



IOM STRATEGY FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA (2023 – 2025)

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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Cover photo: Ukrainian refugees and Third Country Nationals (TCNs) arrive at the Palanca border point in Moldova. The border point is one of the main ports of entry for people fleeing into Moldova. © IOM/Muse Mohammed 2022
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**IOM STRATEGY FOR
THE REPUBLIC
OF MOLDOVA**
(2023 – 2025)

FOREWORD

We are delighted to present the strategy of the IOM Office in the Republic of Moldova. This strategy is a key tool for clearly articulating the migration trends and challenges, particularly as a result of the ongoing war in Ukraine and its impact on the region, and how IOM will work with government, migrant communities, and our many partners to achieve a positive impact over the course of the next three years. The strategy affirms IOM's mandate and core priorities, as laid out in its Strategic Vision and related governance documents.

This strategy is anchored in IOM's Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, which further refines the global priorities and tailors them to the regional context. It lays out IOM's commitment to empower migrants and communities and to address drivers of migration. IOM is advancing positive, sustainable, and innovative development outcomes that are responsive to regional migration trends. In addition, IOM strengthens cooperative development and implementation of evidence-based and inclusive migration governance.

This strategy highlights the current and future migration trends in the Republic of Moldova and sets out the context in which IOM carries out its activities. It outlines the challenges and opportunities related to migration in the country and identifies the strategic priorities to address them in an effort to foster safe, orderly and regular migration. The strategy for Moldova was developed in support of the government strategies and policies, also in line with Moldova's EU accession vision. With the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), and establishment of a UN Migration Network in Moldova, IOM in its capacity as Network Coordinator and Secretariat, will continue to foster effective collaboration in support of the government's implementation follow-up and review of the GCM.

This strategy is aligned with IOM's Strategic Results Framework (SRF). The SRF provides a roadmap for implementation of IOM's Strategic Vision, anchored in the 2030 Agenda and the GCM, by identifying institutional results and indicators to facilitate reporting on IOM's broad range of work in a coherent, comparative manner. In this way, IOM aims to measure progress towards its strategic objectives and to strengthen accountability to Member States and other stakeholders.

We are very grateful to IOM staff – particularly at the regional and country level – for their diligent and insightful work in developing this strategy and in their commitment to its successful implementation. The strategy is particularly timely given the operational needs on the ground, with a particular emphasis on response and recovery to Ukraine crisis and our collective commitment to build back better.

This strategy affirms IOM's commitment to support governments and stakeholders in upholding migrants' rights, regardless of their migration status and across all stages of the migration cycle. With this strategy, and in cooperation with our numerous and diverse partners, we will continue to respond to the needs and aspirations of migrants, building societies fit for a modern, mobile and interconnected world. IOM looks forward to strengthening its partnerships in the Republic of Moldova and joining efforts in fostering migration for the benefit of all.

Lars Johan Lonnback
Chief of Mission
IOM Moldova

Manfred Profazi
Regional Director IOM's Regional Office
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia

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ACRONYMS

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
BCP	Border Crossing Point
CAP	Centre for Assistance and Protection of victims and potential victims of trafficking
CS	Customs Service
DMD	Diaspora, Migration and Development
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
EDF	European Disability Forum
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct investments
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
GCR	Global Compact for Refugees
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIBP	General Inspectorate of Border Police
GIES	General Inspectorate of Emergency Situations
GIM	General Inspectorate for Migration
GIP	General Inspectorate of Police
HCI	Human Capital Index
HDPN	Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRIS	International Recruitment Integrity System
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAS	Programme on Managing Migration Flow, Asylum and Integration of Foreigners for 2022-2025
MCOF	Migration Crisis Operational Framework
MGI	Migration Governance Indicators
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NDS	National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030"

NFI	Non-food items
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Aid
OPD	Organisations for People with Disabilities
PCCOCS	Prosecutor's Office for Combatting Organized Crime and Special Cases
PSEAH	Prevention Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment
RAC	Refugee Accommodation Centre
RRP	Regional Refugee Response Plan
SAP	Service for Assistance and Protection male victims of trafficking
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRF	Strategic Results Framework
TCN	Third Country National
TiP	Trafficking in Persons
UNDPPA	UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VLAP	Visa Liberalisation Action Plan



(1) IOM staff carry out cash-based intervention activities to Ukrainian refugees in Chisinau, Moldova. IOM staff distribute cash vouchers which are valid at local supermarkets in order to purchase essentials for refugees. © IOM/Muse Mohammed 2022
(2) IOM staff carry out medical assistance and fit-to-travel checks for Azeri TCNs in Chisinau, Moldova. The group of TCNs had recently arrived from Ukraine and organized onward bus transportation to Azerbaijan. © IOM/Muse Mohammed 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. ABOUT IOM

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the United Nations (UN) leading agency on migration and the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration, working closely with its key stakeholders — migrants and Member States — to promote humane, safe, and orderly migration. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants from an integral and holistic perspective, including links to development, in order to maximize the benefits and opportunities of migration and reduce its challenges. Established in 1951, IOM now has more than 170 Member States, offices in over 400 field locations and more than 14,000 staff — 90 per cent of IOM's staff being deployed in the field. In the South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia region, IOM has 19 missions.

As recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, human mobility is indivisible from sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – and the commitment to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind – will not be achieved without due consideration of migration. Additionally, the Global Compact for Migration is grounded in the 2030 Agenda and promotes the principles of having a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to address this intrinsic link.

This Strategy will support the Member States to achieve this, ultimately leveraging the potential of migration through a whole-of-government approach to achieve sustainable development outcomes for all. It is a direct contribution to the Decade of Action to fast-track progress for reaching the SDGs. It brings greater coherence and development impact to IOM's activities and allows for a joined-up approach to the way the Organization designs and delivers its operations, as called for in IOM's strategic vision.

IOM's strategic vision¹, presented to IOM Member States in 2019, spans the period of 2019 to 2023. The Vision articulates how IOM plans to meet its new and emerging responsibilities, including IOM's mandated role as network coordinator. It outlines IOM's 'direction of travel' and promotes 'joined-up thinking'.

This Strategy is aligned with the IOM Vision, its corresponding Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia² and the IOM Strategic Results Framework (SRF)³ as well as the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Republic of Moldova 2023-2027⁴, which are anchored in the overall framework of the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact for Migration (GCM). Under the overall framework of this strategy, IOM Moldova will define a results matrix, including resource requirements. In the current context of the Ukraine crisis response, which includes Ukraine and the region into which Ukrainians and others have fled, the results matrix will also form a part of IOM's Appeal for Ukraine and Neighbouring Countries.⁵

1.2. IOM IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The IOM Country Office was established in the Republic of Moldova in 2001. The country became an IOM Member State in 2003. For two decades, IOM has been the leading international agency supporting the Government and migrants in the Republic of Moldova, as well as the Moldovan diaspora and migrants in vulnerable situations.

The Republic of Moldova joined the UN in 1992 and its independence was officially recognized on 2 March 1992. IOM has had a long-standing relationship with the Government and is equipped with the necessary skills, expertise and resources to provide tailored solutions to governments and crisis-affected populations by ensuring humanitarian and international border management, humanitarian movement assistance, and area-based approaches through an array of multisectoral interventions providing cash, protection, shelter, health, site management, and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) assistance. IOM preparedness actions are fully integrated into the wider interagency planning in the country.

By the end of 2022, the mission counted 198 staff, 88 per cent of whom are national. Currently, staff are based in the capital Chisinau and two major Border Crossing Points (BCPs) with Ukraine: Palanca and Otaci. IOM avails mobile teams covering the country, and works closely with local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) based in Drochia, Căușeni, Cahul, Ocnita, Chisinau and the Transnistrian Region to deliver services.

