



Environmental and Social Review Summary

Concept Stage

(ESRS Concept Stage)

Date Prepared/Updated: 04/04/2019 | Report No: ESRSC00366



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country	Region	Project ID	Parent Project ID (if any)
Moldova	EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA	P167790	
Project Name	Moldova Higher Education Project		
Practice Area (Lead)	Financing Instrument	Estimated Appraisal Date	Estimated Board Date
Education	Investment Project Financing	6/30/2019	9/30/2019
Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency(ies)		
Ministry of Finance	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research		

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Project Development Objectives are to improve the quality of teaching and learning environments of project-supported institutions and the labor market relevance of higher and adult education in Moldova.

Financing (in USD Million)	Amount
Total Project Cost	30.00

B. Is the project being prepared in a Situation of Urgent Need of Assistance or Capacity Constraints, as per Bank IPF Policy, para. 12?

No

C. Summary Description of Proposed Project [including overview of Country, Sectoral & Institutional Contexts and Relationship to CPF]

The proposed Project would be implemented over a period of five years, organized around three components, and financed by an International Development Association (IDA) Credit of US\$ 30 million. Project components are described below. Component 1 – Improving the Quality of Higher Education. This component would finance activities to improve the quality of higher education in Moldova to ultimately produce a better skilled work force. Sub-Component 1.1 – Improving Higher Education Quality through Systemic Interventions. This sub-component would support the development of qualification standards within the broad context of the development of Moldova’s National Qualifications Framework. The capacity of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MoECR) would be also strengthened through this sub-component. Concerning quality assurance (QA), this sub-component would



finance technical assistance for ensuring a full alignment of the existing standards and regulations with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality of Higher Education, as well as the enhancement of the existing QA capacity of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research and universities, among other activities. This sub-component would also support the development of a unified admissions methodology to be applicable to all Moldovan public universities, which would be paired with the development of an electronic platform. Additionally, a unified management information system would be developed under this sub-component. Moreover, to improve the internal efficiency of Moldova's Higher Education system, which may ultimately channel more public funds towards quality improvement, this sub-component would support the development of new financing mechanism. Sub-Component 1.2 – Improving Higher Education Quality through Targeted Interventions. This sub-component would support the improvement of physical conditions of learning environments of selected universities and pedagogical colleges. Civil works to be financed by this sub-component won't include the construction of new buildings, but rather the renovation of existing facilities to meet applicable standards and make them energy efficient. It would also finance the procurement of equipment and furniture for learning environments and teaching laboratories for these institutions. Component 2 – Improving the Labor Market Relevance of Higher Education. This component would finance the design and implementation of a competitive university-based program (Higher Education Relevance Enhancement Program - HEREP) to improve the labor market relevance of Moldova's higher education system. Activities to be financed by the HEREP would include: (i) training of university teachers towards an improved labor market relevance of programs; (ii) improvement of the effectiveness of internships including through a gender balanced participation of students in firms; (iii) technical assistance for establishing and implementing effective career guidance services, including approaches to ensure that these services are inclusive and gender unbiased; (iv) enhancement of university's capacity to provide career guidance services; (v) participation of employers in academic activities; and (vi) graduate tracer studies. Component 3 – Project Management. This component would support the day-to-day management and monitoring of the proposed Project through the establishment and maintenance of the Project Management Team (PMT). The PMT would provide managerial, fiduciary and technical support to the implementation the proposed Project for its full duration. This sub-component would finance inter alia (i) salaries (fees for individual consultancies) for PMT staff, (ii) technical assistance in procurement, citizen engagement and grievance redress, (iii) training activities, (iv) equipment, (v) furniture, (vi) software for project management, and (vii) incremental operating costs. This component would also finance the required annual project audits, as well as the design and implementation of a project-specific grievance redress mechanism.

