



# **EAST EUROPE FOUNDATION ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2022**

**CHISINAU - 2023**

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## ACRONYMS

CEC	Central Electoral Commission
CPD	Centre Partnership for Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
DPC	District Participation Council
DPO	Disabled Peoples' Organisation
EEF	East Europe Foundation
EU	European Union
LPA	Local Public Administration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SE	Social Enterprise
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
YB	Youth Bank
District	Administrative territorial unit, in Romanian "raion"

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report reflects the progress under the EEF Strategy “Engaging Citizens, Empowering Communities” 2021-2025 (hereinafter the Strategy) from January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022. The Strategy is funded by the following donors: European Union, Sweden and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The report substantiates the results achieved during project implementation according to the results framework.

The program aims to improve policy making and fulfilment of human rights of most vulnerable women and men in Moldova. The program entails two impact outcomes: (i) vulnerable men and women enjoy civil and political rights and opportunities to exercise democratic influence; (ii) empowered people in targeted communities enjoy socio-economic rights and sustainable development opportunities.

During the reporting period EEF registered progress under both impact outcomes. Firstly, **vulnerable men and women increasingly enjoyed opportunities to exercise democratic influence (impact outcome one)**. Specific examples to support this statement are provided below:

*Over 200 CSOs representing vulnerable groups (Roma, older people, youth, persons with disabilities) actively shaped public policies from the perspective of inclusion and equal opportunities. During this reporting period they influenced 13 out of the 54 targeted policies.*

*EEF supported the advocacy efforts of the Coalition for Inclusion and Non-Discrimination that brings together 23 most active human rights CSOs and civic activists. They advocated successfully for strengthened protection against hate crimes and hate speech.*

*Three platforms, bringing together social enterprises, business hubs and businesses, demanded a better business and social entrepreneurship environment.*

*188 trained community journalists developed and posted over 700 articles reflecting community issues. To date 24 reported problems have been addressed by duty bearers*

*36 CSOs, united under the umbrella of the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections, actively engaged with the Central Electoral Commission and Parliament to address the legal pitfalls identified during the 2021 Parliamentary Elections.*

Secondly, **vulnerable men and women in targeted communities are more empowered and steadily enjoy socio-economic rights and sustainable development opportunities (impact outcome two)**. Examples of achieved results are outlined below:

*Over 60 CSOs in Cahul, Soroca and Causeni districts steadily advanced transparency and responsiveness of local authorities towards community needs. In 2022 they analysed 72 draft decisions and influenced 36 local policies from the perspective of inclusion.*

*District Participation Councils were set up in three new districts (Stefan Voda, Floresti and Cimislia) pursuant to comprehensive mobilisation work and policy dialogue with local authorities*

*Empowered youth in 10 targeted communities increasingly contributed to local development through implementation of youth development initiatives that contributed to the mobilization of over 24532 young girls and boys.*

*15 Youth entrepreneurship funds contributed to the creation of 86 youth led businesses and 66 new jobs, with focus on NEET youth.*

*15 CSOs were enabled to pilot innovative services that facilitate the social inclusion of NEET youth.*

*In partnership with “LalaPlay Voices” CSO, 100 talented children from all over the country improved their knowledge, attitudes, confidence in their own strengths and visions of personal and professional development at the Voices Summer Camp.*

*Six business hubs were set up and capacitated to provide quality services for over 900 SMEs.*

*15 work integration social enterprises targeting most vulnerable women and men were set up. To date they created 53 new jobs and provided free of charge or partially paid services to over 1000 vulnerable women and men*

*15 Consortia of NGOs piloted innovative employment services for most vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, Roma, older people.*

**EEF made significant strides to support advocacy, community mobilisation and service delivery efforts of national and grassroots CSOs.** In 2022 EEF managed 103 grants to Moldovan NGOs, most of them grassroots organisations. This support has been possible due to the joint contribution of Sweden, European Union, Swiss Development Cooperation Agency (SDC).

Apart from grants, EEF provided technical assistance to relevant partner NGOs and facilitated cooperation and dialogue between civil society and the government. EEF worked and coordinated closely with the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), line ministries, Local Public Authorities, and international organizations, such as EU Delegation to Moldova, SKAT (manages *Ma Implic* project), UNDP Moldova, UN Women, Council of Europe office in Moldova, UNICEF, EBRD, and others.

#### **Update of the context and challenges:**

Geopolitical factors, emerged in the beginning of 2022, significantly shaped the agenda and response of national authorities. Russian invasion of the neighbouring Ukraine on 24 February 2022 triggered a refugee crisis. Moldova hosted more than 500,000 refugees, around 100,000 of them remained in the country. Fleeing the devastating war, these persons are constantly in need of protection and support. This was an important challenge from an economic and political perspective, as Moldova was not financially and institutionally prepared to manage such a situation.

The refugee crisis was followed by economic and security risks and economic challenges that influenced the priorities of national authorities. Thus, the policy response during the first quarter of 2022 was primarily reactive. Contentious measures, undertaken to address security measures, include (a) the decision of the Committee on Exceptional Situations to limit freedom of assemblies during working days and (b) the decision to suspend the licenses of six TV stations during the emergency situation.

After some stabilisation of the security and the refugee situation, by May national authorities resumed reforms intended for the 2022. Moldova's candidate status, granted by the EU in June 2022, prompted the development and adoption of a comprehensive action plan designed to address nine key conditions identified by the European Commission.<sup>1</sup> The action plan includes commitments in key areas such as justice, human rights, curbing corruption, civil society engagement, public finance management, improving public service.

The second semester of 2022 was marked by important policy and legislative developments, mostly in the context of the adopted Moldova's EU candidacy action plan. National authorities approved several legislative measures designed to strengthen human rights and equality institutions. National authorities developed and approved the "European Moldova 2030" national Strategy and other important policies on child rights protection and employment. Other key policies were initiated and pending approval, including in the following thematic areas: gender equality acceleration, inclusive education, healthcare, addressing violence against women, civil society development, criminal justice.

Multiple crises prompted difficult decisions of national and local authorities which had to balance between crisis management and reforms. They also triggered delays in the adoption and implementation of pro-active public policies such as childcare, inclusive employment, inclusive education, local development projects in poor communities. Against this background, the project adjusted its interventions by (i) mainstreaming the needs and barriers faced by refugees in the advocacy plans of supported CSO networks; (ii) raising awareness, in targeted districts, on the available services and entitlements for refugees; (iii) frontloading policy recommendations on inclusion to be incorporated in ongoing policies; (iv) providing greater flexibility to CSOs involved in service provision for refugees in order to avoid burnout; (v) provision of continuous tailored capacity building for CSOs to strengthen their resilience in crises situations.

Moldova's EU candidate status will prompt a very dynamic period in terms of policy design and approval, often coupled with limited deadlines. These commitments represent a significant opportunity for CSOs to shape important policies in the areas of healthcare, education, gender equality, addressing domestic violence, promoting an inclusive public administration reform. CSO networks shall actively engage during the design and consultations processes, bringing to the attention of decision makers issues faced by vulnerable groups. When the voice of civil society is ignored, policy advocacy efforts could be scaled by exploring innovative advocacy approaches, including dialogue with the EU delegation to Moldova and other relevant development partners.

Local elections are due to take place in 2023. In the context of this suffrage, EEF will pay due attention to enabling CSOs promote political participation of vulnerable groups. Prior and during the local election the implementation of advocacy plans at local level will become more difficult and uncertain. Therefore, DPCs will have to adopt a more pro-active attitude regarding local governments, conduct in-depth analysis of impact of most important local policies, and promote in a bold manner the rights of the vulnerable in local decisions.

