

MOLDOVA HIGHER EDUCATION PROJECT
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND RESEARCH

TERMS OF REFERENCE
ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SPECIALIST

A. BACKGROUND

„Moldova Higher Education” Project (MHEP) is a World Bank-financed Project to be implemented between May 2020 and December 2025.

The total cost of credit is EUR 35.7 million (US\$39.4 million equivalent) financed by an International Development Association (IDA) and is provided to the Republic of Moldova in support of Moldova Higher Education Project.

The Project Objective is to improve the labor market orientation of selected higher education institutions and the quality assurance mechanisms. The Project is organized around three components and includes systemic interventions in the areas of higher education quality, financing and management, as well as a targeted program to be implemented by selected universities and pedagogical colleges to address some of their most pressing needs in labor market orientation.

The MHEP components are described below:

1. Improving the Quality Assurance Mechanisms
2. Improving the Labor Market Orientation through Targeted Interventions
3. Project Management

Component 1 – Improving the Quality Assurance Mechanisms. This component aims to improve Moldova higher education system’s quality assurance mechanisms, which would also contribute to improve its labor market orientation. It comprises three sub-components that support activities in: (i) National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Quality Assurance (QA); (ii) System Management and Monitoring; (iii) Higher Education Financing.

Component 2 – Improving the Labor Market Orientation through Targeted Interventions. This component would finance the design and implementation of a targeted and needs-based program (Higher Education Improvement Program - HEIP) aimed at improving the labor market orientation of Moldova’s higher education institutions, as well as their research capacity.

Component 3 – Project Management. This component would support the day-to-day management of the Project by the MoECR with assistance of a dedicated team of individual consultants who would provide managerial, fiduciary, and technical support to the implementation of the proposed Project for its full duration.

The proposed project components are environmentally harmless, except for the HEIP (sub-component 2.2), which would support minor civil works for renovation of up to 6 pedagogical colleges. The activities to procure goods (and minor civil works, in the case of pedagogical colleges) should be necessarily connected with expected improvements in research, learning and labor market orientation. Project activities would be implemented nationwide, but specific project locations have not yet been identified, at this stage of the preparation. Project beneficiaries would include universities in the areas of pedagogy, information technologies, engineering and health, as well as pedagogical colleges, and would be selected in accordance with some criteria to be defined by the MoECR. Most of these higher education institutions are located in Chisinau. These institutions are located in urban areas, on lands belonging to the state.

The minor civil works in selected pedagogical colleges would take place under the existing footprint. They would not generate adverse environmental impacts on or substantial risks to the human population. The environmental risks associated with these minor civil works are classified as *moderate* under the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (ESF). The moderate risk rating is proposed because the likely impacts are predictable, and expected to be temporary, reversible, low in magnitude, site specific, limited to the immediate surroundings, and can be managed through the implementation of cost-effective mitigation measures.

No adverse impacts such as involuntary land acquisition, as well as impacts on indigenous peoples, biodiversity and habitats are expected. Social risks related to project activities are deemed *low* for both implementation and operation phases.

Towards addressing these issues, the client prepared, before appraisal, an environmental and social management framework (ESMF) and disclosed it in country. The ESMF provides 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 (colleges) will be established, site-specific ESMPs will be prepared for individual investments using 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 EMP 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 order to ensure that a consistent, comprehensive, coordinated and culturally appropriate approach is taken to stakeholder engagement and project disclosure, MoECR prepared a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) that has been disclosed prior the project appraisal. The SEP will be updated, as necessary, throughout the project cycle.

The Project Management Team (PMT) is responsible for implementation of environmental and social measures in accordance with the procedures set forth in the ESMF prepared for MHEP and available at the following link: <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/795561575929145380/environmental-and-social-management-framework>.

In this context, an Environmental and Social (E&S) Specialist will be hired to be responsible for reviewing, advising and overseeing compliance with the ESMF and site-specific ESMPs and provide technical support to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and Project management team. S/he should ensure that environmental and social considerations are integrated into subprojects designs and implementation, and that actions taken fully comply with the Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) policies and standards.

B. OBJECTIVE OF THE CONSULTANCY

Environmental & Social (ES) Specialist will be responsible for assisting project determine the potential environment and social impacts that can be generated by proposed activities supported under each HEIP component, as well as identify and propose the required mitigation actions to be taken. The E&S Specialist will also conduct screening and ensure that environmental and social due diligence work (ESIAs/ESMPs) is prepared for the proposed investments. The specialist is responsible for (i) ensuring the implementation and supervision of the ESMF and site-specific ESMPs, (ii) the implementation and revisions of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, (iii) the implementation and revisions of the Labor Management Procedures. He/she will also be responsible for all matters related to citizen engagement and grievance redress under the Project.

This Terms of Reference (TOR) is developed to provide an overview of the generic tasks for which the Consultant is responsible. The TOR focuses on responsibilities related to ensuring compliance with the Bank's ESF policies; however, the Consultant's responsibilities may go beyond these.

The E&S Specialist Consultant will support the Project Management Team (PMT) in preparation of environmental and social due diligence documentation for the overall Project, as per Project's ESMF. This basic document facilitates screening, assessment, and management of environmental and social issues for activities / subprojects during Project implementation, while taking into account and ensuring compliance with the national regulation and relevant ESF Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs) for this Project. These include:

- ESS1 Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts;
- ESS2 Labor and Working Conditions;
- ESS3 Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management;

- ESS4 Community Health and Safety;
- ESS10 Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure.

