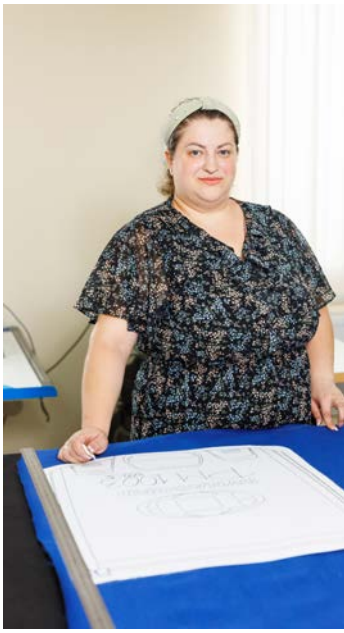
International Labour Organization

DECENT WORK COUNTRY PROGRAMME 2025–2027

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA





ILO Office for Central and Eastern Europe

DECENT WORK COUNTRY PROGRAMME 2025–2027

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

2025

CONTENTS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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFAM	Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Moldova
ALMP	Active labour market policy
CNPM	National Confederation of Employers of the Republic of Moldova
CNSM	National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova
CPD	Partnership for Development Centre
CPOs	Country Programme Objectives
CRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CVET	Continuous Vocational Education and Training
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
EODS	Eurostat standards
ESAW	Eurostat standards
EU	European Union
ILS	International Labour Standards
LEPs	Local Employment Partnerships
LLL	Lifelong learning
LMP	Labour market policy
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
MSMEs	Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises
NCCCB	National Commission for Consultations and Collective Bargaining
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NEA	National Employment Agency
NEET	Not in Employment, Education, or Training
NP	National Programme
ODA	Organization for Entrepreneurship Development
OSH	Occupational safety and health
PES	Public Employment Service
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLI	State Labour Inspectorate
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SSE	Social and Solidarity Economy
STEM	Science, Technology and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UDW	Undeclared work
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
V&H	Violence and harassment
VET	Vocational Education and Training

1 SUMMARY

Why is a Decent Work Country Programme needed?

Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) are the main planning framework for delivery of International Labour Organization (ILO) support to member countries. They outline a medium-term plan that guides the work of the ILO in a country in accordance with priorities and objectives agreed upon with employers' organizations, governments and trade unions.

How was the programme developed?

The new DWCP for Moldova is a result of tripartite consultations on ILO support in Moldova for the period 2025–27. The draft programme was developed and validated through a workshop with ILO constituents in October 2024. The new DWCP supports national development priorities as informed by the National Development Strategy Moldova 2030[1] and contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Moldova (2023–2027), especially Outcome 3 (By 2027, all people of Moldova, especially the most vulnerable, benefit from inclusive, competitive and sustainable economic development and equal access to decent work and productive employment).[2]

What are the challenges to work on?

Key labour market challenges encompass demographic shifts with a decreasing population (low natality rates, longer life expectancy and significant emigration), a high poverty rate with significant income inequality, employment in the informal economy (concentrated in rural areas) and low labour force participation, particularly among women and youth. Yet youth unemployment is increasing, and the overall labour underutilization rate (combining underemployment, unemployment and potential labour force) shows substantial rises. The limited coverage of the public insurance social security system remains a key challenge to prevent poverty and afford adequate social protection. A reactive rather than proactive social dialogue fails to address these pressing issues.

Objectives of the programme

The DWCP seeks to help Moldova to address these challenges. Three priorities were identified by the tripartite constituents for the 2025–2027 programme, with ten expected outcomes:

Priority	Outcomes
1. Strengthening social dialogue at all levels	1.1 Labour legislation is in line with International Labour Standards and related EU *acquis*
	1.2 Social partners strengthened to engage in social dialogue and inform policymaking
	1.3 Improved social dialogue and collective bargaining
2. Enhancing labour and social protection of workers	2.1 Stronger and sustainable social security system
	2.2 Safe and healthy working environment for all promoted
	2.3 Enhanced capacity to tackle undeclared work (UDW)

Priority	Outcomes
3. Strengthening employment, skills and enterprise development policies	3.1 Effective labour market activation strategies implemented at national and local level
	3.2 Enhanced knowledge for labour migration management
	3.3 Better frameworks, conditions and skills for productivity growth and Just Transition
	3.4 Enabling environment in place for women's participation in the labour market and sustainable enterprise development

The programme builds on the findings and lessons learned from a review of the Decent Work Country Programme 2021–2024. This new DWCP focuses on promoting decent work in Moldova and the ILO Decent Work Agenda and helping Moldova align its social protection and labour market policies with European Union standards.


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2 COUNTRY CONTEXT: DIAGNOSTIC AND SITUATION ANALYSIS[3]

2.1 Country development context

The Republic of Moldova faces deep socio-economic challenges marked by demographic shifts, migration trends and systemic structural weaknesses. The country is experiencing a period of slow economic recovery after multiple overlapping crises, including inflationary pressures, severe droughts and energy shocks, sluggish domestic and external demand, and war in neighbouring Ukraine. Its population has been declining steadily, decreasing from 2.83 million individuals in 2016 to 2.42 million individuals in 2024, accompanied by the aging of its population. These forces, along with migration, accelerate Moldova's population decrease and result in a shrinking labour force, creating gaps in both high-skill and low-skill sectors. Birth rates have plummeted, with only 24,030 live births in 2023 (compared to 40,550 in 2015), while emigration continues to exacerbate labour shortages.

Economic growth has been volatile, hindered by weak domestic demand and external market challenges. GDP growth recovered by only 0.1 per cent in 2024 after periods of contraction during the pandemic and subsequent crises. Moldova's GDP per capita remains significantly lower than regional peers, and wage convergence is limited. The GDP per capita was 29 per cent of the EU average in 2023, indicating a significant socio-economic convergence gap with the EU.

The poverty rate remained high due to inflationary pressures, which have eroded real incomes and household consumption. The rural-urban divide further underscores economic disparities, with rural areas experiencing higher poverty, lower employment opportunities, and limited access to services.

2.2 Main trends in labour market and social policies

High levels of informality and gender gap in labour force participation

Over the past five years, the Republic of Moldova's labour market has experienced significant challenges in the context of demographic changes, the COVID–19 pandemic, and slow economic growth. These factors have exacerbated structural issues such as informal employment and low labour force participation. At the same time, Moldova has been proactive in introducing reforms in social protection and labour market policies, with a focus on aligning with European Union standards.

Informal employment affects a large portion of Moldova's workforce, particularly in agriculture and construction. Informality hinders workers' access to social protections and depresses wage levels. In 2023,

approximately 203,600 workers were informally employed, representing a 7 per cent increase from the prior year.

In addition to the prevalence of informal employment, irregular employment practices, such as "envelope wages", remain widespread. These practices persist despite government efforts to formalize the economy, which has made it difficult to accurately assess the true employment situation. The causes of informality in Moldova include a combination of economic, institutional and social factors. One major cause is weak enforcement of labour laws and regulatory compliance, which creates an environment where informality can flourish without significant penalties. Low wages and limited job opportunities in the formal sector also drive workers towards informal employment, where they might find more flexible, albeit less secure, income sources. Further, the prevalence of family-run agricultural work, often operating outside formal frameworks, exacerbates the issue of informality in Moldova.

The activity rate in Moldova remains very low, particularly among women and youth, although it increased from 40.3 per cent in 2020 to 45.1 per cent in 2023, following recovery after the pandemic-induced decline. Urban areas have higher activity rates compared to rural areas, but rural areas saw a significant improvement in 2023 attributed to better targeted active labour market programmes, efforts to reduce informal employment and the reform of Social Benefits (Ajutorul Social).

Gender disparities in terms of activity rate persist (8.1 per cent in 2023), with women participating less in the workforce due to traditional gender roles and greater unpaid caregiving responsibilities. Based on recent ILO research, the share of women outside of the labour force due to care responsibilities was 20.3 per cent in 2023, compared to 0.8 per cent for men. The lack of accessible and affordable childcare services also hinders women's full participation in the workforce.

The activity rate of people with disabilities in Moldova has shown a positive trend over the last two years, increasing from 14.1 per cent in 2021 to 17.0 per cent in 2023, and the employment for this group increased from 13.5 per cent in 2021 to 15.8 per cent in 2023. This upward trend may be attributed to targeted employment policies and programmes aimed at improving access to the labour market for persons with disabilities.

The employment rate followed a post-COVID recovery trend, rising from 38.8 per cent in 2020 to 43.1 per cent in 2023 (47.1 per cent vs. 39.7 per cent for women) with a narrowing gender employment gap.