## PROGRESS TOWARDS IMPACT OUTCOME 1: VULNERABLE WOMEN AND MEN ENJOY CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO EXERCISE DEMOCRATIC INFLUENCE

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
Civil liberties and political rights score for Moldova	3.0% (~48%)	Positive trend	62/100 <sup>1</sup>	62/100

In 2022 the civil and political rights score for Moldova remained unchanged. The country is still rated by the latest Freedom House Report as “partly free. Democratic governance is hampered by a number of factors, such as pervasive corruption, links between major political figures and powerful economic interests, and critical deficiencies in the justice sector and the rule of law all continue to hamper democratic governance.

EEF played an important role in advancing some positive aspects mentioned in the aforementioned research, particularly in advancing transparency and participation rights, promoting more competitive and inclusive elections, promoting freedom of speech and critical thinking. The most notable results are outlined below:

- ✓ Coalesced and empowered civil society actively organisations advocated for greater decisional transparency, design and implementation of more inclusive public policies;
- ✓ CSOs promoted pluralism and freedom of expression through the community journalism project;
- ✓ United CSOs advocated amendments to the electoral framework designed to address the gaps identified during the oversight of early parliamentary elections in 2021.

The detailed progress towards outcomes is substantiated below.

### Outcome 1.1. Organised men and women influence targeted public policies

Performance indicators	Baseline (2019)	Target 2025	Achieved by 2022	Cumulative indicators
CSO Advocacy Indicator	3.1	Positive trend	3.1	3.1



The CSO Advocacy Indicator for Moldova remained unchanged during the reporting period. The CSO Sustainability Index for Moldova commends the improved advocacy environment, with the increased openness expressed by the new Government towards CSOs and their initiatives. However, the analysis underlines that transparency in the decision making process remains a challenge,

<sup>1</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/country/moldova/freedom-world/2023>

show-casing many draft bills and policies that were passed without public consultations. The document also flagged the delays in passing important draft laws and initiatives due to the political crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, and the transfer of power.<sup>2</sup>

EEF played a significant role in increasingly shaping public policies from the perspective of inclusion. Exploring the opportunity provided by the openness of the Government to improve collaboration with civil society, in 2022 EEF scaled up policy advocacy efforts. With program support around 200 NGOs representing most vulnerable groups increasingly shaped public policies from the perspective of inclusion.

*Bridging Outcome 1.1.1. National authorities adopt and implement more inclusive public policies in a transparent manner*

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
% of CSOs recommendations accepted	~25%	35%	57.1%	~35%
% of recommendations accepted on gender equality	~25%	50%	~50%	~50%
% of draft public policies consulted with civil society	48.3%	60%	66%	~55%

Official data reflect significant improvement of transparency in decision-making. According to the official data issued by the State Chancellery, the share of draft public policies and bills consulted with civil society was around 66%, including 78% of Government Decisions, 72% of draft bills, 50% of Presidential Decrees. According to the same source, the share of approved recommendation was approximately 57%.<sup>3</sup>

With co-funding leveraged from SDC, in 2022 EEF increasingly empowered CSOs representing vulnerable groups to shape public policies from the perspective of inclusion of most vulnerable women and men. Four targeted CSO networks bringing together 176 NGOs of Roma, persons with disabilities, older people and youth finalized implementation advocacy cycle for 2022. Coalition for Inclusion and Non-discrimination successfully advocated for the adoption of comprehensive legal amendments designed to ensure proper qualification, investigation and sanctioning of hate crimes and hate speech. Three additional platforms steadily promoted social entrepreneurship and a better business environment.

*Output 1.1.1.1 Targeted NGO platforms representing vulnerable groups are more inclusive towards local NGOs and actively advocate for design and implementation of inclusive public policies*

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative data
# of prioritised public policies influenced by NGO Platforms (with more than 30% of CSOs recommendations accepted)	29	50	13	42

<sup>2</sup> FHI 360 (2022). *CSO Sustainability Index*, pp. 147-148, available online at <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-europe-eurasia-2021-report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> State Chancellery (2023). *Report on the Observance of Transparency in the Decision Making Process by Central Public Authorities*, p. 3, available online at [https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/raport\\_transparenta\\_decizionala\\_2022\\_final\\_docx.pdf](https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/raport_transparenta_decizionala_2022_final_docx.pdf)

# of prioritised public policies influenced by NGO Platforms related to gender equality	2	20	2 (sexual harassment, labour rights during maternity leave)	4
# of prioritised public policies influenced by the Coalition for Inclusion and Non-Discrimination	0	10	2	4

During the reporting period these CSO platforms prioritised and analysed 54 public policies. To date they influenced 13 of them, that is around 24%. These organisations harnessed policy commitments that (i) enlarge the spectrum of social services designed for older people; (ii) ensure inclusive education in professional schools for young people with disabilities; (iii) foster Roma inclusion; (iv) advance access to education in schools and kindergartens; (v) ensure women’s access to the labour market during maternity leave; (vi) address sexual harassment at the workplace.

Examples of most recent policies influenced by the CSO networks are provided below:

**Promoting right to work for women on maternity leave:**

*As part of the strategic partnership with CPD, efforts were conducted to ensure the right of pregnant women to decide whether they want to continue working while on maternity leave, with corresponding maternity allowance and salary. Sustained advocacy efforts led to the approval of the bill in the final reading at the plenary session on December 22, 2022.*

**Inclusion of Roma people:**

*Roma Voice Coalition advocated for elaboration and approval of Local Action Plans on supporting Roma people in Rezina, Balti, Falesti, Calarasi, Chisinau, Singrei. Additionally, three Roma CSOs, members of Roma coalition, were enabled to address needs identified in Roma communities: (i) Ferapontievca, Comrat – creation of a local folk-dance ensemble; (ii) Talmaza, Ștefan Vodă - setting up a football field; (iii) Drochia, Drochia - digging and setting up a well in the locality.*

**Mainstreaming disability in the National Employment Program:**

*AOPD actively engaged with Ministry of Labour Social Protection during the design of National Employment Program 2022-2026. Evidence based policy dialogue on the situation of persons with disabilities on the labour market contributed to the development and subsequent approval of a specific objective, focused on increasing the employment rate of persons with disabilities by at least 3% in the upcoming years.*

**Statistics sensitive to people with disabilities:**

*AOPD launched an advocacy campaign to increase sensitivity of data in terms of people with disabilities and their needs. It resulted in the commitment of National Bureau of Statistics to ensure accessibility of the web site for persons with disabilities by providing data in easy-to-understand formats. The advocacy campaign also resulted in a special commitment, enshrined in the Statistics*

*Development Program for 2023-2026, to improve data collection and disaggregation on the rights of persons with disabilities.*

**Advancing access to specialized medical services for persons with disabilities:**

*AOPD policy monitoring efforts identified the problem of non-transparent waiting lists for specialized medical services such as cataract surgery, hip or shoulder prosthesis. Currently around 28000 persons with disabilities are waiting for such services. Lack of transparency may lead to discrimination of persons with disabilities, raises concerns of abuses or corruption, diminishes popular confidence in the medical system. Against this background, the platform initiated an advocacy campaign to address this phenomenon. These efforts resulted in corresponding normative amendments initiated by Ministry of Health pending final approval.*

**Fostering participation of older people in Edinet:**

*Members of “Active Ageing” platform advocated for elaboration of public policies sensitive to needs of older people. A pilot initiative on creating District Council for Elderly was successfully promoted and launched in Edinet. A regulation on District Council for Elderly (DCE) was approved and a partnership agreement between DCE, CSOs and LPA was concluded aimed at promoting active and healthy aging in Edinet district.*

**Coalition for Inclusion and Non-Discrimination**

During the reporting period the voice of the Coalition for Inclusion and Non-discrimination was even more prominent. Its membership increased from 14 in 2021 to 23 CSOs and individual activists. The network members actively engaged in policy dialogue with the Equality Council, Ministry of Justice, Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights and Inter-Ethnic Relation, Legal, Nomination and Immunities Parliamentary Commission and other relevant actors. As a result of this process, most of the recommendations to the draft bill on curbing hate speech and hate crimes (bill 304) were taken into consideration by the Government and Parliament.

