

TERMS OF REFERENCE

For selecting 5 mass-media organizations for the implementation of the

“Consolidating the consumer protection framework in Moldova” Project

1. Brief project description

Donor: European Commission and Soros Foundation Moldova

Implementation period: January 2024 – June 2026

Project total budget: EUR 784,285.00

Independent Analytical Centre Expert-Grup, as lead partner, in consortium with the Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE), is currently implementing the EU-grant project “Consolidating the consumer protection framework in Moldova”.

The general objective of the project aims that consumer rights are known and enforced in Moldova. It contributes to fulfilment of the global objective of this call for proposals to strengthen CSOs' capacity in the process of implementation of the Association Agreement, including at local level, taking into account that consumer protection is a key component of the association agenda and European integration process. Namely, it corresponds to Lot 2 of the call: support implementing rights-based consumer protection through advocacy activities. It will be addressed by the Action through two complementary specific objectives (SOs).

Specific objectives:

1. Government of Moldova has increased its capacities to enforce consumer protection legislation approximated with the EU acquis - will follow the top-down approach by targeting the policy makers. It will consist mainly of technical assistance that will allow the Government to speed up the harmonization process with EU acquis in the area of consumer protection.
2. Consumers in Moldova increased their knowledge and capacities to promote their rights – will follow the bottom-up approach, by empowering the mass-media and civil society to promote consumer protection and raise the level of information and awareness in the society around this issue.

The main activities of the project are:

- Comprehensive mapping of institutions in the field of consumer protection;
- Gap analysis between the current situation in Moldova related to consumer protection framework and EU directives in this field;
- Elaborating a set of recommendations for relevant institutions to adjust the legal framework in line with the mentioned gap analysis;
- Elaboration of a software that allows for quick classification, sorting and processing of petitions and, at the same time, allows consumers to track the status of their petition;
- **Development and the implementation of an awareness raising campaign on consumer protection;**
- Establishment of the European Consumer Centre;

Target groups and final beneficiaries of the project:

The Action will be implemented for 3 key target groups (TGs).

TG1 comprises the Ministry of Economy and Digital Development and its subordinated State Inspectorate for Supervision of Non-Food Products and Consumer Protection, as well as the entire constellation of institutions responsible for consumer protection, given the high fragmentation of the institutional framework in this area (table nr 1).

Table 1. Main public authorities that are dealing with consumer protection

Sector	Main public authority responsible for consumer protection	Subordinated public authority responsible for consumer protection
Non-foodstuffs, services, metrology	Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization	State Inspectorate for the Supervision of Non-Food Products and Consumer Protection
Health	Ministry of Health	National Agency for Public Health
Transport	Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development	National Motor Transport Agency National Naval Agency Civil Aeronautic Authority
Constructions	Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development	Agency for Technical Supervision
Telecommunications	Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development	National Agency for Regulation of Electronic Communications and Information Technologies
Tourism	Ministry of Culture	State Inspectorate for the Supervision of Non-Food Products and Consumer Protection
Non-banking financial sector	National Commission for Financial Market	National Commission for Financial Market
Banking financial sector	National Bank of Moldova	National Bank of Moldova
Foodstuffs	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry	National Agency for Food Safety
Energy, water and sewage	Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development	National Agency for Energy Regulation

Needs & Constraints: low capacities to align the legal and institutional framework to EU Acquis, poor inter-institutional coordination, lack of proper digital tools to manage consumer petitions and low credibility among consumers. The Action will address these needs and constraints through technical assistance in finetuning the legal and institutional framework in line with EU Acquis and development (OP1.1-OP1.3) and implementation of the digital tool/software for management of consumer petitions (OP1.4), under SO1.

TG2: civil society. Needs & Constraints: low information and awareness about consumer rights and mechanisms to promote consumer protection, underfunding and poor organization of civil society that is working in this area. The Action will address these needs and constraints by supporting the creation of the European Consumer Center (OP2.3-2.4), as well as through the awareness campaign (OP2.1), under SO1.

TG3: mass-media. Needs & Constraints: similar to civil society – low awareness, but also capacities to reflect consumer protection issues in their activity. The Action will address these needs and constraints by supporting

5 media CSOs, including through sub-grants (OP2.2) and by providing content for the awareness and visibility campaign (OP2.1) that will be implemented also through mass-media.

2. Scope of the assignment

This assignment aims to select 5 mass-media organizations that will receive sub-grants, worth **up to €15,000.00 for each media organization**, to support the project's communication and awareness activities, carried out across the country. The project is included in annex no.1 to the GD no. 246 of 2010, thus the awarded sub-grant that will be awarded therein is also subject to exemptions from the payment of income tax, excise duties, customs duties, and VAT.

One media organization will be selected from each of the following 5 development regions, as defined by Law no. 438/2006 on regional development in the Republic of Moldova:

North; Center; South; Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia; and the municipality of Chisinau.

Mass-media organizations will compete only with other organizations from the same development region. Each of the selected media organizations will support the consumer protection awareness campaign by developing a **journalistic investigation and other 5 media products, at their discretion: articles, radio/TV shows, podcasts, etc. on topics related to consumer protection**. All 5 selected media organizations will be guided by one of the 5 experts selected within the project.