¹ IOM Strategic Vision – Setting a Course for IOM (2019 – 2023), available at <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iom-strategic-vision>

² South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia – Regional Strategy (2020–2024), available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/south-eastern-europe-eastern-europe-and-central-asia-regional-strategy-2020-2024>

³ IOM Results Framework, more information available at <https://www.iom.int/strategic-results-framework>

⁴ The Republic of Moldova – the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Moldova (2023-2027), available at <https://moldova.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/Brosura%20TIPAR.pdf>

⁵ IOM's Appeal outlining IOM's crisis response plan for the Ukraine and Neighbouring countries can be accessed at the IOM's Crisis Response Portal: <https://crisisresponse.iom.int/>



Movement of Ukrainian refugees from the Republic of Moldova to EU countries by flight. © IOM Moldova

2. CONTEXT ANALYSIS

2.1. POLITICAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND MIGRATION OUTLOOK

The Republic of Moldova is a landlocked country which, based on the UN definition of population with usual residence, officially counted 2.6 million inhabitants in 2022⁶ (versus 4.4 million in 1991), decreasing by 190,000 persons in the last five years. The population growth rate is negative (-1.8% p.a.) as a result of low fertility, with the higher out-migration rate of youth contributing to accelerated ageing correlating with decrease of active labour force. The country borders with Romania and Ukraine and lies at the historical, cultural, economic, and geopolitical crossroads between East and West. The Republic of Moldova gained independence from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991 and was granted European Union (EU) candidate status in June 2022.

While the **Transnistrian Region declared its independence in 1990**, the authorities of the Republic of Moldova consider the territory a part of the Republic of Moldova. However, the official population statistics of the Republic of Moldova do not include the residents of the Transnistrian Region (estimated at approx. 350,000 persons, including several national minorities; with an additional 250,000 persons originating from the Transnistrian Region who are estimated to be residing abroad).⁷ IOM operates through implementing partners in this region in close coordination with the UN Country Team (UNCT) and in line with guidance developed by UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNDPPA).

Transparency International ranks the Republic of Moldova 105 out of 180 on the **Corruption Perceptions Index**⁸, calling corruption an endemic and systemic issue in the country. The current Government was elected in July 2021 with significant support from the diaspora (14% of all votes). The Government is in the process of adjusting its national legislation to the adopted international commitments, including under the GCM. Legislative harmonization is

⁶ Usual resident population Republic of Moldova, as of January by Years, Areas and Sex (2022), available at <https://statbank.statistica.md/>

⁷ IOM Extended Migration Profile of the Transnistrian Region (2017), available at https://moldova.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11626/files/documents/Extended%20Migration%20Profile%20of%20Transnistria_2.pdf

⁸ Moldova Transparency International, 2021, available at <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/moldova>; Overview of corruption and anti-corruption in the Eastern Partnership countries, including Moldova (2020), available at <https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/helpdesk>

ongoing and is in great part sustained by the Republic of Moldova's commitment to the EU accession process.

With approximately 1.16 million Moldovans living abroad (data from 2020)⁹, **outward migration** has for many years been one of the most pressing socioeconomical issues for the country.

The limited opportunities for (well-paid) jobs and career development, and the mismatches between the educational possibilities in the Republic of Moldova on the one hand and the actual demand for skills on the labour market on the other hand, have led to a high propensity of young Moldovans to move abroad. In the last four years, the share of Moldovan migrants aged 18-29 years increased from 55 per cent to 66 per cent. A total of 15 per cent of migrants are university graduates and 37 per cent are graduates of mid-level professional education¹⁰. The limited available labour forces have challenged the country's potential for economic development, and the resilience of the existing health and social protection system. As a result, the Republic of Moldova's Human Capital Index (HCI)¹¹ in 2020 was 0.58, i.e., lower than the average for Europe and Central Asia region, while in 2022 the Republic of Moldova ranks as one of the lowest in the region (86th place, at 56.5)¹² on the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Index as it relates to retention of talent.

Remittances stood at USD 1.74 billion in 2022 (approximately 16 per cent of GDP)¹³ versus Foreign Direct investments (FDI) of USD 161 million and Official Development Aid (ODA) – USD 129 million, being a major source of income for migrants' households and for the national economy. At the macroeconomic level, the high emigration rate has led to a dependency on remittances to sustain consumption driven economic growth. Citizens living abroad have temporary or permanent residential status in over thirty countries including Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Germany, Ireland, United Kingdom, Poland, Russian Federation, and Israel.

While many members of the more than one-million-strong diaspora are well integrated abroad, they yearn to re-connect with the homeland and to contribute to its prosperity with skills and resources. The Republic of Moldova's diaspora engagement at institutional, policy and coordination framework and programming remain mostly of declarative nature, with limited impact on valorising the diaspora's material resources, skills, networks, and partnerships for the country's development. The current framework remains largely sub-optimal for meeting the Government's ambition for managing a complex and multi-dimensional dialogue and engagement of diaspora in the country's development. In recent years, the diaspora played a crucial role in the presidential and parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova as vector of change. Through the overwhelming vote of the diaspora for the pro-EU political parties and leaders, they have been supporting the country's course of reform towards EU accession. The democratic role of the diaspora is expected to grow further, as emigration trends do not decrease.

⁹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2020) International Migrant Stock 2020, available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>

¹⁰ BMA, Extended Migration Profile of the Republic of Moldova (2018), available at http://bma.gov.md/sites/default/files/media/ra_pme_2014-2018_0.pdf

¹¹ Moldova Human Capital Index (2020), available at https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/hci/HCI_2pager_MDA.pdf

¹² Moldova Competitiveness Rank (2022), available at <https://tradingeconomics.com/moldova/competitiveness-rank>

¹³ National Bank of Moldova (2022), available at <http://www.bnm.md/bdi/pages/reports/dbp/DBP14.xhtmlhttp://www.bnm.md/bdi/pages/reports/dbp/DBP14.xhtmlMoldova%20December%202022%20Update-%20En.pdf>



IOM staff members conduct DTM surveys to recent Ukrainian refugee arrivals at Palanca, Republic of Moldova.
© IOM/Muse Mohammed 2022

The Republic of Moldova remains a country of origin – and to a lesser extent a country of transit and destination – for victims of trafficking in persons (TiP). Over the past two decades, there have been notable developments in the anti-trafficking movement in the Republic of Moldova, especially considering the prioritization of prevention, protection of victims, prosecution of perpetrators and partnerships in the fight against TiP. According to the U.S. Department of State’s TiP report for 2022¹⁴, the significant efforts made by the Government over the past years, still lack certain minimum standards in key areas, such as: identification of victims, state-funded long-term assistance to victims, high turnover of investigation and prosecution actors; lack of awareness among vulnerable populations and inadequate information of victims of trafficking regarding the available services and support, insufficient asset seizure and recovery; lack of trainings for prosecutors, judges, and police on victim-centred investigations and prosecution, especially in the view of emerging threats brought by online platforms used to recruit and exploit victims.

Furthermore, **climate change** is impacting the lives and livelihoods of people in the Republic of Moldova and is projected to increasingly do so in the future. People are already experiencing the impacts of climate change with more frequent droughts, heavy rains and flooding, and other severe weather events. Agriculture employs almost one-third of the country’s population and is an important source of livelihoods in rural regions. The high dependency on agriculture and the relatively low level of socioeconomic development makes the country extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Due to limited capacities and resources, migration remains at the fringe of the climate change policies and programming in the Republic of Moldova.

The **COVID-19 pandemic** and the related restrictions in place from March 2020 to March 2022 put additional strain on the economic and social welfare of the country.

In beginning of 2022 (prior to the war in Ukraine and the ensuing inflow of displaced population), the total number of immigrants (including stateless persons) residing in the Republic of Moldova on a temporary/permanent status stood at 21,830 persons¹⁵, representing 0.5 per

¹⁴ U.S. Department of State’s TiP report (2022), available at <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/>

¹⁵ Extended Migration Profile Moldova (2021), available at http://bma.gov.md/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/atasamente/comunicate/compendiul_statistic_pentru_perioada_2018-2020_editia_2021.pdf

cent of the total population. Efficient valorisation of immigrants' contribution can add to the Republic of Moldova's development, given the increasing number of foreigners settling in the country, and their engagement in business and the labour market; the Republic of Moldova's education and research sector could benefit from attracting more international students.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022 has triggered the largest human mobility crisis the European continent has experienced since World War II. The continuous escalation of conflict has internally displaced 5.4 million people inside Ukraine and forced close to eight million people to flee the country¹⁶, with the majority seeking refuge and protection in Ukraine's closest neighbouring countries. Approximately 740,000 refugees and Third Country Nationals (TCNs) entered from Ukraine into the Republic of Moldova¹⁷, ten per cent of whom are TCNs, as of December 2022. Close to 90,000 people remained in the country¹⁸. The influx of people fleeing Ukraine brought an unprecedented human mobility emergency for the Republic of Moldova, whose economy was already debilitated by two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of flow dynamics, most of the border crossings were through the Palanca and the Otaci BCPs, which significantly strained the national border management and refugee protection capacities. Most refugees passed through the Republic of Moldova within a short timeframe. Those that have remained did so within urban host communities, in Chisinau and across the regions. There is a possibility of a further influx, depending on the evolution of the war in Ukraine.

