



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organizația Internațională pentru Migrație

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - MOLDOVA, MIGRATION, TRAFFICKING

IOM MOLDOVA

September 2009

This FAQ was prepared by IOM Mission to Moldova as a preparatory document for all interested in learning about trafficking in Moldova. This FAQ is a working document, which needs to be updated as the situation changes and is by no means an exhaustive source of information. All information where a separate source is not given is derived from IOM Moldova statistics and experience. Please see www.iom.md for more information

I Moldova

1. What is the population of Moldova?

According to the National Bureau of Statistics the Moldovan population, excluding Transnistria, was 3,567,500 on 1st January 2009. The Transnistrian authorities carried out a census in 2004, and stated that the population of the region consists of 555,347 people, while according to estimates of the Moldovan statistical authorities the total was of some 410,000 people in January 2008. The total population of Moldova, including Transnistria, would therefore be approximately 4 million.

2. Is Moldova the poorest country in Europe?

The country's per capita real GDP is the lowest in Europe and Moldova is classified as a lower-middle-income country by the World Bank. The GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) was 2,500 USD in 2008 (7,800 USD in Ukraine; 12,500 USD in Romania; and 33,800 USD in the European Union). Overall, the country suffers from a high incidence of poverty, particularly in rural areas.

3. What is the average salary in Moldova?

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the average monthly salary (in Jan 2009) is 2,555 MDL or about 255 USD.

4. How do Moldovans earn a living?

As the Moldovan average salary suggests, declared jobs do not allow most Moldovans to earn a living and people look for alternative sources of revenue; complementary and undeclared jobs. Remittances constitute also a major source of revenue for Moldovans, as 30% of the population resides in households that receive remittances. In approximately 50% of all the remittance-receiving households, remittances fund more than half of current expenditures. The majority of the Moldovan population lives in rural areas (58.7% on 01.01.2009) and indeed, according to 2005 estimates, approximately 40% of the population works in the agriculture sector. A slightly bigger percentage works in the services sector, while 16% are employed by the industry sector. Moldova enjoys a favorable climate and good farmland, and as it has no major mineral deposits, the economy depends heavily on agriculture and food processing industrial sectors; fruits, vegetables, wine, and tobacco are main products. Moldova relies on imported energy and the economy remains vulnerable to higher fuel prices, natural disasters, and the skepticism of foreign investors.

5. What is the social security system in Moldova?

The social assistance system in Moldova is in transition. The types of service that people receive can be divided into three levels which may be classified as primary (or 'community') care, specialist care and very high need care services. The central government currently provides most of the services for people in very high need, but the rest of the services are all provided by the rayon (district) administration. Although there has been progress in this area during the last years, access to quality social assistance and services is still very limited. In 2007, the average pension was 546,2 MDL per month (about 52 USD) and registered unemployed people could receive between 30% and 50% of the Moldovan average salary (2063 MDL) depending on the circumstances of cessation of their employment. In December 2008, the Government of the Republic of Moldova approved the National Programme on the Development of an Integrated System of Social Services for 2008 to 2012 promoted by the Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child, which aims at addressing the current

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deficiencies of the social care system. A number of International Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations are active in the social protection field.

6. When did Moldova become independent?

For half a century from 1940 Moldova was known as the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) and was one of the 15 Republics of the Soviet Union. In early 1991, the Moldovan parliament renamed the country as "The Republic of Moldova". On 27th August 1991, Moldova seceded from the USSR and proclaimed itself a sovereign independent state.

7. What exactly is Transnistria?

The Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, is located on the left bank of the Nistru River. Transnistria has not been controlled by central Moldovan authorities since the region declared unilaterally its independence on 2 September 1990. In March 1992, fighting broke out between the central Moldovan authorities and forces of the unrecognized "Transnistrian Moldovan Republic" (Russian: "Pridnestrovskaya Moldavskaya Respublika" - "PMR"). In July 1992, a ceasefire agreement was reached and is supervised by a trilateral (Russia, Moldova, Transnistria) peacekeeping force. Political settlement negotiations including the two sides, the three mediators from the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the OSCE, and since 2005 the European Union and the United States as observers have not resulted in final settlement yet. While the region is de jure part of Moldova, de facto Transnistria (including the right bank city Bender) – with the exception of six villages on the left bank of the Nistru – remains under the administration of the authorities in Tiraspol, the "capital" of Transnistria. Transnistria is organized as a presidential republic, with its own government, parliament, military, police, security service, postal system, telephone system and currency. Its de facto authorities have adopted a constitution, flag, national anthem, and a coat of arms.