CIN was instrumental in preventing discrimination against refugees. In 2022 CIN became a members of the Consultative Council for the prevention of the violation of the rights of refugees from Ukraine, set up by the People's Advocate Office. CIN members took part in the regular monitoring visits at border crossing points and in temporary placement centres for refugees. Accordingly, its members contributed to the development of monitoring reports on the situation of refugees and to the design of corresponding recommendations for national and local duty bearers.

With funding from the European Union, in 2022 EEF supported three additional CSO platforms: (i) Platform on Business and Inclusive Employment (PBIE); (ii) Platform for Development of Social Entrepreneurship (PDSE); (ii) Trade Platform. Their advocacy efforts are presented in the section below.

**Platform for Development of Social Entrepreneurship (PDSE)**

The platform brings together 22 members: 14 CSOs, 4 social enterprises, two individuals, two coalitions (the Transnistrian Social Entrepreneurship Platform with 23 members) and National Platform of Entrepreneurs Women. In 2022 its members established a strong collaboration

relationship with the Economic Council to create positive changes in the field. The platform members organised the first Social Entrepreneurship GALA, show-casing positive results achieved by social enterprises throughout the country, including the Transnistrian region. In addition, they actively engaged with the Moldovan MPs and organised, in the premises of the Parliament a National Conference on Social Entrepreneurship.

The platform worked to advance social entrepreneurship in the Transnistrian region. Its members from the left bank analysed five public policies implemented by the *de facto* authorities. The findings and corresponding policy recommendations were discussed in policy dialogue events and bi-lateral meetings.

### **Platform on Business and Inclusive Employment (PBIE)**

The Platform was set up on in 2021 and currently brings together 60 members. Its members work to improve the business environment in Moldova.

During the reporting period regional Groups of the Platform were established in four regions of the country. The groups held 38 meetings focused on the identifying the needs of the business environment and developing corresponding position papers. The secretariat of the platform is currently hosted by the Moldova Organic Value Chain Alliance (MOVCA).

### **Trade Platform**

Hosted by the European Business Association (EBA), the platform consists of 81 members, represented by the largest companies from the Republic of Moldova. In 2022 the platform developed 28 policy proposals focused on the following thematic areas: fiscal policy; renewable energy; GDPR; labor code; digitization and the cyber field; internal trade law; public sector reform; E-commerce, development and improvement of customs procedures; food safety. Around half of them have been accepted by decision makers.

Funds raised from the European Union enabled 10 grassroots CSO advocate **for more inclusive policies towards NEET youth**. Some of the key results achieved to date are presented below.

*A.O. Anima: mapped the services for young NEETs in the municipality of Balti, providing specific recommendations to local authorities.*

*A. O. Golubka: promoted the development and adoption of the district youth strategy 2022-2026 in Basarabeasca along with the action plan.*

*A.O. Societatea Invalizilor din Republica Moldova: the organization conducted and assessment on the legislation on subsidizing jobs for people with disabilities along with relevant recommendations.*

## Outcome 1.2. Vulnerable men and women enjoy and promote freedom of expression and access to unbiased information

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2020	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
% of respondents who believe they have access to unbiased information	42.5%	Positive trend	51.5%	51.5%

The share of people who trust the media continued to escalate in 2022. According to the latest Barometer of Public Opinion, the cumulative share of respondents who mentioned that have they have trust “to a certain extent” and “to a great extent” in Moldovan media increased from 42.5% in 2020 to 51.5% in November 2022.<sup>4</sup>

This increase in popular confidence may not be attributed only to EEF interventions. This positive trend could be the consequence of legal amendments to the media legislation adopted in 2022 and other efforts made by the Government to increase transparency of media ownership and de-monopolise the media landscape in Moldova.

EEF made significant strides to promote critical thinking, pluralism, citizens’ journalism and positive news. The progress to date is substantiated in the sections below.

*Bridging Outcome 1.2.1. Public authorities and other community actors (businesses) increasingly take corrective measures to address issues reported by vulnerable women and men*

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
# of issues solved through the intervention of local authorities	0	100	23	24
% of solved issues that were reported by women	0	increase	6	6

During the reporting period important progress was registered towards enhancing accountability of duty bearers through community journalisms. As the community journalists are developing and posting more articles reporting various community issues, the media impact is increasing along with the pressure on decision makers to solve specific issues.

### **Valeria and Alexandra Palanciuc, together with the team of young journalists, an example of community involvement**

*Twin sisters Valeria and Alexandra Palanciuc from Răscăieții Noi village, Ștefan Vodă district, are two young community journalists, who are actively involved in solving community problems. They are 15 years old and study in the 9th grade in the local high school. Both are the leaders of a group of young community journalists from Răscăieții Noi and write for the Jurnalist.md portal. After being trained in the field of community journalism, sisters Valeria and Alexandra, together with other colleagues from the locality\* and district, got involved in identifying, reporting and solving community problems.*

<sup>4</sup> IPP (2022). *Public Opinion Barometer*, p. 37, available online at <https://ipp.md/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Sondajul-BOP-noiembrie-2022.pdf>

The team of community journalists formed a common front with the local civic group "Răscăieții Noi Pune Umărul",<sup>5</sup> or, with common forces, it is easier to solve problems.

"We tried to see the problems not only with our eyes, but to realize who outside of us they affect. Thus, we identified a number of problems such as the lack of a centralized system for the supply of quality drinking water; the lack of spaces designed for young people, the lack and the need to install trash cans on the main street that leads to the public institutions in our town", says Valeria Palanciuc. And Alexandra Palanciuc adds that another problem identified and sensitized is the existence of old and worn furniture in the festive hall in the gymnasium, where, as a rule, all social and cultural activities in the village take place. The two sisters, leaders of the team of community journalists, say that in the process of documenting and solving community problems, the young people had various meetings with representatives of the local public administration. Thus, the mayor of the locality Ludmila Zagoreț committed to contribute to the solution of the problem of the lack of garbage cans on the central street of the village, and the local councilor Iurie Stoica advanced the idea of organizing a fair with the sale of gastronomic products in the gymnasium to raise funds in order to make five garbage bins that will be installed on the main street of the village. The action had the tagline "We install garbage cans in the community."<sup>6</sup>

Output 1.2.1.1. Community journalists freely express their views on key public policies and report abuses through the Community journalists' platform

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
# of vulnerable men and women who used the community journalists' platforms to comment public policies or report abuses	10	1000	110	171

In 2022 Deca-Pres and Urma scaled up their community journalism efforts. These NGOs trained 188 young men and women on community journalism. In addition, 10 podcasts on community journalism were developed and widely disseminated. Over 700 articles were developed and published on [www.jurnalism.md](http://www.jurnalism.md) by local community journalists with the support of the sub-contracted NGOs. Around 75 articles were taken over by other online platforms.

The Stiripozitivo.eu portal includes a domain<sup>7</sup> that groups various community journalism topics and maintains a banner that reveals some landmarks from the content of workshops with young people about community journalism. The statistics reveal that the topics created within the project "Community Journalism: Communication for the Community" have so far reached 15,405 people. Currently a series of 10 community topics are on roll, focused on the inclusion of people with disabilities, the importance of community support in this process and identified solutions.

### Outcome 1.3. Empowered women and other under-represented groups (persons with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic minorities) benefit from free, fair and inclusive elections.

Performance indicators	Baseline (2019)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
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<sup>5</sup> <https://jurnalism.md/2022/09/24/noutati-din-rascaiitii-noi-gata-sa-se-implice-in-rezolvarea-problemelor-comunitare/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://jurnalism.md/2022/09/15/tinerii-din-rascaiitii-noi-fac-satul-mai-curat/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://stiripozitivo.eu/category/jurnalism-comunitar/>

% of respondents who believe that elections were free and fair, disaggregated by sex	28.9%	Increase	24.2%	24.2%
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Citizens' confidence in free and fair elections remained low during the reporting period. According to the latest Barometer of Public Opinion, the share of people who believe that elections were free and fair decreased from 28.9% in 2019 to 24.2% in November 2022. This negative trend may be explained by the extensive debates on the proposed amendments to the electoral legislation, including contentious discussions on internet voting, conducted during the reporting period.



