



## The Swiss Cooperation Program for Moldova 2018-2021 – Extended until 2024. What is New?

### Approaches

The current Swiss Cooperation Program for Moldova was initially designed for the period of 2018-2021. However, Moldova, like the entire region and the world, had to face an unprecedented sequence of crises. The Swiss Cooperation Program was, therefore, extended until the end of 2024 in order to avoid developing a new medium-term program in the midst of the uncertainties and the turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in the neighbouring Ukraine, with the subsequent large influx of refugees into Moldova.

The main goal of the Swiss development assistance to Moldova remains unchanged: to enhance the well-being of Moldova's population and the cohesion of Moldovan society, with a special focus on the inclusion of disadvantaged groups. Most of the Swiss-supported interventions cover the entire country (including the Transnistrian region, when possible) and support systemic changes and reforms, which ultimately benefit the entire population of the country.

The extended Swiss Cooperation Program continues to focus on three main domains of intervention: health, local governance, and economic development and employment. In addition, the Program continues supporting, through small grants, short-term innovative initiatives of the local civil society as well as socially-engaged arts and culture projects. In 2022, for the first time since 2002, Switzerland reintroduced humanitarian interventions into its development cooperation portfolio for Moldova, with the purpose of increasing Moldova's resilience in the face of numerous crises and threats.

Under the new circumstances, Switzerland committed to adopting and promoting the 'triple nexus' approach, ensuring strong interlinkages and complementarity between development, humanitarian and peace building interventions. The adjustment of the Swiss Cooperation Program for Moldova to the new context has resulted in revised priorities, approaches and expected results; correspondingly, resources have been redirected and additional funds allocated. In order to support the Moldovan Government's efforts to respond appropriately to humanitarian needs and, at the same time, to achieve the country's development objectives, social cohesion and sustainable peace, the Swiss Cooperation Program is using, now more than before, a variety of approaches.



The President of Switzerland, Ignazio Cassis and the Prime-Minister of Moldova, Natalia Gavrilita during a visit to the temporary refugee shelter at Moldexpo in 2022

In particular, the human-rights based-approach as well as conflict-sensitive and adaptive management are central to all Swiss-supported interventions. Gender equality, social inclusion and the 'leave no-one behind' principle are not only mainstreamed as transversal themes, but are meanwhile at the core of dedicated projects or project components.

Switzerland's engagement in policy dialogue has seen a boost at multiple levels, notably in newly established high-level fora, such as the Moldova Support Platform and its working groups. The bilateral political dialogue between Moldova and Switzerland has been on raise since 2022 due to the unprecedented intensification of political exchanges, including at the highest level.

## Swiss Cooperation Program: Main Adjustments and Focus Shifts

### Health Domain



Switzerland was among the first partners to support Moldova's response to the COVID-19 pandemic through donations of life-saving medical and personal protective equipment to public institutions

Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences of the war in neighbouring Ukraine have put unprecedented pressure on Moldova's public healthcare system. The Swiss Health domain portfolio has been adjusted to help improve crisis preparedness and enhance the resilience of the healthcare system, especially with regards to the responsiveness, efficiency and continuity of care in health emergencies. Switzerland was among the first development partners to support Moldova's COVID-19 response capacity by funding the procurement of mobile ventilators and personal protective equipment as well as technical assistance to improve crisis communication and coordination. In response to the threats and challenges emerging from the war in Ukraine, Switzerland provided emergency medical equipment and capacity building for health professionals to better respond to the needs of refugees. As the recent crises affect disproportionately vulnerable groups, including refugees, hosting families and communities, more attention is paid to ensuring their access to affordable healthcare services. Furthermore, Switzerland contributed to strengthening the capacities of the Moldovan public health system to mitigate radio-nuclear threats.

