been very dispersed. The main actor and shaper of the policy is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but most other ministries conduct international development activities, as well. Their actions, however, are not coordinated in advance with the MFA and oftentimes they are not even known in detail before the annual report is produced by the International Development Cooperation Department of the MFA after the end of the calendar year. These annual reports on the IDC activities of the various actors highly differed in quality and detailedness over the years. Nevertheless, these are still the only available sources of information documenting the first decade of the policy. Strategic and annual planning was missing until now; with very few exceptions no country-specific cooperation plans were adopted.

Initially, Hungary identified four strategic partner countries (Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Palestinian National Authorities, Vietnam), six partner countries (Kirgizstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Ukraine, Mongolia, China), and four least developed countries (Ethiopia, Yemen, Cambodia, Laos) for which it wanted to provide official development assistance, as well as two additional countries under international obligations (Afghanistan and Iraq). The circle of recipients slightly changed over time, but the main directions remained the same. In 2008, Moldova became a strategic partner.

³³ There is an interesting contradiction among the annual IDC reports. The annual report on the year mentions that a mid-term strategy was developed in 2008 for Moldova. The annual report on 2009, however, states that the strategy was adopted already in June 2007. It might only be a typo though. Considering the institutional structure and often ad hoc nature of the Hungarian IDC, it is not likely and it would not even make sense to develop a strategy that would start 1.5 years after its adoption.

As opposed to a suspected dividing line in 2009, the year 2008 proves to bring more of a change in development activities. This has also been the peak year of ODA support: compared to 2007, ODA allocated for Moldova grew by almost 50% and reached \$ 0,42 million, 2.84% of the entire bilateral ODA. In 2008, a new foreign policy strategy referring to Moldova specifically was developed, and the 2009-2011 mid-term country strategy was adopted, although not published. Against this background, it is curious why the absolute amount of ODA for Moldova dropped so significantly the next year, especially as the absolute amount of bilateral ODA increased. In fact, after the 2009 decrease, ODA for Moldova did not reach the 2008 level again.

While training and capacity building projects organized by ministries and other authorities continued, in 2008 non-governmental actors also appeared on the scene. The Association of European Election Officials (ACEEEO) implemented capacity building training for the members of the Central Election Commission and the Territorial Election Commissions of Moldova with the support of the MFA.³⁴ From this year on, the activities of the International Centre for Democratic Transition are also listed in the annual IDC reports of the MFA as the listed projects also used governmental funding and contributed to the realization of Hungary's foreign policy goals in Moldova. Starting in 2008, the first project titled "Strengthening Rule of Law Institutions in Moldova: The Constitutional Court and the Ombudsman Service" focused on helping the reform of the Constitutional Court and the Ombudsmen's Office in order to "improve the local and international visibility, accountability, and transparency, and to gain trust from the public."³⁵

In the period between 2009 and 2012, in line with the goals of the Eastern Partnership program, technical assistance and training programs were more focused on sharing Hungary's experiences in preparation for the negotiation and adoption of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. To help the Europeanization process, the MFA organized training and workshops for Moldovan officials in the fields of finance, taxation and agriculture in 2010 and 2012. Other training also continued, e.g. for young diplomats in consular affairs in 2009, for parliamentarians on economic development, institution building and management with the aim of building the capacity of the Moldovan Parliament and its departments and institutions.

An important multilateral project in the EU's Twinning framework, in which Hungary participated as a junior partner alongside France, followed the same focus: it sought to ensure know-how transfer in the reform of the Parliament between French and Hungarian professionals and Moldovan stakeholders, especially the staff of the Moldovan Parliament. The project ran between July 2008 and September 2010 and amounted to close to € 1 million.³⁶ Although it was not a Hungarian initiative, it is interesting to note that a 2-year EU project which aimed at developing the skills of Moldovan officials to prepare for and implement the EU's Comprehensive Institution Building program was led by a Hungarian, Dr. János Zákonyi, in 2011-2013.³⁷

Hungary further strengthened its involvement in supporting Moldova's transition processes through supporting projects implemented by non-governmental actors. Several of these projects are listed in the annual reports on the MFA's IDC activities as official ODA resources were invested in these projects. The MFA's most important partner in Moldova in the given period was the above mentioned ICDT. However,

³⁴ ACEEEO. "Capacity Building Training for Moldovan Election Officials." Source: <http://www.aceeeo.org/en/special-projects/training-for-election-officials/capacity-building-training-for-the-moldovan-election-officials> Last accessed: January 28, 2014.

³⁵ ICDT. "Strengthening Rule of Law Institutions in Moldova: The Constitutional Court and the Ombudsman Service". Source: <http://www.icdt.hu/projects/projects-by-regions/eastern-europe/strengthening-rule-of-law-institutions-in-moldova-the-constitutional-court-and-the-ombudsman-service> Last accessed: January 28, 2014.

³⁶ State Chancellery. "Parliament of the Republic of Moldova". Source: <http://www.ncu.moldova.md/pageview.php?l=en&idc=601&t=/Twinning-in-Moldova/Parliament-of-the-Republic-of-Moldova/> Last accessed: January 28, 2014.

State Chancellery. "The Status of TWINNING in Moldova". Source: http://ncu.gov.md/public/files/09072013_en_annex_3_status.swf Last accessed: January 28, 2014.

³⁷ For more details on the project: State Chancellery. "TTSIB Project" Source: <http://www.ncu.moldova.md/category.php?l=en&idc=522&t=TTSIB-Project/> Last accessed: January 28, 2014.

the ICDT's project activity in Moldova goes beyond projects financed by the MFA. Some Moldova-related projects, which do not appear in the annual reports, are listed on the ICDT's website.³⁸

The establishment of the Dniester Euroregion, supported from Hungarian ODA sources and implemented by the ICDT, was one of the most important projects of Hungarian IDC in Moldova. The Dniester Euroregion is a form of cross-border cooperation that seeks to indirectly contribute to the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict through building confidence among communities living along the river Nistru in Ukraine, Moldova and the Transnistrian region by involving them in mutually addressing the social, economic and environmental challenges they face. In 2009, the initiating conference of the cooperation was held and the Dniester Euroregion Working Group was set up. In 2010, the ICDT organized a study trip to the Carpathian Euroregion for Moldovan, Transnistrian and Ukrainian representatives, and in 2011 it won a grant from the MFA to develop the capacity of civil society organizations and to raise awareness about European models of regional cooperation. The project was implemented in 2012, the same year the official cooperation agreement of the parties involved in the establishment of the Dniester Euroregion was accepted.

Apart from the ICDT, another organization, the Foundation for the Development of Democratic Rights (DemNet) also got involved in capacity building in Moldova and in 2012 implemented a project titled "FIT Into Society" to support the social embeddedness and sustainability of civil society organizations in the country. This project also enjoyed the support of Hungarian ODA sources.³⁹

Covering an additional area, ODA was allocated for the Gagauz community in Moldova in the 2009-12 period, whose autonomy Hungary supports and sees as a model for other communities. In this field, Hungary provided assistance both for the realization of the 2nd Gagauz World Conference and for the development of facilities used by the community.

Conclusions

In conclusion, Hungarian engagement in Moldova went beyond mere political declarations and Budapest is seeking to establish its presence as a policy-maker in the partner country. With regards to its foreign policy goals, Hungary's balance is good, but not perfect. The official bi- and multilateral activities of Budapest certainly contribute to the transition and the Europeanization of the country, thus supporting Moldova's European aspirations. Setting up the Common Visa Application Centre, training officials and capacity building projects are all good examples of such engagement, while Hungary's role in the Working Group of Security Sector Reform of the Community of Democracies can help fighting smuggling, illegal migration and organized crime.

Bilateral cooperation strengthened from 2008 on, already before the start of the EU's Eastern Partnership program. The number of development projects implemented by non-governmental actors increased starting this year, and these initiatives delivered on the official goals as well. The establishment of the Dniester Euroregion is a valuable contribution to confidence building and therefore to the potential

³⁸ E.g.: the projects titled „Training Moldovan Politicians and Experts in Security Policy” in August 2009 – January 2010, and „Promoting Moldova’s EU Integration” in May 2012 – October 2013, both of which strongly focus on sharing Hungary’s experiences in the reform of the security sector. The project entitled „Cross-river Development” in March – May 2010 aimed at confidence building in the Dniester region.

ICDT. “Projects, Eastern Europe.” Source: <http://www.icdt.hu/projects/projects-by-regions/eastern-europe> Last accessed: December 1, 2013.

³⁹ DemNet. “FIT into Society.” Source:

http://demnet.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=346%3Acsattolodj-be-a-tarsadalomba-fit-into-society&catid=41%3Anemzetkoezi-fejlesztési-programok&Itemid=76&lang=en

Last accessed: January 28, 2014.

Although it does not fall into the studied period, we should mention that DemNet continues its engagement, and as part of a consortium, it supports the transfer of Hungary’s transition experience to enhance the sustainability of the civil sector in Moldova. For more information: DemNet. “V4 transition experience transfer for enhancing EaP CSOs' sustainability.” Source:

http://demnet.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=387%3Av4-transition-experience-transfer-for-enhancing-eap-csos-sustainability&catid=41%3Anemzetkoezi-fejlesztési-programok&Itemid=76&lang=en Last accessed: January 28, 2014.

resolution of the Transnistrian conflict, while capacity building projects of DemNet or the ICDT facilitate the political and social transition of Moldova.

Hungarian activities, however, have fallen short in the field of economic relations during the studied period. Trade turnover is still minuscule as of 2012. Nevertheless, 2013 has brought promising developments in this sector and cooperation frameworks are now set in place for establishing deeper cooperation. The results, though, remain to be seen.