Rising unemployment and underemployment

The unemployment rate rose from 3.1 per cent in 2022 to 4.6 per cent in 2023, with underemployment also increasing, particularly in rural areas. The unemployment rate, however, does not fully capture the overall condition of the labour market due to several structural factors, the significant size of Moldova's informal economy being one of them.

Underemployment further undermines the relevance of the unemployment rate. Many workers, especially in rural areas, are underemployed, meaning they are employed in jobs that do not fully utilize their skills or provide adequate income. These workers are counted as employed in official statistics, but their employment does not necessarily reflect decent or sufficient work.

The underutilization rate – which combines both underemployment, unemployment and potential labour force – increased significantly to 10.1 per cent in 2023 from 6.7 per cent in 2022. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, the youth underutilization rate for the 15 –24 age group in the last quarter of 2023 was 18.3 per cent, significantly higher than the overall workforce underutilization rate. The youth underutilization rate is also influenced by gender and rural-urban divides, with rural youth and women often experiencing higher rates of underutilization.

Youth unemployment and NEET challenges

Youth unemployment and NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) rates remain critical concerns. In 2023, the unemployment rate among young people aged 15–24 reached 11.5 per cent. In addition to the rise in youth unemployment, there has been a steady decline in the number of employed younger workers, particularly those in the 25–34 age group.

The young NEET population in Moldova remains at a relatively high level, particularly among the 15–34 age group, as more than a quarter of young people in this age group are neither working nor pursuing education or training, reflecting significant challenges in youth engagement with the labour market or educational system. The rate is even higher among women in this group, at 35.2 per cent, compared to 19.3 per cent for men, reflecting gender disparities in labour market and educational participation.

Skills mismatches and workforce gaps

Moldova's labour market is characterized by a significant mismatch between available skills and employer needs. Surveys reveal that 70 per cent of employers find vocational training graduates lacking in practical experience, problem-solving and soft skills. TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) systems have expanded but face challenges in aligning curricula with labour market demands, particularly in emerging sectors like renewable energy or ICT.

Skills mismatches, gaps and obsolescence remain a root cause for low competitiveness, low productivity and unemployment. To address these challenges, Moldova has made significant efforts over the past five years to improve Vocational Education and Training (VET) and lifelong learning, including through the adoption of the "Education 2030" Development Strategy. The measures outlined in this strategy include investments in STEM education, digital skills, work-based learning, a dual VET system, and career guidance. While overall TVET reportedly increased in quality, this has not yet translated into better labour market outcomes, suggesting that skills training is not fully responsive to labour market needs. The TVET system still suffers from significant structural challenges such as curriculum and teacher professional development, insufficient anticipation of skills needs and their translation into standards, underinvestment and efficient resource allocation, as well as a need for better coordination and cooperation with the private sector. The TVET system also needs a stronger orientation towards emerging skills and occupations, due to drivers of change such as the digital transformation and the Green Transition.

Continuous Vocational Education and Training and Lifelong Learning still do not adequately attract and provide for the needs of adult learners. Only about 2 per cent of adults aged 25–64 engage in lifelong learning.

One area of concern is the low level of digital literacy among disadvantaged and rural adults. Opportunities for the validation or recognition of prior learning (RPL) have been expanded, and Moldova currently is seeking to make the first steps towards a system of micro-qualifications. To build a durable lifelong learning system, these efforts need to increase their coverage and outreach to low-skill populations and better connect remedial and continuing learning opportunities.

Sustainable enterprises

As of 2023, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) continue to be the predominant employers in Moldova, accounting for 65.3 per cent of the total workforce. Within the SME sector, micro-enterprises employed 22.5 per cent of workers, while small and medium-sized enterprises contributed 22.7 per cent and 20.1 per cent, respectively. Large enterprises, despite making up only 0.8 per cent of all companies, play an important role in the economy by employing 34.7 per cent of the workforce.

The business environment in Moldova has improved significantly in recent years, but progress remains uneven. The lack of an adequately educated workforce and political instability are reported as the main obstacles for private investment for about 20 per cent of firms in Moldova (2023), a much larger proportion than in other Europe and Central Asia (ECA) countries.

Both low access to finance and the high cost of credit represent major barriers to the development of the private sector, particularly micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The financing gap for MSMEs stands at 14 per cent of GDP, pointing to opportunities for banking and non-banking financial institutions to expand access to finance for MSMEs with adequate regulatory and policy reforms. Cooperatives, a critical part of Moldova's Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), face similar financing challenges. As of 2021, there were approximately 400 cooperatives registered in Moldova, with many focused on agriculture, such as dairy, fruits, and vegetable production. However, these cooperatives often struggle with limited access to credit, hindering their ability to invest in infrastructure and grow their operations.

In Moldova, an estimated 38.5 per cent of registered MSMEs are led or owned by women. Cooperatives play a key role in empowering women entrepreneurs by offering collective support, reducing individual financial risks, and providing shared access to resources and markets. Despite parity in the law, harmful norms hinder women entrepreneurs' ability to access and make effective use of finance. Available data suggest financial institutions reject well-established female businesses at a higher rate than those led by men. Cooperatives led by women provide an inclusive alternative for overcoming these barriers by fostering community-based solutions.

Moreover, financial and non-financial support services to the private sector is weak in Moldova, with limited market intelligence and investment promotion. Cooperatives also could benefit from enhanced services to improve their operational capacity, adopt sustainable practices, and enhance their competitiveness in local and international markets.

Assessments of SME policies in Moldova suggest greater efforts to support entrepreneurial learning, enterprise skills and women's entrepreneurship. Cooperatives, given their collective governance structure, act as a platform for entrepreneurial development and knowledge sharing. Informality of enterprises, including cooperatives, and the provision of incentives for

registration will also be a priority to tackle with the strong involvement of social partners and through the creation of an incentive-based support system that makes it beneficial for enterprises to register.

The shift to greener enterprises, while ensuring a Just Transition based on social dialogue, and the implementation of digitalization will also be priorities that contribute to cleaner production processes. This would be undertaken while safeguarding jobs and ensuring that workers have access to reskilling and upskilling training. Cooperatives, which often emphasize sustainability and social impact, are well-positioned to contribute to this this transition by adopting eco-friendly practices and leveraging digital tools for more efficient operations. The application of responsible business conduct at the enterprise level will be a priority to ensure access to markets and various supply chains.

Social security insurance coverage gaps

The social insurance system covers only 43.4 per cent of the population aged 15 and above, with rural residents and women being the most underinsured. Coverage among younger individuals (15–35 years old) is also concerning, standing at just 44.6 per cent, suggesting that many younger workers, particularly in informal sectors, remain outside the social insurance system. Informal workers are generally uninsured, as compulsory social contributions are paid by employers. While voluntary participation is an option, many informal workers are deterred by a lack of awareness or understanding of the available social protection programmes. Additionally, informal workers often face irregular and unpredictable incomes, making it difficult to contribute to public social insurance.

In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has made strides in improving social protection for working parents particularly in terms of maternity and paternity benefits. Furthermore, the country has made significant progress in expanding social protection for children. Universal monthly allowances were introduced for all children under two years old, irrespective of the parents' employment status, and the universal childbirth allowance was significantly increased to 20 000 Moldovan lei in 2024. Although these measures provide additional income to uninsured parents in the first two years after childbirth, informal work continues to exclude many from full social security benefits, with uninsured women and men being disadvantaged in terms of access to maternity, paternity and childcare allowances.

While pensions have seen improvements, disability pensions and allowances for vulnerable groups remain inadequate, often falling below the poverty line. There is a significant disparity in pension benefits, with older pensions often not reflecting the true value of the work performed by retirees during their careers. The gender gap in the pension system persists with women receiving approximately 19 per cent less in total pensions and 16 per cent less in old-age pensions.

One significant area of concern is the social insurance of workers in hazardous occupations. Clearer criteria and potentially lower retirement ages are needed for those in particularly dangerous professions, as the current framework does not adequately account for the risks and physical demands these jobs entail.

Economic migration and labour policies

Migration continues to shape Moldova's labour market, with skilled workers departing and foreign labour increasingly filling the gaps created by emigration, particularly in low-skilled sectors. The number of authorised emigrants from Moldova spiked in 2022 and increased again in 2023, as COVID restrictions were lifted in destination countries. Both men and women contributed to the rise in authorised emigration. Noteworthy, migration to Moldova has been steadily increasing, with the total number of immigrants reaching 7,203 in 2023, marking a 22 per cent rise from the previous year. Moldova has become a destination for workers from diverse countries, with a significant influx from Türkiye and Ukraine. Workers from Bangladesh, India, and Nepal also saw a notable rise in recent years, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, construction, and manufacturing. Moldova has made efforts to simplify administrative processes for work permits, especially for highly skilled workers, although challenges remain regarding the alignment with European Union directives and the recognition of foreign qualifications.