II Migration

1. How many Moldovans Migrate?

According to the National Bureau of Statistics the number of Moldovans currently abroad in the first trimester of 2009 was approximately 272,500. However, a survey carried out by IOM gives the number of Moldovans working abroad but still belonging to a household in Moldova to be 353,000 in March 2009. In addition, there are approx. 150,000 Moldovans who are planning to migrate in the near future; some for the first time, and some have been abroad and only returned for a short period of time. In the years 2006-2008 alone a number of up to 100,000 Moldovans left the country for good; half of them were members of entire households moving abroad. Considering different estimates it is likely that altogether up to 600 000 Moldovans reside outside the country under different status.

2. How many Moldovans migrate illegally?

It is estimated that one third of Moldovan migrants reside illegally in their host countries. The exact number of Moldovan irregular migrants is very difficult to assess, as migrants can leave the country through the break-away region of Transnistria and other unregulated segments of the border and are therefore not counted in the national statistics. Illegal residence status seems to have become more widespread among Moldovan migrants in CIS countries, while the situation has improved in EU and other host countries.

3. What are the consequences of migrating illegally?

Crossing a border illegally is against the law. Most often, the people organizing illegal migration (the smuggling of people) are members of criminal networks. Sometimes the smugglers can also be traffickers and therefore migrants who pay someone to organize their journey are taking serious risks that might land them in prison or in a trafficking situation. Even if they reach their destination safely, the irregular status of migrants poses a considerable threat to their well-being. Irregular migrants often live in the margin of society, trying to avoid contact with authorities, as that may result in imprisonment and deportation. They have virtually no rights in the place of their residence, including limited or no legal access to social and healthcare services, and may be compelled, due to their precarious circumstances, into unsafe working conditions and accommodation. They are therefore extremely vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, and can easily become victims of human trafficking. Additionally, people who leave their home country legally can end up living as irregular migrants, for example, by overstaying their visas or due to expiration of their travel documents. Sometimes people are not even aware of their status, which severely hampers the realization of their rights. Regular status means that migrants are truly members of their host communities; with rights, privileges and obligations to fulfill according to the country's relevant laws.

4. What are the main reasons for leaving?

According to a survey carried out by IOM in mid-2006, the most common reason for migrants to leave Moldova was the will to earn a better living: the decision might be made because of low pay, unemployment or poverty. Among the pull factors migrants listed the low costs of migration and advice they had received to go to a particular country. Guarantees of employment and expected good working conditions, as well as the existence of social contacts abroad, are other central factors. Some also expect the living conditions to be better abroad.

5. What are the main countries of destination?

Since the late 1990s, migration from Moldova has been towards two regions: CIS countries, predominantly Russia (62% of migrants in 2008), and Western Europe, particularly Italy (14.5% of migrants in 2008). Other important destination countries host between 4% and 1% and include, by decreasing order, Ukraine, Turkey, Portugal, Romania, Greece France, Czech Republic, Israel, Spain and USA.

6. What do the migrants do abroad?

According to a survey carried out mid-2008, the main sector of employment for Moldovan migrants is construction, in which more than half are employed. The second largest sector is services, in which approximately one in five Moldovan migrants earns a living. Smaller numbers of migrants are employed in trade, transport, housekeeping and care, industry and mining, and in agriculture.

7. How much money do Moldovan migrants send back to Moldova?

The total of remittances sent through formal channels alone was 1.65 billion USD in 2008. In addition there are remittances sent through informal channels – typically bus-drivers or fellow migrants going home – which are estimated to have accounted for another 400 million USD the same year.

