EXTENSION OF THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF EOIs

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANT

Support to the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization

in the field of SME Internationalization and Market Access

World Bank Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Competitiveness Project

**REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

**MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES COMPETITIVENESS PROJECT**

Sector: General industry and trade sector

IDA Credit No. 71740

IBRD Loan No. 94230

Project ID No. P177895

Reference No. MD-CEP- 514158 -CS-INDV

The Republic of Moldova has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Competitiveness Project (MSME) and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The consulting services (“the Services”) include support and effective coordination of activities between MEDD and government authorities, private sector associations, donors, IFIs and other stakeholders as necessary to facilitate SME development.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the assignment is attached to this request for expressions of interest.

The Project Implementation Unit of the MSME Competitiveness Project now invites **eligible individual local consultants** (“Consultants”) to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services.

The evaluation/shortlisted criteria are:

* Master degree in economics (general economics or finance departments).
* Good knowledge of the economic sectors of Moldova and their needs, reflected by having a minimum of 7 years of practical experience in working in or with the private sector in Moldova and international organisations.
* Minimum of 5 years of experience in providing advisory services and analytical work to public authorities of Moldova on SME and private sector development.
* Experience developing and/or implementing tools and/or programs to support enterprise development in Moldova.
* Knowledge of the national and international regulations, including institutional, legal and policy frameworks, in the field of SME growth.
* Experience of the development of analytical reports.
* Strong communication and teamwork skills.
* Fluency in Romanian and English. Computer proficiency, i.e. MS Office word, Excel, Power Point, etc.

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to Section III, paragraphs, 3.14, 3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank’s “Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers” November 2020 (“Procurement Regulations”), setting forth the World Bank’s policy on conflict of interest.

A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the „Open Competitive Selection of Individual Consultants” method set out in the Procurement Regulations and to be specifically set out in the Request for submission of the technical and financial proposal.

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours.

The applications should include a letter of Expression of Interest, CV, and related recommendation letters, if any, together with a **copy of CV in MS WORD format**.

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail, or by e-mail) by **October 14**, **2025**, COBD**, indicating the assignment title in subject line.**

Project Implementation Unit of the MSME Competitiveness Project

Attn. Mr. Aureliu Casian, Executive Director

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**Terms of Reference**

**for the consultant services support to the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization**

**in the field of SME Internationalization and Market Access**

**A. Background**

The Government of the Republic of Moldova (GoM) is pursuing a policy agenda to support export-led economic growth. In this regard, an improved business environment is essential to foster sustainable private sector growth. Significant regulatory and institutional weaknesses in the business environment have been identified by the recently conducted Investment Climate Assessment as major obstacles to the private sector’s ability to perform efficiently and grow, and they also negatively affect investor confidence. The presence of cumbersome regulations undermines the competitiveness of private Moldovan enterprises and prevents increased investment by increasing the cost of doing business.

The World Bank has been supporting the Government in its competitiveness and reform efforts through two Competitiveness Enhancement Projects, which closed successfully and focused on: (i) regulatory reform; (ii) small and medium enterprises’ (SMEs) access to business development services and quality certifications, through a matching grant facility (MGF); (iii) access to finance, through a line of credit (LoC) for exporters; and (iv) quality infrastructure, including equipment and institutional reform in the area of metrology, standards, testing, and quality.

During the implementation of the CEP II, - supported activities have resulted in approximately $215 million in new exports, more than 1,000 jobs, an estimated $15 million in savings to the private sector associated with the implementation of the electronic one-stop-shop for permits, as well as other reforms. The online electronic platform (MMIP system) aimed to streamline procedures for obtaining permissive documents, focusing on those procedures that present problems for Moldovan exporters. Through the implementation of a one-stop shop, electronic issuance of permits, and legal reforms to reduce overlap- and duplication, exporters benefited from increased efficiency, less delays, faster financial processing, and higher revenues. It is estimated that MMIP has allowed companies to reduce both the direct and indirect costs of obtaining permissive documents. The direct cost for obtaining a permissive document has decreased from $215 in 2013 to $92 per permit in 2020, resulting in savings of approximately $123 (57% cost reduction) for a single permit. The indirect costs to businesses, i.e., the time required to obtain authorization from authorities, have been reduced by 40% on average, from 15 days in 2013 to 7 days in 2020. Both dimensions indicate, significant improvements for businesses, especially exporters.