Moldova has signed bilateral labour and social security agreements with 18 countries to protect migrant workers' rights. However, retaining domestic talent remains a priority.

Gender pay gaps and wage disparities

Despite consistent growth in gross monthly wages, reaching 16.9 per cent in 2023, two problems persist in Moldova: a significant gender pay gap and a high incidence of low wages.

Women earn approximately 15.6 per cent less than men, with higher gaps in sectors like ICT (38 per cent) and finance (34.6 per cent) revealing deeply rooted sectoral gender inequalities.

Although minimum wage increases have occurred (from 2,935 Moldovan lei in January 2022 to 5,000 lei by January 2024 – an increase of 70.4 per cent in nominal terms and of 25.6 per cent in real terms), the minimum wage to average wage ratio has remained low, reaching only 36 per cent in 2024. As a result, there is still a very high prevalence of working poor. Moreover, low compliance and wage compression limit the broader economic impact of any minimum wage increase. Efforts to expand collective bargaining coverage are underway to address wage inequality.

Challenges in labour market policy implementation

Although safety regulations in Moldova have been developed in line with international labour standards and related EU *acquis*, workplace accidents continue to have a high incidence rate, with 0.92 victims per 1,000 employees in 2023, up from 0.82 in 2018. Fatal accidents, though gradually decreasing from 0.06 victims per 1,000 employees in 2018 to 0.04 in 2023, remain a concern. Accident data for 2022 revealed a disproportionate ratio of accidents to fatalities (17:1) compared to the EU's (903:1), indicating significant underreporting. Occupational disease reporting is similarly insufficient, with no confirmed cases from 2020 to 2022, highlighting systemic gaps. The underreporting of non-fatal accidents suggests that the actual rates of work-related injuries could be higher than recorded. Sectors like manufacturing and construction continue to have high rates of accidents due to insufficient adherence to safety protocols and inadequate employee training. The prevalence of informal work, particularly in agriculture, exacerbates the lack of adherence to occupational safety and health (OSH) regulations. The new National Programme for Occupational Safety and Health for 2024–2028 addresses these sectors, aiming to reduce workplace accidents and improve health standards.

Tripartite dialogue and collective bargaining stagnant

Peak-level social dialogue in Moldova remains ineffective, and there is limited progress in collective bargaining. However, employers' and workers' organisations recently agreed on a minimum wage for the private sector which is higher than the statutory general minimum wage. The National Commission for Consultations and Collective Bargaining serves as the main platform for tripartite discussions but often struggles to exert significant influence over key policy decisions. Although the commission resumed its regular activities in 2021 and plays an important role in negotiating labour law reforms, its overall effectiveness has been hampered by a growing trend of bypassing traditional tripartite mechanisms in favour of alternative consultative platforms.

Trade union membership has been declining steadily, with union density falling from 60 per cent in 2017 to 45.5 per cent by 2021, and the total number of union members decreasing by 17 per cent in the same period. This decline is paired with limited diversification of trade union activities and a need to increase the relevance of services to union members to spur union membership. There is a need to improve collective bargaining practices, especially at the company level. In 2020, collective bargaining coverage was estimated at around 43 per cent.

Although the membership of National Confederation of Employers of the Republic of Moldova (CNPM) remains stable, it is still relatively low. This is partly because many companies do not fully understand the benefits of collective action, which makes them reluctant to join. The government's growing tendency to hold consultations through alternative platforms, such as the Economic Council to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, rather than through traditional tripartite social dialogue, has further fragmented employer representation. This has weakened the CNPM's position by diminishing its influence in important policy discussions and indirectly hindering its growth.

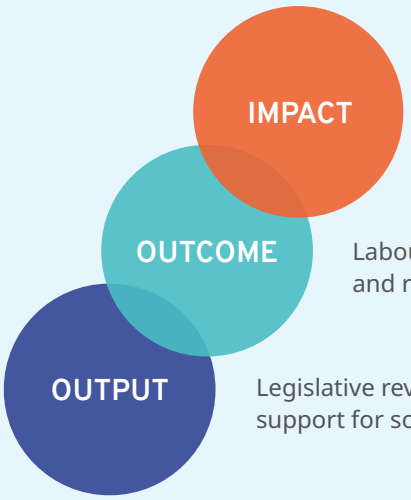
International labour standards

Moldova has ratified a total of 44 ILO conventions, including all ten fundamental conventions, which cover fundamental labour standards related to freedom of association, forced labour, child labour, discrimination, and a safe and healthy working environment. In 2023, Moldova ratified the ILO's Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), which marks a critical first step in addressing work-related violence and gender-related issues, including sexual harassment, in the world of work.

Additionally, Moldova has integrated provisions from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), with the goal of ensuring equal employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Despite these advancements, ILO supervisory bodies have noted ongoing issues related to the full application of labour standards, particularly concerning informal employment and occupational safety and health (OSH). Particularly, it was noted that informality weakens the enforcement of labour rights, exposing many workers to unregulated working conditions, lack of social security, and insufficient workplace protections.

INTERVENTION MODEL



Fair, inclusive and resilient labour market

Labour legislation is in line with International Labour Standards and related EU *acquis*

Legislative review, advisory services for labour law reform, support for social dialogue during the review process

MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE

Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) ratified.

BASELINE — Not ratified.

TARGET — Ratified by 2027.

Legislative reforms reflect relevant International Labour Standards and related. EU *acquis*.

BASELINE **0**

TARGET **2**

Legislative reform processes undertaken in consultation with social partners.

BASELINE **0**

TARGET **2**

3 COUNTRY PRIORITIES AND COUNTRY PROGRAMME OUTCOMES (CPOs)

The choice of priorities for DWCP Moldova 2025–2027 supports both national and global goals (SDGs), including Moldova's preparation for formal EU accession. The latter is seen as a key accelerator for SDG achievement.

Priority 1 Strengthening social dialogue at all levels

Outcome 1.1 *Labour legislation is in line with International Labour Standards and related EU* acquis

The rationale for intervention

ILO supervisory bodies have flagged several issues related to the conformity of Moldova's regulatory framework with those Conventions that require legislative reform. These issues include a regulatory framework governing the exaction of compulsory labour as a means of mobilising and using labour for the development of the national economy; minimum age of employment and the determination of light work; effective protection against acts of anti-union discrimination and interference; barriers to collective bargaining; and status of wage claims in case of enterprise insolvency and the regular payment of wages. In addition, Moldova's labour market challenges (emerging types of employment such as platform work, gender disparities, informality, lack of quality jobs and so on) suggest the current regulatory framework is not fit-for-purpose and modernization is overdue.

The EU accession process will require extensive reforms of labour laws, providing an opportunity for Moldova to prioritize improving conformity with International Labour Standards and related EU *acquis*. In doing so, it must safeguard those reform processes that are undertaken through an inclusive process of tripartite social dialogue involving employers' and workers' organisations and that do not lead to an erosion of the protection of labour rights. The strengthening of compliance and enforcement mechanisms must be part and parcel of any legislative reform process to ensure that rights and responsibilities become a reality for employers and workers, that the labour market provides for decent and productive job opportunities, and that the economy constitutes a level playing field for socially responsible enterprises.

Theory of change

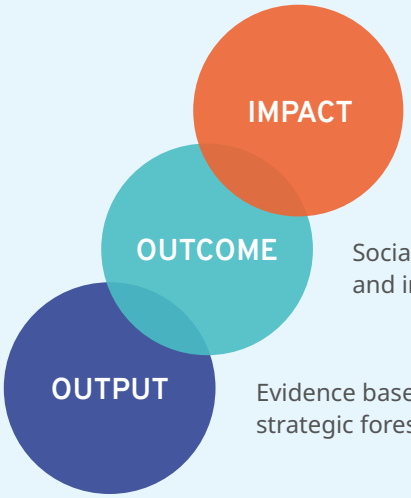
If the constituents undertake, with ILO support, a comprehensive and evidence-based process of legislative reform anchored in a solid process of social dialogue with the aim of harmonising laws with ILS and related EU *acquis*,

...then the regulatory framework will better reflect the rights and interests of workers and employers,

...which will **lead to** a more resilient, fair, and inclusive labour market, better suited to support Moldova's long-term growth and social development goals, including EU accession.