Whether the conflict will escalate or resolve, significant cross-border movements of conflict-affected people will continue in both the short- and long-term, posing challenges for the national border management architecture. Furthermore, the proximity of conflict-affected areas will increase the risks of expansion of criminality across borders, as well as the potential influx of small arms and ammunition.

Beyond the human mobility dimensions of the crisis, the Republic of Moldova is also experiencing significant secondary impacts of the rapidly escalating regional tensions. The coverage of social protection services, including health services, is putting an additional pressure on the economy. In addition, and since the start of the conflict in Ukraine, the remittances of Moldovan migrant workers in the Russian Federation and Ukraine have dropped because of the changed labour migration patterns. As energy prices and inflation have soared, the Republic of Moldova – owing to its near total dependence on the Russian natural gas piped from Transnistria region – is facing a unique combination of national, social cohesion, and economic security risks, with concurrent externally-driven attempts to destabilize the national political landscape, which remains divided along the pro-European and pro-Russian lines. The strain of the situation on the refugees, TCNs, and host communities is becoming greater, magnified by uncertainty and depletion of resources, the winter, and pressures of inflation. The resulting pressure on the public social services and infrastructure, on the labour market and business environment is impacting social cohesion and calls for decisive action to boost local resources and capacities catering for livelihood and social inclusion of both the refugees and local communities. Better and real-time forecasting and analysis are needed, to inform and support targeted strategies, coordination, policies, programs and services.

¹⁶ Data as of January 2023, IOM's Crisis Response Portal, IOM 2023 Appeal for Ukraine and neighbouring Countries, available at <https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11481/files/uploaded-files/IOM%20APPEAL%202023%20%283%29.pdf>

¹⁷ Between 24 February 2022 and 31 December 2022, an estimated 739,680 Ukrainian citizens entered the Republic of Moldova directly from Ukraine (based on Moldovan General Inspectorate of Border Police data (GIBP)).

¹⁸ IOM Moldova Monthly Report for December 2022 available at <https://moldova.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11626/files/documents/IOM%20>

2.2. MIGRATION MANAGEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



IOM team visits Palanca and Otaci BCPs to conduct a humanitarian border needs assessment with integrated protection components. © IOM Moldova

The IOM Country Strategy for the Republic of Moldova was developed to support the Government strategies and policies. Currently, migration is governed in the Republic of Moldova through the following key strategies and policies, closely aligned with the EU accession vision. The overarching guidance and vision are laid out in the **National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030" (NDS)**, adopted in December 2022. The strategy acknowledges the demographic pressure, labour shortage and loss of human capital risks of migration, the unsustainable character of the remittances-driven economic growth consumption-based model, the issue of children and young people left without parental supervision in the country as well as the high dependency ratios and pressure on the social protection system. The NDS prioritises diaspora advocacy and engagement through promoting the transfer of knowledge and skills of the diaspora and migrants, by establishing partnerships between local public authorities, communities, diaspora and home-town associations. It also prioritises effective reintegration of people who returned from abroad and harnessing the potential of the diaspora in terms of skills and qualifications. It prioritises the development of policies, programs and innovative financial instruments for channelling migrants' remittances and savings in financing private and public infrastructure investments. The NDS strategy also prioritizes developing¹⁹ an effective state border management system and ensuring a safe, orderly, and regulated migration process.

At the sectorial level, the main policy document is the **Programme on Managing Migration Flow, Asylum and Integration of Foreigners for 2022-2025 (MAS)**, also adopted in December 2022. The MAS derives from the Internal Affairs Development Strategy for 2022-2030 (IADS), contributing to its implementation in the respective field of activity. The MAS stipulates that the integrated migration management system needs to be underpinned by strong institutions, efficient instruments and clear procedures, risk analysis and management capacities, strengthening of interinstitutional and international cooperation. The MAS aligns with the priorities and objectives of the GCM as well as with the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), promoting international

¹⁹ Global Data Institute Displacement Tracking Matrix <https://dtm.iom.int/republic-of-moldova>

cooperation by defining guiding principles and providing a policy framework. The MAS also aims to achieve the commitments set out in the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the EU. The MAS is aligned with other public policy documents related to the field, such as the **Programme of Integrated Management of the State Border for 2022-2025**. The MAS proposes solutions for a safe, orderly and regulated migration, through informing on the conditions of entry, stay and exit to/from the Republic of Moldova, defining admission and documentation procedures, enhancing the prevention and addressing irregular migration, implementing clear and optimal procedures for providing services to foreigners, through their reengineering and digitization and their provision in electronic format. Another aim is to strengthen the national asylum system and ensure adequate reception conditions, facilitating the integration of foreigners and provision of diversified and improved integration services. Also, the MAS prioritises the strengthening of response capacities for an eventual massive influx of people through the development of an interinstitutional interaction mechanism.

The Republic of Moldova achieved a visa-free regime with the EU in 2014 under the **Visa Liberalisation Action Plan (VLAP)**. In the nine years since it was introduced for Moldovan citizens, visa liberalisation has improved business opportunities, offered wider travel choices and reconnected families. The continued implementation by the Republic of Moldova of the benchmarks set in its VLAP is being assessed through the monitoring of the continuous fulfilment of the visa exemption requirements. The latest report²⁰ from the Commission on the Visa Suspension Mechanism states that the EU Member States reported good overall cooperation with the Republic of Moldova on migration and border management, including readmission. Isolated issues were signalled on the return of TCNs, as well as administrative delays in treating readmission requests by the Republic of Moldova. The report noted that the Republic of Moldova continued efforts to improve border management and migration systems by investing in infrastructure, software and training. The country is also a beneficiary of a cooperation plan between Frontex and the General Inspectorate of Border Police (GIBP). In 2021, the Republic of Moldova became an observer in the European Migration Network. Further efforts advised for the Republic of Moldova refer to the need for aligning the country's visa policy with the EU's list of visa-required third countries, in particular third countries presenting irregular migration or security risks to the EU. The Republic of Moldova was advised by the Commission to continue tailoring information campaigns on the visa-free regime to relevant migrant profiles, including vulnerable groups, those remaining beyond the period for which entry was granted (overstays), and those making unfounded asylum applications.

The Government acknowledged the diaspora's importance and committed itself to be the promotor and defender of all citizens' rights, regardless of their place of residence, as well as to be an enabler of diaspora mobilization. The Government adopted a whole-of-government approach for mainstreaming of diaspora, migration and development into the national policies is a complex process, involving ministries, central public authorities, and institutions. As diaspora was recognised as an important catalyst for the development of the country, the **National Strategy "Diaspora-2025"** is focused on developing the relations with diaspora members, promoting and observing the rights of the citizens of the country, regardless of their place of residence. The Strategy and the Action Plan for its implementation is focused on increasing the cooperation between the Government, local public authorities, civil society in the country, and diaspora, by enhancing and extending the transversal approach to diaspora, migration, and development, as well as by diaspora's engagement and collaboration for the

²⁰ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Fifth Report under the Visa Suspension Mechanism (2022), available at [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0715R\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0715R(01)&from=EN)

development of the Republic of Moldova. The objective of the Strategy is to develop a sustainable and comprehensive framework of collaboration between the state institutions and diaspora, based on trust and joint initiatives, meant to facilitate the options for diaspora's productive return.

The current inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms, promoting the application of the whole-of-government approach to governing migration, comprises two national commissions: ii) Commission for coordination of migration and asylum matters, chaired the Ministry of Internal Affairs; and ii) the Commission for Coordination of Diaspora, Migration and Development (DMD), chaired by the Secretary General of the Government, the secretariat being ensured by the Diaspora Relations Bureau; the respective coordination mechanism also includes a network of focal points from all the central level institutions, responsible for promoting the DMD in policy development, implementation and monitoring; at local level, a network exists in communes, and rayons, driving the implementation of DMD policies.