**B*.* Project Description**

The MSME’s project development objectives (PDO) are: (i) to reduce the regulatory burden, increase access to finance, increase the export competitiveness of Moldovan enterprises, and (ii) in case of an Eligible Crisis or Emergency, to respond promptly and effectively to it.

The PDO will be achieved through a set of activities that aim to: (a) digitize government-to-business services and inspections, streamline permissive documents, and enhance national quality infrastructure to reduce the regulatory burden enterprises face; (b) support access to finance for enterprises through credit guarantees and enhance the capacity of the Credit Guarantee Fund (CGF), and (c) support the development of MSMEs and enhance their export competitiveness; d) support project management; e) support the government's response in case of an emergency.

The project consists of the following components:

***Component 1 – Regulatory reform and Digitization***. This component supports GoM in reducing the regulatory burden on businesses by further digitization both at the national and local levels, enhancing and digitizing inspection services, improving interoperability and integrated service delivery for businesses, simplifying the regulatory environment, and improving the National Quality Infrastructure System (hereinafter NQI).

***Component 2 –******Access to Finance***.This component aims to support the CGF under the Organization for Entrepreneurial Development[[1]](#footnote-1) (hereinafter ODA) in providing financial guarantees to MSMEs, to deliver more effective programs and assistance that have positive spillovers for the growth of MSMEs and export-oriented sectors to expand the business, enter new markets, start new export activities, and introduce new technologies needed for productivity gains.

***Component 3 – MSME Development and Export Competitiveness***, focusing on supporting firms through matching grants, export readiness, supplier linkages, and export promotion programs. The objectives of this component are linked with GoM’s goals of simplifying the rules for MSME operation, supporting business establishment, growth and internationalization, enabling more efficient support programs for MSMEs, as well as facilitating the inflow of investments.

Breaking it down by key activities: (i) enable local firms to export through matching grants program, integrated in ODIMM’s export readiness, internationalization, European Green Deal, and linkages programs for maximum efficiency; (ii) strengthen export readiness program for MSMEs at ODA to bring MSMEs to export readiness (iii) enhance export promotion activities of the Investment Agency and (iv) enable local linkages with foreign manufacturing firms.

***Component 4 – Contingency Emergency Response (CERC)*.** This is an unfunded contingency component that can be activated in case of a relevant emergency event. Following an eligible crisis or emergency, the Borrower may request the World Bank to reallocate Project funds to support an emergency response. Once triggered, this component will be drawn from the uncommitted loan resources under the Project to address the emergency.

The project implementation is delegated to the Project Implementation Unit (PIU), an autonomous legal entity established by the Government. The PIU will act as the “Client” for the proposed assignment and will handle contract signing and processing the payments. The contract will be implemented in collaboration with Invest Moldova Agency as main Beneficiary of the assignment.

**C. Background of the assignment**

The SME sector is the catalyst of the national economy of the Republic of Moldova. During the establishment of market relations, the role of SMEs was determined not only by the structure of the economy, where the high share belongs to the types of activity preferred by the small enterprises, but also by the existence of human resources, unused second-rate raw materials that could best be used by the small business, etc. Within 20 years period, the SME sector of the Republic of Moldova has grown both in terms of quality and quantity. Given the economic landscape of Moldova, and the government’s strong commitment to competitiveness and export growth, there is a clear need to promote SME development towards internationalization. SMEs comprise 98 percent of Moldova’s private sector, while accounting for 60 percent of the national employment and around 30 percent of GDP.