The planned changes will contribute to Moldova's achievement of ILO PB24–25 Strategic Policy Outcome 1 and SDG targets 8.5, 16.3 and 16.7.

INTERVENTION MODEL



Fair economic, employment and social policies

Social partners strengthened to engage in social dialogue and inform policymaking

Evidence based policy position, strategy on services, strategic foresight tool, advocacy and communication strategy

MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE

Number of evidence-based policy proposals that are developed and then discussed in bipartite and/or tripartite negotiations.

BASELINE

CNSM: 2 policy proposals discussed in 2024.
CNPM: 2

TARGET

CNSM: 6 policy proposals developed and discussed by 2027.
CNPM: 3

Innovative, gender-responsive membership and communication strategy developed and implemented.

BASELINE 0

TARGET CNPM: 1

Number of communication campaigns or outreach initiatives conducted by CNPM and CNSM to promote social dialogue and collective action.

BASELINE

CNSM: 1 campaign conducted in 2024.
CNPM: 1

TARGET

CNSM: 3 campaigns conducted by 2027.
CNPM: 3

Outcome 1.2 *Social partners strengthened to engage in social dialogue and inform policy making*

The rationale for intervention

Social partners are a cornerstone of democratic and inclusive governance in Moldova. Both employers' and workers' organizations play an instrumental role in forging consensus on sustainable development pathways. Their efforts have significantly contributed to strengthening Moldova's economy by advocating for policies that foster sustainable enterprises and prioritise a human-centred approach to economic, labour, and social issues. With Moldova acquiring EU candidate status, new opportunities are emerging, and it is essential that social partners play an active role in the process leading up to accession negotiations. To do so, however, they must first address the challenges that hinder their ability to effectively fulfil their mandates.

The National Confederation of Employers of Moldova (CNPM) is the main employer representative in Moldova. Since its establishment, the organisation has made efforts to modernise and increase its membership. However, the limited effectiveness of social dialogue in the country undermines the value of collective action and makes companies hesitant to join. This places limits on the CNPM's growth, diminishing its financial and technical capacity and making it difficult to effectively engage in social dialogue, provide quality services, and advocate for a more enabling business environment. To navigate these challenges, it is crucial that the CNPM continue the process of modernization and revisit its value proposition so as to reinvigorate engagement with existing members, while expanding into new and underrepresented sectors. This will enhance the CNPM's capacity to advocate for evidence-based, data-driven policy reforms that are conducive to enterprise growth, thereby strengthening its position in social dialogue.

The National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova (CNSM) has expressed concerns regarding infringements on workers' rights in Moldova. In relations to social dialogue at the national level, Moldova has potential to further promote democratic governance and participation through good faith negotiations on policies pertaining to labour. Despite challenges, the union has worked to modernize its structure and service delivery to members over the last years. CNSM is also working to increase its impact on policy decision-making through social dialogue.

Through target support CNSM will further strengthen its capacity to engage in social dialogue and inform policymaking through high-quality inputs based on International Labour Standards and the EU *acquis*.

CNSM's support to member organizations and workers on organizational development and communication will be prioritized. CNSM will also continue its work to deliver relevant services for members and potential members, increasing the relevance of the union.

In addition to institutional support under this outcome, both CNPM and CNSM will be fully involved in the other outcomes of the DWCP.

Theory of change

If the social partners, with the support of the ILO, continue modernizing their organisations and implementing membership and communication strategies targeting enterprises and workers in under-represented sectors; **and if** the ILO continues to strengthen employers' and workers' organizations' capacity for evidence-based advocacy and equips them

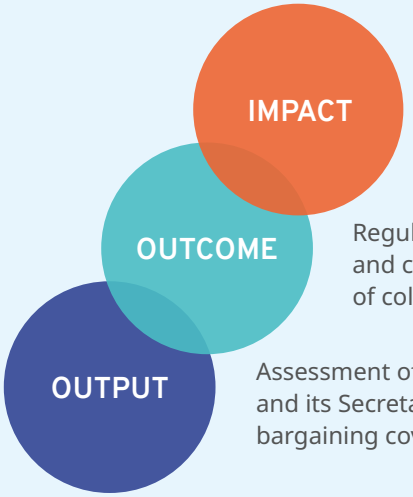
with innovative policy advocacy tools; **and if** the ILO continues to assist social partners to further augment their service offer with a view to attracting more members; **and if** the ILO provides support in building strong and professional communication skills in workers' and employers' organisations to effectively convey the benefits of social dialogue and collective action,

...then employers' and workers' organizations will be better equipped to meet the needs of existing and potential members and to effectively articulate their voice in policy and law making, including discussions on aligning national laws with ILS and the related EU *acquis*,

...leading to the right balance between the rights and interest of employers and workers, strengthened democratic governance and steady progress toward EU accession.

The planned changes will contribute to Moldova's achievement of ILO PB24–25 Strategic Policy Outcome 2. and SDG targets 8.5 and 8.8.

INTERVENTION MODEL



Fair, inclusive and resilient labour market

Regulatory framework and culture of social dialogue and collective bargaining conducive for the promotion of collective bargaining

Assessment of social dialogue, capacity building of the NCCCB and its Secretariat, action plan to increase the rate of collective bargaining coverage

MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE

Action Plan for the promotion of social dialogue and collective bargaining adopted.

BASELINE **0**

TARGET **1**

At least 50 per cent of the activities in the action plan implemented.

BASELINE **0**

TARGET At least **50 per cent** (2027).

Outcome 1.3 *Improved social dialogue and collective bargaining*

The rationale for intervention

As noted earlier, peak-level social dialogue in Moldova remains ineffective. The National Commission for Consultations and Collective Bargaining (NCCBCB) serves as the main platform for tripartite discussions but often struggles to exert significant influence over key policy decisions. Although the commission resumed its regular activities in 2021 and plays an important role in negotiating labour law reforms, its overall effectiveness has been hampered by the growing trend of bypassing traditional tripartite mechanisms in favour of alternative consultative platforms.

Collective bargaining is a fundamental right. It is rooted in the ILO Constitution and reaffirmed as such in the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Collective bargaining is a key means through which employers and their organizations and trade unions can establish fair wages and working conditions. It also provides the basis for sound labour relations. As a country that is preparing for EU accession, promoting collective bargaining should take on even more urgency for Moldova as it is enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 28) and built into the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Articles 151–156). The role of the social partners is emphasised in a broad range of relevant sources of the EU *acquis*, including the Directive on adequate minimum wages in the EU (2022/2041), the Temporary Agency Work Directive (2008/104/EC) and the Working Time Directive (Directive 2003/88/EC).

The legislative framework governing social dialogue and collective bargaining appears to be relatively well-developed, although some key issues remain for the latter, such as the requirement of compulsory arbitration. In practice, social partners are not consistently consulted on policy decisions that directly affect workers and employers and there is a lack of capacity amongst the constituents to engage in well-informed and strategic social dialogue. Collective bargaining seems to remain limited with one source estimating coverage at 43 per cent, which is well below the 80 per cent target of the Directive on adequate minimum wages in the European Union 2022/2041. Some of the main challenges include a concentration of union members in large state-owned enterprises, the limited level of collective bargaining at the district level, and the low representation of employers' organizations in some sectors and of trade unions in private enterprises.

For social dialogue and collective bargaining to play a significant role in the building of a fair and dynamic labour market that can retain and attract the workforce required to achieve Moldova's economic growth targets, its constituents will have to develop and implement a strategic action plan focusing on the achievement of long-term targets and a shared understanding that good faith social dialogue and bargaining are necessary conditions for success. This will require making the regulatory framework governing social dialogue and collective bargaining fit-for-purpose, in line with International Labour Standards and related EU *acquis* and capacitating the constituents so they have the knowledge and skills required to engage in informed, good faith social dialogue and bargaining. Social partners must expand their membership into sectors that are currently not well-covered by collective bargaining agreements and become more inclusive by reaching out to workers in non-standard forms of employment (part-time workers, platform workers and so on)

and workers that are not traditionally members of trade unions, such as domestic workers and migrant workers. Not doing so will further weaken social partners' ability to safeguard the rights and interests of their members and diminish their influence in shaping Moldova's labour market.

