



1. Executive Summary

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Moldova

Evaluation date: 23 February 2024

Evaluation type: Clustered

Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office: DWT/CO-Budapest

Technical Office: EMPLOYMENT, ENTERPRISE

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DC Symbol: MDA/21/01/RBS and MDA/21/02/RBS

Donor(s) & budget: RBSA, \$400,000 and \$600,000

Key Words:

Employment, Inclusion, Labour Market, Policy, Women, Youth, NEETs, Partnership

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

Two projects are included in this cluster evaluation:

- (1) “Stimulating the **green economy** in Moldova to create new and better jobs” aims at supporting Moldovan constituents in the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis by stimulating the creation of new and decent jobs in one high-value-added sector of the green economy. It intends to do so through (1). Enhanced job creation potential knowledge of high-value-added sectors of the green economy, (2) Stimulating green jobs through generating business ideas, (3) Shaping a business environment encouraging green business investments. The project logic involved the formulation of tripartite policy recommendation on Just Transition towards environmentally sustainable economy and activities enabling a deeper understanding the main challenges of the core value chain, the promotion of Environmentally efficient practices, greening business support and other support function.
- (2) “Job creation at the local level in Moldova through the adoption of a new, gender-transformative National

	<p>Employment Strategy and its decentralized implementation through Local Employment Partnerships” is a project aiming at contributing to a job-rich recovery. The intervention intends to develop an evidence-based policy, operationalized with piloted job creation, activation measures through local decentralised implementation, by equipping labour market institutions and social partners with knowledge, evidence and tools to formulate a new gender-transformative employment policy and offering a pragmatic response to the urgent need for job creation at the local level.</p>
<p>Present project situation</p>	<p>Both projects, singly worth \$400,000 and \$600,000 have been completed in December 2023 after respectively 26 and 27 months of implementation. Both interventions have timely delivered activities and fully reached its objectives, in a highly challenging and complex context, marked by the war in Ukraine, a refugee and an energy crisis.</p>
<p>Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation</p>	<p>The scope of this evaluation encompasses the overall duration of both projects, i.e., from respectively October and November 2021 until December 2023. The geographic scope is Moldova and the key topics covered are inclusive activation measures, decentralised operationalisation of measures and the Just, Green Transition. The main clients of this cluster evaluation include ILO management, HQ and CO technical specialists, projects’ staff and tripartite constituents in Moldova.</p>
<p>Methodology of evaluation</p>	<p>This evaluation has applied the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability and impact, tackling the issues of gender equality, women empowerment, and disability inclusion. Evaluation information has been collected through documentation review and analysis, crossed with interviews of all key project stakeholders, either in a face-to-face or remote modality. The ability to collect the perspectives of a wide range of actors has been instrumental in capture the complexities of the project and the context. The evaluation has faced no significant limitation during its implementation.</p>
<p>MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS</p>	<p>Relevance The degree of relevance of both projects is very high at all levels, including national policy priorities, ILO Moldova DWCP, UNSDCF and</p>

international development organisation's strategic priorities, the EU accession priorities, local and national institutions, the social partners, and the targeted individuals unable to access the labour market.

The implementation approach (combining policy development, operationalization of pilot measures through decentralized multi-stakeholder mechanism) of both interventions has been appropriate to tackle the root causes of systems inefficient in making labour market accessible to the marginalised unemployed and develop their skills to match the labour demand.

Both RBSA interventions are also relevant to key actual topics for Moldova: With the LEP project and the demonstration of the effective decentralization of activation measures, its convincing results call for the need of higher level of State budget. The Green Economy project is relevant as the Green Transition is both a national and EU priority while also a pressing need to the development of key economic sectors, to be addressed.

Effectiveness

Both projects have fully achieved its intended results, which given the country context (directly impacted by the war in Ukraine, the COVID crisis, the refugee, the energy crisis), and the complex nature of these interventions, can be considered as an outstanding performance.

The quality and the degree of trust of the constituents and other partners has rendered an intense and demanding tempo delivery of activities a possible achievement. Flexibility, ILO staff competence and the quality of expertise is also to be accounted for the effective realisation of the project's objectives and the quality of its results.

However, the individual involvement of each of projects teams members, is to be recognised as instrumental and the key factor that has conditioned the project's high effectiveness.

Efficiency

The evaluation has found that both projects have used available resources with high efficiency; this, in consideration of the delays and effects of the context – principally the war in Ukraine – on the implementation of activities and the mobilisation of key stakeholders to deal with the refugee and economic crisis.

Coherence

While the RBSA projects do not necessarily directly interact with other interventions, they do mutually complement one another while they support a number of key strategic priorities, identified in the relevance section.

For instance, both projects, through its respective contributions to the employment and green economic legal framework, do strengthen an environment that is conducive to Moldova's future accession to the EU. Those interventions are mutually supportive of the EU accession assistance. This, for instance, include a package from the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP), delivering projects worth over €170 million

in access to finance for SMEs'. The Local Employment Partnerships (LEP) project provides a coherent contribution to EU support reforms to building stronger institutions, including those at the local level. The LEP territorial approaches is also coherent with the decentralisation of states services.