During the reporting period EEF and its partners focused on improving the legal framework. Exploring the opportunity provided by the commitment of the Central Electoral Commission to review the Election Code in 2022, the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections (Coalition) successfully advocated for addressing the legislative gaps identified during the previous electoral processes. Such gaps included the deficient dispute settlement mechanism, limited transparency and oversight of political party finance, electoral administration, ensuring accessibility and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities, ensuring equal opportunities to vote for Moldovan citizens living abroad. The outstanding role of the Coalition in advancing democratic process was acknowledged during the celebration of 25 years of activity of the Central Election Commission.

*Bridging Outcome 1.3.1. Political parties are more transparent and more inclusive towards under-represented groups (women, Roma, persons with disabilities)*

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
# of political parties that ensure a balanced representation of women and other under-represented in their internal governance	0	3	all	all

Gender quotas and placement requirements adopted in 2019 by the Parliament contributed to a significant increase in the share of women in Parliament and local councils. In light of these developments, during the reporting EEF consulted the Coalition members on the needs and strategies designed to support and scale up women's participation in the upcoming local general elections, due to take place in fall 2023. Preparatory actions were made to promote more women on the candidates' lists and in the decision-making bodies of political parties and electoral bodies.

*Bridging Outcome 1.3.2. Electoral commissioners and local authorities are more sensitive to the electoral rights of persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups*

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
% of polling stations accessible for PwD	45%	increase	In progress	In progress

Ballots are accessible for minority groups	ballots are accessible in Russian	ballots are accessible for minority groups	Ballots were accessible in Russian	Ballots accessible in Russian
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In 2022 the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections worked with the Central Electoral Commission to address the barriers faced by persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups during the last parliamentary elections. In addition, the members of the Coalition actively participated in the multi-disciplinary working group set up by the Central Electoral Commission, tasked to develop and pilot the Internet voting system.<sup>8</sup>

*Output 1.3.1.1. NGOs of Women, Roma and PwD advocate for inclusive and fair elections*

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
# of advocacy campaigns resulting in commitment of political parties or electoral authorities to ensure fair access to vote and representation in politics of women, Roma, PWDs	9	12	1	2

As the reporting period was not marked by electoral processes, during this time frame EEF enabled the Coalition to advocate for improved electoral framework compliant with international standards and human rights commitments. In addition, EEF harnessed the needs and constraints expressed by members of the Coalition in light of the upcoming local elections. These needs were included in a call for proposals focused on promoting a more inclusive local suffrage, launched in the beginning of 2023. The call will support at least seven advocacy campaigns focused on political inclusion of vulnerable groups.

**PROGRESS TOWARDS IMPACT OUTCOME 2: VULNERABLE MEN AND WOMEN IN TARGETED COMMUNITIES ENJOY SOCIO-ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
Equality Gaps in the following areas: living standards, health, employment	positive trend compared to 2017	Positive trend	Not applicable for the reporting period. The next equality gap report is scheduled for 2023	Access to services – positive trend; Poverty – negative trend; Health – progress stalled; Employment – negative trend

During the reporting period the country faced multiple crises including COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine that triggered unprecedented influx of refugees, energy crisis, high inflation. These negative factors affected the incomes access to basic needs, especially for the most vulnerable groups. According to latest Barometer of public opinion (2022), every fifth

<sup>8</sup> [https://a.cec.md/ro/grup-de-lucru-pentru-elaborarea-si-pilotarea-sistemul-informatinal-2781\\_102714.html](https://a.cec.md/ro/grup-de-lucru-pentru-elaborarea-si-pilotarea-sistemul-informatinal-2781_102714.html)

respondent (21.5%), especially women, older people and persons from rural areas mentioned that their incomes do not cover the minimum needs.<sup>9</sup>

In 2022 EEF and its partners made a tangible contribution to community mobilization for more inclusive policies, mobilising over 2000 women and men to engage in local policy making and oversight. Significant efforts were made to mobilise boys and girls to participate in local development through 10 youth banks all over the country. EEF and its partners created more employment opportunities for NEET youth, through capacity building, seed funding, work integration social enterprises. Efforts were made to support small and medium enterprises and advance work integration social enterprises targeting most vulnerable women and men.

**Outcome 2.1. Vulnerable men and women in targeted communities successfully advocate for responsive governance and address basic needs (e.g. water, sanitation, education, healthcare, street lighting)**

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
% respondents who believe that social and economic rights are respected by local authorities	Water: 56.2% work: 34.7% health: 28.4% social protection: 27.9%	increase	Data collection in process	Data collection in process

Progress towards this outcome is difficult to assess at this early stage of project implementation. In 2021 the Ombudsman Institution did not produce additional research on the perception of the population on the observance and social and economic rights by local authorities.

However, there are positive trends regarding the ability of local authorities to handle the situation of one of the most vulnerable groups that were in urgent need of protection and support - Ukrainian refugees. According to a recent opinion poll conducted by NDI (2023), more than 70% of respondents think that both national and local authorities have managed well the influx of refugees from Ukraine to Moldova.<sup>10</sup>

Progress was reported on the level of local democracy in three targeted districts. During the annual democracy Forums, held in Soroca, Căușeni and Cahul in December 2022, participants representing CSOs, local public authorities and media mentioned that level of participation in the decision-making process has been slowly but steadily increasing in 2022.<sup>11</sup>

The project achieved compelling progress in terms of mobilising CSOs and local communities in additional three targeted districts to promote greater transparency and accountability of LPAs towards most vulnerable groups, including Ukrainian refugees. Specific progress is substantiated in the sections below.

One of the obstacles faced by the partners in targeted districts and surrounding communities was the excessive anonymization of public interest information on the veil of personal data protection regulations. Such data included allocated budgets, names of councillors who signed decisions, sub-contracted firms. EEF made significant strides to address these barriers through awareness

<sup>9</sup> IPP (2022). *Public Opinion Barometer: November 2022*, p. 32, available online at <https://ipp.md/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Sondajul-BOP-noiembrie-2022.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> NDI (2023). Opinion poll on the situ

<sup>11</sup> [Raport de activitate al Consiliului Raional de Participare Soroca; Raport transparenta în procesul decizional în cadrul Consiliului raional Căușeni pe perioada anului 2022; Consiliul Raional pentru Participare Cahul - Raport de activitate](#)

raising on public interest data that should not be erased under the current legislation and through capacity building activities for CSOs and local public authorities.

*Bridging Outcome 2.1.1. Local authorities in targeted communities are more responsive to the needs of targeted vulnerable groups*

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
Number and % of recommendations proposed by initiative groups and accepted by authorities	17%	30%	50% (36 out of 72)	~40%
# of recommendations proposed by women' initiative groups and accepted	30	100	N/A for the reporting period	27

With co-funding leveraged from the Swiss Cooperation Office, in 2022 members of the District Participation Councils in Soroca, Causeni and Cahul constantly interacted with decision-makers to mainstream the perspective of vulnerable persons and groups in local policies. They analysed 72 draft decisions and managed to influence 36 off them. The advocacy process included active participation before and during the district council sessions, bi-lateral meetings with local councillors, public awareness about draft decisions and CSO recommendations. Most recent examples of results achieved by DPCs to date are outlined below:

***District Participation Council in Causeni:***

*Considering financial burden caused by country energy and economic crisis and in order to ensure social inclusion of people with special needs, the Causeni DPC requested identification of financial sources to provide unique financial support to people with disabilities in the Causeni district. As result, the District Council approved allocation of financial support to 159 people in need.*

*The analysis of funds allocated by Causeni District Council for the reparation of "Stefan cel Mare si Sfint" school revealed that no funds were allocated for accessibility of the building. As a result of evidence and human rights based dialogue, DPC Causeni convinced district authorities to allocate funds in in order to ensure compliance with accessibility requirements.*

***District Participation Council in Soroca:***

*Members of Soroca DPC actively promoted creation and sustainable support to AO "Soarta", an organisation providing social services for children at risk and with disabilities, initially funded by Soros Foundation. Further to advocacy efforts, an agreement and commitment documents were signed between Soroca District Council, Soroca City Hall and AO "Soarta", on provision of social service and a day center for children at risk and with disabilities, which currently are lacking in the city.*

*The DPC in Soroca monitored the situation of young budget workers who benefit from social housing such as teachers, nurses or municipality workers. They flagged that provisions of the Regulation on selection and distribution of social housing fail to consider in a holistic manner the vulnerability of these groups, even if their income slightly increased during the last two years. The DPC argued that*

eviction of these categories would deepen their vulnerability. As result of conflict mediation efforts carried out by DPC, Soroca District Council postponed deciding on tenants' evacuation and is looking for the most optimal solution for the issue, including amendments to Regulation.