Theory of change

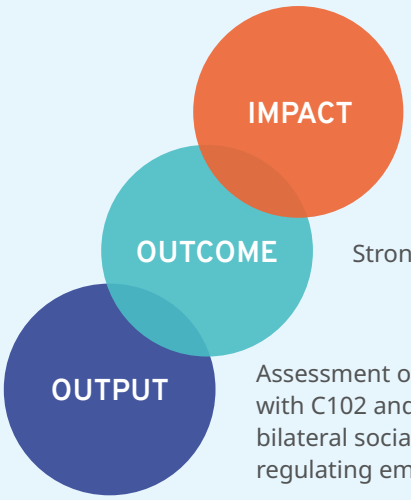
If the constituents develop and implement, with the support of the ILO, a national action plan for the promotion of social dialogue and collective bargaining,

...then the regulatory framework and culture of social dialogue and collective bargaining will become more conducive for the promotion of collective bargaining and constituents will develop improved capacities to defend and promote the rights and interests of their members,

...which will **lead to** increased formalization of employment, reduction of poverty and inequality, and more sustainable economic growth.

The planned changes will contribute to Moldova's achievement of ILO PB24–25 Strategic Policy Outcome 2. and SDG target 8.8.

INTERVENTION MODEL



Increased formalization of employment, reduction of poverty and inequality, and sustainable economic growth

Stronger and sustainable social security system

Assessment of compatibility of the social protection system with C102 and legal gap analysis, capacity building to negotiate bilateral social security agreements, assessment of the law regulating employment injury

MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE

Indicator: National strategy or action plan adopted to improve the financial governance of the pension system, ensuring enhanced transparency, sustainability, and stakeholder engagement.

BASELINE **0**

TARGET **1**

Indicator: Number of negotiated bilateral social security agreements.

BASELINE **18**

TARGET **24**

Indicator: National strategy or action plan adopted to improve the legislative framework regulating employment injury benefits.

BASELINE **0**

TARGET **1**

Priority 2 Enhancing labour and social protection of workers

Outcome 2.1 *Stronger and sustainable social security system*

The rationale for intervention

Moldova has made notable progress in reforming its social security system through the introduction of a new regulatory framework aimed at clarifying responsibilities among authorities and the successful implementation of annual indexation of social benefits to reflect cost-of-living changes.

To further strengthen and sustain the social security system in Moldova, several key changes are necessary:

1) Policy Reform: comprehensive reforms are needed to enhance the adequacy and coverage of social security benefits, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children, persons with disabilities and women. This includes revising existing legislation to ensure alignment with international standards and best practices.

2) Sustainable Financing Mechanisms: establishing sustainable financing mechanisms is crucial for the long-term viability of the social security system. This involves diversifying funding sources, improving collection rates of contributions, and ensuring that benefits are indexed to inflation to maintain their purchasing power.

3) Digital Transformation: implementing digital solutions will improve efficiency and accessibility within the social security system. This includes developing an integrated information system that streamlines processes and reduces fraud.

4) Capacity Building: enhancing the capacity of institutions responsible for social security administration is essential. This includes fostering a culture of accountability and transparency, improving service delivery and training staff.

The intervention aligns with other outcomes, in particular outcomes 2.2, 2.4, 3.1 and 3.2. By strengthening the social security system, Moldova can improve overall socio-economic conditions, promote inclusive growth and reduce inequalities.

Theory of change

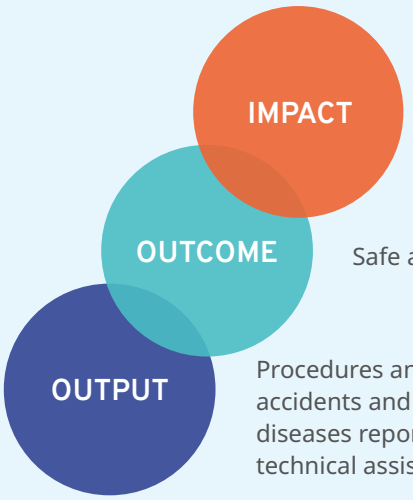
If the constituents in Moldova receive ILO support to assess the compatibility of the social protection system with the minimum requirements established by Convention No. 102; **and if** stakeholders engage in tripartite dialogues that strengthen governance structures within the social security system, **and if** the ILO builds the capacities of the government to negotiate bilateral social security agreements, **and if** constituents with ILO support conduct an assessment of the law regulating employment injury,

...then constituents will be equipped to implement effective policies and practices that ensure comprehensive coverage and better benefits for all workers, particularly those in vulnerable sectors such as agriculture and informal employment,

...which will **lead to** employment, reduction of poverty and inequality, and more sustainable economic growth.

The planned changes will contribute to Moldova's achievement of ILO PB24–25 Strategic Policy Outcome 7. and SDG targets 1.3 and 8.8.

INTERVENTION MODEL



Safer, healthier and more productive workplaces in Moldova

Safe and healthy working environment for all promoted

Procedures and protocols for the investigation of occupational accidents and diseases, assessment of the work-related accidents and diseases reporting system and action plan to improve the system, technical assistance in the revision of the list of occupational diseases

MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE

Revised list of Occupational Diseases, considering the 2010 ILO List of Occupational Diseases.

BASELINE — Outdated list.

TARGET — Revised list by 2027.

Revised procedure for the investigation of work-related accidents, not including occupational diseases.

BASELINE — Outdated procedure.

TARGET — Revised procedure by 2027.

Updated legal framework.

BASELINE — Current legal framework not aligned with ESAW and EODS requirements.

TARGET — Legal framework updated and aligned with ESAW and EODS requirements.

Outcome 2.2 *Safe and healthy working environment for all promoted*

The rationale for intervention

Labour inspections are critical to ensuring safe and healthy work environments and preventing workplace accidents and occupational diseases. Investigating these events is vital for implementing control measures and avoiding recurrences. However, despite efforts to strengthen labour inspection, significant limitations persist when investigating workplace accidents and illnesses. Challenges include a persecutory rather than preventive inspection approach, limited collaboration between agencies, and insufficient coverage of accidents. Currently, only severe and fatal accidents are mandated for investigation, excluding work-related diseases.

Enhancing the capacity of labour inspection requires improved resources, procedural frameworks and inter-agency protocols, aligning with best practices from EU countries. Addressing the underreporting of non-fatal accidents and occupational diseases is also essential.

Modernizing occupational health data collection and aligning it with Eurostat standards (ESAW and EODS) are critical for Moldova's EU accession process. Historical research, such as Heinrich's and Bird's accident ratios, underscores the importance of accurately capturing minor incidents to predict and prevent severe accidents. Reliable data on causality and labour relationships is also essential for designing coherent strategies.

Efforts to revise Moldova's outdated list of recognized occupational diseases must integrate the ILO's 2010 list and consider the updated version in progress. Enhancing reporting mechanisms for non-fatal accidents and occupational diseases to EU benchmarks is a priority. Additionally, occupational health services, aligned with ILO Convention No. 161 and Recommendation 171, are vital to improving workplace conditions and prevention efforts. Moldova's dual system of public and private occupational health services faces challenges, including inefficiencies in public systems and substandard performance in private services due to insufficient training and lack of evaluation criteria.

Theory of change

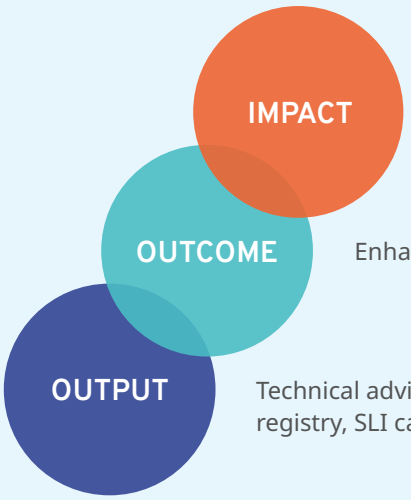
If the ILO builds the capacity of the State Labour Inspection for investigation of work-related accidents and diseases, **and if** constituents with ILO support conduct a comprehensive assessment of the reporting system on work-related accidents and diseases, **and if** constituents with ILO support develop an Action Plan aimed at improving this system and reduce underreporting, **and if** the ILO advises on the revision of the list of occupational diseases,

...then constituents will be equipped to make informed decisions and take the action required to gradually develop a system and culture for the realization of safe and healthy working environments for all, in alignment with international labour standards,

...which will **lead to** safer, healthier and more productive workplaces in Moldova.

The planned changes will contribute to Moldova's achievement of ILO PB24–25 Strategic Policy Outcome 6 and SDG target 8.8.

INTERVENTION MODEL



Increased formalization of undeclared workers and a reduction of informality

Enhanced capacity to tackle undeclared work

Technical advice to legislative reforms to include a mandatory worker registry, SLI capacity building, promotion of holistic approaches

MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE

Share of measures included in the National Programme to tackle UDW 2024–25 implemented.