8. Is there any migration to Moldova?

Yes. The Government of the Republic of Moldova establishes annually a quota for labor immigrants (2,068 in 2008). In 2008, 2,749 immigrants were given residence status. 1,136 persons came as labor migrants (especially from Turkey, Romania, Ukraine, Italy and Russia), but those who came to Moldova for family reunification are almost as numerous, coming largely from the same countries as the labor migrants. In addition in 2008 a little over 500 people moved to Moldova for studies.

III Trafficking

1. What is human trafficking?

Trafficking is the exploitation of another person or their work through deception, coercion, often in surroundings unfamiliar to the person exploited. Traffickers rely on a wide variety of methods, often taking advantage of people in a vulnerable position, such as irregular migrants. The international legal definition of trafficking describes it as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation”. (UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_%20traff_eng.pdf)

2. How many victims are there?

It is impossible to give a total number. The full scale of trafficking from/in Moldova remains unknown as many victims are not identified in the destination countries or in Moldova due to changes in trends in trafficking, fear of stigmatization, low level of self identification, limited knowledge of human rights/trafficking issues, as well as the inability or unwillingness of some victims to report their trafficking experiences to the authorities. One indication of the extent of the trafficking phenomenon in Moldova is the total number of those assisted as victims of trafficking by IOM Chisinau. From 2000 to 2008, this number is 2,443 persons. Added to this number, there have been 1,016 children of victims, 50 stranded migrants and 1,674 cases at risk of being trafficked for a total number of 5,183 persons who have been assisted by IOM Moldova from 2000-2008.

3. Who is trafficked and for what purpose?

The work and experience of IOM Moldova shows that most Moldovan victims are women and girls trafficked for the purpose of sexual and/or labor exploitation. Offers of work are the most common bait used by recruiters. Many girls and women believe that they are going to be working as shop assistants, house keepers or similar professions, but are instead

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forced to work in the sex industry through coercion, violence and threats. Men and boys have also been trafficked for forced begging and for forced labor in the construction, agriculture, and service sectors. Children are usually trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced begging, theft and other delinquent activities.

4. If someone knows they are going to work in the sex industry can they still be a victim of trafficking?

Yes. Recent information shows a growing trend that more victims are accepting high-risk jobs (waitress, dancer, prostitute, hostess etc.). The main reason for this is despair caused by poverty, unemployment, low salaries and sometimes also psychosocial trauma as a result of domestic violence, including physical and psychological abuse, incest and rape. Even if a person accepts to work in a job linked with the sex industry, they can still become a victim of trafficking if the offer they accept differs considerably from the conditions they face in the destination country. People go to work abroad to earn money, to provide for themselves and their families, but sometimes end up in a situation where they earn little if any money, and have to work and live under terrible conditions. No-one voluntarily chooses exploitation: risking their mental and physical health, earning no or hardly any money and living in much worse conditions than in their home country, regardless of the field of work or country of destination.

5. In Moldova, how are people recruited into trafficking?

Most people are lured into the networks of trafficking by promises of job opportunities. Often the person making the proposal is someone the victims know and trust, for example a friend, relative, or a neighbor. Working abroad is perceived as a way to earn more money to support their family and to live a decent life. Based on the interviews conducted with trafficking victims assisted by IOM, around 90% suffered from domestic violence prior to their recruitment; their situation at home was already untenable and they were looking for a way out. The high incidence of domestic violence among victims of trafficking and its role as a push-factor has been reported also by other agencies, for example by Winrock International (see www.winrock.org.md). Some are professionals who can not find work responding to their education and experience. Young people attracted by employment opportunities abroad are especially vulnerable and can easily fall victim to trafficking. In addition to false promises of jobs, another method of recruitment is through false marriage proposals. Once the victims are recruited, they are then transferred, sometimes through other countries, to the country of destination. It is often only once there that people realize they have been deceived. Their passports and personal belongings are often taken away and they are often monitored at all times. Through violence, debt-bondage and threats to their families, victims are held in captivity to prevent escape. They are forced into various activities that produce money for their traffickers (sexual exploitation, forced labor, begging, etc.).