POLISH DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FOR MOLDOVA

Moldova in Poland's Foreign Policy

The goals of Polish foreign policy are outlined in the Polish Foreign Policy Priorities for 2012-2016 adopted in March 2012, the first multiannual foreign and European policy strategy of the country since 1989. According to this document Poland supports the European "accession aspirations"⁴⁰ of Moldova and will also continue to advocate NATO enlargement to Moldova.⁴¹ As for Polish-Moldavian bilateral relations, they are regulated by the Treaty between the Republic of Poland and Moldova on Friendship and Cooperation signed in Warsaw on 15 November 1994 as well as by other bilateral agreements referring to specific areas of cooperation.

In essence, Moldova's place in Polish foreign policy is usually defined in the context of Poland's wider Eastern policy – since 2009 in the context of the Eastern Partnership (EaP). The Eastern vector of Polish diplomacy is dominated by Ukraine and Belarus, countries with which bonds are strong due to a shared history and the large Polish minority living in these states. However, while it is often hard to show up visible results in cooperation with Belarus and Ukraine, investing diplomatic efforts in relations with Moldova has proved very fruitful. As such Moldova has been in the past few years – and particularly since the government change in 2009 – quickly elevated to a significant position in Poland's foreign policy. This is well reflected by the increased dynamism of bilateral high-level visits, the intensification of economic relations as well as augmented attention in terms of development and transition aid.

Moldova in the Polish Development Cooperation System

Due to the growing eagerness and capacities of Poland to participate in development cooperation and democracy support, in 2011 the international development cooperation system underwent a major reform. The new system's foundations were laid down in the Act on Development Cooperation which came into force on 1 January 2012. The policy is currently implemented in line with the 2012-2015 Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme. As regards the institutional framework, there is no separate development agency that would coordinate the work in its entirety; instead, it is the Department of Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DDC) which is in charge of both planning and implementation tasks. Its work is facilitated by the Development Cooperation Policy Council, an advisory and consultative body functioning alongside the Minister of Foreign Affairs which takes part in setting priorities and ensures a cross-institutional overview of development cooperation related activities.

The 2012-2015 Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme outlines two major categories as regards the geographic targets of Polish development policy: one is the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region, while the other covers all the remaining target countries of Africa, Asia and the Middle East (including countries of East Africa, North Africa, Afghanistan, Kirgizstan, Tajikistan as well as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip)⁴². Such a division, just as with the organizational structure of the DDC – only two geographical

⁴⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. *Polish Foreign Policy Priorities for 2012-2016*. Warsaw: MFA of the Republic of Poland, 2012, p. 11

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 15

⁴² *Ibidem*, pp. 5-6,

departments corresponding to these categories – demonstrates the privileged position the Eastern Neighbourhood occupies in Poland's development aid policy.

Budget allocations also confirm the special weight on the Eastern region: in 2012 some 110 million PLN⁴³ was allocated to the EaP countries⁴⁴, almost half of the entire Polish bilateral ODA for that year. Out of this Moldova received 6.269.426 PLN ranking a distant fourth in the region after Belarus (51.7 million PLN), Ukraine (40.2 million PLN) and Georgia (8.4 million PLN)⁴⁵. Yet this sum has been on the rise for the past few years as the table below demonstrates.

Total bilateral ODA disbursement of Poland in Moldova between 2005-2012

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total Polish bilateral ODA disbursement for Moldova (in million USD)	0,6	1,06	0,83	1,42	0,53	0,59	0,92	2,08

Source: Poland's Development Cooperation. Annual Reports 2005-2012

In fact, the general systemic reform that took place in 2011 is also clearly reflected in the aid pattern directed at Moldova. As a result of the strategic overhaul of the aid system considerable sources were redirected to the Eastern neighbourhood from non-European target regions – a remarkable example being Afghanistan⁴⁶. From 2012 increased stress has also been laid on bilateral cooperation with a new quota introduced that foresees 60% of all aid to be spent through bilateral channels. Moldova was one of the main beneficiaries of these changes and as such saw a double fold increase of ODA from the year 2011 to 2012.

Changes occurred not only in terms of volume, but also in terms of priorities. In the case of Moldova anew principle objective guiding development cooperation with this country appeared - support for preparations to sign the Association Agreement with the EU. Accordingly, in 2012 and 2013 a new priority was added for Moldova, namely that of public security and border management focusing on bolstering the capacities of public security services to manage issues like migration, human trafficking and organized crime. The other two priorities, regional development and decentralization (in support of the administrative and fiscal decentralization process in Moldova) on one hand and development of rural areas on the other hand, have been the pillars of Polish aid in Moldova ever since the country has been on the list of priority recipients of Polish development aid, that is since 2004.⁴⁷

Forms of Assistance for Moldova

A considerable part (2,385,000 PLN) of the overall sum disbursed in 2013 was distributed through the competition announced by the DDC called "Polish Development Aid 2012". The Polish NGOs carrying out

⁴³ Excluding credit agreements and debt cancellation.

⁴⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. *Poland's Development Cooperation. Annual Report 2012*. Warsaw: MFA of the Republic of Poland, 2013, p. 7. http://www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/files/Aktualnosci2013/Raport_2012/Raport_2012_eng.pdf

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 78-84.

⁴⁶ Interview with a member of the Department of Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. January 2014.

⁴⁷ <http://www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/Moldova,187.html>

year by year large scale projects are the East Foundation, the Konstany Ostrogski Foundation and the Polish-Ukrainian Cooperation Foundation PAUCI. Additionally, a further close to 1,5 million PLN was spent on government administration projects which were carried out by various Polish public administration units other than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (for instance the Ministry of Regional Development or the Ministry of Internal Affairs)⁴⁸. Besides, Moldova was the only EaP state in 2013 that received humanitarian aid in the value of 440,000 PLN aiming at decreasing the effects of drought.

Apart from the project based support carried out by the DDC, another, specific form of assistance financed by the MFA from the Polish development aid funds is the **Eastern Partnership Academy of Public Administration (EPAPA)** launched during Poland's EU Council presidency in the second half of 2011. The mission of EPAPA is to strengthen public administration in the EaP countries by organising specialist trainings for representatives of the EaP countries' public administration in cooperation with Poland's National School of Public Administration (KSAP). In 2011 ten and in 2012 fifteen civil servants from Moldova took part in EPAPA trainings on issues of value-based management, the economics of public finance and security and defence policies. In 2013 besides the training module addressing all EaP countries there was a separate module launched for Moldova on EU negotiation training.

A further important element of Polish development cooperation is the **scholarship policy**. In 2012 Poland spent a total of 60 million PLN⁴⁹ on scholarships. Most of the students interested in the scholarship programme are students from the EaP states, which meant 13,589 students from the region in the 2012/2013 academic year. Places available are not split for countries of origin, yet statistics show that the majority of scholarship recipients come from Ukraine, while this opportunity is far less attractive for Moldovan students: in 2012 Poland spent close to 30 million PLN on scholarships for Ukrainians whereas only 658,000 PLN for Moldovans.⁵⁰ This is in part explicable on the grounds of language similarities (for Ukrainian native speakers it is much easier to pick up the Polish language than it is for Romanian-speaking Moldovans) and poor transport connections between Moldova and Poland.

Other relevant actors of Polish development cooperation are the foreign diplomatic missions who conduct development projects by themselves or in cooperation with local partners in the framework of the so-called **Small Grants System**. If in the years 2009-2010 the Polish Embassy in Chisinau carried out only 3 and 5 such small grant projects respectively, in 2011 they already numbered 9 and in 2012 ten benefitting altogether of some 394,000 PLN funding⁵¹. They were small-scale initiatives aimed at, for instance, renovating a heating system in a kindergarden, improving a drainage system or equipment procurement for other social facilities.

One successful attempt by the Polish Embassy to make Polish development cooperation in Moldova more visible to the wider public was the exhibition "Polish Cooperation for Development in Moldova" organized in the National Library of Moldova in December 2013. The exhibition presented the projects of Polish NGOs which were implemented in cooperation with Moldovan partners in the period 2009-2012. A

⁴⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. *Poland's Development Cooperation. Annual Report 2012*. Warsaw: MFA of the Republic of Poland, 2013, p. 81. http://www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/files/Aktualnosci2013/Raport_2012/Raport_2012_eng.pdf

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 82-83.

⁵¹ Information assembled from Poland's development cooperation annual report for the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, <http://www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/Documents,and,Publications,208.html>

useful internet source⁵² was also launched gathering information on all Polish projects implemented from 2007 onwards.

Apart from the MFA, a significant role in Polish international development cooperation is played by the **International Solidarity Fund (ISF)**. Though registered as a non-governmental organization, in line with the 2011 government Act on Development Cooperation the ISF undertakes assignments commissioned and financed by the Polish MFA. Being such a re-granting organ allows it to provide assistance for politically sensitive projects too. Its main activity consists of the so-called Support for Democracy programme which through its open grants competition funds common projects of Polish non-governmental organizations and pro-democratic milieus abroad. While the DDC provides mainly development aid (through so-called 'hard projects', e.g. for infrastructure development), the objective of ISF is facilitating democratization and transition (through so-called 'soft projects' providing e.g. training).

The open grant competition's target countries in 2014 are the EaP states (with the exception of Armenia), Tajikistan and Tunisia. Priorities are set in close cooperation with the MFA, yet these priorities are much more vaguely formulated than those in the DDC call. There are country specific priorities only in the case of Belarus (which also receives by far the most funding), Tajikistan and Tunisia, whereas Moldova is in one basket with Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine. By such a scale of generality the ISF wishes to leave applicants with considerable freedom to formulate the goals of their projects⁵³.

The average value of co-financing by ISF ranges from approx. \$50,000 to \$200,000 and the overall financial envelope of this year's call is \$1,454,000⁵⁴.