Over the past fifteen years, the Government of the Republic of Moldova has been making a sustained effort to address the proliferation of migration of people in vulnerable situations and TiP, inter alia, by ratifying key international and European legal instruments, adopting corresponding domestic legislation and policies, and establishing a comprehensive and decentralized multidisciplinary institutional base for combating TiP. In order to coordinate Government's actions on the prevention and combating TiP, the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings²¹, chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration and co-chaired by the Minister of Internal Affairs and Minister of Labour and Social Protection, was established as the main consultative body. Within this framework, the Government of the Republic of Moldova approved a National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the years 2018-2023²², and developed three-year Action Plans for its implementation. The Government will be developing a new policy document to address the needs and gaps based on the recommendations from the GRETA²³ and TiP monitoring reports. The National Referral System for the Protection and Assistance to Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings was replaced in March 2022 with new **Programme on National Referral Mechanism for the Protection and Assistance to Victims of Crime (NRMV)** for 2022-2026. Victims of TiP are considered as one of the vulnerable categories of the population and have become the first category of victims of crime, whose rights have been expressly regulated in the national legislation²⁴.

The crisis in Ukraine has led to the need to develop a range of coordination mechanisms, to govern the crisis impact and ensure an efficient response. The Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) and the Joint Crisis Management Centre (JCMC), regularly gather for high-level meetings, adopting and monitoring implementation of **Regional Refugee Response Plan**

²¹ National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings available at <http://www.antitrafic.gov.md/index.php?l=en>

²² National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2018-2023) <http://www.antitrafic.gov.md/pageview>

²³ Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings <https://coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/greta>

²⁴ Law No. 241/2005 on Prevention and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2005), available at <http://www.antitrafic.gov.md/pageview.php?l=en&idc=118>

(RRP) and its planning process, with the participation of key the Government counterparts, UN agencies, NGOs, International Federation for Red Cross (IFRC) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The RRP is a multi-partner, multi-sector response plan to support the Government-led efforts to respond to the needs of refugees. It provides a platform on which to coordinate the inter-agency response based on a comprehensive plan in alignment with the Government's strategy. The JCMC coordinates the response related to the flow of refugees from Ukraine.

The JCMC works to provide Ukrainian citizens, who are in temporary accommodation centres, with relatives or friends, with short- and medium-term needs – food, clothes, medical assistance, consular services, necessities and others. Also, the JCMC coordinates the processes related to the storage, transportation and distribution of donations and humanitarian aid received both from external partners and from economic agents and individuals will be managed. Whereas the RRP in 2022 focused primarily on the urgent provision of protection services and humanitarian assistance upon arrival, the RRP for 2023²⁵ also places an emphasis on refugees' socio-economic inclusion, in recognition of the challenges faced by refugees as their displacement becomes more protracted. In 2023, particular attention will again be given to the Republic of Moldova, as a non-EU Member State. There, host communities will be included in the target population figures, where the pressures of hosting refugees have particularly strained local capacity and put pressure on scarce resources.

To support the governments of Ukraine and its neighbouring countries in a coherent and integrated way throughout the region, IOM launches appeals that outlines IOM's crisis response plan. For 2023, IOM has launched the **IOM 2023 Appeal for Ukraine and Neighbouring Countries**²⁶, which also includes IOM's contributions to the regional RRP for 2023. IOM's overarching priorities include promoting the dignity, safety and protection of vulnerable conflict affected populations, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), refugees, TCN, and host communities, and ensuring the provision of and access to quality services, leveraging active and growing programming across the Humanitarian Development and Peace Nexus (HDPN). IOM Moldova is engaged in a principled and timely multi-sector response, supporting Government partners and local authorities to respond to the crisis and assisting affected populations, including through early recovery and resilience-building initiatives which enable displaced households to take their first steps toward durable solutions in Ukraine and to access inclusive services and support in the neighbouring countries.

An increasingly important role in governing migration is played by the authorities and other stakeholders at local level (district and rayons' level). Local actors are left with implementing the public policies and programs devised at central level, and often the costs of managing the impact of crises, but also to implement the services, need to be born locally. Hence, it is important to map the local level response, the gaps and capacities, so as to develop and implement support mechanisms.

On the other hand, it is important to assess how the policies' beneficiaries perceive the level of service implemented. To that end, IOM has developed and will deploy to the Republic of Moldova a set of methodological tools to measure the progress of governing migration at local level (Local Migration Governance Indicators (MGI)); their deployment will support the implementation of the area-based approach.

²⁵ The 2023 Regional RRP can be accessed at UNHCR's Operational Data Portal at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/97958>

²⁶ The 2023 Appeal for Ukraine and the neighbouring countries can be accessed at IOM's Crisis Response Portal at <https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1481/files/uploaded-files/IOM%20APPEAL%202023%20%283%29.pdf>.



Donation of equipment for the Customs Service, provided by the Governments of the USA, Japan, and UK, through the IOM © IOM Moldova

3. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The strategic objectives for the Republic of Moldova to be achieved over the next three years, focus on addressing national migration trends and challenges and are in line with broader regional and international development priorities. They are based on IOM's Strategic Vision and its Strategic Results Framework (SRF), IOM Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, and related IOM governance documents, such as the Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF), and the Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF). The strategy draws on international instruments such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) Target 10.7 to “facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies” and the GCM.

This strategy further supports IOM's 2023 Appeal outlining the crisis response plan for Ukraine and neighbouring countries, in line with the Ukraine Regional RRP for 2023 as well as the four outcomes of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Moldova 2023-2027.²⁷ IOM in the Republic of Moldova will work towards achieving the following six key strategic objectives in the country, structured along the four key objectives of the SRF, as detailed in the *Figure 1*.

