

The Third Working Meeting of the Coalition for Monitoring Public Procurement

December 2023

At the third meeting of the [Coalition for Monitoring Public Procurement](#) on December 13, 2023, the [Open Spending EU Coalition](#) related their experience on a systemic approach to transparency in public spending. Another topic addressed was the shortcomings identified by the Association for Efficient and Accountable Governance (AGER) in the monitoring process for health procurements carried out by the Center for Centralized Public Procurement in Healthcare (CAPCS).

The [Coalition for Monitoring Public Procurement](#) was created by the [Institute for Development and Social Initiatives \(IDIS\) Viitorul](#), within the project [Increasing the Integrity of Public Procurement in Moldova](#), implemented with [Partnership for Transparency](#). The coalition aims to support public procurement reforms in the Republic of Moldova. Over 20 civil society organizations (CSOs), investigative journalists, experts, and independent monitors from the Republic of Moldova are members of the Coalition.

Carolina Ungureanu, the Project Coordinator and Vice Director at IDIS Viitorul, said that it is important for the members of the Public Procurement Monitoring Coalition to know the good practices of other organizations that monitor public procurement. *"It is important for us as members of civil society to have additional tools and knowledge about how public procurement should be monitored and how public money is spent. It is important for us to know exactly the most appropriate ways, so that we can then have qualitative monitoring and come up with recommendations to improve the public procurement system, for contracting authorities, but also for decision makers, who are responsible for public procurement policies."*

In attendance at the meeting was **Gina S. Lentine**, Program Officer, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Office of Global Programs, who said that civil society in Moldova has always had a role to play in strengthening democracy, promoting open and constructive discussions with the government, and helping to hold the government accountable for failures, regardless of who is in power. *"You really have a very important job in advancing efforts in this direction. I am delighted to hear about your efforts and the solutions that you are proposing. After all the work that you are doing, I have seen that you have been able to make progress, like in increasing the integrity of public authorities at the national level. We see that they have started to respond to some of your recommendations. They are not simply taking them into consideration, but are actually actively working with you to address some of these important issues that you have identified. We are very proud to be able to support these efforts of yours in this important work aimed at advancing anti-corruption efforts here in the Republic of Moldova at this vital time for the country, for its growing democracy."*

Krzysiek Izdebski, Co-Leader of the Open Spending EU Coalition, said that the Coalition brings together academics, experts, and specialists working in different EU Member States for the transparency of public procurement spending and EU funds. The legislation and regulations of the public procurement systems of EU member countries were analyzed and it was determined that there is transparency in the spending of EU funds. *"Public procurement is an important part of our work, but there are other ways in which EU money is spent. We want to make sure that the whole system is absolutely transparent. We want to follow the money that comes directly from the EU budget to subcontractors."*

Izdebski also mentioned that while there are differences in European countries' procurement legislation, they are trying to influence the legal provisions to make the right changes. In the coming years, the members will also focus on monitoring countries at the pre-accession stage of EU membership, as there are different transparency rules for different funds managed by the EU and the aim is to support countries in the pre-accession process. *"Here we are not talking about monitoring for the sake of monitoring, but we want to check whether or not there has been corruption in spending. We very much support the pre-accession process, but we need to come up with some key rules for transparency of EU funds."*

Another of the Coalition's activities is to ensure that member states publish public procurement data in real time. Izdebski said *"In recent years, we have focused on bringing more transparency to the recovery and resilience funds that have been distributed by the EU in the pandemic. We found that there was no provision for transparency in the regulation behind these funds nor in Member States' regulations. There was no obligation to publish data on actual expenditures. From the very beginning it was a problem in understanding where this money went and there was the problem of trust in public institutions, which is decreasing and we are trying to be very vocal about these issues. There are major discrepancies between countries. We need to create policies to increase the quality of human rights. We need to understand how money is spent in the EU member states as well. We are trying to intervene, and to get in touch with decision makers to generate those necessary changes."*

Olga Diaconu, Project Coordinator at AGER, presented the shortcomings identified in the monitoring process of centralized procurements in health carried out by CAPCS. Double standards were found in the procurement of medicines and major problems were identified in the procurement of ambulances. Diaconu mentioned that in the Republic of Moldova there are medicines and medical devices of poor quality, because the government always chooses the lowest priced offers. *"This is the criterion most often used in public procurement in Moldova, including in the procurement of medicines. We pay a lot of money, but the quality is not always the best. In some cases, medicines that are authorized in Moldova are accepted, in other cases, medicines unauthorized in countries with high quality standards are purchased. There are also*

situations where medicines are accepted that have been authorized only in the country of origin. It is these legislative inconsistencies that contracting authorities have to juggle."

Diaconu said that, in 2023, there were two procurements for ambulances worth five million Euro (~\$5,493,750). The procurement specified four-wheel-drive ambulances, because it is difficult to reach some villages with two-wheel-drive vehicles. However, most of the ambulances offered were two-wheel-drive types. A Romanian company would have been the favored awardee because the company is owned by a state dignitary. Diaconu stated, "*Although it indicated in the tender specifications that ambulances meeting EN1789 standards were being procured and a reference was made to European directives, CAPCS left it to the discretion of the economic operators to choose how to verify that the ambulances met the criteria.*"

At the meeting, AGER, Public Association Local Invest, and Transparency International Moldova were assigned to be part of the National Platform for Public Procurement.

Thus far, the [Coalition for Monitoring Public Procurement](#) has held two meetings at which several topical issues in the field of public procurement were discussed. These include the national program on development of public procurements system for the years 2023 to 2026, transparency and reporting of low-value procurements, and procurement rigging.

The [Increasing the Integrity of Public Procurement](#) project is implemented by the Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) Viitorul, in partnership with Partnership for Transparency. The project aims to support reforms in Moldova that will increase transparency and fairness in public procurement by empowering citizens to hold relevant institutions accountable.

Established in 1993, [IDIS Viitorul](#) is an independent think tank that combines social, political, and economic research with strong advocacy components. IDIS conducts applied monitoring research in several areas: economics, social policy, EU policies, regional development, security, and foreign policy risks.

[Partnership for Transparency](#) (PTF) is based in Washington, DC and its mission is to support innovative CSO-led approaches to reduce corruption, increase transparency, strengthen governance, and enhance accountability in low- and middle-income economies. Since 2000, PTF has collaborated with over 160 local civil society partners in approximately 55 countries on more than 285 anti-corruption projects pertaining to education, environment, gender equality, health, humanitarian assistance, public procurement, and service delivery.