Switzerland promotes a patient-centred, integrated approach to healthcare, health promotion and disease prevention. Swiss interventions in the Health domain support Moldovan authorities and other relevant stakeholders within and outside the health sector to realize reforms designed to bring systemic changes, improve the governance within the health sector and ensure equitable access to qualitative and affordable primary healthcare services. The focus is on non-communicable diseases (such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases) and mental health. At the same time, people are encouraged to adopt a responsible and pro-active attitude towards their own health, to seek healthcare when needed, and to demand transparency and good quality of healthcare services.

### Local Governance Domain

With its projects promoting Local Governance (LG), Switzerland contributes to strengthening the civic space in the regions of Moldova and improving trust and cooperation between local public authorities, civil society organizations, independent media and the general public. The Swiss interventions focus on encouraging and facilitating mobilization and inclusive participation of people, including Moldovans who live abroad, in local development. The Swiss-funded projects capacitate local initiative groups, organizations and networks to influence effectively the decision-making and budgetary processes at national and local levels.

At the same time, Switzerland assists local public authorities in diversifying their sources of funding through partnerships with migrants, private sector, and other donors, in order to improve the availability, accessibility and quality of public services delivered to people all over the country. As well, in order to enable central and local public authorities to make targeted, cost-efficient policies based on reliable evidence and demographic projections, Switzerland continues supporting the National Bureau of Statistics in modernizing the generation and dissemination of official population data at national and sub-national levels taking into account internal and international migration trends. The convergence of multiple crises put the resilience of Moldova and its population to a great test, and forced central and local public authorities to balance between operating in a short-term crisis management mode, on the one side, and pursuing the implementation of reforms with a medium-term perspective, on the other side.



Villagers of Borogani, Leova, discuss local development priorities during consultations held within the Swiss-financed project "Mă Implic" ("I Engage")

Despite the numerous challenges faced by the country, in spring 2022, Moldovan people, including those who live abroad, local businesses and public authorities showed incredible solidarity and mobilized fast to help refugees from the very first days of the war in Ukraine, providing free food, water, transportation and accommodation. Switzerland allocated additional funding to help authorities cope with growing expenses. The LG domain interventions have been correspondingly revised and adjusted. The local development and civic engagement mechanisms, developed with Swiss support, focus now increasingly on building crisis response capacity, as well as on improving resilience and social cohesion. In the upcoming years, Switzerland will continue supporting the implementation of important reforms and will explore opportunities to support Moldovan Government's efforts in other areas, such as fighting against corruption.

## **Economic Development and Employment Domain**

The Economic Development and Employment (EDE) domain of the Swiss Cooperation Program focuses on stimulating the creation of more and better jobs and income opportunities for women and men through better functioning market systems, higher quality vocational education and training, as well as through an improved business and investment climate.

The recent multiple crises magnified the economic vulnerability of Moldova, affecting adversely, among others, its capacity to attract investments. Therefore, building economic resilience and sustaining recovery have become important elements of the EDE domain interventions. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Swiss EDE interventions shifted their focus from stimulating the creation of new jobs to assisting companies in finding solutions to maintain their businesses and keep their existing employees. Additional adjustments have been introduced to strengthen the economic resilience of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and small farmers in the face of energy, climatic and economic shocks, as well as to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and expertise of Moldovan emigrants. Furthermore, the scope of the EDE portfolio has been extended to include the promotion of a green economy approach and the economic inclusion of vulnerable groups, including refugees. The Swiss interventions now capitalize, as well, on the new opportunities linked to the EU-candidacy status granted to Moldova in 2022. By promoting the competitiveness of Moldovan products on the European markets, Switzerland makes its contribution towards fostering a tighter integration of Moldova's economy into the European common market and value chains.