While the number of projects co-financed in the open grant competition is marginal (in 2013 only one project was financed in Moldova)⁵⁵ and the bulk of the funding goes to Belarus, a key achievement of Polish development aid in Moldova is **the Information Centre for Local Authorities in Moldova (ICLA)** managed by the ISF. The Centre is located in Ialoveni and was opened in December 2012 after the foundations for its creation were laid down in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland and the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction of the Republic Moldova signed on 29 June 2012. The project was launched in the scope of the Moldova Task Force and constitutes a part of the Democracy Partnership Challenge programme implemented by the Community of Democracies⁵⁶. This international platform in 2011 offered its patronage for two selected emerging democracies, Moldova and Tunisia and established for this purpose two so-called Task Forces. The one for Moldova is co-chaired by Poland and the US and it operates through five working groups, out of which the one on local governance is led by Poland. Its aim is to provide a platform for donors to facilitate donors to identify needs and to find co-financing⁵⁷. Initially Poland assured financial

⁵² The interactive information source was realized on Google Maps:

http://data.mapchannels.com/mc4/20953/pwr_w_moldawii_20953.htm?v=20131204120438

⁵³ Interview with a representative of the International Solidarity Fund. January 2014.

⁵⁴ Website of the International Solidarity Fund: <http://solidarityfund.pl/en>

⁵⁵ Interview with a representative of the International Solidarity Fund. January 2014.

⁵⁶ The Community of Democracies is a coalition of over one hundred countries whose mission is to strengthen democratic norms and institutions worldwide. It was established during an international conference in Warsaw in 2000 on the initiative of Polish Foreign Minister Prof. Bronisław Geremek and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (www.community-democracies.org).

⁵⁷ Interview with representatives of the Community of Democracies. January 2014.

support of the ICLA in the framework of Polish Aid until the end of 2013⁵⁸ which was then complemented by funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for one year until March 2014. Romania's contribution was supposed to have no financial character, but to consist of delegating a seconded expert,⁵⁹ yet this has not yet materialized⁶⁰. In December 2013 Poland and Moldova signed an annex to the Memorandum of Understanding governing the Centre's work in which Poland undertook to continue funding for one more year. It is possible that such an extension will be made once more by Poland for 2015⁶¹, after which the Centre will pass to the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction of Moldova under the assumption that its cadre received sufficient preparation to run it by itself and continue to support local administration and NGOs, establishing external partnerships and attracting foreign donors.

Overall, the ICLA has an informative, coordinative and educational role: it provides the necessary know-how to local authorities and NGOs which have an idea for a project to be implemented but still search for funding possibilities and project partners abroad. This is being done via trainings, individual consultations (both services free of charge) and maintaining a website⁶² that comprises exhaustive information on funding and partnership possibilities. An e-learning platform is also under construction.

During the first year of its existence the ICLA primarily aimed to train local governments in the field of fund raising and project management (in 2013 eight training sessions took place with over 350 participants from the whole of Moldova⁶³) and provided opportunities for establishing partnerships between Polish NGOs and representatives of Moldovan civil society. The yearly report of the ICLA pinpoints tangible outcomes of its activity in 2013, namely that the number of applications for small grants announced by the Lithuanian and Polish Embassies in Moldova „is several times higher than in the previous years“.⁶⁴ As a next step, in the current year there are plans to launch a Small Project Fund for Moldovan Local Public Authorities and NGOs with the expected financial support of the U.S. Government Emerging Donors Challenge Fund⁶⁵. The small grants would be commonly administered by ICLA and USAID and would provide a chance to put in to practice the newly acquired knowledge and contacts. This is meant as a sort of exercise for next year's call for application of the ISF.

Conclusions

Poland's foreign policy shows an increasing attention towards Moldova along with the traditional focus of Poland in the East, Belarus and Moldova. Parallel to that is the ambition of Poland undertaking an increasingly comprehensive and professional international development cooperation. These two trends together result, as data and practice suggests, in increased development and transformation aid for Moldova. The next challenge, along with keeping up the dynamism of these developments, is to look

⁵⁸ *Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland and the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction of the Republic Moldova*, point 6.

⁵⁹ Currently the staff of the Centre consists of the Director and two assistants.

⁶⁰ Information Centre for Local Authorities in Moldova. Yearly Report. December 2012-December 2013, Ialoveni, 2013, p. 4

⁶¹ Interview with a representative of the International Solidarity Fund. January 2014.

⁶² The ICLA website can be visited at www.centruinfo.org

⁶³ Information Centre for Local Authorities in Moldova. Yearly Report. December 2012-December 2013, Ialoveni, 2013, p. 3

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 3

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 15

beyond Poland's own courtyard, and increase efforts to coordinate aid activities with, as a first step, V4 neighbours for the sake of increasing aid not just in volume, but also in effectiveness.

ASSESSMENT OF THE SLOVAK ASSISTANCE TO MOLDOVA

Moldova currently enjoys a prominent place in Slovakia's foreign policy and development assistance. In 2013, the intensity of the Slovak-Moldovan political relations reached its all-time peak, culminating with the opening of a new Slovak embassy in Chisinau in July 2013. At the same time, Moldova was promoted from a project country to a program country of Slovakia's official development assistance (ODA).⁶⁶ The situation was quite different only a few years ago, though, when the political relations were quite unremarkable and assistance to Moldova virtually non-existent. The objective of this paper is thus to: a.) review the development of the Slovak attitude towards Moldova with a focus on Slovakia's support and assistance, b.) assess the current scope and quality of the multilateral and bilateral cooperation with and assistance to Moldova, and c.) outline the recent and expected developments in Slovak ODA vis-à-vis Moldova.

Development of the Slovak Attitude towards Moldova (2003-2009)

Slovakia launched its official development assistance (ODA) program in 2003, but Moldova – nor, in fact, any other country of the current European Union's (EU) Eastern Partnership (EaP) region – did not feature on the list of territorial priorities initially outlined in the very first *Medium-Term ODA Strategy for the years 2003-2008*.⁶⁷ But while already in 2004/2005 assistance projects were implemented also in Ukraine and Belarus and the two countries have been included in each *National ODA Program* since 2005,⁶⁸ until 2009 Moldova received only very limited assistance in the form of two *ad hoc* humanitarian projects.⁶⁹ This, though, merely reflected the order of political priorities and the interests of Slovakia in its eastern neighbourhood at that period.

The eastern dimension of Slovakia's foreign policy has traditionally had a strong focus on Ukraine and Russia for considerable geographical, geopolitical and economic reasons, and it remained so after Slovakia joined the EU in 2004. On the other hand, the remaining countries of the region⁷⁰ were in the early years of Slovakia's EU membership dealt with quite marginally.⁷¹ The only exception was Belarus, where in 2005 Slovakia pledged to support pro-democratic, pro-reform and pro-European forces, dedicating also a part of its ODA resources to further such efforts. The Slovak position on Moldova at that time was unremarkable, given the country's domestic political situation, as illustrated in the document *Slovakia's Foreign Policy Orientation for 2005*: "Development of relations with Moldova remains an open

⁶⁶ The upgraded status of Moldova in Slovakia's ODA will come into effect in 2014.

⁶⁷ Slovak ODA is shaped primarily by two kinds of documents: medium-term strategies, which provide guidance for 5-6-year periods, and national ODA programs, which – based on the respective strategy – are published on a yearly basis.

⁶⁸ Ukraine and Belarus were originally not included in the ODA strategy because they were not classified as ODA countries by OECD. In 2004, however, Slovakia decided to make an exemption and allocate ODA funds for the two countries: first, they were considered foreign policy priorities of Slovakia and, more importantly, 2004 was a crucial year for both Ukraine and Belarus due to the elections in each country, as well as the start of the Orange Revolution. The same exemption was granted for the two countries also in the *National ODA Program for 2005*. In 2006, OECD re-classified Ukraine and Belarus from official assistance (OA) recipient countries to ODA countries, and consequently they were included in the *National ODA Program for 2006* along with other Slovak ODA priority project countries.

⁶⁹ In 2007 grants for two humanitarian projects were approved to help Moldova deal with severe drought and the resulting grave situation in agriculture. The projects in the total amount of 4 million Slovak crowns (approximately €133,000) were implemented by two Slovak NGOs – Človek v ohrození (People in Peril) and ADRA – Slovensko (Adventist Development Relief Agency).

⁷⁰ Even in 2005, already after the accession into the EU, the relevant Slovak foreign policy documents defined the countries of the region primarily under the banner of their membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States. See *Slovakia's Foreign Policy Orientation for 2005*, [http://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_181727FE24079C74C1257648004316B1_SK/\\$File/Zameranie_ZP_2005.pdf](http://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_181727FE24079C74C1257648004316B1_SK/$File/Zameranie_ZP_2005.pdf).

⁷¹ See the annual *Slovakia's Foreign Policy Orientation* documents for years 2004-2007, http://www.mzv.sk/sk/zahranicna_politika/dokumenty_k_zahranicnej_politike.

issue. Precondition to their development, though, is stabilisation of the situation in the country, democratisation, and completion of necessary reforms aimed at building a market-oriented economy.”⁷² Although the 2006 foreign policy plan read that “[i]n perspective, Slovakia contemplates ... assisting Moldova to bring closer the European integration perspective”,⁷³ with the Communist party in power in Chisinau until 2009, Slovak political engagement towards Moldova was in effect only of a multilateral character and chiefly focused on the issue of Transnistria.⁷⁴

Things began to gradually change in the context of two key and complementary developments. The first one was the formation of the EU’s EaP project, driven particularly by Poland, but to which Slovakia actively contributed. In its foreign policy plan for 2007, Slovakia voiced its support for the “EU steps aimed at fostering relations with the countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)” in order to develop a “stable and prospering neighbourhood”, as well as its readiness to “share its experience gained from the reform and transformation processes with the countries in the ENP framework.”⁷⁵ At the same time, it recognized the need to give the ENP a new impetus: in January 2007, Slovakia along with other Visegrád 4 (V4) countries initiated a process aimed at strengthening of the eastern dimension of the ENP, presenting to their EU partners the rationale and particular concepts of the reinforced policy.⁷⁶ All the suggestions and recommendations formulated by the V4 were consequently included in the EaP initiative as proposed by Poland and Sweden, which was then approved by the European Council in 2008.⁷⁷ Of the six partner countries involved in the EaP,⁷⁸ Slovakia expressed its interest to “pay special attention ... in the first place to deepening relations with Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus”⁷⁹ – a natural preference given the already ongoing assistance programs and projects in Ukraine and Belarus, and the geographical and cultural proximity of Moldova.