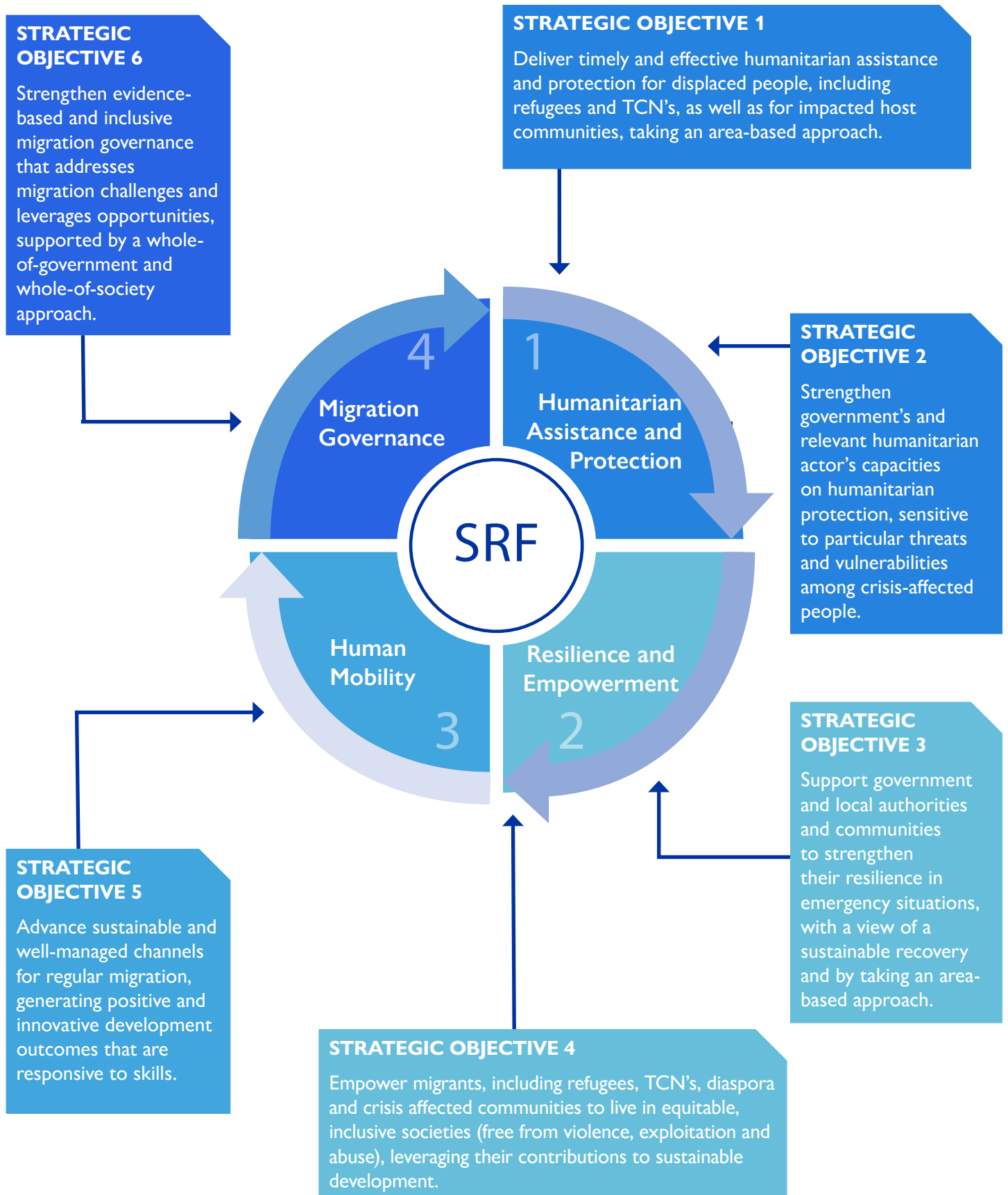
3.1. PROGRAMMATIC PRIORITIES

3.1.1. SRF Objective 1: Humanitarian Assistance and Protection

Over the next three years, IOM will continue to provide humanitarian assistance and protection in response to the current human mobility emergency in the Republic of Moldova, notably including in the Transnistrian Region, while the dignity and rights of people affected by crises, including refugees and TCNs are upheld.

²⁷ The Republic of Moldova - United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023-2027 <https://moldova.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/Brosura%20TIPAR.pdf>

Figure 1. Strategic Priorities (wheel interlaced with country priorities)





STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Deliver timely and effective humanitarian assistance and protection for displaced people, including refugees and TCN's, as well as for impacted host communities, taking an area-based approach.

Over the next three years, IOM will continue to provide humanitarian assistance and protection in response to the current human mobility emergency in the Republic of Moldova, notably including in the Transnistrian Region, while the dignity and rights of people affected by crises, including refugees and TCNs are upheld.

IOM will support crisis-affected populations, including refugees and TCNs, with meeting their basic needs and providing minimum standard living conditions with reduced barriers to access for marginalized and vulnerable individuals. This will be done through – but not limited to – the provision of adequate and equitable reception conditions; transitional shelter and rental support with a view to facilitate self-reliance, privacy, and protection; cash and market-based interventions whenever appropriate; quality health services, including MHPSS; and the facilitation of referrals to targeted services when required.

IOM will provide **movement assistance** according to need, including coordination of arrival assistance. Particularly in response to the Ukraine crisis, IOM is the leading agency facilitating safe, dignified and **free transport on the ground** for displaced persons willing to continue their journey from the Ukrainian-Republic of Moldova's border to Romania and beyond. The ground transportation routes were established at the beginning of March 2022 by IOM to facilitate fast-track transfer assistance based on the principles of safety, non-discrimination, self-determination, participation, confidentiality, and the right to privacy. IOM's humanitarian transport operations are supported by and operated in partnership with the Government of the Republic of Moldova, the Government of Romania, the Moldovan General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (IGSU), and UNHCR. In line with its unwavering commitment to humanitarian assistance, IOM will assume a pivotal role in facilitating and supporting an Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) process for TCNs, who voluntarily choose to return to their countries of origin. Through close collaboration and partnership with relevant stakeholders, IOM will actively engage in implementing AVRR designed to cater to the specific needs and circumstances of TCNs, ensuring that their return is not only voluntary but also conducted in a manner that upholds their safety, security and rights throughout the entire process. By adopting a holistic and rights-based approach, IOM aims to facilitate the smooth transitioning and effective integration of TCNs back into their respective societies, ultimately contributing to their long-term well-being and self-reliance. IOM will further continue organizing according to need, **air transport** and coordination of arrival assistance and reintegration support of refugees and TCNs in receiving or home countries respectively, also as part of the **EU Solidarity Platform** response.

IOM, in collaboration with the Government and the UN system, will provide humanitarian assistance in a manner that actively contributes to immediate and longer-term response and is informed by reliable data and its analysis. Through IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), IOM will ensure the availability of robust data on mobility and displacement within a

crisis, transition and recovery as well as for development setting, disaggregated inter alia by age, sex and disability using appropriate methodologies. IOM will continue to conduct needs, multi-sector and inter-agency assessments, intention surveys and information analyses, in close collaboration with IOM missions throughout the region as well as with government, humanitarian actors and other relevant partners.

IOM will also strengthen local stakeholders' capacities to actively contribute to the immediate and longer-term response planning. By taking an area-based approach, IOM aims to ensure better coordination in IOM programming to maximize synergies, and to strengthen collaboration with local authorities and communities, extending support to them where needed. Priority locations will be selected based on geographical presence of refugees and TCNs, strategic geographical positions on the main migration corridors, socio-economic indicators (e.g., workforce shortages, unemployment, foreign investments, and companies, proximity to national borders), and existing capacities of IOM, local authority, and other partners.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Strengthen government's and relevant humanitarian actor's capacities on humanitarian protection, sensitive to particular threats and vulnerabilities among crisis-affected people.

To ensure that threats and vulnerabilities are reduced or mitigated through humanitarian protection, IOM will support the Government and relevant humanitarian actors with knowledge and data, capacity and tools, to understand the vulnerabilities and evolving needs that are context specific. IOM will strengthen the existing humanitarian protection systems in a way that upholds rights and dignity of crisis-affected populations, including refugees and TCNs, with an eye on gender, age and disability related risks across all sectors of humanitarian response.

In addition, IOM will continue to strengthen the capacity of the immigration and border authorities in protection-sensitive and rights-based humanitarian border management, migration crisis management, including on addressing vulnerabilities and protection needs in crisis affected situations IOM collaborates with national authorities to ensure necessary conditions for securing access to legal identity for non-nationals and improving the technical capacity to utilise biometric information in line with international standards and data protection principles. Through the presence of mobile medical and protection teams, IOM mainstreams protection-sensitive procedures and identification mechanisms of the most vulnerable people, while **raising awareness** of the available medical and protection services for all crisis-affected people, including refugees and TCNs, are entitled to, also in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse, TiP and unaccompanied children.

Lastly, IOM Moldova will ensure quality of its humanitarian programming guided by clear, transparent and consistent standards, that adhere to shared humanitarian principles and supported by IOM Moldova's robust systems which effectively and flexibly support humanitarian operations and cope with operational needs. IOM will continue to co-lead

or actively participate in interagency coordination mechanisms as relevant, including the co-leadership of the Anti-Trafficking Taskforce together with the State Chancellery and other active participation and contributions to the coordination groups under the Refugee Coordination Forum on AAP, PSEA, Disability and Inclusion, Information Management, Health, MHPSS, Accommodation and Transport, Protection, Roma, Livelihoods and Social Cohesion.

3.1.2. SRF Objective 2: Resilience and Empowerment

IOM Moldova supports government and local communities to address and adapt to crises and emergency situations with a view to reduce the impact of mobility risks without compromising long-term prospects for sustainable development, peace and security, and human rights. In doing so, IOM will take an **area-based approach** to ensure the region-specific needs are being addressed, based on geographical and socio-economic indicators and existing capacities and resources, with the aim to reinforce synergies in programming, maximise its impacts and identify concrete avenues for further collaboration with local authorities. IOM will be supporting the development of strategies that address socio-economic inequalities and drivers to migration.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Support government and local authorities and communities to strengthen their resilience in emergency situations, with a view of a sustainable recovery and by taking an area-based approach.