BASELINE **10 per cent** in 2024.

TARGET **50 per cent** in 2025.

Evaluation of the National Programme to tackle UDW 2024–2025 discussed with tripartite constituents and followed up actions agreed on.

BASELINE **0**

TARGET **1** (2026).

Outcome 2.3 *Enhanced capacity to tackle undeclared work (UDW)*

The rationale for intervention

Over the past five years, several key amendments to the regulatory framework have been introduced to tackle UDW, including a law allowing labour inspectors to conduct unannounced visits. Institutional reforms also have strengthened the capacity to combat it. Since 2018, social insurance contributions have been reported through a unified system and efforts to formalize self-employment have led to simplified legal and tax obligations. Regarding the enforcement bodies, the State Tax Service has prioritized tackling UDW through its annual plan, "Declare. Make the Payment of Salary Legal", and the State Labour Inspectorate (SLI) has undergone a profound reform, leading to an increase in the identification of cases and registration of workers. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, in 2024 alone, the SLI identified 3,088 individuals working without labour contracts, representing 7 per cent of all informal workers in the Republic of Moldova. Of these, 2,496 (80.8 per cent) have already been formalized. Enhanced risk assessment criteria and access to State Tax Service data have further improved the targeting and effectiveness of inspections. Collaboration between the State Tax Service, the SLI, and the National Office of Social Insurance has enhanced information sharing and coordination.

Despite recent progress, significant gaps persist. Moldova's Labour Code does not cover casual employment, digital platform work, job sharing or temporary agency work. Self-employment also lacks a legal definition and efforts to formalize it have yet to expand social security coverage, which remains limited and excludes key benefits like maternity protection. Inspection bodies also face notable challenges. Unannounced inspections are only allowed after a risk assessment and concrete evidence of undeclared work. In addition, employers have 10 days to register new employees, during which verbal agreements can be made, complicating efforts to monitor and address labour violations. Finally, cooperation between enforcement authorities and social partners on undeclared work is limited and mainly ad hoc, focusing on joint initiatives like awareness campaigns.

In 2024 the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection approved the National Programme to tackle undeclared work 2024–2025, which combines enforcement, incentives, institutional reforms and public awareness to encourage a shift toward formal employment. The ILO will support its implementation, focusing on key areas, such as: (1) amending the legal framework to include a mandatory worker registry and ensuring full protection for vulnerable workers; (2) supporting the implementation of the ongoing reform of the SLI; (3) strengthening the capacity of the relevant institutions and social partners to tackle informality; (4) improving coordination between different enforcement bodies and social partners to undertake joint actions.

The ILO will work with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Tax Authority, the National Social Insurance House, the Ministry of Economy, the National Confederation of Trade Unions (CNSM) and the National Employers' Confederation (CNPM).

This Outcome will be implemented in close coordination with Outcome 4.4 on Gender Equality, which includes initiatives on the formalization of the highly feminized care sector and the formalization of women-owned enterprises.

Theory of change

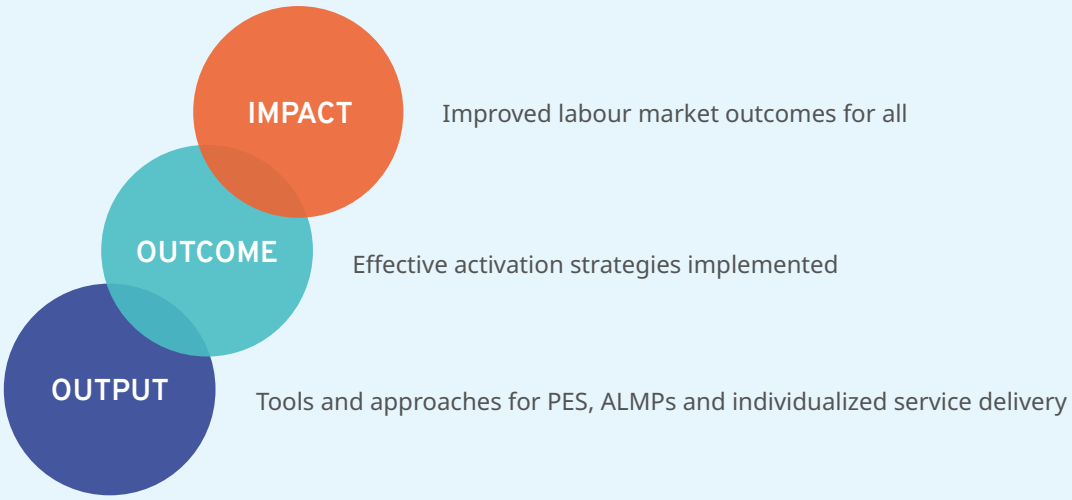
If the tripartite constituents, with ILO support, promote legislative reforms to include a mandatory worker registry and ensure full protection for vulnerable workers, and if the ongoing reform of the SLI is effectively implemented, and if the tripartite constituents collaborate on joint initiatives and raise awareness among workers, employers and citizens,

...then the National Programme to tackle undeclared work (UDW) will be effectively implemented,

...leading to increased formalization of undeclared workers and a reduction of informality.

The planned changes will contribute to Moldova's achievement of ILO PB24–25 Strategic Policy Outcomes 6 and 8 and SDG targets 8.3 and 8.8.

INTERVENTION MODEL



MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE

Number of persons with disabilities benefitting from ALMPs (disaggregated by sex and age).

BASELINE **268** (2023); **154** (intermediary 2024).

TARGET **400**; at least **40 per cent** women (2027).

Number of young NEET women and men reached out to and activated (disaggregated by sex).

BASELINE **0** (2023); **447** (intermediary 2024).

TARGET **2000**; at least **60 per cent** women (2027).

Number of local Tripartite Committees for consultations and collective bargaining (TCCCBs) providing oversight and effectively steering Local Employment Partnerships.

BASELINE **7** (2024).

TARGET **9** (2027).

Priority 3 Strengthening employment, skills and enterprise development policies

Outcome 3.1 *Effective labour market activation strategies implemented at national and local level*

The rationale for intervention

Better articulated labour market activation strategies are a necessary step for Moldova's constituents to enable the inclusion of underemployed and unemployed individuals (particularly long-term unemployed) and those who remain outside the labour force with varying degrees of labour market attachment. Reported labour force participation rates remain low in Moldova (41.4 per cent for women and 49.5 per cent for men), although they have marginally increased for certain sub-groups compared with pre-pandemic levels (3.2 percentage points for women and 2.5 percentage points for men) and more so in rural areas. However, young Moldovans face simultaneously increasing unemployment rates (from 9.2 per cent in 2021 to 11.5 per cent in 2023) and declining employment rates (a 5.2 percentage point reduction for young men and a 1.9 percentage point reduction for young women between 2021 and 2023). Moldova's NEET rate (15–29) is more than double the EU average (23.1 per cent vs. 11.2 per cent, respectively). This challenge is particularly pronounced among rural residents and women across all age groups, reflecting broader gender disparities in the labour market. Participation and employment rates for persons with disabilities have been increasing after the pandemic (17 per cent and 15.8 per cent in 2023, respectively) but remain significantly below the European averages (57 per cent and 53.1 per cent, respectively).

Relevant international labour standards and EU good practices recognize that effective activation strategies require: (1) a tailored approach that helps individuals overcome their specific labour market disadvantage, with due consideration to their personal characteristics and the labour market situation in the areas where they live; (2) a good articulation of active and passive labour market measures based on continuous monitoring and follow-up; (3) efficient, resourced and well-structured public employment services that work in partnership with other relevant public and private service providers at the national and decentralised levels. Some results have already been achieved in these areas, but there is a need to further advance relevant reforms, as envisaged in the National Employment Programme (2022–2026), including through the allocation of adequate budgets for outreach and activation.

Theory of change

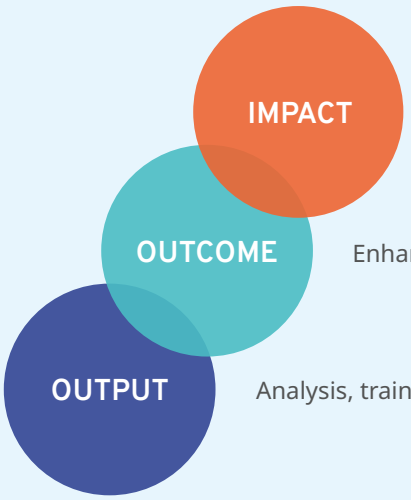
If the constituents, with ILO support, develop tailored approaches, tools and services that enable vulnerable individuals to overcome their specific labour market disadvantages; optimize the delivery of active labour market policies; and improve the performance of the National Employment Agency (NEA),

...then effective activation strategies can be designed, financed, and implemented throughout Moldova,

...which will **lead to** improved labour market outcomes for all.