In parallel with that, the other key factor that significantly contributed to the new quality in and deepening of the Slovak-Moldovan relations was the political development that took place in Moldova in 2008-09 and culminated in 2010 with creation of the Alliance for European Integration (AEI) – a new pro-European coalition led by the prime-minister Vladimir Filat. Slovakia recognized the positive political changes and welcomed the European ambitions of the new government, which it began to support accordingly: Slovakia stepped-up its political dialogue with Moldova to help the country streamline its EU association negotiations and since 2009 has joined several multilateral platforms for better support, cooperation and experience sharing with Moldova in various areas pertaining to democratic transition and EU integration. At the same time, in 2009 Slovakia incorporated Moldova into its ODA program and

⁷² Slovakia’s Foreign Policy Orientation for 2005, pp. 17.

⁷³ See Slovakia’s Foreign Policy Orientation for 2006, pp. 19, http://www.mzv.sk/sk/zahranicna_politika/dokumenty_k_zahranicnej_politike.

⁷⁴ This concerned activities especially at international forums such as the United Nations (UN), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Council of Europe (CoE), and the EU. In this sense, Slovakia was for example active in creation of the EU Border Assistance Mission to Ukraine and Moldova (EUBAM) in 2005, or actively supported fulfilment of the EU/Moldova Action Plan for the years 2005-2007 through expert negotiations.

⁷⁵ Slovakia’s Foreign Policy Orientation for 2007, pp. 7, [http://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_47D2BC1F5AC79314C125764800426465_SK/\\$File/Zameranie07-final.pdf](http://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_47D2BC1F5AC79314C125764800426465_SK/$File/Zameranie07-final.pdf).

⁷⁶ Two key documents initializing this process are the *Joint Political Statement of the V4 Countries on the Strengthening of the European Neighbourhood Policy* and the *ENP and Eastern Neighbourhood – Time to Act*, presented respectively by Slovakia and Czech Republic during their V4 presidencies.

⁷⁷ See *Annual Report: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic – Foreign Policy in 2007*, [http://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_3DA40E29B2A8D64AC125764800505293_SK/\\$File/eng%20VS%20MZV%20text2007.pdf](http://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_3DA40E29B2A8D64AC125764800505293_SK/$File/eng%20VS%20MZV%20text2007.pdf).

⁷⁸ The six EaP countries are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

⁷⁹ See *Annual Report: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic – Foreign Policy in 2009*, [http://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_5F93D8825C2681D6C1257703002496CE_SK/\\$File/Vyrocná_správa_2009_EN.pdf](http://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_5F93D8825C2681D6C1257703002496CE_SK/$File/Vyrocná_správa_2009_EN.pdf). Although, as far as the ODA was concerned, Georgia was also included among the territorial priorities in 2009.

since then a total of 12 bilateral technical assistance projects has been contracted in a total amount of €1,200,773 , more than 44 micro-grants worth more than €210,401 have been provided, and at least 4 experience-sharing study trips worth more than €13,068 have been carried out.

Unlike in the case of some countries, Slovakia's support for and assistance to Moldova is not motivated by any hidden agenda or vested interests – as illustrated above. Above all, it comes as a genuine response to the positive changes in the country as well as a demonstration of Slovakia's belief that through the EaP "it is possible to realize a vision of a political association, economic integration and a comprehensive modernisation of the east European countries on the basis of EU values and standards."⁸⁰ A realistic understanding of Slovakia's assistance capacities and resources – impact factor – plays an important role too, though. Given Moldova's geographical proximity, the size of its territory and the nature of the its development issues, not to mention the receptive attitude of the country's government and stakeholders, the limited ODA resources that Slovakia is able to provide can still produce a visible and tangible impact even in the presence of several major international donors, which makes Moldova an ideal assistance partner for Slovakia.

Current Mechanisms of Slovak Assistance to Moldova (2009-2013)

Slovakia's support and assistance to Moldova takes place on a multilateral as well as a bilateral level in a number of formats and mechanisms. In terms of the multilateral level,⁸¹ among the most significant formats – besides the general framework of the ENP and the EaP – are the *Friends of Moldova* group and the *Task Force on Moldova*. The former, formally known as the *European Action Group for the Republic of Moldova*, is an open and informal group of like-minded EU member countries most interested in a European consensus vis-à-vis Moldova, which furthermore believe in the principle of an equal (though not necessarily undifferentiated) approach to all the EaP countries. Initiated by Romania and France and launched in 2010 in reaction to the positive political changes in Moldova, the group meets with the country's representatives and other interested parties⁸² approximately twice a year with the ambition to share information on developments in Moldova, as well as to pronounce their support for its euro-integration aspirations.⁸³ In practical terms, support of the group was – for example – important in helping Moldova negotiate formulations and conditions in the preamble of its Association Agreement (AA) similar to those of Ukraine.⁸⁴ Slovakia, for its part, is among the original members of the group, along with Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Sweden.

The second format mentioned above is the *Task Force on Moldova* – a part of the Democracy Partnership Challenge project, which functions within the framework of the of the Community of Democracies,⁸⁵the

⁸⁰ See "Eastern Partnership (European Neighbourhood Policy)", http://www.mzv.sk/sk/europske_zalezitosti/eu_ropske_politiky-vychodne_partnerstvo.

⁸¹ While on the multilateral level Slovakia is involved to a different extent in various programs and initiatives where (also) Moldova is concerned, for the purposes of this paper only such multilateral mechanisms were considered where Moldova is the explicitly defined target country and where Slovakia is engaged directly, actively, and systematically.

⁸² The meetings are usually attended by group member states' representatives of various ranks, including foreign ministers, secretaries of state, and ambassadors. The European Commission participated on several occasions too, represented by the Commissioner for Enlargement and ENP, Mr. Štefan Füle.

⁸³ See <http://en.interlic.md/2010-01-26/launch-of-group-meant-to-support-european-action-of-republic-of-moldova-is-open-initiative-14211.html> and http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/baltic_states_cis/?doc=86346.

⁸⁴ Author's interview with an official of the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, 14 May 2013.

⁸⁵ The Community of Democracies (CoD) is an intergovernmental coalition founded to promote democratic rules and strengthening democratic norms and institutions around the world. The exclusive Democracy Partnership Challenge (DPC) project was launched within the CoD in order to support countries that have showed serious commitment to significant progress towards democracy. This support is then provided to a selected country by a

Task Force was inaugurated in 2011 under the co-chairmanship of the United States and Poland with the objective to “provide resources, expertise, and support...to Moldova as the country enters the next stage in its democratic transition.”⁸⁶ The work of the Task Force is divided among sector specific teams, with each of them focused on one of the identified areas/objectives and led by one of the member countries. The work is carried out through quarterly conference calls and e-coordination among team members. At the time of its launch, members of the Task Force together with their Moldovan counterparts identified four common objectives: local governance (led by Poland), justice sector reform (led by the United States), transparency of government/e-governance (led by Lithuania), and security sector reform (led by Hungary).

Having had a positive experience with co-chairing the Task Force on Tunisia together with the Netherlands, Slovakia was in 2012 approached to participate in a new sector team of the Task Force on Moldova focusing on migration⁸⁷ and – along with Romania – it assumed the role of a sectorial co-chairing country. In its role, Slovakia⁸⁸ participates in physical and virtual team meetings, and serves *de facto* as an administrator of requests coming from Moldova pertaining to the issue of migration, which it then shares with the rest of the working team. Besides that, it also provides direct assistance to Moldova on migration-related issues in the form of trainings and technology. The former includes training by Slovak authorities⁸⁹ of their Moldovan counterparts on issues such as illegal migration, human trafficking, or security of travel documents. The latter, on the other hand, consists of donations of pieces of obsolete technology and materiel.⁹⁰

Perhaps the most significant and complex part of Slovakia’s support and assistance to Moldova is, however, provided through Slovakia’s Official Development Assistance program – and chiefly on the bilateral level. In fact, Slovakia’s ODA is the most significant and comprehensive mechanism that provides a solid backbone (and financial resources) for supporting and assisting Moldova.⁹¹ Moldova was first included in Slovakia’s ODA program in 2009 in the second *Medium-Term ODA Strategy for the years 2009-*

group of states that together form a dedicated Task Force. So far two recipient countries have been chosen: Tunisia and Moldova. See <http://www.community-democracies.org/Working-for-Democracy/Initiatives/Civil-Society-Pillar>.

⁸⁶ See <http://www.state.gov/s/sacsed/communitydemocracies/c51359.htm>.

⁸⁷ Migration as another focus area was considered already at the very first meeting of the Task Force on 7 December, 2011. See <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/187504.pdf>.

⁸⁸ Both the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs as well as the Ministry of Interior.

⁸⁹ Institutions involved in these trainings have so far included for example the National Unit for Combating Illegal Migration, Office of the Border and Alien Police, or the Presidium of the Police Force.

⁹⁰ Slovakia, for example, considered donating to Moldova some of the technology and hardware previously used for securing its eastern border, which now does not meeting the Schengen standards.

⁹¹ Given that the Slovak ODA is quite complex and consists of bilateral and multilateral ODA programs, along with an array of sub-programs, from many of which Moldova can theoretically benefit, for the purpose of this paper only such programs and instruments were considered where Moldova was explicitly defined as one of the longer-term target countries and the responsible authority was the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs in cooperation with the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAIDC). Besides any assistance provided to Moldova by international organisations to which Slovakia financially contributes via multilateral ODA (including the UN, World Bank, or EBRD), these criteria also exclude from consideration the *ad hoc* humanitarian aid commissioned for Moldova in 2007 and 2010 (altogether 3 projects worth approximately €168,000 in total), as well as the technical assistance provided to Moldova by the UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre with financial support of and in cooperation with the Slovak Ministry of Finance under the “Public Finances for Development: Capacities Enhancement in the Public Finance in the Western Balkans and the Commonwealth of Independent States” program (launched in September 2009 with expected end in 2014).