6. Does organ trafficking occur in Moldova?

Trafficking for the purpose of removal of organs is a form of trafficking and in Moldova some people have been victims of this, especially some years ago. During the last two years, 8 victims of organ trafficking have been assisted by IOM. There exists, however, a more significant pattern of organ transplant related exploitation in terms of people being deceived in the process of selling an organ; people who agreed to sell an organ may be paid less than promised and in some cases there is no payment at all. Furthermore, consent for the transaction may be obtained under varying degrees of coercion. Victims of kidney trafficking face not only the socio-economic problems that caused them to consider selling their kidney in the first place, but also serious health problems due to the lack of information and lack of adequate post-surgery health care. Selling a kidney or another organ is viewed as a last resort to overcome poverty, and victims often do not realize the serious long term consequences of the procedure. Traffickers take advantage of the victim's profound despair to obtain their consent. Those who sell kidneys are often precluded from taking legal action against the traffickers when they face the reality of what happened to them as they have often unwittingly signed false affidavits saying they consent to donate a kidney.

7. Are the victims always trafficked abroad?

No. Not all cases of trafficking involve crossing a border and there has been an increase of identified cases of internal trafficking. For example, the traffickers may bring persons from rural areas to the cities and force them into prostitution/forced labor/begging. Sometimes, persons trafficked in their own country can at a later stage be trafficked abroad. In 2008, 30 Moldovan nationals were assisted by IOM as victims of internal trafficking vs. 2004, when only six such cases were identified.

8. What are the main destination countries?

Moldovans have been, and continue to be, trafficked to more than 42 destination countries. These include Western Europe, South Eastern Europe, the Middle East, the United States, and the former Soviet Union (CIS countries); primarily

Russia. In 2008, the main destination countries were: Turkey (31%), Russia (22.8%), Moldova (20.2%), United Arab Emirates (5.7%), and Cyprus (4.4%).

9. Who are the traffickers?

One third of Moldovan victims of trafficking are recruited by an acquaintance; one in six by a close friend. Recruiters are from every age group, and include e.g. young women who can be good at manipulating their peers, using their dreams and aspirations as weapons against them. The recruiters often come from the same dire social and economic background as their recruits, and are willing to put their financial interests ahead of the welfare of others. There are also private employment agencies, who recruit job seekers to send them abroad with the purpose of exploiting them. Sometimes victims are forced to “buy” their freedom by recruiting others.

10. What happens to Moldovans returning home after a trafficking experience?

Most trafficking survivors come from a background that is vulnerable economically and socially. Upon return home, they often find themselves in the same conditions, or even worse. The victims who talk about their experience can be rejected by their family, and they often face social stigma, with no chance of returning to normal life and very little means to make a living. Victims usually suffer from serious health problems, both physical and mental, due to their traumatizing experiences. The risk of re-trafficking among victims who face these difficulties is high. Identifying and assisting victims is therefore as important as it is challenging. Rehabilitation and reintegration measures are important recovery processes, which may take months and even years. In Moldova, IOM is one of the organizations assisting victims of trafficking. The Chisinau Assistance and Protection Centre (CAPC), is run by the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, in partnership with IOM Moldova. The CAPC provides rehabilitation measures in the initial crisis phase after identification. These measures include social support, psychological counseling, medical assistance and legal support. As the only facility of its kind in Moldova, the CAPC provides assistance services in a safe and friendly environment. While staying at the CAPC, a reintegration plan is developed, and it can involve different types of measures: counseling and psychosocial support, medical assistance, socio-economic empowerment, professional development, formal and informal education, and so forth. If a beneficiary of the CAPC for some reason cannot return home after the completion of the crisis intervention phase, the Centre’s staff will assist them with referrals to institutions that provide long-term assistance, or to transitional housing. The CAPC can accommodate and provide assistance to 24 beneficiaries.

11. What is being done to combat trafficking in Moldova?

In recent years the Government of the Republic of Moldova has taken a number of legislative, organizational, administrative and other measures to advance the fight against trafficking. In 2005-2006, the Parliament ratified the most important international convention, and adopted the Law on Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Human Beings. This law has additions and amendments to the Criminal and Administrative Code and other regulations aimed at enhancing liability for trafficking crimes, as well as related crimes, such as the organization of illegal migration. Progress has been achieved in the criminal prosecution of trafficking cases. There are also various proactive non-governmental organizations providing assistance and support to victims of human trafficking, implementing programs aimed at preventing this phenomenon among risk groups through public awareness raising campaigns and through direct assistance to at-risk groups. In Moldova, the most important mechanism in preventing trafficking in human beings is the National Referral System.