All subprojects to be financed under Project must undergo an environmental and social screening in the manner described in the ESMF. The E&S Specialist Consultant would perform this process when reviewing and evaluating sub-projects and inform potential applicants on environmental and social requirements for sub-projects evaluation, in order to be able to implement them in an environmentally and socially acceptable manner.

The main task of the E&S Specialist Consultant is to ensure compliance with the environmental policies triggered under the Project. In the sense of wide consultations, compliance should be ensured and the issues of possible environmental and social impacts at the level of measures should be streamlined at the beginning of policy development process. This is why the involvement of the Consultant is to provide inputs/comments to these documents to ensure that there is no adverse impact on the Project.

C. SPECIFIC TASKS

To achieve the assignment's objectives, the E&S Specialist Consultant shall perform the following tasks:

1. As part of the ESMF, the Consultant will conduct the whole environmental and social (E&S) screening process and determine the E&S impacts and vulnerabilities, assess an environment/social risk category/level, and identify risk management opportunities/strategies as to determine the adequate ESS instrument to be applied for the received applications (subproject proposals).
2. Ensure that no Bank Safeguard standards other than ESS1, ESS2, ESS3, ESS4 and ESS10 are relevant for proposed sub-project Any activities corresponding to the Bank Projects with Moderate risk will be required to have an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) in place prior to approval that would identify potential environmental impacts and provide adequate mitigation measures.
3. Provide assistance to the project to determine the exact impacts that can be generated by proposed activities supported under each HEIP, as well as prescribe the required mitigation actions to be taken;
4. Conduct screening and ensure that due environmental work (ESIAs/ESMPs) is prepared for the proposed investments;
5. Monitor and report, on a regular basis, the environment and social impacts of project financed activities and ensure that mitigation actions are carried out. The Environmental & social Consultant will also have to visit each HEIP sub-projects, and ensure proper monitoring for all HEIP sub-projects;
6. Identify potential impacts related to any land acquisition issues under MHEP sub-projects and advice. provide clear guidance to PMTs to make sure that OP 4.12 is not triggered;
7. Support the MoECR and HEIP beneficiaries in environmental policies and procedures (EA) covering legal and administrative conditions in terms of completeness and appropriateness with regard to the school renovations;
8. Ensure that each HEIP beneficiary has a separate individual file that would be filled in with the set of environmental documents according to the planned activities and assigned risk category (Checklist, Environmental Impact Assessment, necessary authorizations).
9. Contributes to the development of the chapter "Environmental protection" for rehabilitation works contracts for HEIP beneficiaries.

Evaluation of the environmental chapter of the project documentation in compliance with the requirements of the national legislation and the World Bank, stipulated in the Environmental and Social Management Framework;

10. Conduct quality control of ESS instruments in line with ESF requirements prior to Bank submission and dealing with the comments as may be received from the Bank;
11. Elaboration of the environmental checklist according to the Environmental and Social Management Plan;
12. Elaboration of the Environmental and Social Monitoring Plan as part of the civil work contracts. Organization, conducting and documenting public consultations on the ground;

13. Monitoring of the Environmental and Social Management Framework implementation and technical assistance provision; Provide support and coordinate with the analytical and M&E experts in analysis of the environment and social impact related topics;
14. Drawing up narrative reports on each HEIP beneficiaries after field visits, including facilitating the development and issuing of environmental advice upon hand-over of the object.
15. Establish a Functioning Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) under the project and maintain GRM log on reported complaints and how they have resolved.
16. Conduct Stakeholder consultations including public meetings with project beneficiaries;
17. Ensure that Labor Management procedures (LMP) of the project are duly implemented and guide the project staff/workers to conduct OSHS standards of the project
18. Prepare quarterly progress report on environment social management work of the project including the actions taken and GRM updates.
19. Prepare annual reports on ES progress and implementation status
20. Coordinate the implementation of project-activities related to citizen engagement and GRM. Report to the Project Coordinator on these activities. Collect data and information to measure the project indicators on these areas with assistance of the M&E Specialist of the PMT.

D. DURATION

This is a part-time assignment (subject to 4 hours per day) expected to begin in August 2020. The contract will be signed for a period of 12 months. Subject to Consultant's satisfactory performance, the contract may be renewed until the Closing Date of the project on December 31, 2025.

E. CONSULTANT'S REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

The consultant to be hired in accordance with the proposed assignment should prepare monthly reports on all activities performed. This monthly report should be subject to approval of MHEP Project Coordinator. The consultant reports to MHEP Project Coordinator.

The MoECR and Project team will provide the Consultant with necessary support to complete the assignment: project documents necessary for assignment accomplishment, necessary work conditions, including office space, telephone, fax and other office equipment and supplies.

F. QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS AND BASIS FOR EVALUATION (EVALUATION CRITERIA)

The Consultant should have the following qualifications:

- Degree in the environmental science, social, natural resources management, environmental or civil engineering, or related discipline Minimum of 3 years of relevant professional experience, including applied experience in Environmental & Social risk management in investment projects (international and local);
- Working experience with international organizations and / or similar projects for at least 2 years.
- Experience of implementing similar assignments at the local, regional or national level. Knowledge of international good practice for management of E&S risks, including World Bank ESF/Safeguards policies and International Finance Corporation (IFC) Sustainability Framework and supporting documents such as Guidance Notes, EHS Guidelines;
- Previous experience with World Bank-funded projects as environmental and social reviewer and an understanding of its requirements would be an advantage;
- Strong analytical skills, ability to think strategically, analyse and synthesize diverse environmentally related data and information.
- Ability to communicate ideas clearly and confidently, articulate issues and recommend solutions.
- Excellent spoken and written Romanian and English.