2013 for the reasons outlined above.⁹² Defined in the strategy as a project country,⁹³ it was in effect provided access to a number of instruments of cooperation with priority countries through experience transfer program of the Slovak ODA.⁹⁴

The most substantial instrument was the small grants scheme of *bilateral technical assistance projects* aimed at experience sharing and transfer of specific transformation- and integration-related know-how. For four years since 2009, Moldova was made a part of an EaP region package, along with Belarus, Georgia, and Ukraine, with its common set of sectorial priorities and a shared pool of financial resources. These, as the *Table 1* illustrates, were to a greater or lesser extent defined and re-defined on an annual basis; however, two recognizable trends eventually emerged by the end of the 2009-13 period: first, the sector priorities were gradually narrowed down to three main areas, including intensification of transformation reforms, civil society support, and building democratic institutions/EU integration. Rather than infrastructure development and management (as well as energy efficiency), which featured among the priorities in 2009 and 2011, a shift towards “soft” projects is obvious. Second, the amount of funds allocated for the selected EaP countries, including Moldova, took a sharp downfall: starting off with a generous pot of €1,100,000 in 2009, which was further increased by another €600,000 in 2010, the available EaP budget eventually marked a 3-fold decrease, eventually settling at €500,000 in 2013.

Table 1: Priorities and funds for bilateral technical assistance projects in the EaP countries in 2009-13

YEAR	PRIORITIES	ALLOCATED FUNDS (€)
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building democratic institutions, rule of law, civil society and peace, • social development, • economic development – building market environment, strengthening macro-economic environment, public finance management, and support for SMEs, • infrastructure development with positive impact on sustainable development and protection of environment. 	1,100,000
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approximation of legislation and norms to the EU norms, • supporting integration ambitions and administrative capacities building. 	1 700 000
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policies and administrative management of public sector; supporting the countries getting closer to the EU (approximation of EU norms, coordination and planning of implementation of 	450 000 280 000 (additional

⁹² The Strategy lists the following four sectorial priorities for the period of 2009-13: a.) building democratic institutions, rule of law, civil society and peace, b.) social development, c.) economic development – building market environment, strengthening macro-economic environment, public finance management, and support for small and medium enterprises, and d.) infrastructure development with positive impact on sustainable development and protection of environment, including construction of economic infrastructure related to trade and building of production capacities. See http://www.slovakaid.sk/sites/default/files/strednodoba_strategia_oda_sr_2009_20013.pdf.

⁹³ In Slovakia’s ODA, territorial priorities are divided into program countries and priority countries. While the former indicates cooperation with a given country on a program level, including preparation of a country strategy and allocating a more significant pool of financial resources available for projects in a specific country, the latter refers to a country that shares a common set of priorities and financial resources with other selected priority countries of a given region, e.g. the Western Balkans, EU’s Southern Neighbourhood, or the Eastern Partnership region.

⁹⁴ The strategy did not outline specific programs and instruments of the bilateral ODA, these were defined annually in the respective *National ODA Programs*. In 2013, the bilateral programs included: 1.) development cooperation with program countries, 2.) cooperation with priority countries through transfer of experience (including microgrants and CETIR), 3.) humanitarian aid, 4.) public awareness, development education and ODA capacity-building, and 5.) support programs.

	reforms, building institutions, supporting fiscal policies, public spending management), <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting civil society and its involvement in reform processes, • energy efficiency, • additional separate call on Moldova: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ social development with focus on healthcare and education ○ water management with focus on flood protection and drinking water 	call on Moldova)
201 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intensification of reforms (in the field of economics, legislation, security, education, social system, public and local administration reforms, public policy making), • civil society support (dialogue between the government and CSOs, support of analytic community, financial sustainability, capacity building), • building institutions and capacities for cooperation with the EU, enlargement policy, approximation of the EU norms and standards, • healthy business environment and business opportunities. 	450 000
201 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intensification of reforms (in the field of economics, legislation, security, education, social system, public and local administration reforms, public policy making), • civil society support (dialogue between the government and CSOs, support of analytic community, financial sustainability, capacity building), • building institutions and capacities for cooperation with the EU, enlargement policy, approximation of the EU norms and standards, supporting euro-Atlantic integration. 	500 000

Source: National ODA Programs of the Slovak Republic from 2009 until 2013.

Given the fact that the EaP countries were programmed for 2009-13 as one package, sharing the same priorities and one common budget as outlined above, the actual number of projects and funds contracted for each country varied from one year to another. Territorial distribution of the contracted projects depended both on the level of political priority assigned to the respective country in a given year, as well as on the merit of the submitted project applications. So how did Moldova do in terms of the number of projects, their sectorial priorities, and the provided funds?

As Table 2 shows, altogether 12 technical assistance projects in Moldova worth the total amount of €1,200,773 were contracted from 2009 until 2013 (including the projects launched in 2013 and ending in 2014). In absolute terms, this is 3 projects more than contracted for Georgia (9) and Ukraine (9), and twice as many as Belarus (6), demonstrating that already at that period Moldova indeed held a prominent (and promising) place among Slovakia's assistance priorities in line with the proclamations and support provided at the political level.

Table 2: List of bilateral technical assistance projects in Moldova in 2009-13

YEAR	CONTRACTOR	NAME OF THE PROJECT	SECTOR/PRIORITY	BUDGET (€)
2009	ADRA	Drinking Water for Dezghinja Village	rural infrastructure	139 356
2010	Pontis	Slovakia and European Future of Moldova	supporting civil society	102 471
	RC SFPA	National Convention on the EU in Moldova	building democratic institutions	107 064
	Centron, s.r.o.	Improvement and Modernisation of Program Radio Service of the State Development Television	building democratic institutions	100 000
2011	Academia Istropolitana Nova	Modernisation of Education in Moldova – Preparation of Teachers and Students for E-learning Methodology	education	89 714
	Pontis	Supporting Dialogue About Sectorial Policies Between NGOs and the Government in Moldova	supporting civil society	99 976
	RC SFPA	National Convention on the EU in Moldova	building democratic institutions	99 999
	SEA	Introduction of a Suitable System of Environmental Treatment of Waste from Electrical and Electro-technical Devices	environment protection	88 848
2012	SAC	Moldova Closer to Europe: Supporting Moldova's Civil Society and Healthy Business Environment	supporting civil society	97 260
2013	RC SFPA	National Convention on the EU in Moldova	building democratic institutions	96 675
	SAŽP	Technical Assistance with Introduction of Measures for Suitable Environmental Treatment of Electro-waste into Practice	environment protection	92 650
	SAC	Widening the European Dialogue in Moldova	supporting civil society	86.760
TOTAL BUDGET				1 200 773

Source: Annual Reports of the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation from 2009 until 2012; D&D Consulting, "Evaluation of 4 Development Projects of the Slovak Republic in Moldova – Final Report", December 20, 2013.

Slovakia's political commitment to support and assist Moldova on its way towards the EU is also reflected in the nature of the contracted technical assistance projects, namely in terms of the selected sectors/priorities, as well as their objectives. As Table 2 shows, out of the 12 projects only 1 – the very first one in Moldova, launched in 2009 – was focused on physical infrastructure development. All the remaining projects are "soft", dealing with the following priorities: building democratic institutions (4), supporting civil society (4), environmental protection (2), and education (1) – all of them in one way or

another aiming to share Slovakia's specific experience and know-how gained during the period of democratic transformation and, especially, EU integration.

It is also worth noting that most (8) of the 12 technical assistance projects in Moldova have been implemented by non-governmental organisations and, what is even more telling, the majority (9) of them has been implemented by only four organisations: *Research Centre of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (RC SFPA)* has been active in Moldova since 2010, when it launched the first *National Convention on the EU in Moldova* – a project seeking to institutionalise and foster a public debate on the issue of EU integration with engagement and cooperation of governmental, non-governmental, business, and other interested institutions. RC SFPA is currently implementing the third round of the Convention. The *Pontis Foundation* became active in Moldova also in 2010 and has since then completed two projects, both aimed at supporting the capacity of Moldovan civil society to lead a constructive dialogue with the government on EU-related issues, particularly through the National Participatory Council. In 2011-12 the *Slovak Environmental Agency (SEA)* carried out its first project in Moldova focused on devising a complex system of environmental treatment of electrical and electro-technical waste. Since 2013 SEA has been implementing a second project with the ambition to introduce into practice the previously designed system and proposed measures. The *Slovak Atlantic Commission (SAC)* is currently also running its second project in Moldova. While the first one, contracted in 2012, focused – *inter alia* – on sharing Slovakia's experience with ensuring the financial sustainability of the civil society, the current one, launched in 2013, aims to help increase public support for EU integration in Moldova by means of public communication and civic diplomacy.

After the *bilateral technical assistance projects*, the second most significant instrument of the Slovak bilateral ODA vis-à-vis Moldova – in terms of funds – is the *microgrants* scheme. Microgrants are a specific form of ODA provided through embassies in selected countries, which allows for a fast, flexible, and targeted response to the needs of local recipients and their communities. These grants of up to €5,000 and six months of duration were first introduced into the Slovak ODA only in 2005 – then available only to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine via the Slovak embassies in Sarajevo and Kyiv – but quickly proved very effective (both in addressing local problems and promoting Slovakia) and were made available to several more priority countries. In 2009 the Slovak embassy in Bucharest was given a budget of €35,000 for distributing microgrants in Moldova.⁹⁵ As *Table 3* shows, altogether 8 projects were supported through the scheme that year. By the end of 2012 44 projects worth €210,401 were supported by microgrants in Moldova. In terms of the sectorial priorities, the majority of the projects dealt with issues related to infrastructure and civil society; and to a lesser extent to social infrastructure and services, education, and social development with a focus on healthcare. The supported projects included, for example, renovation and reconstruction of rural schools, the purchase of goods and services for local communities, improvement of sources of drinking water, and so on.⁹⁶ No microgrants, however, were provided in 2013: with preparations to open a new embassy in Chisinau under way, the Slovak embassy in Bucharest stopped covering Moldova and, consequently, awarding the funds. Yet, the embassy in Chisinau became fully operational only in late October 2013 and is in the process of re-launching the instrument in the country.