Experts will help subgrantees to identify the topic for their journalistic investigations and will guide the selected mass-media organizations in elaborating their consumer protection related media products (investigations, articles, tv/radio shows, podcasts etc). The topics for the media-products will also be consulted and agreed with the project team and the EU Delegation.

Taking into account that often people from the Transnistrian region buy consumer products/services on the right bank of the Nistru river, that is controlled by constitutional authorities, all media materials will be translated in Russian and disseminated through communication channels in that region. If communication materials will be produced in Russian then they will be translated in Romanian and will be disseminated.

3. Deliverables and timeline

Each of the 5 subgrantees will start by proposing to their designated expert the topics for the journalistic investigation and the 5 media products per subgrantee (articles, tv/radio shows, podcasts etc). Following the approval of the topics, subgrantees will draft the sketches/drafts of the journalistic investigation and that of the other 5 media products. The sketches will be discussed with and approved by the project team. The drafts of the media products will be peer reviewed by the experts. Media products will end up by being published and disseminated.

Table 2. Deliverables and estimated timelines

Deliverables	Timeline of project activities
Proposing topics for 1 journalistic investigation and 5 media products.	October-November 2024
Input from the designated expert and approval of the topics.	December 2024
Elaboration and launching of the journalistic investigation	December 2024-April 2025
Elaboration, publishing and dissemination of the 5 media products.	March 2025 – December 2025 (one every two months).

4. General requirements for the applicant

The candidate mass-media organization must fulfill the following general eligibility requirements:

- be legally registered in the Republic of Moldova;
- have signed and abide by the [„Moldovan journalists code of ethics“](#);
- provide proof of an independent editorial policy (self-assessment).

5. Specific requirements for the applicant:

The candidate mass-media organization will explain:

- explain: i) the motivation and interest in consolidating the consumer protection framework in Moldova, ii) the organization's plans to publish/launch in production and disseminate the produced material, iii) the organization's plans on the continuation of the efforts to address in its media products the consumer protection related issues; iv) the organization's objectives and results that it intends to achieve through the subgrant contract.
- showcase the organization's experience in conducting journalistic investigations (if any);
- showcase the experience in article writing or/and producing TV/radio shows, podcasts etc;
- provide links to the organization's website, social media pages;
- provide up to 3 CVs of the members of the team, the organization is planning to implement the subgrant with;
- prove the financial sustainability of the organization by providing the financial statements for 2022 and 2023.
- Budget relevance for the tasks described (note: the project is VAT exempt).

6. Submission of the offer

The submitted offer will be comprised of a single PDF file that will include:

1. Copy of the Certificate of registration
2. Motivation letter (max 3 pages) that will address:
 - i) the organization's motivation and interest in consolidating the consumer protection framework in Moldova;
 - ii) the organization's plans to disseminate the produced material,
 - iii) the organization's plans on the continuation of the efforts to address in its media products the consumer protection related issues;
 - iv) the organization's objectives and results that it intends to achieve through the subgrant contract.
3. List with links to the conducted journalistic investigations (if any).
4. Organization's experience: a list of links to the top 10 most impactful media materials (articles, TV/radio shows, podcasts etc). If available, accompanied by the outreach figures.
5. The list of links to the organization's website, social media pages etc.
6. The CVs of the up to 3 members of the team the organization is planning to implement the subgrant with.
7. Financial statements for 2022 and 2023.
8. Explanation on how the media organization is insuring the independence of its editorial policy (max 1 page);

9. Proposed budget for the implementation of the grant activities.

Interested candidates should submit their offers in one PDF document, by email, at procurari@expert-grup.org. **Deadline for submission: September 30th 2024, 18:00 local time. Paper applications will be rejected.**

When sending the application by email, the applicant will indicate the subject of the message: "**Selection of the CPF Region**: Center/North/South/UTAG/ Chisinau" media organization. **Only the region in which the organization operates will be left** in the subject of the message.

7. Evaluation grid

The evaluation of applications will be carried out in one stage based on the received materials that will be combined in one PDF file and will constitute the candidate organization's application. The application that does not comply to the "**general requirements of the applicant**" will be rejected and will not be evaluated. The evaluation of applications will be conducted in correspondence with the evaluation criteria expressed in table below.

Table 3 Evaluation grid

Specific evaluation criteria	Points (max)
Explanation of the organization's (max. 3 pages):	
i) motivation and interest in consolidating the consumer protection framework in Moldova;	30
ii) plans to disseminate the produced materials;	
iii) plans on the continuation of tackling in its media products the consumer protection related issues;	
iv) objectives and results that it intends to achieve through the subgrant contract.	
Showcase the organization's experience in conducting journalistic investigations (list with links to the conducted journalistic investigations, if any);	15
Organization's experience: a list of links to the top 10 most impactful media materials (journalistic investigations, articles, TV/radio shows, podcasts etc). If available, accompanied by the outreach figures;	15
Organization's website, social media pages;	10
CVs of the members of the team the organization is planning to implement the subgrant with;	10
Financial statements for 2022 and 2023.	10
Budget relevance for the tasks described (note: the project is VAT exempt)	10
Total	100