In light of the **ongoing war in Ukraine** and the fluid and uncertain situation in the Republic of Moldova, IOM will continue to work closely with the Government and partners to build capacity to prepare for potential future flows of conflict-affected people. The **preparedness measures** taken up to date include: the establishment of bus stations and facilities at the main BCPs to enable management of large flows; stand-by ground transport capacity which can be mobilized in case of escalation; pre-positioning of Non-Food Items (NFIs) in a warehouse based in the capital; support to the General Inspectorate of Emergency Situations (GIES) in preparing for transit site establishment; and the renovation of identified buildings as stand-by Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs).

To ensure communities affected by crisis or situations of vulnerability **sustainably recover** IOM, in line with the area-based-approach, will promote the engagement of the local community members affected by crisis in the planning and implementation of recovery and resilience programmes. Based on existing primary and secondary data, IOM is preparing community profiles of priority areas to identify strengths and opportunities with local communities and authorities. In addition, IOM is co leading the Peace and Social Cohesion Taskforce, which was established under the UNCT, and brings together local communities and authorities to strengthen social cohesion, particularly considering both the left and right banks of the Nistru River as well as the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia.

Similarly, and in line with the Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change 2021–2030, IOM will work with the Government and communities to prepare for internal- and outward migration a result of slow onset of climate change, in particular as it related to drought and flooding in traditional rural agricultural areas, as well as work to mobilise migrants’ resources for climate change adaptation action.

National security and law enforcement mechanisms are being strengthened to create a safe, secure living environment for affected communities and respond to their needs, with special attention to vulnerable and marginalized groups.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Empower migrants, including refugees, TCN's, diaspora and crisis affected communities to live in equitable, inclusive societies (free from violence, exploitation and abuse), leveraging their contributions to sustainable development.

IOM helps promoting equitable, inclusive societies enabling migrants, including diaspora, displaced persons and communities to access essential services and contribute to sustainable development, including through affordable remittances channels.

Given the Republic of Moldova's large and skilled diaspora, IOM will promote and support their participation in policy processes, including the creation of mechanisms to ensure that eligible mobile populations are able to participate in policy, including electoral processes. Through robust diaspora analysis, IOM will support effective methods for outreach, engagement and organization of diaspora networks within the region promoting short- and medium-term programmes to promote diaspora's agency to participate in policy processes for recovery and development, promoting the Republic of Moldova's socio-economic development, social cohesion and prosperity.

IOM will contribute to the Government and institutional capacities to create greater financial inclusion so that migrant workers and their families are better able to achieve their savings goals and apply their savings towards sustainable livelihood opportunities and greater long-term wellbeing. This will be achieved through improved understanding of the financial habits and interests of migrants and remittance recipients; by developing and supporting products that promote financial inclusion of migrants and remittance recipients as well as by pilot testing a financial inclusion training programme. IOM will continue support national and local authorities to ensure legislative and policy frameworks and programming in healthcare, education, and social protection policies (including portability of social rights and benefits), are inclusive of migrants within and across borders. IOM will partner with UN agencies in support of the Government's social protection systems, with a view to social cohesion, and eventually to social inclusion and the ability of the state to provide for the most vulnerable within its territory, including refugees and other migrant groups, and in particular in view of the implementation of Temporary Protection for Ukrainian refugees in the Republic of Moldova, which is foreseen in 2023.

On health, IOM will continue facilitating and supporting the mainstreaming of migration health in the public health approach of the Ministry of Health in collaboration with WHO and other health partners. IOM will conduct a qualitative study on the main barriers, that impede international migrants' and stateless persons' access to health services. IOM will also support WHO to conduct an assessment to identify gaps and challenges in the primary healthcare sector and cooperate with the Government and relevant health partners to restore and strengthen national and local health systems, including referral mechanisms, where needed to ensure health and psychosocial needs of migrants and displaced persons are being addressed.

In order for all migrants, including displaced persons, returnees and communities impacted by crisis or situations of vulnerability, to recover or establish sustainable livelihoods, IOM will provide tailored technical assistance and strengthen capacities of government, local authorities and communities impacted by crisis or situations of vulnerability to identify, create and match livelihoods opportunities, with particular attention to migrants in vulnerable situations. Host community needs will be addressed through small-scale infrastructure or facilities investments.

IOM provides protection assistance for those vulnerable, or who have been subjected, to **violence, exploitation and abuse, including Gender Based Violence (GBV)**. IOM supports the Government in reducing and mitigating risk factors which increase migrants' vulnerability, including through capacity building and provision of technical support to the Government officials and civil society organizations.

IOM will further contribute to strengthening the core protection infrastructures in the Republic of Moldova to ensure that quality, timely and gender and child sensitive-protection and assistance to marginalized and/or migrants in vulnerable situations, including children and victims of trafficking has been provided.

IOM Moldova has a longstanding programme on **counter trafficking**. With over 60 projects implemented since 2000, targeting the prevention, protection, prosecution of trafficking of persons, IOM remains the most important development partner in this field. It has an extensive network of NGO partners, such as the International Centre "La Strada Moldova"²⁸, as well as independent experts in the Republic of Moldova and neighbouring countries. IOM has also strong relationships with the national authorities at local and national level, such as National Agency for Social Protection (under the Ministry for Labour and Social Protection) and the Centre for Combatting Trafficking in Persons (under of the Ministry of Internal Affairs). Together with the State Chancellery Directorate for Human Rights, IOM co-chairs (with UNHCR) the national Anti-Trafficking Task Force²⁹, focused on ensuring effective reach and targeted impact in a sustainable manner.

Through IOM's Counter Trafficking Programme in the Republic of Moldova, the Centre for Assistance and Protection of victims and potential victims of trafficking (CAP) and the Service for Assistance and Protection male victims of trafficking (SAP) were established and eventually taken over by the Government. Since 2006, IOM is the main Government partner in the development and implementation of the National Referral System for Assistance and Protection of victims and potential victims of trafficking and training of thousands of specialists to identify and assist (potential) victims of trafficking. IOM will continue to

²⁸ Website accessible at <https://www.lastradainternational.org/https://www.lastradainternational.org/>

²⁹ Terms of Reference (2022) accessible at [Moldova Protection Working Group Task Force on Trafficking in Persons](#)

support the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the National Agency on Social Assistance in implementation of the newly adopted Program on National Referral Mechanism for Assistance of Victims of Crime, especially in relation to adjustment of the normative frameworks and training of specialists at the local level. In addition, IOM will continue to support CAP and SAP beneficiaries with tailored rehabilitation and reintegration assistance to compliment the aid received through state programs. IOM will also sustain national awareness raising campaigns which should be developed according to the identified risks in the country and reach different categories vulnerable to TiP including refugees and TCNs.

International standards in the field of vulnerable or marginalized migrants, including unaccompanied children and victims of trafficking, and assisting the victims will remain the benchmark for IOM engagement in this field, contributing to enhancing the rule of law and applying a victim-centred and human rights-based approach. IOM abides by the non-discrimination principle and ensures that adults and children of all genders have equal access to assistance and protection programmes.

In order for private entities to respect migrant workers' rights and actively engage in efforts to prevent exploitation and trafficking, IOM will work on improving recruitment practices of labour migrants in the Republic of Moldova, including on portability of social rights and benefits, and enhancing reporting and mediator mechanisms in cases of exploitative conditions, including by promoting the International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) standards in the Republic of Moldova and capitalizing on the expertise and networking opportunities provided by the IOM's Global Network of Ethical Recruitment.

3.1.3. SRF Objective 3: Human Mobility

To support **sustainable channels for regular migration**, IOM will assist the Government with developing innovative, flexible and inclusive cross-border mobility solutions that addresses the current and future skills needs. IOM will support the development of bilateral and regional labour agreements to increase opportunities for human development in the Republic of Moldova, including based on the new EU's Multi-annual Indicative Program.³⁰



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

Advance sustainable and well-managed channels for regular migration, generating positive and innovative development outcomes that are responsive to skills.

IOM will partner with the EU with a greater focus on reinforcing investment in local skills. IOM will pilot a “Talent Partnership” with the EU which aims to combine support for mobility schemes with capacity building for the most affected labour market sectors such as health, education and governance.

³⁰ EU Multiannual Indicative Programme for Moldova 2021-2027 (2021), available at <https://neighbourhoodenlargement.ec.europa.eu/system>

IOM will continue to **enhance migrants' contributions to sustainable development** processes through skills partnerships and diaspora mapping and engagement, as well as efforts in integration and social cohesion. Particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the mobility programming of IOM will be crucial.