⁹⁵ The same pool of money for microgrants was made available to embassies in Sarajevo, Nairobi, Minsk, and Kyiv, while Belgrade was given €70,000 intended for microgrants in three countries – Serbia, Montenegro, and FYROM. See National ODA Program for 2009, http://www.mvro.sk/attachments/article/293/NP_ODA_2009.pdf.

⁹⁶ Data and information provided upon author's request by the Department of Development Aid of the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA).

Table 3: Overview of the provided bilateral ODA to Moldova by specific programs in 2009-13⁹⁷

YEAR	PROGRAM/INSTRUMENT					
	Technical assistance projects		Microgrants		CETIR	
	Num. of projects	Budget (€)	Num. of grants	Budget (€)	Num. of projects	Budget (€)
2009	1	139 356	8	35 000	-	-
2010	3	309 535	19	93 197	-	-
2011	4	378 537	12	39 854	1	4 385
2012	1	97 260	5	23 662	3	8 683
2013	3	276 085	0	0	1	1 527.8
TOTAL	12	1 200 773	44	210 401	4*	14 595.8
SUMMARY: 60 projects and grants worth more than 1 425 769,8 EUR						

Source: Annual Reports of the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation from 2009 until 2012; Department of Development Aid, MFaEA SR.

The last regular bilateral ODA instrument that has been used for assistance to Moldova is the *Centre for Experience Transfer in Integration and Reforms* (CETIR) program. Launched in 2011, its objective is to share information and transfer the experience Slovakia gained during the transformation and Euro-Atlantic integration process through provision of tailored assistance. The assistance takes various forms (study trips to Slovakia, seminars, presentations, etc.) and is primarily provided on a government-to-government basis: by experts and practitioners working in the Slovak state institutions to “experts working in public administration, governmental institutions and agencies, self-governing bodies, as well as for representatives of the civil society” of partner countries.⁹⁸ CETIR was initially available only to priority ODA countries, but since July 2012 all countries undergoing transformation and/or integration processes are eligible. As Table 3 suggests, in 2011-13 Moldova was involved in just 5 CETIR projects together worth only €14,595.8. These figures appear quite low especially when compared to the total funds spent on the program activities in 2011 and 2012: €56 887.55 and €128 599.54 respectively.⁹⁹ When it comes to the areas where expertise and experience was provided, 1 project (a study trip to Slovakia) dealt with the issue of normalisation, standardisation and trade barriers in agriculture, while the other 4 projects (two study trips to Slovakia, two visits of a Slovak experts in Moldova) focused on challenges related to migration – this, in fact, took place as a part of Slovakia’s contribution to the work of the *Task Force on Moldova*, as described earlier in more detail.

Expansion of the Slovak ODA to Moldova (2014-2018)

The year 2013 marked a new departure in Slovak-Moldovan relations and in Slovakia’s assistance to Moldova. In July Slovakia opened an embassy in Chisinau, in October the two countries signed a bilateral *Intergovernmental Agreement on Development Cooperation*, and on 5 December a new, already third, *Middle-Term ODA Strategy for the years 2014-2018* was released by the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, which promoted Moldova to the status of program country.¹⁰⁰ Although marking a significant shift, it came as a natural culmination of the deepening and intensifying of the Slovak-

⁹⁷ Where assistance (in form of projects or grants) was provided, but the relevant information is not publically available (yet), or the existing information is not specific enough to determine territorial relation to Moldova, “not available” (N/A) is indicated.

⁹⁸ See <http://www.slovakaid.sk/en/cetir>.

⁹⁹ See *Annual Reports of the SAIDC for 2011 and 2012*.

¹⁰⁰ See [http://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_ED145C5550B3C46AC1257C6300524794_SK/\\$File/Strednodoba%20strategia%202014-2018.pdf](http://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_ED145C5550B3C46AC1257C6300524794_SK/$File/Strednodoba%20strategia%202014-2018.pdf).

Moldovan political and assistance cooperation since 2009. It also reflected Moldova's considerable European ambitions and the progress the country has made in terms of the EU integration agenda (especially in comparison with the other EaP countries), as well as its eminent interest in sharing Slovakia's transformation and integration experience.

Based on the new strategy, for the next 5-year period Moldova will be a part of the *development interventions program* as a program country along with Slovakia's other long-term territorial priorities – Afghanistan and Kenya.¹⁰¹ The program is a key component of Slovak bilateral ODA, as it is based on a long-term strategic partnership and is furthermore characterized by a more substantial pool of funds annually allocated for each program country. In case of Moldova, this is expected to be €500 000 in the first year, enough to support approximately 5 projects. The strategy also outlines the following sectorial priorities for Moldova based on the country's needs, Slovakia's experience with development projects in the country, real capacities and comparative advantages of Slovak contractors, as well as other donors' activities:

- good governance – public finance reform, security sector reform, and support of cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sectors;
- water and sanitation – drinking water supply, water and waste management.

The inclusion of "water and sanitation" as one of the two priorities may arguably signal a shift from the trend of preferring and supporting "soft" projects over infrastructure ones as identified in the 2009-13 period. However, concrete goals, priorities, and modalities of the bilateral development cooperation with Moldova will be defined in detail in a *Country Strategy Paper (CSP)* on Moldova, which is expected to be elaborated in early 2014. .

Besides the previously available instruments such as micro-grants and CETIR projects, the ODA strategy outlines several new instruments that will be available for program countries, including Moldova: these are especially *block grants* and *delivery of goods and services*.¹⁰²

Supporting such an expansion of the Slovak ODA to Moldova will be a development diplomat (the first ever) posted at the recently opened embassy in Chisinau. The embassy will also play an important role in the work of a *Slovak-Moldovan Consulting Group for the EU*: a working group consisting of representatives of Slovak and Moldovan ministries (e.g. interior, finance, education, or environment ministries) created in order to comprehensively discuss the EU agenda and identify areas where Slovakia could help – based on the existing expertise and capacity, as well as resources available, given that the consequent projects/activities are to be funded through CETIR. In effect, the group will function as a kind of a contact point for submitting requests from the Moldovan side in order to ensure a single communication channel and streamline the administrative process.

¹⁰¹ Opposed to the 2009-13 period, the new strategy does specifically list the programs and instruments of the bilateral ODA for the next period. These are: 1.) development interventions program (for program countries), 2.) transformation experience sharing program (including microgrants, CETIR), 3.) business partnerships program (including Start Ups), 4.) humanitarian aid program, 4.) government scholarships program, 5.) program of sending development workers and civilian experts to developing countries, 6.) program of public awareness and development education in Slovakia, and 7.) capacity-building program.

¹⁰² Both of the two new instruments are intended to be used primarily for the development interventions program. The block grants instrument aims at supporting coherent and interactive interventions with strategic development objectives. Such grants will be contracted to subjects active in the area of intervention and with a strong track record of development projects on a program level. The delivery of goods and services instrument is based on the principles of public procurement: subjects will not submit project proposals based on defined priorities, but will bid for a pre-defined project with specific terms of reference, in order for a most effective solution to the given development issue to be selected.

ACTIVITIES OF THE VISEGRAD FUND

In the funding document of the IVF¹⁰³ the objectives of the Fund were to promote the regional and bilateral cooperation between the member states and the common presentation of the region in third countries. The support of democratic transition and euroatlantic integration in third countries, as the current programs on the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership had no foundation at all in the document.

Still the IVF had a limited history of cooperation with some of the Eastern Partnership countries, prior to launching its Visegrad 4 - Eastern Partnership Program (V4EaP) program, through its Visegrad+ grant mechanism, which was created to administer and finance projects which contribute to the democratization and transformation processes in selected countries and regions, especially the EaP countries and Western Balkans. Moldova never became the priority country of the Visegrad+ scheme.

The V4EaP program was launched at the Bratislava summit of the V4 Prime Ministers on June 16, 2011 with the goal of contributing to the acceleration of political association and further economic integration between the European Union and Eastern Partnership countries. The Priorities of the V4EaP:

- 1. Democratization and Transformation process;**
- 2. Regional co-operation;**
- 3. Support for civil society**

The activities were developed through project and grant schemes based on existing IVF grant rules, with necessary adjustments given by a different nature of the program.

The so called V4EaP Flagship Projects are to support the implementation of long-term projects of strategic character focusing on providing access to the Visegrad Group countries' democratic transformation and integration as well as regional cooperation experience. The V4EaP Standard Grants has a similar nature to the Flagship projects; they mainly differ in size and length of the projects. The Scholarship Program is a specific program of the Fund created to facilitate academic exchanges by providing financial support to students or researchers who are citizens of the Eastern Partnership countries to study in the V4 countries. Finally the Visegrad University Studies Grant (VUSG) is to promote and support the development and launching of outstanding University courses or degree programs. The course shall be a series of lessons or lectures (seminars, etc.) on a particular subject focused on sharing of the Visegrad Group countries' experience.

The initiative of the V4 was welcomed by external donors and the initial program budget of €1,456,800 by the Visegrad countries was extended by a €1,5 million support from The Netherlands (in 2012). This will be extended by further major grants from Sweden and Japan (most likely in 2014) making the grant scheme to the biggest of the Visegrad Fund. This initiative of the V4 was welcomed by other donors.

Although the existing grant mechanisms and structures of the IVF provides a transparent and good working basis, a major step was not made yet with regard the EaP grants. No country strategies, and priorities have been created, which makes the decision-making of the IVF less coherent, and makes extremely hard to analyse how much the projects can contribute to the fulfilment of the goals of the V4EaP program.