Young people learn about the advantages of professional studies that include apprenticeship. Dual Vocational Education and Training Day in Comrat, 2023

## **Rapid and Timely Response to Multiple Crises: Renewed Humanitarian Assistance and Triple Nexus Approach**

The urge of acting quickly to alleviate the emergency needs and to support Moldova's capacity to respond to the consequences of the war in Ukraine and the subsequent refugee crisis prompted Switzerland to increase its engagement and provide also humanitarian support to Moldova during 2022-2023. In the spirit of the triple nexus approach, Switzerland aligned most of its humanitarian interventions along the three domains of its long-term development cooperation mentioned above.

As the refugee crisis started, a multi-disciplinary emergency team of 42 humanitarian experts was deployed to assess the situation, plan and initiate varied interventions, such as setting-up emergency crisis management structures, providing healthcare services in refugee centres and contributing to the improvement of infrastructure at the customs points, e.g. in Palanca, the busiest border-crossing point in the South of Moldova. This contributed to a better management of the inflow of refugees from Ukraine.





A Swiss aircraft shipped a 20-ton batch of humanitarian aid to help Moldova manage the refugee crisis in March 2022

Moreover, Switzerland provided the following direct financial contributions to Moldova:

- CHF 3 million (the equivalent of MDL 59.6 million), to a National Emergency Response Fund, set up by the Moldovan Government to reduce the additional financial burden on the central and local authorities related to the costs for temporary accommodation, food and health services for refugees, and for additional human resources involved in the crisis response;
- CHF 6 million (MDL 119 million), to the Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund, which provides subsidies to socially vulnerable groups so that they can afford to pay the sharply increased energy bills;
- CHF 10 million (MDL 198.3 million), to a Multi-Donor Trust Fund operated by the World Bank, which supports Moldova in mitigating the impact of the war on refugees and local households as well as in strengthening the resilience of the Moldovan economy to reduce vulnerabilities to future shocks.

Switzerland has also supported various short and long-term projects facilitating refugees' access to health services, food, cash assistance, protection services, adapted transportation for people with disabilities, improved accommodation with decent sanitary conditions, as well as interventions empowering the civic and economic participation of local and refugee women.

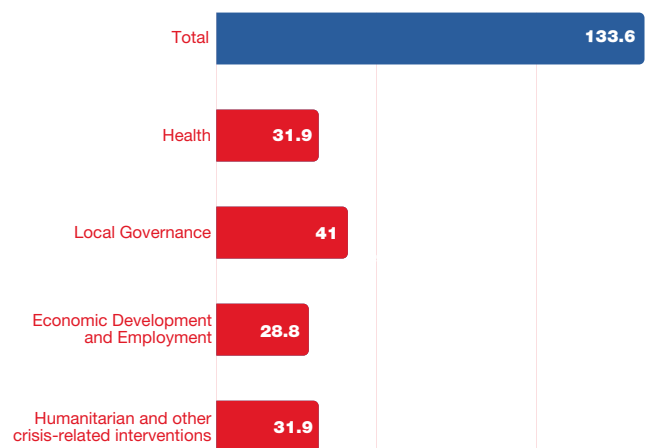
## Small Grants Supporting Civil Society and Cultural Initiatives

The Small Grants Program provides funding to locally registered organisations for the implementation of short-term actions in both rural and urban areas of Moldova. The program supports initiatives aimed at fostering democracy and peace, those promoting good governance, human rights, social inclusion and cohesion, as well as their link with arts and culture. It also supports the development of the cultural sector of Moldova, alternative cultural initiatives, particularly those promoting freedom of speech, critical thinking, civic and environmental awareness, as well as building trust between regions, institutions, social groups and generations.

A new direction that has emerged in the recent years is the support to independent media. Switzerland contributes to strengthening their capacities to produce accessible and reliable information, including on social inclusion topics, and to give voice to vulnerable and marginalized groups, thus enhancing and complementing the advocacy and watchdogging efforts of the civil society. Switzerland also helps independent media produce high quality local content.

## Financial resources

The currently foreseen disbursements during the period 2018-2024 amount to CHF 133.6 million:



Note: Figures are in millions CHF.