#### **District Participation Council in Cahul**

Since 2019 members of Cahul DPC carried out watch-dog and monitoring activities regarding the contribution of the Cahul District Council to the implementation of 10 mln grant support from National Ecological Fund on waste management system. Participation in such projects of the district authority fell out of its competences and was risking to violate legal provisions on the matter. As result of active participation of DPC members in decision-making along these years, by the end of 2022 Cahul DC withdrew from this project, contributing to a) reduced political factor that could influence activity of an economic agent-implementer of the project on waste management; b) diminished risks of fraud, which would have existed since Cahul DC intended to contribute with a considerable amount; c) increased ownership of level I LPA, where the project will be implemented..

Members of the DPC in Cahul raised the issue of unauthorized garbage dump in Moscovei commune. As a result of DPC advocacy, the garbage dump was evacuated and the field place cleaned.

#### **Output 2.1.1.1. Targeted grass-roots NGOs representing vulnerable groups are actively using community mobilization tools to empower communities**

<b>Performance indicators</b>	<b>Baseline (2020)</b>	<b>Target 2025</b>	<b>Achieved in 2022</b>	<b>Cumulative indicators</b>
# of CSOs demonstrating active involvement of people in assessing quality of local governance and designing community development initiatives	45	90	94 (including 34 CSOs in three new districts)	90 (including 34 CSOs in three new districts)
# of Gender impact assessments conducted to draft decisions of local public authorities	0	45	3 (gender analyses conducted as part of the election process)	3 (gender analyses conducted as part of the election process)

Three district participation councils in earlier selected three districts, which bring together 60 grass-roots CSOs, demonstrated active involvement in promoting good governance and greater accountability of local public authorities toward community needs. To achieve results, they conducted monthly meetings, actively participated in the work of specialised commissions of the district councils and during the official sessions of the district authorities.

Their advocacy and oversight capacities increased during the reporting period. The data collected showed that, during the last 24 months, the effort undertaken by all platforms to raise public policy awareness on the needs of marginalized groups increased. The experience gained during last two years helped the platforms to better advocate for the rights of most vulnerable. Compared to 2020, capacities to analyse public policy documents improved. Training and coaching efforts have favourably influenced this practice.

EEF paid due attention to strengthening the sustainability of DPCs, conducting the first sustainability index. The collected data show that District Participation Councils are characterized by an average level of sustainability. However, the analysis indicates that almost all structures have deficiencies in setting a medium-term institutional strategy with provision of necessary resources. Similarly, local structures of DPCs are at an intermediate level. Organizational capacity assessment included evaluation of strategic planning, fundraising and human resources, as well as mobilization capacities.

Significant efforts were made to replicate community mobilization, participation and policy influencing practices in **three new districts**. The selection process began with a thorough analysis of 29 districts, conducted based on four objective criteria: (i) gender equality; (ii) youth index; (iii) prevalence of persons with disabilities; (iv) unemployment of older people; (v) representation of Roma; (vi) civic infrastructure. Pursuant to the analysis, the following three districts were selected: *Floresti, Stefan-Voda and Cimislia*.

In partnership with CPD, EEF prepared the ground and launched participation councils in three selected districts. Bi-lateral meetings were conducted with local grass roots CSOs and district authorities. Subsequently, EEF conducted capacity building activities for local NGOs, business representatives and media on (i) transparency in decision making for 34 CSOs and eight local public authorities and on (ii) policy advocacy for 31 grassroots CSOs.

EEF worked to coalesce local NGOs around the principle of participation and transparency. This effort resulted in joint identification of one CSO in each district to host the secretariats of the new DPCs during the upcoming 12 months. Ultimately, DPC launching events were organized jointly with district authorities, NGOs, local business community and media: on 06 December in Floresti, 08 December in Cimislia, on 20 December in Stefan Voda. The visibility of launching events was ensured through the presence of local media and through the development and wide dissemination of a special media report, prepared with project support.<sup>12</sup>

EEF made important preparatory work to assist the newly created DPCs in the journey of shaping local decisions from the perspective of inclusion. A complex selection process for local consultants was carried out by EEF. By the date of reporting, local consultants were selected for Stefan Voda (Mr. Vitalie Rusanovschi), and Floresti (Mr. Dumitru Stoica).

## Outcome 2.2. Boys and girls in targeted communities actively participate in local development and claim their rights

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
Share of NEET young women and men in targeted communities	26% at national level	At least 10% decrease	Data collection in progress	~26%

<sup>12</sup> The media report was prepared and widely disseminated through various media platforms, including the following: <https://youtu.be/CtcGvJPy3t4>; <https://diez.md/2022/12/28/mai-multa-transparenta-si-participare-decizionala-la-stefan-voda-a-fost-prezentata-initiativa-consiliului-raional-de-participare/>; <https://realitatea.md/mai-multa-transparenta-decizionala-la-stefan-voda-a-fost-prezentata-initiativa-consiliului-raional-de-participare/>; <https://tvr Moldova.md/article/ef4747aec5ed39fc/video-mai-multa-transparenta-si-participare-decizionala-la-stefan-voda-a-fost-prezentata-initiativa-consiliului-raional-de-participare.html>

While data at result level are not yet available, EEF achieved important progress towards economic and civic empowerment of vulnerable young women and men. This was achieved through: five social enterprises targeting NEET youth, 15 youth entrepreneurship funds, 15 sub-grants to improve youth services, 10 youth banks.

*Bridging Outcome 2.2.1. Local authorities and businesses support youth mobilization through direct funding and enabling environment.*

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
% of funds raised by youth banks from local authorities	81%	81%	84%	84%
% of funds raised by youth banks from businesses	18.4%	20%	7%	7%

Being guided by the motto “*Real Lives. Real Money. Real Change*”, the YouthBank network is improving at diversifying their sources of financial support and some of them have managed to attract funding from the Ministry of Education, local public authorities, local businesses and donations from individuals during fundraising events.

Local businesses are increasingly supporting the YouthBanks. This high share is the result of youth groups activism, transparency and continuous engagement with local stakeholders.

In 2022, the Ialoveni district Council contributed financially with 382 000 thousand MDL for financing the small grants programme.

YouthBanks made significant efforts to fundraise from the LPA (84%), from the private sector actors and during fundraising events (9%). Thus, by the end of 2022, the share of funds raised from businesses is 7% and during the special events (9%).

In 2022, there were conducted 50 fundraising events including the charity events, donation boxes, door-to-door campaigning, face painting and others. A successful example is YouthBank Ștefan Vodă who managed to involve a number of 15 229 young people in fundraising events.

Finally, young people are empowered to develop their competencies and to engage their peers in small projects and initiatives in their towns and villages. To assist the YouthBank members, a programme of training backed up by on-going support is constantly provided by EEF and local coordinators.