12. What is the National Referral System?

The National Referral System (NRS) is the central mechanism in the fight against trafficking; it is a system of cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors. All major stakeholders involved in counter trafficking in Moldova participate in the NRS and the Government has full ownership over the system. The NRS is designed to facilitate access to protection services by establishing and employing referral procedures. The NRS strategy is aimed at gradual integration of the existing system of assistance and protection of trafficking victims into the national system of assistance and protection of socially vulnerable groups of the population. The NRS therefore serves to both prevent trafficking as well as to protect and assist those who have fallen victim to this crime. The NRS works to delegate responsibility of the assistance and protection of trafficking victims, with observance for their rights, from international and non-governmental organizations to state agencies. Within the NRS, the state takes the leading role and acts as the coordinator of assistance and prevention measures. On February 10, 2009, the Strategy and Action Plan for the NRS entered into force and became a binding document after its approval by the Parliament.

The NRS was originally launched by IOM Moldova in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP), in 5 pilot rayons in 2006. Currently the NRS has been expanded to 27 territorial administrative units: 24 rayons including 1 rayon in Transnistria, 2 municipalities and 1 town. By 2011 the NRS is expected to provide assistance and protection to vulnerable persons in every community of the Republic of Moldova.

13. Have There Been Recent Government Achievements in the Fight Against Trafficking?

In October 2008, the United States Government, in recognition of efforts made by the Government to address the trafficking problem, upgraded Moldova to Tier 2 Watch List on the Trafficking in Persons Report scale. This was a significant improvement from the previous position as a Tier 3 (the lowest ranking) country. Among the positive steps taken by the Government of Moldova are the openings of new investigations of alleged trafficking involving law enforcement officials, high-level statements condemning trafficking-related complicity, drafting a code of conduct for law enforcement personnel, and the establishment of an anonymous reporting mechanism for trafficking related complicity of officials.

III Basic Figures

Republic of Moldova



Capital	Chisinau
Population	3,877,000
Area:	33,845 sq km
Official Language	Moldovan
Other Languages	Russian, Gagauz
Currency:	Moldovan Leu (MDL)
GDP Index:	0.508
GDP:	USD 2.9 billion
GDP PPP	USD 8.8 billion
GDP per Capita	USD 694
GDP per Capita PPP	USD 2,100
HDI Rank:	111 of 177
Population Living Below Poverty Line	64.7%
Remittances (Estimated):	USD 1.18 billion
Net Migration Rate	1.9 migrants/1,000 population
Immigrants	10.5%
Women as %age of Immigrants:	57.8%
Percentage of Population under 15:	20%
HIV Prevalence:	1.1%
Life Expectancy	68.4 years
Adult literacy rate	99.1%

IV FAQ sources and statistics

- The Socio-Economic Impact of the Economic Crisis on Migration and Remittances in the Republic of Moldova (March 2009).

- Labour Migration and Remittances in Moldova: Is the Boom Over?

Trends and Preliminary Findings from the IOM - CBSAXA Panel Household Survey 2006 - 2008

- Migration in Moldova: Country Profile 2008.

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- Recommendations of the policy seminar on diaspora and homeland development (April 2008).
- Recent Trends in Migration and Remittances in Moldova: The CBSAXA Survey 2006
- Trafficking As It Is: IOM Moldova 2006
- IOM Moldova Experience and Presentations on Counter-Trafficking
- Counter-Trafficking Module (CTM), the largest global database with primary data on VoTs.

The CTM has been created by IOM in order to facilitate the assistance of VoTs as well as to map the victims' experience and to understand the causes, processes, trends and consequences of trafficking. It serves as a knowledge bank, from which statistics and detailed reports can be drawn, informing research, programme development and policy making on counter trafficking. All the confidential data are protected in order to preserve privacy and security of the VoTs assisted.

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