The planned changes will contribute to Moldova's achievement of ILO PB24–25 Strategic Policy Outcome 3 and SDG targets 8.5 and 8.6. The assumptions underpinning this outcome include the fact that labour markets in Moldova should not experience any further tightening and demand for labour should continue to grow in line with decent work criteria so that people are activated into good-quality jobs. Additionally, the activation approaches and relevant reforms included in the DWCP require an adequate fiscal space to secure the necessary funds for implementation.

INTERVENTION MODEL



Improved policies and labour market outcomes for both domestic and foreign-born workers

Enhanced capacities for managing labour migration

Analysis, training and sectoral dialogue

MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE

Labour market projections available to the MLSP and NEA (y/n).

BASELINE **No** (2024).

TARGET **Yes** (2027).

Outcome 3.2 *Enhanced knowledge for labour migration management*

The rationale for intervention

The emigration of working-age individuals exacerbates Moldova's labour and skills shortages, creating gaps in both high-skill and low-skill occupations. In addition, it adds on to existing skills mismatches. To compensate, employers tend to turn to foreign labour markets to fill the workforce gaps. To address labour shortages and associated risks, constituents plan to improve Moldova's labour migration policy in a negotiated and tripartite manner, based on evidence of labour market demands in specific sectors. Attention is given to the complementarity of investing in activation strategies to release the untapped potential of domestic workers while developing policies that do not juxtapose categories of workers (for example, nationals vs. migrants) but protect everyone's rights and advance decent work. Emphasis is placed on enhancing national-level tools for managing labour migration, in line with International Labour Standards. These tools should be grounded in improved data collection and analysis of labour and skills shortages for evidence-based policies, and strengthened policy dialogue, particularly in specific sectors, leveraging the inclusion of social partners in labour migration policy. Additionally, this would require enhanced capacities in relation to labour migration and social security agreements (see Outcome 2.1) and a more structured approach toward involving Moldova's diaspora.

Theory of change

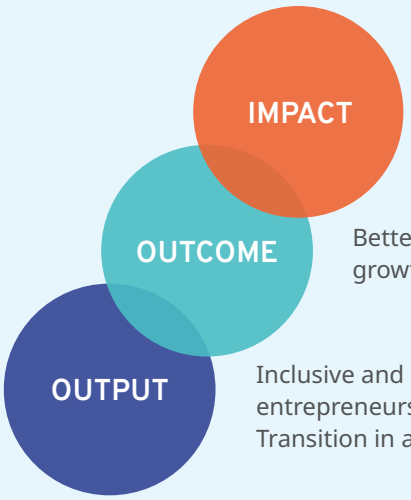
If the tripartite constituents, with ILO support, improve the availability of data and information on labour imbalances and engage in evidence-based dialogue (including at sectoral level) on the adequate policy mix to address labour imbalances,

...then constituents will have better capacities to manage labour migration,

...which will **lead to** improved policies and labour market outcomes for both domestic and foreign-born workers.

The planned changes will contribute to Moldova's achievement of ILO PB24–25 Strategic Policy Outcome 3 and SDG targets 8.5, 8.8, 10.7 and 17.2. The main assumption underpinning this outcome is that the principle of equal treatment and decent work for national and migrant workers are the starting point for the work ahead on labour migration.

INTERVENTION MODEL



Inclusive economic growth, increased productivity, a smooth Just Transition

Better frameworks, conditions and skills for productivity growth and Just Transition

Inclusive and gender-sensitive skills strategies for economic growth and entrepreneurship; educational packages and National Dialogue for a Just Transition in a context of gender- and disability-inclusive lifelong learning

MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE

Number of sectoral skills needs anticipation exercises in the Renewable Energies sector validated.

BASELINE **0** (2024).

TARGET **1** (2026).

Number of national-level dialogue events carried out.

BASELINE **1** (2024).

TARGET **2** (2026).

Number of new educational packages developed.

BASELINE **0** (2024).

TARGET **4** (2026).

Outcome 3.3 *Better frameworks, conditions and skills for productivity growth and Just Transition*

The rationale for intervention

To address labour market challenges, low productivity and inequality, Moldova has made efforts to improve Vocational Education and Training (VET) and lifelong learning through the "Education 2030" Development Strategy. However, the TVET system still faces structural challenges such as underinvestment, ineffective anticipation of skills needs and a lack of coordination with the private sector. Continuous Vocational Education and Training (CVET) and lifelong learning (LLL) opportunities remain limited, particularly for adults in rural areas and for low-skilled women. The digital transformation and Just Transition require an increased development of specific skills related to digitalization and renewable energy, implying significant investments in infrastructure, market development and technology. Entrepreneurship and small enterprise development are crucial for Moldova's economic growth, with SMEs employing a significant portion of the workforce. Programmes targeting youth entrepreneurship and vocational training are being expanded to integrate young people into the labour market.

To this end, the ILO will work with a broad range of actors including the Ministries of Labour and Education and the Social Partners, TVET schools and Centres of Excellence, Sector Skills Committees, the National Employment Agency, as well as others such as the Ministry of Construction, the Ministry of Energy and the Renewable Energies Agency.

Synergies can be made with outcomes 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4. Furthermore, Priority I., Outcome 2 offers possibilities for more synergies.

Increasing the labour market participation of women and girls in all these measures requires active efforts in career guidance, information sharing and specific measures targeting women to be complemented with an expansion of care opportunities. Furthermore, the inclusion of persons with disabilities will also require proactive efforts. To enable the participation of Ukrainian refugees, special targeted measures and provisions for language courses need to be foreseen.

Theory of change

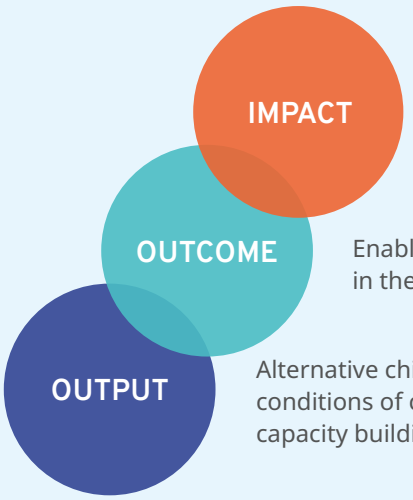
If the tripartite constituents, jointly with ILO, develop inclusive and gender-responsive skills development strategies and programmes for inclusive and green development, **and if** they enhance their knowledge of and participation in Nationally Determined Contributions processes, **and if** they promote sustainable entrepreneurship, **and if** they engage in a National Dialogue for a Just Transition in a context of lifelong learning,

...then employability and productivity will be improved, and the socio-economic inclusion of young and adult women and men will be increased and their preparedness for a Just Transition to a carbon-neutral economy enhanced,

...which will **lead to** more inclusive economic development, increased productivity and a smoother Just Transition in the Republic of Moldova.

The planned changes will contribute to Moldova's achievement of ILO PB24–25 Strategic Policy Outcome 3, 4 and 5 and SDGs 4, 5, 8, 9 and 13.

INTERVENTION MODEL



Higher economic productivity and improved social and economic outcomes for families, particularly for women and children

Enabling environment for women's participation in the labour market and enterprise development

Alternative child-care services, measures to improve working conditions of care workers, launch of women in business programme, capacity building on mechanisms to tackle V&H

MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE

Number of initiatives led by the constituents to effectively address the gender pay gap and violence and harassment – designed and implemented.

BASELINE **0** (2024).

TARGET **3** per constituents (2026).

Number of initiatives led by the constituents to introduce policies and measures aligned with the ILO 5R Framework for Decent Care Work – designed and implemented.

BASELINE **0** (2024).

TARGET **3** per constituents (2026).

Number of beneficiary women having new or better employment in relation to the developed initiatives.

BASELINE **0** (2024).

TARGET at least **500** (2026).