To **strengthen well-managed migration flows and cross-border mobility**, IOM will strengthen the national border management authorities' capacities to develop and implement inclusive (non-discriminatory, gender-responsive and child-sensitive) immigration and border management policies, in line with international standards while corresponding to national priorities and emergent trends. This will include technical assistance to implement relevant sections of the National Development Strategy (NDS 2030)³¹, the Concept of the Integrated State Border Management Program for the years 2022-2025³², and the new program for the management of the migration flows, asylum and integration of foreigners for the years 2022-2025.

IOM will also work with Government, so they are able to better prevent and counter TiP, smuggling of migrants and related transnational organised crimes at all levels in line with the Palermo Protocol. This will be done through enhancing the capacities of relevant authorities, including the Prosecutor's Office for Combatting Organized Crime and Special Cases (PCCOCS), to detect, investigate, and prosecute TiP, smuggling of migrants and related transnational organised crimes; supporting the operationalisation of the National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Crime and the strengthen the available services; strengthening protection measures for unaccompanied and separated children in coordination with relevant partners; contribute to awareness raising and risk assessments initiatives on trafficking in cooperation with the relevant authorities.

To inform mobility management systems, procedures, decisions and policies, IOM will support the Government of the Republic of Moldova as well as development, and humanitarian actors with responsibly collecting, analysing and using data on mobility patterns and intentions of Moldovans, disaggregated inter alia by age and sex in line with international standards and IOM data protection principles.

3.1.4. SRF Objective 4: Migration Governance



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6

Strengthen evidence-based and inclusive migration governance that addresses migration challenges and leverages opportunities, supported by a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

³¹ National Development Strategy (2018), available (Romanian) at <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/mol191490.pdf>

³² Concept of the Integrated State Border Management Program for the years 2022-2025 (2022), available at [220512-5983a2-sti-damep-solici...627cbfa04b259 \(3\).pdf](https://www.refugees.org/220512-5983a2-sti-damep-solici...627cbfa04b259%20(3).pdf)

IOM is an important partner for the Government of the Republic of Moldova, be it in terms of delivering services, developing government capacity, or supporting the development and implementation of national migration strategies in the region.

IOM will invest in strengthening its evidence base on migration by improving and investing in the collection, analysis and dissemination to government and relevant partners at local, national, regional and global level of accurate, reliable and comparable data, ensuring that this data fosters research, guides coherent and evidence-based policymaking, programming and well-informed public discourse to counter xenophobia and negative perceptions of migration. This will enable migrants, including diaspora, to benefit from the opportunities of human mobility and contribute to the sustainable development and climate action in the Republic of Moldova, including to sustainable recovery efforts from the Ukraine crisis and COVID-19 pandemic.

IOM aims to support Government of the Republic of Moldova to strengthen policy coherence and coordination by mainstreaming migration into government policies and strategies, especially development strategies at the local, national and regional levels. This will allow governments to leverage migration as an accelerator for the achievement of the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs, as also outlined in the Global Compact for Migration, as well as support the Government in meeting their international obligations and agreements with the EU, particularly in light of the Republic of Moldova's candidacy status for EU accession. IOM Moldova, also in its capacity as co-chair of the UN Network on Migration in the Republic of Moldova, is committed to support government in mainstreaming migration related policies and strategic decision-making across development, humanitarian and HDPN agendas. As migration is well mainstreamed in the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the Republic of Moldova 2023-2027, IOM will be an important contributor to its implementation.

IOM supported the implementation of three editions of MGI at central level, which served to inform strategic and policy-making, providing a framework of benchmarks to guide further reforms in the migration-management area; a concrete result is the developed GCM-aligned Programme on Managing Migration Flow, Asylum and Integration of Foreigners for 2022-2025 and the National Program for the Reintegration of Returning Migrants 2023-2025; MGI will provide a further guidance and backdrop for further implementation of the respective strategies. IOM is working to expand the MGI at local level, in two communities, to assess the implementation of migration policies at local level, the capacities, needs and gaps, to inform further policy and programming reforms, as well the implementation of the area-based approach.

IOM is promoting the vision and supporting the national capacities for a whole-of-government approach in governing migration, for valorising migrations' benefits and addressing the costs. Further efforts will be put into operationalising the migration mainstreaming mechanism and expanding it to the local level.

Throughout its work, IOM ensures a whole-of-society approach, strengthening partnerships with governments, UN agencies, international organizations, inter-state consultation mechanisms on migration, academia, non-governmental bodies, the private sector, migrant civil society and other stakeholders.

3.2. CROSSCUTTING THEMES AND APPROACHES



Training for humanitarian staff in the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.
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The overall socioeconomic and political context in the Republic of Moldova and the specific conditions in which migration and displacement are taking place, prompt the mainstreaming of cross-cutting themes and approaches in all mission's programmes and interventions.

- **Area-based-approach:** IOM applies an area-based approach to ensure integrated programming and strengthened partnerships at local level, while maximizing the impact of resources and activities. This approach enables IOM to bridge on the one hand the preparedness and flexibility measures that are responding to the evolution of crisis and emergency situations, with on the other hand sustainable recovery and institutional strengthening of the Government and communities.
- **HDPN:** IOM – like all donors and UN agencies - adheres to the OECD-DAC Recommendations on the HDPN. IOM will continue conducting joint assessments and risk analyses, to reach the most vulnerable populations, and to ensure a multi-dimensional understanding of each crisis' context. The HDPN approach will enable IOM to align its humanitarian action with the 'Do No Harm' principle and contributes to strengthening local capacities to achieve durable solutions and the SDGs.
- **Accountability to Affected Population (AAP):** IOM works for and is accountable to the people we serve, seeking to involve and empower the communities we work with. IOM will put in place a single call centre for complaints, feedback, requests for assistance and referrals.
- **Gender mainstreaming:** IOM recognized that a person's sex, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation shape every stage of their migration experience, risks, vulnerabilities, and needs. Gender-specific migration trends and ways in which gender affects the types of migration are considered in programme and project design and implementation according to the IOM Gender Marker methodology to successfully address the specific needs and capacities of all IOM beneficiaries. Examples of mainstreaming gender include advocating for equal rights and access to services, combatting discriminatory migration practices, responding to how gender influences economic growth, capacities, risks, and vulnerabilities, strengthening the programming to address gender-based violence, ensuring diversity and inclusiveness in consultations and participation in activities, etc.

- **Disability inclusion:** IOM champions in mainstreaming disability in service delivery for people with disabilities, through partnerships with local Organisations for People with Disabilities (OPDs). The NGO “Motivatie” provides technical support for IOM’s programs, and in collaboration with the European Disability Forum (EDF), IOM is supporting four local OPDs to collaborate in the response. IOM also supports the secretariat of the Disability Taskforce for the refugee response.
- **Prevention of and response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (PSEAH):** IOM has a policy of zero tolerance of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH) by IOM staff members and its partners and service providers and are not only serious misconduct but can be violations of human rights. IOM recognizes that incident SH in the workplace and SEA against beneficiaries are forms of sexual violence driven by gender inequality and imbalances of power. IOM is committed to addressing SEA and SH through effective prevention, risk mitigation, and response measures at all stages of programming across all types of interventions and within all IOM offices worldwide. IOM Moldova has a PSEA officer in place, reporting directly to the Chief of Mission to ensure that IOM’s commitments and obligations are operationalized, and rolls out regular PSEA trainings to all staff and partners on IOM’s standards of conduct and PSEA and ensures that PSEA key messages/information, communication and education materials are continuously shared with IOM personnel, partners, beneficiaries and communities. Moreover, IOM Moldova mission is an active member at the UNCT PSEAH Task Force and at the Inter-agency PSEA Network Task Force.
- **Protection mainstreaming:** All activities of IOM before, during, and after the crisis will ensure that service delivery preserves the dignity of individuals and communities and minimizes any harmful or unintended negative impact. All assistance and services will be provided responding to the need and accessible without discrimination. Individualized approaches are applied to victims of TiP, survivors of GBV, and migrants in vulnerable situations. Best interests of the child are paramount in all interventions concerning children.
- **Climate change:** As the Republic of Moldova is one of the European countries most impacted by climate change, IOM Moldova will assess the migration, environment, and climate change nexus to inform the mainstreaming of migration into climate change adaptation, so as to reduce specific vulnerabilities and valorise migrants’ resources for climate change adaptation and local green development.
- **Youth empowerment:** IOM will empower youth and support enabling policies programmes and partnerships which will bring multiple benefits to the Republic of Moldova including skills circulation, cross-border academic partnerships, flow of innovation to public and private sector.
- **Localisation:** IOM champions localization, working under and supporting the leadership of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, and working through local partners who are members of their communities and leading local response.
- **Due diligence:** IOM will ensure adherence to IOM’s core principles of integrity, transparency and accountability as well as to internationally recognized principles of human rights, labour rights, the environment and anti-corruption when partnering with private sector, and alignment with the Guidelines on Cooperation between the UN and the Business