*Output 2.2.1.1. Youth groups (boys and girls) in targeted regions successfully galvanize youth participation in decision-making and local development.*

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
# of youth groups [youth banks] that demonstrated successful youth mobilisation and empowerment initiatives	10	10	10	10
# of boys and girls in targeted communities mobilised through the youth banks' initiatives	128536	200000	24532	153068
# of youth led businesses created with project support, disaggregated by sex	66	120	86	152

# of new workplaces created by youth-led businesses	81	200	66	147
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## Youth Banks

In 2022 the 10 youth banks supported by EEF were managed by 164 young boys and girls from 10 regions including the Transnistrian region. These enthusiastic boys and girls supported 185 youth led initiatives (i. e. setting up reading and socializing spaces, installing a container-box for donation, creating a playground, greening up the school, setting up volleyball and badminton courts, improving educational conditions) that mobilized around 5643 young boys and girls. Examples of youth mobilization projects supported in 2022 are provided below:

*Ambitious students from the State University of Cahul "B. P. Hasdeu" have strengthened their efforts for raising public awareness and sensitizing the inhabitants regarding the positive impact of donations by installing a container-box.*

*The group of students from Vădeni village "Young Creators Club" promotes the art of craftsmanship by involving young people in art therapy sessions. Thanks to the implementation of the "Active youth for a prosperous future" project, children and young people have obtained more possibilities for development and manifestation of creativity, feeling stronger, namely by participating in various exhibitions such as: the 2022 Soroca Apple Festival, Sweet golden autumn, thematic fairs.*

*A group of young boys and girls from the Sturzeni village, Rîscani district, gathered in the "Baștina" initiative group, joined their efforts to make a change in the locality. With the support of the YouthBank and Town Hall, they transformed the school yard into a socializing space for young people.*

*Through the "Outdoor Playground" project, a group of young people from Ivancea, procured the necessary materials for arranging the space for outdoor activities of the local kindergarten.*

*In order to promote the financial education, time management, sex education and the role of social networks in creating personality and social image for a successful career, the Cahul Youth Fund managed to implement their idea of organizing and mobilizing more than 100 young people to participate in 4 seminars on the most priority areas of life. This gives young people the knowledge and skills they need for a lifetime.*

*The young people from the College of Medicine in Orhei reported that they do not have a space where they can meet, discuss and carry out various training and non-formal activities. As a result, with the project support, but also with the involvement of the college administration, the young people managed to equip and furnish the Socialization Hall.*

The "YouthBank" program has had direct impact on the lives of over 24532 young people from more than 580 rural and urban communities across the country. The number of youth bank activists increased from 121 boys and girls in 2020 to 164 young people by the end of 2022.

Equality and non-discrimination are among the key principles guiding all youth banks' activities. Thus, at least 56% of the current Youth Bank members are from vulnerable groups (ethnic and linguistic minorities, people with precarious social and economic backgrounds, deprived rural areas, children of migrant parents, young people with disabilities as well as young people living in the security zone along the Nistru river).

### Youth entrepreneurship funds

EEF has set up 15 youth entrepreneurship funds that will support self-employment of NEET youth. These funds are managed by subcontracting CSOs. This effort was possible within two EU funded initiatives: (i) Local Civil Society contributes to Inclusive and Sustainable Local Economic Development; (ii) Better opportunities for Young Women and Men Not in Education, Employment and Training in Moldova (NEET Inclusion Initiative).

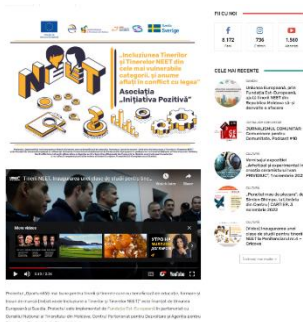
In 2022 the entrepreneurship funds conducted capacity building activities and launched the process of awarding small business grants to NEET youth through competitive processes. By the reporting date at least 445 NEET young women (259) and men (186) have been trained on business development. To date 66 NEET boys and girls already seed funding to develop a small business.

EEF continued to strengthen the fundraising capacity of the established youth entrepreneurship funds. Contracted experts helped the participants to understand the key principles in fundraising and provided examples and positive fundraising practices. Internal and external fundraising techniques were discussed and exemplified, such as: Fundraising and management through Crowdfunding; Fundraising through social networks, 2% mechanism, Collection through P2P transfers); External sources of fundraising (donors); Provision of services (public and private sector).

### Youth services targeting NEET

Pursuant to capacity building efforts and a competitive process, in 2022 EEF awarded grants to 15 CSOs to contribute to NEET youth inclusion by piloting innovative inclusive services or monitoring the youth services that already exists. Examples of supported services are provided below.

### Services for detained NEET youth



A study room equipped with computers for the training of convicts was inaugurated, today, in the premises of Penitentiary no. 4 from Cricova. The new study classroom is equipped with 9 computers and aims to increase the chances of reintegration of 18 NEET prisoners, who will develop primary digital skills which will allow them to access educational programs in the penitentiary, to validate these skills, but also to and continue studies at the next levels afterwards. Other 18 NEET young people that are in conflict with law received driving

license school training.

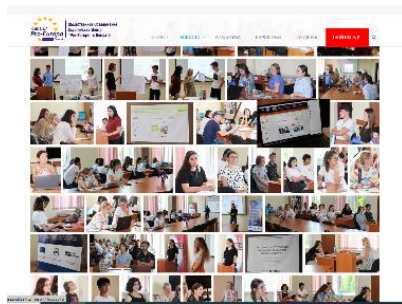
## Art therapy, legal and psycho services of young NEET Mothers – Colibri!

The launch of the Colibri Service (legal and psychological support for Young NEET mothers) - the first meetings with the lawyer, the psychologist and the ARTtherapy Club. Participants - husbands of the participants joined the group and are actively involved. Children who come with their mothers have a special activity program that is provided by the volunteers of the Anima Center. Thus, work is being done in several directions to reach the final goal of the project.



The beneficiaries of the activities are the group of mothers, young NEETs who are currently at home with their children. The group of 20 mothers represent the direct beneficiaries. The project also included the fathers, husbands of the participants and young NEET women who do not yet have a family or children. They are part of the group, and have requested consent to be involved.

## Empowering NEET in Gagauzia



Pro Europa Centre in Gagauz Autonomy trained 45 NEET young people on Career guidance, Computer/Digital literacy, Self-presentation. Within the framework of the project 15 young people received the opportunity to study at professional courses, 5 people - the opportunity to purchase equipment and materials 32 young people took part in study visits and excursions to enterprises and educational organizations. Some project participants were able to decide on the choice of a place

for further education in secondary specialized educational institutions, some found out for themselves preferences in choosing a profession or place of work. During the implementation of the project 12 beneficiaries from vulnerable families were including in the social support for employment schemes. To date two project participants were employed with project support.<sup>13</sup>

## Work integration Social Enterprises targeting NEET Youth

Five social enterprises targeting NEET youth are operating at the moment, striving to insert NEET youth on the labor market. The capacity building and seed funding for youth business development, along with youth social entrepreneurship started and are in process to coming to fruition by the end of 2023.

## Baker's helper in Razeni

<sup>13</sup> <https://proeuropa.md/ru/news/molodeji%20iz%20gagauzii%20prowla%20obucenie%20po%203%20moduleam/>

The project, implemented by ECO Razeni, is designed to contribute to work integration of most vulnerable NEET. As part of the initiative 11 young men and women with disabilities and from other disadvantaged categories benefit from on-the-job training to acquire the necessary skills for the job of baker's helper. The organization developed the study curriculum at the workplace for the baker's helper job and initiated the accreditation process of the study program. To date seven new jobs were created within the social insertion enterprise Floare de cireș SRL, of which: 2 women with disabilities, 2 men with disabilities, 1 woman of Roma ethnicity, 2 women with full abilities. Around 100 m2 of the production section intended for the social bakery in Răzeni is 90% ready to launch the activity: installation of the bridge and the electricity/lighting network, installation of hotels, installation of the ventilation system, fire protection and video surveillance, equipping with tables stainless steel and shelves. The social enterprises was exposed to the experience of Brutăria Concordia from Bucharest by means of online study visit. In addition, the staff of the social enterprise participated in a masterclass on the production of traditional Estonian bread.