Within this framework, the Government of Moldova is seeking the services of a local consultant, to provide expert support to the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization and Organization for Entrepreneurship Development (ODA), on economic aspects related to reducing the barriers facing the SMEs in the fields of access to markets, new technologies and innovation, access to finance, enhancing productivity and competitiveness.

 **D. Objectives and Scope of Work of the Assignment**

The main objective of the Consultant is to ensure effective coordination and support to MEDD in the field of SME internationalization and market access, by fostering collaboration with government authorities, private sector associations, MIA, ODA, and other stakeholders. The Consultant will contribute to the design, alignment, and implementation of coherent export promotion policies and programs, associated to *Export Bridge* and other export promotion and internationalization programs, but also *Industrial Innovation parks*, aimed to enhance SME competitiveness on international markets.

To achieve the assignment’s objectives, the Consultant will be responsible for:

1. Assessing the current policies and institutional and regulatory framework in Moldova in the field of SMEs and export-oriented enterprises, identifying bottlenecks, and proposing improvements to enhance the business environment, particularly linked to export operations[[2]](#footnote-2)
2. Supporting MEDD in strengthening cooperation between ODA, MIA, CCI, other public institutions and private sector associations, aimed to build capacity in export readiness and mentoring export support schemes for SMEs.
3. Assist TA Donors' programs attracted by the Government and contribute to building investment promotion initiatives, including such as development of industrial innovative parks and strategic projects in order to attract investments and expand opportunities for Moldovan exporters.
4. Supporting capacity building and knowledge transfer for SMEs and partner institutions to enhance international competitiveness.
5. Maintaining effective relationships with SME associations, chambers of commerce, financial institutions, and other stakeholders. Act as a liaison between SMEs and the Ministry, addressing their concerns, facilitating communication, and ensuring their active participation in policy development.
6. Strengthening country brand promotion and improve performance of priority export sectors through integrated trade promotion, and investment promotion actions.
7. Facilitating coordination with MIA on national export promotion strategies and the design and delivery of Export Bridge.
8. Supporting the ministry in facilitating necessary dialog and coordinate the activities of the economic bureaus and attaches within Moldovan embassies with the goal to strengthen the economic diplomacy abroad.
9. Overseeing communication and visibility efforts related to SME development initiatives, ensuring effective dissemination of information to stakeholders, the public, and international partners.

**F. Reporting Arrangements / Terms of Payment**

The Consultant will submit monthly timesheets, which will state activities performed by the Consultant according to the TOR, during the appropriate month, the time spent on each activity. The Consultant will attach to the monthly time sheets the materials developed as he/she carried out the activities (deliverables). The Consultant shall coordinate the reports/deliverables with ODA. The payments will be made by the PIU subject to ODA’s approval of outputs.

All deliverables will be provided in electronic form and in hard copies. The language of the deliverables shall be Romanian. The Contract will be in accordance with World Bank procedures.

**G. Period of the Assignment**

The assignment requires full-time involvement and will be implemented in the period from October 2025 to June 30, 2026 with an estimated level of effort of approximately 190 man-days.

**H. Requirements for the assignment**

This assignment will require an individual local Consultant, which has:

* Master degree in economics (general economics or finance departments).
* Good knowledge of the economic sectors of Moldova and their needs, reflected by having a minimum of 7 years of practical experience in working in or with the private sector in Moldova and international organisations.
* Minimum of 5 years of experience in providing advisory services and analytical work to public authorities of Moldova on SME and private sector development.
* Experience developing and/or implementing tools and/or programs to support enterprise development in Moldova.
* Knowledge of the national and international regulations, including institutional, legal and policy frameworks, in the field of SME growth.
* Experience of the development of analytical reports.
* Strong communication and teamwork skills.
* Fluency in Romanian and English. Computer proficiency, i.e. MS Office word, Excel, Power Point, etc.
1. Public institution under the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization with the mission to support the development of the entrepreneurial environment, including small and medium enterprises. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Conclusions of the Exporters’ Survey Reportconducted under the MSME Project shall be one of the starting points. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)