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D. Environmental and Social Overview

D.1. Project location(s) and salient characteristics relevant to the ES assessment [geographic, environmental, social]
The project activities will take place nationwide, however, at this stage of preparation, the specific project locations have not yet been identified. The project beneficiary will be universities in the areas of pedagogy, information technologies, engineering and medicine, as well as pedagogical colleges, and would be selected in accordance with some criteria to be developed by the MoECR. Moldova currently has 29 higher education institutions, out of which 19 are public, with a total number of students around 61,000. Most of these higher education institutions are located in Chisinau – 25 units – and the rest in other towns – Balti, Cahul, Comrat, and Taraclia. Said institutions are located in urban areas on lands belonging to the state. The general problems that characterize such areas are related to inadequate water supply, wastewater, solid waste management, high energy consumption, loss of green and natural spaces, air pollution and noise from traffic, as well as poor public services, lack of job opportunities, the need for better healthcare, etc. which are exacerbated by the increasing population density and demands of urban environments. Whereas the project does not directly finance activities to generate a significant impact (negative or



positive) on these general urban problems, the component that includes minor rehabilitation works to improve the education conditions in several selected universities/colleges will consider carefully all these aspects during the implementation and operation phases.

D. 2. Borrower’s Institutional Capacity

The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Research (MoECR) will be the main project implementing agency. MoECR has experience with the preparation and implementation of projects supported by the World Bank. Presently, there is an education project under implementation – Moldova Education Reform Project (P127388) – by MoECR with the WB’s financial support. This will be, however, the first operation supporting higher education. Even though MoECR has experience in handling safeguards requirements of other World Bank projects, this is the first project in Moldova applying the Bank’s ESF. The client is therefore assumed to have limited capacity to apply the new ESF and to prepare the environmental and social risk management measures and instruments like ESMPs. Borrower's capacity to manage the E&S risks will be specifically assessed during the project preparation to determine capacity gaps and developed through project specific training on ESF and on other environmental and social management aspects including those related to small-scale construction (renovation) works. Specific capacity building measures such as the presence of qualified social and environmental specialist(s), and training needs will be identified. The task team will conduct an institutional capacity assessment prior to appraisal and support the Government team in the development of a capacity enhancement improvement plan as part of the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP). The task team will also look into the extent at which beneficiary institutions will be involved in project implementation, their capacity to meet ESF requirements, including in the area of ensuring that vulnerable and disadvantaged groups have access to project benefits.

II. SCREENING OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL (ES) RISKS AND IMPACTS

A. Environmental and Social Risk Classification (ESRC)

Moderate

Environmental Risk Rating

Moderate

Proposed project components are environmentally harmless except that project subcomponent 1.2 which will support renovation of some of the existing Government buildings (universities and pedagogical colleges) under the same foot print.

The moderate risk rating is proposed because the renovation activities will not generate adverse environmental impacts or substantial risks on human population, and the predictable impacts are expected to be:

- temporary and reversible,
- low in magnitude, and
- site specific, without likelihood of impacts beyond the actual footprint of the project

No adverse impacts such as involuntary land acquisition, impacts on indigenous peoples, on biodiversity and habitats are expected. Although the Client has some experience with the previous projects on the Bank’s safeguards, there is no experience and limited capacity in applying the ESF, and therefore, significant efforts will be required to build the capacity of in the application of the new ESS.

Social Risk Rating

Low

Social risks directly inherent in project activities at this stage are deemed as low. However, this will be re-evaluated during appraisal to confirm or upgrade the current social risk rating. The Project does not support construction or

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rehabilitation activities that cause land acquisition and/or resettlement impacts. It is designed to improve the quality of higher education, improve the labor market relevance of higher education. To address needs in this sector, the project will aim to support public universities and colleges, and ultimately benefit any students seeking education there. This may also include marginalized or vulnerable populations in the country (with the exception to those residing in Transnistria and Gagauzia as there are no World Bank investment lending operations in these territories), and the social and environmental assessment (ESA) and project design may need to include such groups and potentially employ differentiated measures as per ESS1. Issues of social inclusion, especially vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and inclusive public outreach would be considered in the project design to ensure that stakeholders have equal access to project benefits.