3.3. PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION



IOM Moldova Chief of Mission Lars Johan Lönnback signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Republic of Moldova Ministry of Health in the context of IOM health activities. © IOM Moldova

IOM collaborates closely with the people and communities we serve, with the Government of the Republic of Moldova, with UN, NGOs and civil society partners, diaspora groups, and other stakeholders. IOM adopts a whole-of-government approach, working closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs (including GIBP and the General Inspectorate for Migration), Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (including National Agency on Social Assistance), General Prosecutors' Office and the Government's Single Crisis Cell for the refugee response.

Even before becoming a related agency of the UN in 2016, IOM was a member of the UNCT in the Republic of Moldova and it contributed to the development of the then UN Development Assistance Framework for the Republic of Moldova. IOM became a core member of the UNCT, and as well as in the Refugee Coordination Forum and its Sector Working Groups. IOM co-chairs the Counter-Trafficking Taskforce, alongside the Government's Secretariat of the Committee on Combatting Trafficking and UNHCR and supports the secretariat of the Disability Taskforce under the Protection Working Group. IOM co-chairs with UNDP the Peace and Development Taskforce, under the UNCT and the UN Network on Migration (UNMN)³³ established to strengthen the UNCT in supporting the Government in the implementation, follow-up and review of the GCM.

IOM's Strategy is in line with Government of the Republic of Moldova's frameworks and priorities. IOM's programming contributes to the 2030 Agenda and all the UN SDGs, and particularly to SDG Target 10.7, to "*facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people.*" IOM is an important contributor to the four pillars under the UNSDCF 2023-2027. Three indicators at outcome level and two at output level are disaggregated by migration status; nine specific indicators on migration at output level were included in all of the four outcomes; 41 sub-outputs on migration were included in the Results Matrix of the UNSDCF, driven by IOM and its partner UN agencies.

³³ UN Migration Task Force was renamed to UN Network on Migration, Terms of Reference (2019), available at https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/g/files/tmzbd416/files/docs/moldova_-_un_migration_task_force_tor.pdf



IOM Moldova staff answer questions related to IOM services, live on Telegram. © IOM Moldova

4. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND DATA

With the continued growth of IOM on the global and national level, its entry into the UN system and its role in global strategic frameworks, continuously addressing data and knowledge management is more urgent than ever. IOM Moldova commits to building a knowledge management and knowledge-sharing culture across the country mission, including all staff, consultant and interns. IOM Moldova will contribute to knowledge management tools and practices, such as online platforms, repositories, expert networks/communities of practice, peer-assist tools, newsletters, meetings, webinars, etc. to ensure good practices and lessons learned are well documented.

IOM Moldova, in line with the IOM Migration Data Strategy, will invest in strengthening its evidence base on migration by improving and investing in the collection, analysis and dissemination of accurate, reliable and comparable data, ensuring that this data fosters research, guides coherent and evidence-based policymaking and well-informed public discourse, and allows for effective results-based monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of commitments over time.

4.2. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

As a key component of both results-based management and knowledge management, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) helps IOM to understand, learn from and communicate in evidence-based ways about achievements and shortcomings of interventions, thereby promoting continuous improvements, as well as accountability to donors and beneficiaries. IOM Moldova will invest in improving knowledge, skills and practices in line with norms and standards in monitoring and evaluation, to enable more robust assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, impact and sustainability of its projects, programmes, strategies and policies.

IOM will further valorise the M&E framework for assessing the progress of mainstreaming migration into the national and sectoral development strategies and policies which the Government developed with IOM's support.

4.3. COMMUNICATIONS AND VISIBILITY

IOM will continuously advance targeted and consistent communication with the Government of the Republic of Moldova, UN Agencies, donors, and other non-governmental stakeholders, including migrants and diaspora, and promote IOM's visibility and institutional identity.

IOM Moldova has developed a Communications and Visibility Strategy 2023 in the framework of the Ukraine response and IOM's ongoing work. The Strategy is in line with the UNSDG's Guidelines for Communications Advocacy Strategy for Cooperation Framework, the UN Moldova Communication and Advocacy Strategy 2023-2027, and the joint communication plan with IOM Romania. The Strategy aims at i.a. improving the quality of content production and dissemination contributing to an evidence-based and well-informed public discourse on migration; strengthening the use of media and communications resources and products to accomplish programmes and projects' objectives. The mission will be developing annual workplans.

4.4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

To ensure effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, impact and sustainability of its programming, IOM Moldova will continue investing in the capacity of its staff in line with IOM policies and guidance as well as norms and standards and ethical guidelines for monitoring and evaluation. Capacity building trainings will be implemented in close cooperation with the Regional Office.



Activism campaign against Gender-Based Violence supported by IOM Moldova staff. © IOM Moldova



Children from Ukrainian, Roma and Moldovan families enjoy the new playground in Congaz, ATU Gaguzia. © IOM Moldova

5. THE WAY FORWARD

The IOM country strategy for the Republic of Moldova covers the period of three years from 2023 through 2025. The mission will support the Government in responding to the current migration dynamics, addressing the acute challenges while leveraging the emerging opportunities.

The strategy lays out a roadmap for ongoing humanitarian assistance and preparedness measures to flexibly respond to the evolution of hostilities in Ukraine (and its impact on the country), towards resilience and empowerment of migrants, including refugees and TCN, and local communities with a pathway to sustainable recovery and institutional strengthening in the Republic of Moldova. The strategy is organized along the four core pillars of the Strategic Results Framework (SRF), with a strong focus on Humanitarian Assistance and Protection, and Resilience and Empowerment for the next three years. The core pillars are underpinned by six strategic priorities at the programmatic level.

By the end of 2025, IOM Moldova will have:

1. Delivered timely and effective humanitarian assistance and protection for displaced people, including refugees and TCNs, as well as for impacted host communities, taking an area-based approach.
2. Strengthened government's and relevant humanitarian actors' capacities on humanitarian protection, sensitive to particular threats and vulnerabilities among crisis-affected people.
3. Supported government and local authorities and communities to strengthen their resilience in emergency situations, with a view of a sustainable recovery and by taking an area-based approach.

4. Empowered migrants, including refugees, TCNs, diaspora and crisis-affected communities to live in equitable, inclusive societies (free from violence, exploitation and abuse), leveraging their contributions to sustainable development.
5. Advanced sustainable and well-managed channels for regular migration, generating positive and innovative development outcomes that are responsive to skill shortages.
6. Strengthened evidence-based and inclusive migration governance that addresses migration challenges and leverages opportunities, supported by a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

The realization of identified strategic priorities rests on a set of crosscutting themes and mission-critical approaches, including the area-based approach, AAP, protection mainstreaming, including PSEAH, gender, disability, climate change mainstreaming amongst other.

IOM Moldova will strongly cooperate with the governmental partners, UN partners, other international organizations, civil society organizations, Diaspora organizations, private sector, academia and others to achieve the above outlined strategical priorities that are aligned with the country's priorities. The support by donors is a key element for implementation of the strategy. Coordination and liaison with the partners from the donor community, governmental partners, CSOs, migrants, UN and other international organizations will be maintained for the implementation, adjustment and monitoring of the progress towards the strategic priorities.



Handover of ambulances and medical equipment to the National Centre for Pre-hospital Emergency Medical Assistance. © IOM Moldova



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