### Pop Symphonic

In addition to the aforementioned efforts, in partnership with “LalaPlay Voices” CSO, 100 talented children from all over the country improved their knowledge, attitudes, confidence in their own strengths and visions of personal and professional development at the Voices Summer Camp. The public and other interested parties participated in the project from the creed of support solidarity for Ukraine and promote the year of youth in Europe. 60 children with musical abilities from Chisinau and Balti, were selected to participate at the Pop Symphonic 8 concert along with 80 others of musicians.

### Outcome 2.3. Vulnerable men and women in targeted communities benefit from employment opportunities and better social services

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
Share of women and men who declared zero tolerance to domestic violence	tbc	increase	Preparatory work	
Share of homeless people in targeted regions	tbc	decrease	Data collection in progress	
Share of inactive population in targeted districts	tbc	decrease	Data collection in progress	

During the reporting period EEF made significant strides to improve access of most vulnerable groups to employment opportunities and social services. This result was achieved through: six business hubs that provided counselling to around 9000 small and medium enterprises; 15 social enterprises that created 53 new jobs and provided free of charge services to over 1000 vulnerable women and men; support to 15 consortia that piloted innovative employment services for

disadvantaged groups and contributed to the employment of 67 persons, mostly persons with disabilities.

*Bridging Outcome 2.3.1. Local authorities are increasingly sensitive to the needs of victims of domestic violence and of homeless people*

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2021	Cumulative indicators
% of budget allocated for services addressing needs of victims of domestic violence	tbc	at least 3 p.p. increase	Data collection in progress	

At this stage of project implementation, progress is not registered under this bridging outcome. Preparatory work has been made, in partnership with other domestic CSO, to launch a comprehensive initiative that will both improve livelihoods of victims and improve accountability of public authorities for domestic violence. Additional information is provided under Output 2.3.1.1. below.

*Bridging Outcome 2.3.2. Improved business capacities of Social Enterprises and SMEs run by vulnerable groups*

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
# of SMEs who reported increase of profit due to business development assistance provided with project support	531	1000	913 (224 men, 689 women) consulted	1003 SMEs (consulted)

During the reporting period the six business hubs registered significant progress, increasingly supporting development of SMEs. During the reporting period the business hubs organized 106 events for SMEs and potential entrepreneurs during. Total number of entrepreneurs consulted by hubs was 678. Out of them, 378 persons are from urban areas. The six business hubs provided training and consultancy for 913 entrepreneurs, most of them women.

Business Hub from Balti is an inspiring example for others. In 2022 this hub organized the competition "The best business plan". As a result 5 winning entrepreneurs received a small grant for developing their business ideas. In addition, at the official launch of the business hubs all five entrepreneurs have been invited at the fair. The experiences of the winners are outlined below.



*Anna Grama, entrepreneur who lovingly produces sea salts, effervescent balls, body butter, cream and lip balm, all from natural products. Anna benefited from financial support in the form of equipment necessary for the activity and development of her business, such as: stainless steel table, planetary mixer and grinder. The amount of the grant is 1638 euros.*

*Irina Furtună - creates with dedication flowers and lamps for decoration or gifts. With the help of Business Skills HUB, within the project Irina can carry out her work in a well-equipped space with the necessary equipment: plotter and worktable. The offered grant is 790 euros. She benefitted as well of co-working space within the hub*



*Ina Erhan- on an area of 3 ha, plants over 90 varieties of roses. Ina purchased a mini-tractor that will significantly ease her work and, respectively, increase her productivity. The amount of the grant is 2550 euros.*

*Alina Uncu - is a young woman from Făleşti who turned her passion for pastry into a business success. Alina benefited of performant equipment: a professional mixer, a dough mixer and a cabinet with low temperatures, necessary for the activity and development of her business.*

### Output 2.3.1.1. NGOs successfully promote zero tolerance to domestic violence and provide support to victims of domestic violence and gender based violence

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
# of victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence assisted with legal and psychological counselling, as well as other services	tbc	increase	Preparatory work	
# of victims who improved the socio-economic condition with project support	0	300	Preparatory work	
# of vulnerable women and men assisted through more inclusive services <sup>14</sup>	0	Increase	1122, including 67 employed persons	1122

In 2022 EEF continued the negotiations with the World Bank, with the view to starting the implementation of the project “Moldova: Improving access to justice for the vulnerable, with a focus on families affected by domestic violence (DV) and gender-based violence (GBV)”. The \$3.2 million action was preliminarily selected for funding by the World Bank in 2020. It is designed to be

<sup>14</sup> This is an additional indicator, included to better reflect the results achieved during the reporting period.

implemented in 48 months and shall be implemented in close partnership with domestic CSOs, including Women's Law Center, La Strada, Expert Grup.

The project is designed to achieve the following objectives: (i) improve livelihoods for survivors and economic empowerment of survivors and those at-risk; (ii) raise awareness about Domestic and gender-based violence and related Services Promotion of GBV and DV services for victims; (iii) strengthen public sector-civil society collaborative engagement for reducing DV & GBV.

The project is expected to start in 2023. The initiative will improve livelihoods for at least 595 survivors and at risk of DV & GBV through targeted livelihood interventions.

### **Consortia for more inclusive services**

In 2022 EEF supported access to more inclusive services for various vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and older people. To this end, 15 grants were awarded to consortia of local CSOs. Overall, the consortia have consulted 1122 persons belonging to vulnerable groups. Out of them, 67 persons have been employed due to the assistance of consortia. Around 40% of employed persons are women. Examples of results achieved by supported consortia are presented below:

#### ***Assisted employment for persons with disabilities***

*Due to the project implementation one partner of the consortium, AO Psinclusion has received accreditation regarding the assisted employment service for persons with psycho-social disabilities. These services have been contracted by Ministry of Labour for one year with total value 300 000 MDL/15 000 euro. This means that persons with disabilities will have access to qualitative services and will exercise their rights. The employers became more flexible to hire persons with disabilities while public servants from employment agencies will have strengthened capacities to support these categories of persons.*

#### ***Support models for persons with disabilities***

*AO FCPS in partnership with AO CASMED and AO „Clinica Juridică Nord” are piloting two support models for persons with disabilities. The first model applied for vulnerable groups is the assisted employment service, which was piloted by AO CASMED. The National Council for the Accreditation of Social Services (CNPASS) accredited the service provided by AO CASMED, thus confirming compliance with minimum quality standards.*

*The second model is reasonable accommodation of the workplace to the needs of persons with disabilities. FCPS initiated the procedure for obtaining subsidies for the creation of jobs for persons with disabilities. In accordance with the decision issued by National Employment Agency (NEA) from 26.09.2022, an individual employment contract for two years was signed with Valentina Dimicenco, a person with hearing difficulties, employed as a tailor in clothing. Valentina works 6 hours daily, but the salary is calculated for 8 hours of work. The salary is paid from two sources: 50% from project sources, and the other 50% - from public sources. The volume of subsidies obtained from NEA is 91,159 MDL/4558 EURO, being granted for a period of 15 months and 2 days from the date of employment of the disabled person.*

**Output 2.3.2.1. Selected grass-roots NGOs in targeted communities are successfully running social enterprises to address the situation of vulnerable groups**

Performance indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target 2025	Achieved in 2022	Cumulative indicators
# of Work Integration Social Enterprises created (data disaggregated by the sex of the manager of the social enterprise)	17	30	15 (11 – w, 4 - m)	32
# of vulnerable women and men in targeted communities assisted by social enterprises	131	300	1045, including 53 new jobs	1076

With co-funding leveraged from the European Union within the project “Local Civil Society Contributes to Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Development in Moldova”, in 2022 EEF scaled up support to social entrepreneurship. EEF awarded 15 grants to support social entrepreneurship initiative, with specific focus on most vulnerable groups. Most of the supported social enterprises are led by women (11 out of 15).