B. Environment and Social Standards (ESSs) that Apply to the Activities Being Considered

B.1. General Assessment

ESS1 Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Overview of the relevance of the Standard for the Project:

Except for the proposed small-scale interior construction works for renovation/repairs of existing universities' spaces and purchasing of equipment, other activities proposed under components 1.1, 2 and 3 are environmentally harmless. The associated environmental impacts would be limited and typically include: dust, noise, on-site safety and waste management. All potential environmental risks and impacts are predictable, expected to be temporary and reversible, low in magnitude, and site specific. The expected environmental impacts may include also health impacts related with inadequate handling and disposal of asbestos containing material. Since the use of asbestos is not sufficiently regulated in Moldova, the Bank will also require application of adequate OHS practices for this dangerous material. In addition, considering that the project's civil works will mainly be undertaken in education (universities and/or colleges) premises, it is critical to maintaining the health and safety of students, teachers and school staff, vendors, visitors and nearby communities throughout the construction phase. It is also critical to ensure proper movement of heavy goods vehicles to avoid accidents. All the above impacts are to be successfully mitigated through application of the good engineering and construction practices, and with mitigation and monitoring measures to be specified in the project Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) prepared by the Client and disclosed locally as well as on the Bank's website. The ESMF will provide the necessary environmental and social conditions, safety measures for workers, guidelines and measures to be taken by the small works contractors to ensure that health, safety and environmental norms are met. During the project implementation, when the exact locations of selected beneficiaries (universities/colleges) will be established, site-specific ESMP Checklists for minor rehabilitation or small-scale civil works will be prepared in accordance with the ESMF provisions aiming to mitigate any environmental impacts. The ESMP checklist-type format will cover typical core mitigation approaches to civil works contracts with small, localized impacts. The intention of ESMP Checklist is that it would be applicable as guidelines for the small works contractors and constitute an integral part of bidding documents for contractors carrying out small civil works under the Project. In case of beneficiaries that might require a larger and more complex volume of rehabilitation works, site-specific ESMPs will be prepared and implemented. However, at this stage, details about the candidate beneficiaries are not available. The Project Management Team (PMT) established by MoECR will have the full responsibility for the implementation and supervision of the ESMF and related site-specific ESMPs. It is recommended that a designated Environmental and Social specialist (E&S Specialist) is recruited by the PMT to ensure environmental compliance of the project/sub-projects, including day-to-day supervision (jointly with the technical staff and site-supervision engineers), guidance to sub-project applicants, review of documents and



providing inputs to the Head of PMT. All environmental and social management actions will be commensurate with the expected risks for addressing all specific environmental and social impacts and determining adequate mitigation measures. The project will not support construction of new buildings, but only interventions to the existing ones under the same foot print. The selected universities and pedagogical colleges are located in Chisinau, the largest city in Moldova with congested urban areas, and in other build-up areas in different towns in the country. All these locations are not in proximity to areas of biodiversity significance or cultural heritage. Access to higher education among vulnerable /disadvantaged populations in Moldova is low. Preliminary desk review of existing literature suggests that socially disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including youth from rural areas, poor households and Roma minorities face certain barriers in accessing education at all levels, including higher education. United Nations Development Program estimates that only 1% of Roma population achieves higher education as oppose to 18% of non-Roma (Source: UNDP report, 2013, Romii din Republica Moldova in localitățile locuite preponderent de romi (The Roma in the Republic of Moldova in the Localities Inhabited Preponderantly by Roma). According to UNICEF only one third of children with disabilities graduate from school. (Source: UNICEF report, 2018, Children in the Republic of Moldova: A Situation Analysis). Formal and informal school payments, language barriers, and physical location of education institutions are identified as some of the barriers that may constrain their access to higher education. For the Roma population and persons with disabilities, barriers may also include stigma and discrimination. SEA to be conducted during preparation will identify in a gender-sensitive manner barriers to higher education for rural low income and urban low income populations, as well as Romas, persons with disabilities, and other categories of vulnerable groups, and generate data to the extent possible that may be used to track project contribution to enhancing the access to higher education among socially disadvantaged and marginalized groups. As part of the development of the stakeholder engagement plan (SEP), socially disadvantaged and marginalized groups will be consulted to assess barriers that restrict their access to higher education, and their inputs will be used in the ESA process and to develop mitigation measures that may be used under the project.

Areas where reliance on the Borrower’s E&S Framework may be considered:

Moldova's Environmental and Social Framework is not being proposed to be applied in whole or in part for this project.