Sustainability and impact potential

The sustainability of systems has been established for the most part (e.g., outreach to NEETs) as the dimension was an integral part of both projects' intention with the initial phase of both projects aiming at on the institutionalisation of the eco-system (integration of new piloted, decentralised services and decentralised capacities of local employment office branches in the development process of the new National Employment Strategy).

According to the elements the evaluation was able to capture, the impact potential is very high in many aspects. This includes in terms of the volume of job creation, of inclusiveness, gender equality, environmental preservation, district-level social dialogue practice and sector-specific economic growth. However, achieving the full potential requires specific actions, such as the monitoring of impact of a systematic and prolonged period of time and a deeper impact analysis per sector of economic activities.

Cross-cutting issues

(Gender equality, women empowerment, and disability inclusion)

At the strategic level, the project has supported a key advancement at the policy level with a document instilling a gender transformative approach in the employment policy formulation and implementation. More specifically, the new employment policy has aimed at tackling labour market exclusion, with a specific focus on inactive women and youth, as well as people with disability.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

<p>Main findings & Conclusions</p>	<p>Conclusions</p> <p>LEP has been crowned with successful implementation since 2018. Repeated LEP experiences and piloting feedback has helped improve the LEP approach and can be considered as the result of ILO and partners 'investment through a virtuous cycle consultation-assessment-piloting-evidence-based policymaking.</p> <p>There is a lack of information on the LEP post-project implementation and indirect impact and benefits. This LEP project as well as previous LEP project in Moldova (and elsewhere, such as in Bosnia) are assessed as successful because of the effectiveness of the mechanisms to building local partners dynamics and creating job opportunities for NEETs.</p> <p>Recommendations</p>
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1. Raise the importance of the green economy and just transition at the strategic and programmatic level.
2. Further support to the continuation of the Green Economy project (either as a standalone project or integrated in a territorial and sectoral job creation project) should include:
 - Further support to Social Partners' capacities on Green Social Dialogue contributes to the transition towards green economy.
 - Support LEP Trainers to obtain certification in greening of businesses.
 - Consider building service providers capacity (Business Incubators, ODA) by including other greening business development tools, such as the UNEP regional SME greening toolkit¹.
3. Support the progressive integration of Green Transition in the Territorial and Sectoral Approaches..
4. Take LEP to the "next level" in order to maximise the approach's full job creation and sector support potential through a series of measures..
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6. Consider concentrating LEP support scheme to specific economic/professional sectors in order the increase the sustainability and longer-term socio-economic development impact of a LEP .
7. Make LEP professional sector-oriented with a view to increasing small business's competitiveness, formalisation, certification, and job creation. This could be achieved by concentrating LEP support scheme to specific economic/professional sectors in order the increase the sustainability and longer-term socio-economic development impact of a LEP

Main lessons learned and good practices

Lessons learned:

RBSA project need adequate human resource management support and that concretely means a full-time project manager and support staff: The context and events, including COVID and the war in Ukraine, at the time of implementation were particularly challenges to implementation.

Good practices

¹ https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9451/-EaP_GREEN_country_updates_series_Moldova-2015EaPGREEN-Moldova-update-spring-2015.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&%3BisAllowed=

ILO Moldova's permanent dialogue through trustful relations with key institutions is plays an important role to mobilise State budget resources to support the implementation of the National Employment Strategy. However, a direct lobbying with crucial decision-making ministries/institutions (Ministry of Economy, Prime Minister Office...) could help reverse the trends towards reduced resources to Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and National Employment Agency.

The project support focusing on specific sectors (beekeeping, rural tourism...) is identified as good practice as economic sectors in the province need to get organised and supported. The project experience and results has indicated that focusing the support on targeted economic sectors is not only increasing the individual support to small economic actors, but can also contribute to strengthening the sector as a whole and its ability to be competitive and create even more jobs, directly and indirectly. A sector approach could also help mobilise resource RBSA project need adequate human resource management support and that concretely means a full-time project manager and support staff: The context and events, including COVID and the war in Ukraine, at the time of implementation were particularly challenges to implementation.

1. The effectiveness of "Not in Education, Employment or Training" (NEET) outreach mechanism is a good practice.
2. The concomitant implementation of the two RBSA interventions has allowed to create a synergy that opens to new policy and programmatic possibilities
3. The systematic Training of Trainers (TOT) certification and TOT training is a good practice to ensure capacity building within institutions continues after the project ends.
4. Underlining the link between job creation and migration prevention indicates the potential contribution of both projects to migration prevention.
5. The involvement of the Association of Business Consultant is a crucial element and necessary to take supported businesses to a higher level.
6. LEP can potentially increase its impact in terms of job creation and wider economic development if the support is economic sector-focused.
7. The LEP project support to specific sectors calls to provide support in organising the management, structure and economy of strategic sectors.
8. RBSA project need adequate human resource management support and that concretely means a full-time project manager and support staff.

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