During the reporting period the 15 social enterprises provided free of charge or partially paid services/products to 1045 vulnerable persons. Overall, social enterprises have created job places for 53 persons from vulnerable groups. The highest number of job places have been created by БФ «Детство Детям»-12. A story of one of its beneficiaries is outlined below:

*Maria, 36 years old, is single mother of 4 children: 18 years old, 14 years old, 11 years old, 2 years old.*

*Maria is a woman with a difficult fate. As a child, her mother left her, her father betrayed her, and when she got married, she was physically abused.*

*The Fund «Детство Детям» (Childhood for Children) offered professional consultation of psychologist and a lawyer. The woman was helped to restore her documents, the fund offered some essential furniture, clothes, food for her and the children, conducted psychological consultations, invited her to group trainings to get out of depression, and offered her a job in the social atelier. During the work, the woman showed great interest in sewing. Moreover, she was invited to participate in the project as a student.*

*This helped her to gain knowledge and skills in sewing and receive a scholarship. The technologist helped her to understand quickly the work process.*

*Maria is thankful for this assistance and these are her sayings: “Thank you very much for this opportunity. In fact, since childhood, I dreamed of sewing, but because of the problems that happened to me, I forgot about this dream. Now I can not only repair children's clothes with high quality, but also sew something for them.”*

*Now, Maria does not work at the social atelier. She found a job at a sewing company not far from home and now she does not have to spend 2 hours on the road from Tighina to Tiraspol and back.*

EEF is continuously monitoring the financial situation of supported social enterprises. The highest income from sales was registered by Asociatia pentru Formare Antreprenoriala si Dezvoltare (former Asociatia Femeilor de Afaceri din Balti)- 95000 euro. This income is high due to stable contracts for refugees’ food services. The following high income from sales was recorded by AO Filantropia Crestina-18600 euro, four social enterprises from Transnistria Region: БФ «Детство Детям»-12868 euro; ОО ИНОДА «ИнваЛайф»-5098 euro; НП ЦСЭР «Грани будущего» - 4319 euro; НП «От равного к равному»- 3919 euro. Only one social enterprise, founded by AO Sos

Autism, didn't recorded any income considering that this NGO signed the latest the grant contract in September 2022.

## **CROSS- CUTTING ACTIVITIES**

### **EEF Program approach**

EEF explored the program approach, consisting of operating programs and strategic grant-making. Operating programs maintained the organisation's focus on advancing human rights, empowering organised rights-holders and strengthening linkages between civic groups, constituencies, public authorities. They did so in the following ways: (i) EEF built capacities and supported initiatives of NGOs that empower and engage people in decision-making; (ii) EEF served as a convener among stakeholders on an issue, bringing various groups together to improve collective action; (iii) through operating programs, EEF leveraged the small achievements of individual activities and programs by many actors for long term, sustainable impact in the following fields: civil society participation and oversight, inclusive elections, building bridges between NGOs on both banks of Nistru River; fostering economic and social development; (v) the EEF operating programs sought to increase synergies between impact outcomes and corresponding components.

To contribute to the achievement its mission, EEF supported demand-driven projects that fall within EEF's programmatic or mandate areas. EEF program officers guided organizations through the grants process, helping them to build and mobilize constituencies, run public outreach campaigns and strengthen the organizational administrative systems.

In pursuing its development goal, EEF in Moldova followed its commitments to integrating protection of the environment, human rights, gender equality, European integration in its work.

### ***Protection of the Environment***

Environmental stewardship is a shared responsibility for protecting the environment and minimizing the impact of our daily decisions. Committed to reducing its environmental impact and ensuring environmental sustainability, EEF continuously operationalised the policy by integrating compliance in the sub-grants and corresponding monitoring procedures.

### ***Human Rights Based Approach to Development***

EEF made progress in integrating human rights in all its priorities. Supported NGOs increasingly advocated for more inclusive policies and services. In their policy advocacy efforts, these groups continuously used the international human rights standards and principles of information, participation and empowerment, equality and non-discrimination, accountability. Under the first Civil Society Participation and Oversight Program EEF managed to scale up the work of the Coalition for Inclusion and Non-Discrimination. As part of the Free, Fair and Inclusive Elections program, the Civic Coalition consistently called the electoral authorities to ensure the rights of under-represented groups in compliance with the international human rights commitments of Moldova. Grass roots CSOs actively mobilised people to demand from local authorities more inclusive services and fairer allocation and distribution of available resources. EEF also paid due attention to empowering youth and vulnerable people in communities through social enterprises, business development start-ups.

### ***Gender equality***

EEF worked to ensure that women, as much as men, have a real voice in all institutions, so they can participate equally with men in public dialogue and decision-making and influence the decisions that will determine the future of their families and countries. EEF actively explored the

strategic partnership with CPD with the view to mainstream gender equality in all interventions. As part of the Civil Society Participation and Oversight Program, partners made significant strides to promote legal amendments conducive to equal pay and better protection against sexual harassment.

Within the Free, Fair and Inclusive Elections Component, due attention was paid to assessing the extent to which the gender quotas, adopted during the previous years, contributed to the empowerment and increased representation of women.

Specific interventions were made to ensure equal opportunities for girls and boys in the Youth Banks projects. Due to more targeted interventions, the percentage of boys engaged in youth steering committees increased from 25% in 2015 to approximately 40% in 2022.

Jointly with CPD, EEF identified gender-based inequalities and formulated proposals for addressing them. The third edition of the Equality Gap Report, issued in 2021, identified inequalities in income, health and labour along such criteria as gender, disability, age, Roma.

### ***Contribution to EU Integration***

Through this action EEF contributed to bringing the Republic of Moldova closer to the EU. The commitment to eliminate stigma and discrimination towards particularly marginalized individuals and groups represented integral part of the EEF efforts. In 2022, the EEF employee, delegated to the Moldovan Equality Body for a second mandate in 2018, continued to actively examine complaints on discrimination and contribute to the adoption of corresponding decisions and recommendations.

### ***Inclusion of the Transnistrian region***

Building on linkages with other projects and initiatives, EEF made efforts to expand its development efforts in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. In 2022 EEF up-scaled support of the two Youth Banks established in the region in 2018, advanced the social entrepreneurship model, promoted consumer rights, and worked to facilitate linkages and joint actions between the NGOs on both banks of Nistru.

### ***Accessibility of information for ethnic minorities***

EEF made efforts to ensure equal opportunities and accessibility of information for NGOs that represent Russian speaking ethnic groups. To this end, the Terms of References and most important information related to grants' competitions and other opportunities were translated into Russian and widely disseminated through the NGO networks in Gagauzia, Transnistria, Taraclia, Balti and other regions.

## FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2022

Program areas	Budget, EUR	%
<b>Program 1: Civil and political rights and democratic governance</b>		
<b>Component 1.1:</b> Civil Society Participation and Oversight	434.567	12,76%
<b>Component 1.2:</b> Community Journalism	136.344	4,00%
<b>Component 1.3:</b> Free, fair and inclusive elections	35.841	1,05%
<b>Program 2: Socio-economic rights and sustainable local development</b>		
<b>Component 2.1:</b> Community mobilization for responsive local governance	146.778	4,31%
<b>Component 2.2:</b> Youth Participation and Economic Empowerment	1.109.124	32,56%
<b>Component 2.3:</b> Social Actions and Economic Development	1.476.494	43,35%
<b>Sub-Total Program budget</b>	<b>3.339.148</b>	<b>98,04%</b>
Sub-Total Administrative budget	66.811	1,96%
<b>Total budget</b>	<b>3.405.959</b>	<b>100,00%</b>
Donors	Budget, USD	%
European Union	2.121.663	62,29%
Government of Sweden	884.763	25,98%
Swiss Development Cooperation Office	369.597	10,85%
OAK Foundation	29.360	0,86%
Others	576	0,02%
<b>Total budget</b>	<b>3.405.959</b>	<b>100,00%</b>