When it comes to concrete support to Moldova a few characteristics should be mentioned compared to the other countries. Still the highest number of V4EaP projects has a multinational nature. Although there is a visible support on Moldovan projects (in the latest V4EaP standard grants 3 have strong

¹⁰³ IVF Statute: http://visegradfund.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/download/ivf_statute.pdf

Moldovan focus) the number of projects supported compare to Georgia (5) and Ukraine (8) is much lower. So far only one Moldovan NGO managed to secure a grant as a main applicant both in the flagship (in partnerships at flagship projects only Azerbaijan is represented lower then Moldova) and standard grant format. When it comes to the Scholarship Program, the number of Moldovan applicants is by far the lowest among the EaP countries (about 5 students have been supported so far). In the VUSG format no Moldovan recipient secured a grant. Overall Moldova is underrepresented in IVF granting compared to its political importance and front-runner status within EaP.

Generally the tendencies appearing at the bilateral aid of the V4 countries, namely that projects mostly executed by V4 member state main applicants appeared at the IVF as well so far, but the recent results of V4EaP standard grants suggest that this practice might change in the future.¹⁰⁴

As we have analyse in the section on Moldova, Moldovan NGOs indicated the low visibility of IVF. Although the short existence of the V4EaP program can be the reason for that, the embassies of the V4 should have an increased role in promoting Visegrad. An ideal solution would be an agreement on tasking the Slovak development aid expert to be deployed to the Slovak Embassy to represent the IVF and provide information to CSOs, academics and students interested in V4 grants.

¹⁰⁴ http://visegradfund.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/approved/v4fund_approved_ESG_2013_12.xls

EVALUATION OF MOLDOVA'S ASSISTANCE NEEDS

The complex reform agenda that is being implemented in Moldova not only requires financial assistance, but also transfer of knowledge related to transitional experience. That is why the contribution of V4 countries, which went through the same institutional and financial reforms after the fall of the Iron curtain, can provide special added value. It is also important to support the measures and actions carried out in line with the European integration agenda, with assistance mechanisms that are based on the recent integration experience of these Central European countries.

Although governmental bodies and the Moldovan public is the general target of the assistance activities, only local civil society and NGOs are capable of helping the V4 effectively project their assistance in Moldova. Despite the fact Central European donor countries characterize Moldova as the focus of their bilateral assistance; they are mostly under the radar of local organisations. This is mostly because the vast majority of the projects are carried out by Central European NGOs and if there is any local partner, they often provide only technical support in the implementation. A second problem is that the majority of the efforts and programs are concentrated in the capital, Chisinau.

Finally, the paper includes conclusions and general recommendations to the Visegrad Fund and V4.

Assessment of Capacity building needs

European integration is seen in Moldova as a transitional process aimed at strengthening the democratic state and modernizing the economy. As it covers the complete reform agenda of the government, it is considered as one of the most crucial and most important issues.

Although there is some capacity building frameworks provided by the EU already in place, the V4 countries can have a complementary, supporting role. These countries, already familiar with the process of integration, can help Moldova to reform and empower the state institutions, which are the preconditions for Moldova to achieve its EU aspirations.

The roadmap and main goals of the systematic reforms are set and guided by the EU-Moldova Action Plan and since 2013 by its successor: the Association Agenda. To achieve practical results Visegrad donors should focus their support on policies where the potential for reinforcing the outcomes is possible.

In the last ENP Country Progress Report on Moldova¹⁰⁵, the European Commission identified a number of areas where further improvements, in the context of European integration, are still needed and defined recommendations on how Moldova can achieve an efficient transition. According to the Commission, much work remains to be done in the following areas: consolidation of democratic institutions, economic modernization and processes supporting the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict.

a. Consolidation of Democratic institutions

The implementation of reforms related to justice and law enforcement systems remains slow, while corruption remains an endemic problem, which needs to be urgently solved in order to assure the efficient functioning of public institutions. The country is still under delivering in human rights protection as the Commission emphasizes the necessity of implementation of national laws and action plans to ensure equal rights for all citizens. Moreover, the consolidation of democratic institutions has to be achieved through increasing the transparency of government actions not only at the local, but on a national level as well.

¹⁰⁵ ENP Country Progress Report 2012 – Republic of Moldova, Brussels, 20 March 2013. Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-252_en.htm

To address these issues the efforts should be focused on the following¹⁰⁶:

- implementation of the justice sector reform strategy;
- ensuring the National Anti-corruption Centre is fully functional;
- full implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan and Anti-discrimination Law, as well as adoption of secondary legislation (which is crucial for the positive EU assessment of the implementation of Visa Liberalization Action Plan¹⁰⁷);
- initiating reform of the public administration and implementing the decentralization strategy, improving the institutional capacity, efficient public resources management and local administration optimization.

The main stakeholders and beneficiaries of the provided assistance should be:

- State Chancellery;
- The General Prosecutor's office;
- National Anti-Corruption Centre;
- Equality Council;¹⁰⁸
- Office of the Parliamentary Advocates;
- Human Right NGOs;
- Decentralized governmental bodies in the countryside.

b. Economic modernization

The most important reform agenda regarding the modernization of the Moldovan economy is to strengthen the market economy and to implement the provisions defined in the Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, with a special emphasis on the approximation of EU regulations, such as the technical and safety standards. At the same time, economic modernization includes aspects related to the imminence of the privatization of state-owned enterprises.

To address these issues Moldova is invited to¹⁰⁹:

- advance the regulatory approximation to the EU *acquis* in trade and trade-related areas, with attention to implementation of the State aid law and energy sector reforms in the line with the Energy Community commitments;
- continue the process of privatization of the unprofitable and deeply unreformed state-owned enterprises;
- improve the business environment for foreign investors and support the development of the physical infrastructure.

The main stakeholders and beneficiaries of the provided assistance should be:

- Ministry of Economy;

¹⁰⁶ The actions to be taken correspond, partially or entirely, with the measures stated in the ENP Country Progress Report 2012 on Moldova.

¹⁰⁷ 5th Progress Report on the implementation by Moldova of the Action Plan for Visa Liberalization. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/docs/20131115_5th_progress_report_on_the_implementation_by_moldova_of_the_apvl_en.pdf

¹⁰⁸ The Equality Council was created in line with the Law on Ensuring Equality of 25 May 2012. It was set up after some delay in June 2013, its President elected on 23 July, and on 31 July 2013 it was established with a budget of MDL 1.8 million (€112.000) for the period to the end of the year. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/docs/20131115_5th_progress_report_on_the_implementation_by_moldova_of_the_apvl_en.pdf

¹⁰⁹ ENP Country Progress Report 2012 – Republic of Moldova, Brussels, 20 March 2013. Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-252_en.htm

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- Competition Council.

c. **Transnistrian conflict resolution**

As the Transnistrian conflict encompasses geopolitical conditions that should be taken into consideration in any resolution, settlement of this issue requires considerable political and diplomatic effort. Therefore, the V4 countries can assist Moldova by supporting the existent policies of reintegration and strengthening the capacity of responsible institutions. Specific projects concerning civil society cooperation linking both side of Dniester River can become a part of the assistance programs as well. Although such projects already exist, the V4 experience in regional integration, cross-border projects, civil society empowerment and people to people cooperation can be extremely important as confidence building measures.

The main stakeholders and beneficiaries of the provided assistance are:

- Bureau for Reintegration;
- NGOs specialized on projects developed to bring closer various social categories representing both borders.
- Local municipalities close to the Dniester river banks.

d. **European integration**

The present EU-Moldova relationship is characterised by a steady and committed process of European integration. Regardless of the fact that the Moldovan public is deeply split on EU integration, this process has been a strategic goal of the country since 2005, and was further enforced by the initiation of the Association Agreement. According to the current CEPI public opinion research, public opinion is evenly split between pro-EU aspirations and the Russian backed Custom Union (the Eurasian Union).¹¹⁰

Despite the fact that the Moldovan authorities put serious efforts to promote European integration, for example by means of online information provided on the official web-pages¹¹¹, a comprehensive, inclusive and multi-levelled strategy aimed at informing the general public is still absent.

So far, the actions carried out by the authorities have not been sufficient to reach the ethnic minority communities. Therefore European integration remains a little known or utterly misunderstood process especially to the Russian-speaking minorities settled on the right bank of the Dniester River (in particular, from Gagauzia and Balti), as well as to the population of the Transnistrian region. This information gap often leads to resistance to specific reforms required by the integration process. In addition, the lack of understanding among citizens concerning European integration can be used by opposition political parties or external actors whose interests radically differ or even contradict the agenda of European integration.

To address these issues the following actions should be taken:

- implementation of a comprehensive, inclusive and multi-level media communication strategy on European integration, targeting the rural and Russian speaking population, as well as the citizens from the Transnistrian region.

The main stakeholders and beneficiaries of the provided assistance are:

- Local authorities ;

¹¹⁰ According to the survey published by CEPI (November, 2013) the percentage of pro-EU and pro-Customs Union (fundamental entity of the future Eurasian Union) are almost identical. "If you had to choose between adherence to the ECU (Eurasian Customs Union) or the EU, which option would you vote for?" 44,3% would vote for accession to EU, 40,4% - for accession to ECU. Available at: http://www.cepolicy.org/sites/cepolicy.org/files/attachments/survey_results.pdf

¹¹¹ The Moldovan Government informative web-page on European integration. Available at: <http://www.gov.md/europa>

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- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration;
 - NGOs.

Recommendations

1. Completion of justice reform, the fight against corruption and human rights abuses, and the protection of civil liberties are among the most important elements of a strategy to strengthen the rule of law and the consolidation of democracy. The assistance should include the following:

- implementation of Twinning projects related to the fight against corruption and justice reform;
- technical support (expertise and good practices) to the newly established institutions dealing with human rights, protection of fundamental rights and anti-discrimination such as the Equality Council and the Office of Parliamentary Advocates (Ombudsman).