ESS10 Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure

In order to ensure that a consistent, comprehensive, coordinated and culturally appropriate approach is taken to stakeholder engagement and project disclosure, MoECR will have to prepare Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP). The SEP will be proportional to the nature and scale of the project and associated risks and impacts identified. The SEP will be developed and implemented to ensure that stakeholder engagement is conducted on the basis of timely, relevant, understandable and accessible information. The SEP will lay out a strategy to identify and map key stakeholders. MoECR will also have to ensure that consultations are inclusive and accessible (both format and location). SEP will likely to be disclosed prior to appraisal and will be updated, as necessary, throughout the project cycle (preparation and/or implementation). A stakeholder grievance redress mechanism (GRM), as part of SEP, will be operationalized for the project to allow for feedback and complaints. Notably, MoECR has an existing GRM for the ongoing education project supported by the World Bank, and the proposed project would build upon this existing feedback procedures.

B.2. Specific Risks and Impacts



A brief description of the potential environmental and social risks and impacts relevant to the Project.

ESS2 Labor and Working Conditions

Environmental and social risks/impacts related to OHS are expected to be low, mainly because the project footprint is relatively small and does not entail a significant amount of labor as the project aims at refurbishing the existing buildings only. The majority of labor will be locally hired with the exception of a few skilled workers who may not be found in the project location. Labor camps are not anticipated. The project will involve direct workers, contracted workers, as well as government civil servants. Community workers are not planned to be involved in the project. However, risks related to OHS could be induced by minor civil works and these will be managed by incorporating in the works contracts specific OHS requirements that will address potential hazards to workers, and develop preventive and protective measures to be applied by the contractors. In addition, contractors will be requested to prepare and enforce a Code of Conduct that include measures to prevent Gender Based Violence/ Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (GBV/SEA). During the project implementation, the social and environmental staff in the PMT will oversee application of all these OHS standard measures and ensure the compliancy. MoECR will be responsible to develop project-level Labor Management Procedures (LMPs) applicable to the project. These LMPs will identify the main labor requirements and risks associated with the project, and will help MoECR to determine the resources necessary to address project labor issues. The LMPs would describe (i) procedures relevant to each category of workers involved; (ii) overview of key potential labor risks (if any); (iii) overview of Moldova’s labor legislation; (iv) description of grievance redress mechanism or mechanisms available for all direct workers and contracted workers (and if relevant, to their organizations). LMPs may be amended at any time during project cycle depending on the needs and developments in the project preparation and/or implementation. LMPs will also have guidance to contractor(s) on developing labor management plans. GRM: A clear gap in the labor related legislation in Moldova is the lack of a grievance mechanism for the employees apart from the courts. The project will introduce labor, contractor and sub-contractor workers related grievance mechanism as a part of the labor management procedures in place which will be prepared by MoECR. A locally based project specific GRM, proportionate to the potential risks and impacts of the project, will be established. In addition, a GRM specifically for direct and contracted workers will be provided. The GRM will be designed at an early stage and will be formally established by project effectiveness. Complaints received and resolved will be reviewed during the implementation support missions.

ESS3 Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management

The overall level of environmental risks associated with the project is considered moderate. Project’s physical activities are limited to improvements/rehabilitations of high education infrastructure within existing universities or colleges. The expected environmental risks are associated with small scale construction like care, handling and storage of construction material, waste, excessive noise and dust levels, and disposal of asbestos containing material, if present. Those most likely to be affected are students, teachers, and people living in close to the construction sites. Mitigation measures such as dust suppression, vehicle maintenance etc. will be applied to minimize the impacts and residual impacts are expected to be limited in scope and duration. Noise: Noise will likely be generated from use of construction machinery and vehicle movements. The relatively short-term and small-scale nature of the works suggest that noise levels will not be excessive. Construction works will be scheduled to take place mainly during school vacations to limit the impact on students and persons in the respective buildings. Waste management: Liquid and solid waste will mainly include excavated soil, oils from construction machinery, concrete blocks, metal and glass pieces from demolished walls etc. The selected works contractors will be required to develop detailed Waste Management Plans (WMPs) prior to commencement of the civil works and enforce these during contracts



implementation. WMPs will include specific instructions on how the waste will be segregated, stored and disposed at approved sites. In particular, the WMPs will consider the proper management of hazardous waste such as asbestos and asbestos containing materials (ACM) in accordance with the WBG EHS Guidelines for removal, transport and final disposal. Water: Due to the nature of proposed renovation works, it is not expected that the project will have significant water and energy use.