Outcome 3.4 *Enabling environment for women's participation in the labour market and sustainable enterprise development*

The rationale for intervention

Moldova has made significant progress in promoting gender equality through reforms aimed at reducing discrimination and improving women's access to the labour market. Maternity benefits have been improved, and parental leave offers new options to encourage mothers to return to work sooner. Fathers are entitled to 15 days of paid paternity leave to promote shared caregiving, and flexible work arrangements have been introduced to help parents balance work and family life. Law No. 367 expanded child-care services for children aged 0-3, introducing home-based nurseries, on-site kindergartens and individual nannies. The Law on Pay Transparency was enacted in 2022 to address the gender pay gap. Moreover, ILO Violence and Harassment Convention 2019, (No.190), to combat workplace violence and harassment was ratified in 2024 and a new law, effective May 2025, grants the State Labour Inspectorate the authority to investigate and address workplace sexual harassment. Key programmes supporting these reforms include the 2023–2027 Programme for Promoting Equality, the National Programme for Childcare Services (2023–2026), and the Programme for Support of Women's Entrepreneurship (2025–2027).

Despite policy progress, women in Moldova, particularly mothers, still face obstacles to enter the labour market under decent work conditions and set up their own enterprises. Women entrepreneurs, burdened by household responsibilities, face limited access to business support services and markets. Deeply rooted gender norms pressure women to prioritize caregiving over careers, while men face stigma for assuming child-care roles. The availability of child-care services for children under three years old is very limited, and long-term care services are almost non-existent. Horizontal segregation in education and employment remains a challenge, restricting women to lower-paying sectors and perpetuating the wage gap. Workplace violence and harassment (V&H) are also pervasive but rarely reported.

The ILO will support the country with measures to boost women's economic participation and simultaneously improve working conditions in the care sector. Key initiatives include facilitating women's return from child-care leave to employment and promoting shared caregiving responsibilities through advocacy campaigns. To meet the rising demand for child-care, the ILO will assess regional child-care needs and expand child-care services. In coordination with CNPM, it will also collaborate with enterprises to pilot workplace child-care solutions and help them implement policies to attract and retain women. Additionally, the ILO will provide targeted support to women entrepreneurs across different sectors, with a particular focus on enabling them to set up nurseries and other care-related businesses. A diagnostic assessment of the care sector will be conducted to improve working conditions and formalize it. Lastly, the ILO will strengthen relevant institutions and social partners to monitor and close the gender pay gap and tackle violence and harassment in the workplace, including by building the labour inspectors' capacity to monitor gender-specific working conditions. The ILO also will enhance the capacity of CNSM, especially its Women's Commission, to strengthen its role as a catalyst for change and advocates for women's rights across the country.

The ILO will work with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the Ministry of Economy, with CNSM and CNPM, with UN Women and UNFPA, the ODA, AFAM and CPD, among others.

Number of child-care facilities created or expanded.

0 (2024).

at least **50** (2026).

Theory of change

If the constituents, with ILO support, implement measures to ease women's return to work after childbirth, promote shared caregiving, implement coherent and integrated care policies and services, aligned with the ILO 5R Framework for Decent Care Work and the Resolution concerning decent work and the care economy, **and if** they expand child-care services, support women entrepreneurs, improve and formalize the care sector and tackle gender income inequalities and violence and harassment,

...then women will face fewer obstacles to re-enter the workforce, caregiving responsibilities will be more equally shared, child-care services will be more accessible and reliable, and the care sector will provide better working conditions, wages and professional development for workers,

...which will **lead to** a more gender-equitable labour market, increased female labour force participation, decreased gender wage gaps, higher economic productivity, and improved social and economic outcomes for families, particularly for women and children.

The planned changes will contribute to Moldova's achievement of ILO PB24–25 Strategic Policy Outcome 3, 4, 5 and 6 and SDGs 5 and 8.


NIDEA CAFE
Espresso - 17
Americano - 17
Cappuccino - 22
Latte - 27
Ciocolata fierbinte - 30
Ceai in asortiment - 20
French-dog - 27
Placinta dovleac 12

4 MANAGEMENT, IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING, MONITORING, REPORTING AND EVALUATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Implementation, performance monitoring and evaluation arrangements, including roles of ILO constituents

Joint implementation

The Decent Work Country Programme will be implemented (including funding, monitoring and support) by Moldovan tripartite constituents and the ILO.

A tripartite Steering Committee will be set up with a clear role to promote the DWCP and monitor its implementation. The Committee will review the implementation (outputs and outcomes) of the DWCP and the validity of its theory of change on an annual basis, addressing bottlenecks, helping in resource mobilization and suggesting necessary adjustments.

The ILO will prepare a progress report on an annual basis that will feed into the work of the Committee. The ILO will also commission a country programme review by an external expert at the end of the DWCP's implementation period in order to evaluate its coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, relevance and sustainability.

4.2 Risks

Main risks to success are political instability and lack of resources

The multidimensional risks identified during the UNSDCF formulation process remain valid and represent the main risks for the current programme. The military conflict in neighbouring Ukraine and the vulnerability of Moldova to geopolitical developments remain the main risks to achieve the identified outcomes. A mitigation strategy includes regular and strong advocacy for decent work, strengthening existing or seeking new partnerships to promote decent work and capacity to adapt to emerging challenges.

Strong alignment with the UN Cooperation Framework and national development priorities is part of the mitigation strategy. The ILO will enhance its cooperation with UN agencies in Moldova and its constituents in view of timely identification and joint mitigation of these risks.

Achieving DWCP outcomes depends on the availability of financial and human resources among Moldovan constituents and the ILO. Success will only be possible if constituents strongly campaign for the DWCP's goals and outcomes and prioritize the DWCP in national budgets and in programmes of other international organizations supporting Moldova.

Strong commitment, engagement and ownership by key stakeholders are key to the sustainability of results. The ILO will build on its technical expertise, its intervention model that consists in building institutional capacity and on social dialogue to engage all stakeholders in co-creating the most suitable solution for Moldova's context. Strengthening the governance role of the tripartite DWCP Steering Committee will be another mechanism to ensure strong ownership of the programme.

4.3 Funding plan

Stronger resource mobilization

The DWCP requires resources from a combination of contributions from Moldovan tripartite constituents and ILO regular and extra-budgetary sources, including development cooperation projects. The ILO and its tripartite constituents in Moldova will proactively explore opportunities and seek to broaden and diversify the partnership base.

Advocacy for decent work priorities and enhanced communication to demonstrate the impact of the programme are key in securing additional resources. The ILO and its tripartite constituents in Moldova will coordinate resource mobilization efforts with development partners and other implementing agencies to achieve synergies and complementarities.

The ILO will use regular budget and extra-budgetary resources, including UN joint funding mechanisms, to finance some of the activities. Efforts will be made to bring development partners and other key players on board for policy coherence and longer-term financing.

The role of the DWCP Steering Committee in resource mobilization will be central, and progress on the resource mobilization plan will be discussed during its meetings.

5 ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATION PLAN

The DWCP delivers an advocacy and communication plan to support implementation and increase the visibility and impact of its work. This is guided by the ILO Global Communication Strategy and is aligned with the United Nation's joint communication and advocacy plan.

Communication activities aim to raise awareness among stakeholders and the public on:

- The role of International Labour Standards and SDG 8 in promoting inclusive and sustainable development in Moldova
- The importance of effective partnerships to address decent work challenges, work on national development priorities and implement SDGs.
- The unique value-adding nature of the ILO's tripartite membership base with respect to shaping and implementing inclusive, sustainable and equitable national policies, strategies and plans.
- Success stories emerging from initiatives under the DWCP.

Visibility and communication activities target tripartite constituents, multi- and bilateral donor organizations, civil society organizations, and other international and governmental agencies working in Moldova on the same or similar themes. Its secondary audience is Moldova's general public. Key topics ahead will be developed jointly with tripartite constituents; activities will be carried out with their consultation, coordination and/or collaboration while using adequate tools and channels (events, national media, social media, website).

The ILO takes advantage of its participation in the UN joint communications team to increase the public profile of the DWCP and will ensure that good practices and progress of the DWCP is featured in the UN communication materials.

ENDNOTES

1 Government of Moldova, Chisinau, 2018. https://www.imf.md/press/SND_MD2030_25_Jun_eng.pdf.

2 *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, 2023–2027*, Chisinau, United Nations Moldova, https://moldova.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/UNSDCF%202023_2027%20final%20ENG.pdf.

3 The country context provides an overview of the main employment and social policy challenges along the four pillars of the ILO Decent Work Agenda. It summarizes the main elements of the Country Diagnostic developed by ILO consultant Mr Marcel Spatari that was validated by tripartite constituents during the DWCP planning workshop. The statistical annex of the original report is annexed to the DWCP. This does not imply that the new DWCP – presented in the next chapter – will tackle all these challenges. The DWCP is based on the priorities selected by ILO constituents in Moldova.