2. Institutional changes¹¹² require parallel capacity building assistance for public officials to ensure institutional transparency. The reinforcement of public administration is necessary to efficiently manage funds linked with the process of integration. More Twinning¹¹³ initiatives with follow up actions (mentoring), investing in secondment of national experts, capacity building trainings, transfer of best practices and knowledge are necessary to support reforms. The following activities could serve as an example:

- education programs for public officers and experience sharing initiatives;
- partnerships between the local public administrations of Moldova and those coming from the Central European countries;
- technical assistance, including organization of seminars, conferences, and trainings;
- provision of accessible tools necessary for adequate implementation of EU norms and standards.

3. For the modernisation of the Moldovan economy, assistance projects from Central Europe should focus on the transfer of know-how of the management of economic transition into a proper market-economy and best practices on the EU integration process. That includes the management of privatisation, the creation and institutional support of a state agency handling development funds, legislative reforms ensuring a stable legal environment. Both state institutions and public officers should be involved. Hence, the assistance can consist of:

- support of Twinning-oriented projects focused on approximation of the EU legislation in economic field;
- technical assistance, seminars and trainings;
- provision of specialized infrastructure required to comply with EU norms and standards.

4. When it comes to conflict settlement, two factors should be considered. First, the reinforcement of Moldovan institutional capacities involved in implementing reintegration policies. Second, support for projects aimed at bringing together civil society, bringing more cohesion and interoperability across existing divisions. The assistance can refer to the following types of projects:

¹¹² In the State of the Country Report 2013 think tank "Expert-Grup" pointed out a range of measures that are needed to improve the business environment: ease of regulations for doing business (especially related to obtaining construction permits and access to land), modernization of judicial system, strengthening of property rights, consolidation of capacities and guarantee of more independence to the comp reforming the system of public procurement, improvement of fiscal administration primarily by implementing IT solutions and one stop crossing. However, it is difficult to ameliorate the business environment without change of the approach of public officers, who should interact efficiently with business and facilitate trade and economic activity, rather than act like police officers. Available at: <http://expert-grup.org/ro/biblioteca/item/828-republica-moldova-2013-raport-de-stare-a-%C8%9B%C4%83rii&category=7>

- improvement of the institutional capacities of the Bureau for Reintegration in policy making and human resources related issues;
- set up of projects based on partnerships, developed by the NGOs from both sides of the Dniester River.

5. The promotion of public awareness of the European integration process is an essential element in the implementation of the complex reform agenda. Attention should be focused on improving the communication capacities of the institutions and public officers, as well as on the empowering of the civil society. The following actions are proposed:

- setting a comprehensive communication strategy on European integration,
- providing scholarships, fellowships in specialized programmes and studies related to the European integration and the experience of the Central European countries, both for students and for public officers;
- supporting the projects developed by NGOs that consists of information campaigns, seminars and training, aimed at increasing public awareness of European integration.

Assessment of NGOs' perception

Moldovan NGOs rely on mainly external assistance. Therefore their attention is focussed on major donors with a long-term history of commitment. Similarly, these donors prefer to work with NGOs with a proven track record and proper management of previous grants.

Visegrad Fund and Visegrad4 position as donors

As the donor community in Moldova is limited, local NGOs should welcome new grant makers who can help in diversifying their resources. However, although Moldovan NGO's are eligible to submit proposals to the Visegrad Fund and Visegrad4¹¹⁴ Eastern Partnership Program so far none of the most important Moldovan NGOs received any direct assistance.¹¹⁵

Based on our consultations with Moldovan NGOs the following suggestions were made to explain this failure:

- **Lack of visibility** - Visegrad Fund and Visegrad4 are not enough visible in Moldova;
- **Old bonds** - the Moldovan NGOs are usually in touch with the former donor institutions and keep gaining financial assistance from them;
- **Dependence** - some NGOs are used to specific procedures demanded by the long-time existing donors, and many of them face difficulties in meeting the requirements set by new ones;
- **Language barrier** - even though English is progressively becoming a working language for a number of the Moldovan NGOs, many of them still submit applications in Romanian.

According to some of the most active NGOs approached during the current study, they did not receive any sort of direct assistance. However, some of them have been involved in projects related to Visegrad4 or Visegrad Fund as partner organization¹¹⁶ or through receiving technical assistance. This very much reflects the V4 countries and Visegrad Fund's general approach which prefers to provide grants for V4 NGO's, putting a very limited interest on the profile, role and track record of the local partners. All country reports reflected and proved this assumption, and only the small grant programs that are mainly infrastructure focused are exceptions in this regard.

¹¹⁴ Visegrad4 Eastern Partnership Program. Available at: <http://visegradfund.org/v4eap/>

¹¹⁵ According to the discussions with the representatives of few most visible Moldovan NGOs it c

¹¹⁶ The Moldovan NGOs' participation in Visegrad Fund's projects implies more being partners rather than leading project organization. This particularity can be also observed in the last notification regarding the accepted to financing projects, issued on November 25, 2013. Available at: <http://visegradfund.org/2013/home/25-11-2013/>

More detailed information about the former beneficiaries of Visegrad 4 and Visegrad Fund from Moldova is usually hard to find or even not available. This indicates the limited presence of these donors in Moldova or even the lack of permanent and solid contacts between them.

Recommendations

To bring the Moldovan NGOs closer to V4 the following measures should be put in place:

- **Development of a database of the functional Moldovan NGOs.** Specific communicational tools (targeted newsletters etc.) can be used in order to inform the NGOs about the latest V4 grant initiatives. This data could serve as a useful resource for providing future assessment activities as well. V4 Embassies could operate such a newsletter and they could provide information and V4 contacts.
- **Active promotion of donors.** Two platforms could be used - official platforms such as official web-pages of the V4's diplomatic missions and secondly, existing Moldovan platforms managed by public institutions (relevant state institutions, central and local administrations, public libraries and educational institutions) or by the civil society entities (NGOs, online mass-media etc.).
- **Partnerships with Moldovan NGOs.** To build up initiatives that can ensure the leadership of the Moldovan NGOs on very specific issues (Transnistrian conflict settlement, European integration, cross-border cooperation).

Conclusions

There is no doubt that the transitional experience which V4 countries have acquired during their integration process can contribute to the implementation of the complex reform agenda in Moldova. To be more specific, Visegrad Fund and V4 member states should support Moldovan authorities in the implementation of policies aimed at strengthening democratic institutions, economic modernization, and the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. Special attention needs to be given to the reinforcement of the communication capacities of the Moldovan authorities when it comes to the European integration and the process of reforms related to it.

In any case V4 will have to focus more on active PR and information campaigns on their activities not only at home, but in Moldova as well.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- In order to **counter the increasing in-country aid fragmentation in Moldova**, the V4 states – together with some other active donors in Moldova, like Romania, Sweden or Germany – should advocate the **launch of EU Joint Programming**¹¹⁷ for Moldova as soon as possible. Currently there are over forty aid recipient countries world-wide for which the EEAS foresees starting EU Joint Programming by 2018. **While the name of Moldova has been raised, this country does not yet find itself on the list of confirmed states.**

Meanwhile V4 should create its own way of coordination. A harmonised strategy on a V4 level is much needed in order to reduce duplications. As IVF contribution becoming major, at least a **strategy for the International Visegrad Fund on Moldova should be created in 2014.**

- The V4 states should **continue to attract more countries interested in support for Moldova to financially contribute to the V4EaP of the IVF** (similarly to the Netherlands, Sweden and possibly Japan); such countries could potentially be the US, Romania (eager to line itself with the V4 states in the V4+ format on various policy issues), Norway Finland or Canada (which is a classical and much visible donor on issues of democratization and human rights yet lacking local expertise in the Eastern neighbourhood, which could be complemented by the V4's insight).

Ukraine backing up from signing the AA in the last moment not only raises questions about the European future of Ukraine, but also sends warning signals about Moldova and Georgia too possibly pressured away by Russia from their European path in the run-up to signing the AA. As such the „Ukrainian case” should be used as an argument by the V4 to recruit more financial support for Moldova, for instance to feed the V4EaP programme.

- The focus of bilateral aid by each V4 states proves, that Central European states still have to define the areas, where their transformation experience lies. Therefore the **European Transition Compendium should be revised and revived by the V4. Relevant experience should be also used in Moldova.**
- The visibility of the Visegrad Fund and V4 member states as approachable providers of assistance for Moldovan NGOs should be increased. Also in order to improve the situation of CSOs, much larger number of grants should be provided (and managed) directly to Moldovan organizations both by the V4 member states and IVF.
- Direct channels for communication among V4 stakeholders managing projects in Moldova should be introduced. An innovative way of cooperation could be introduced by the V4 by **creating a coordination council among V4 Embassies** that would meet on a regular basis. The meetings

¹¹⁷ The JP process typically starts with a 'mapping' of EU donors' priorities and planning cycles, the sectors they are in and programmes and projects they are running or preparing. A needs analysis is conducted in consultation with the partner country government. In each sector, lead donors coordinate inputs and an indicative financial allocation per sector and donor is worked out. The JP strategy is then first agreed by the EU delegation and member state embassies, then by the member states themselves. Each donor is responsible for approving its own bilateral programming component. As such, JP does not entail joint implementation or financing, rather it is a useful platform for the donors to exchange information at the planning stage. At the same time, it also increases partner country ownership as JP strategies are based on documents on national development strategies.

could be prepared and chaired by the Devad (Development Advisor) of the Slovak Embassy. The group could also represent IVF and advocate for the Fund's activities. The council should also help to improve the PR and awareness on the V4 bilateral assistance activities to Moldova.

- Pooling financial and knowledge-based resources for selected assistance programs should be introduced to increase impact. **Cooperation beyond IVF grants based on bilateral cooperation** of V4 Ministries of Foreign Affairs should be a viable option.



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