ESS4 Community Health and Safety

Since the project's civil works will mainly be undertaken in education (universities and/or colleges) premises, maintaining the health and safety of students, teachers and school staff, vendors, visitors and nearby communities throughout the construction phase is critical. This will include, where appropriate, consideration of safety risks (including fire safety) for third parties and affected communities. Movement of heavy goods vehicles can lead to accidents. Construction in such premises can also disrupt learning process through dust emission, noise, increased generation of solid waste, etc. Potential threats to people and communities may be posed by uncovered or barricaded or not signage spots such as excavated sites, trenches, open holes, open electric cables, etc. Education infrastructure must also ensure unimpeded access to all including persons with disabilities. The project will ensure safety of office workers during the rehabilitation works by adopting adequate OHS protocols following WBG EHS Guidelines. Partition of construction area by putting in place fences, signaling, mitigation measures to control excessive noise and dust levels, and secure access to the area in the building for the office workers and public use will be ensured through a robust mitigation and management plan in the proposed ESMPs or site-specific EMP Checklists.

ESS5 Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement

The project's civil works relate to only financing minor repairs and rehabilitation of the existing buildings. There are no ESS5 impacts or risks. The project will not finance activities that would require land acquisition, access rights such as for easement (short-term or long-term), or physical or economic displacement. There are no specific target locations of the project activities as institutions benefitting from the project activities will be nationwide, but located on lands owned by the state or local municipalities. Risks and impacts will be identified through a social screening process (checklist) and appropriate mitigation measures will be included in the site specific ESMPs.

ESS6 Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources

Potential environmental risks and impacts associated with this ESS have been screened and determined to be not currently relevant given the project's context and timing. Relevance of this ESS will be further reviewed during project preparation.

ESS7 Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities

No negative impacts or risks as per ESS7 are expected.

ESS8 Cultural Heritage



Possible impacts on Cultural Heritage will be further assessed and the applicability of this ESS will be determined during the project preparation. This will also include the chance find process and appropriate steps necessary to apply to ensure conservation of cultural heritage.

ESS9 Financial Intermediaries

No FI involvement is envisaged in the project.

C. Legal Operational Policies that Apply

OP 7.50 Projects on International Waterways No

OP 7.60 Projects in Disputed Areas No

III. WORLD BANK ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL DUE DILIGENCE

A. Is a common approach being considered? No

Financing Partners

n/a

B. Proposed Measures, Actions and Timing (Borrower’s commitments)

Actions to be completed prior to Bank Board Approval:

1. Preparation of Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP)
2. Prior to the Board approval, preparation of Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) to identify, mitigate and monitor the environmental impacts for the proposed renovation works. The ESMF will be disclosed locally as well as on the Bank’s website.
3. Prior to appraisal, preparation of Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP). The SEP will be disclosed locally as well as on the Bank’s website.
4. Prior to appraisal, preparation of Labor Management Procedures (LMPs).
5. Establishing Grievance Redress Mechanism at Project Level and/or Grievance Mechanism for all Direct and Contracted Workers by Board approval.
7. Assess the borrowers' specific capacity building measures such as training needs for environmental risk management and prepare corresponding capacity development plan

Possible issues to be addressed in the Borrower Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP):

1. Implementation of Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and related site-specific ESMPs or EMP Checklists as may be required after sub-projects screening.
2. Implementation of Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)



- 3. Prepare and implement (if the case may be) Labor Management Plans and/or Grievance Mechanism for all Direct and Contracted Workers
- 4. Project level Grievance Redress Mechanism established and operationalized.
- 5. Monitor the progress made on implementing the agreed measures for mitigating environmental and social risks.
- 6. Implement the agreed capacity building plans and recruit the social and environmental specialist.

C. Timing

Tentative target date for preparing the Appraisal Stage ESRS

01-Jul-2019

IV. CONTACT POINTS

World Bank

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Borrower/Client/Recipient

Borrower: Ministry of Finance

Implementing Agency(ies)

Implementing Agency: Ministry of Education, Culture and Research

V. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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VI. APPROVAL

Task Team Leader(s): Janssen Edelweiss Nunes Teixeira, Denis Nikolaev

Safeguards Advisor ESSA Nina Chee (SAESSA) Cleared on 03-Apr-2019 at 04:16:32

Public Disclosure



Practice Manager

Harry Anthony Patrinos (PMGR) Concurred on 04-Apr-2019 at 12:10:23