



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

Migration in Moldova: A Country Profile

2008



Source: <http://people.csail.mit.edu/dodis/images/moldova-map.gif>

Basic facts

Area, km ²	33,843
Capital	Chisinau
Population, 2004	4.2 million
Net migration rate	-1.13 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2007 estimate)*
Urban/rural distribution	
Share of urban population, 2005	46 percent
Share of rural population, 2005	54 percent
Total aid as a proportion of GDP, 2004	4.5 percent
Adult literacy rate	98.4 percent
Life expectancy at birth	68.1 years
GDP per capita, PPP (2005)	USD 2,869

* CIA Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/md.html>

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Executive Summary: General Assessment of Migration Issues

The collapse of the Soviet Union not only allowed Moldova to re-claim its independence (on 27 August 1991) but also gave its citizens the opportunity to move relatively free across state borders with main flows heading primarily towards Europe. Moldovans started to emigrate soon enough after the country proclaimed its independence,¹ but emigration (especially labour migration) has allegedly started to peak in the late 1990s following a severe economic crisis. By 2005, the outflows of migrants had tripled and labour migration became the main component of Moldovan emigration (from less than 100,000 in 1999 to more than 400,000 in 2005). Most of this migration is temporary, as an IOM survey has shown, with only 14 per cent of the migrants planning to settle abroad permanently.² Roughly 52 per cent of labour emigrants engage in seasonal work, most of them to countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). By comparison, those who choose to migrate to the European Union (EU), e.g., Italy, Portugal, and United Kingdom, due to the risks and high costs involved in frequent illegal travel, leave Moldova for extended periods and a significant number even intend to settle abroad (23 percent).

As a result of the increasing outflows, remittances has become one of the most important sources of income for many Moldovan households, while also financing the country's trade account deficit. In fact, Moldova is a leading country in the world in terms of the share of remittances to the GDP. Around 40 per cent of the Moldovan population live in households that receive remittances (see Section 3 below). In these households, remittances play a major role in their finances. Specifically, remittances fund more than half of the current expenditures in about 60 per cent of all remittance-receiving households.³ To a certain extent, remittances may also alleviate the poverty incidence of the receiving households.⁴ The research also shows that remittances also have a positive impact on non-migrant households.

Immigration flows to Moldova has been a less researched issue. Current flows are rather insignificant in terms of regular migration (see Table 1). Irregular immigration numbers are equally low as Moldova is basically a net emigration country. On the other hand, irregular migration of Moldovans is quite extensive. Its scope, whether crossing the border illegally, overstaying a regular tourist visa, or undertaking undocumented jobs, varies across destination countries. For example, since travelling to CIS countries is generally visa-free, the extent of irregular crossing of border is rather low; however, working with no authorization in the Russian Federation and Ukraine is a quite widespread phenomenon, resulting in many labour migrants having an irregular status. As to the extent of illegal migration to the EU, a research indicates that one in four migrants travel to the EU illegally. In general, 40 per cent of the migrants⁵ for both CIS (minus those that take on jobs in construction) and EU countries engage in irregular employment and live without proper documentation.

Given the recent advent of emigration, Moldovan diasporas are an emerging phenomenon in many countries (see Section 4 on how existing research distinguishes diaporas from migrant

¹ Migration was mainly ethnically driven, with most of the flows heading to Israel.

² IOM commissioned a survey conducted by CBS-AXA in 2006, in Lücke, Matthias, Toman Omar Mahmoud and Pia Pinger (2007) *Recent Trends in Migration and Remittances in Moldova: The CBSAXA Survey 2006*, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, http://www.iom.md/materials/patterns_en.pdf

³ CBS-AXA Survey 2006, in IOM Chisinau (2007) *Remittances in the Republic of Moldova: Patterns, Trends, and Effects*, International Organization for Migration, Chisinau. It is sometimes argued that remittances are used mainly for consumptive rather than for investment purposes and are therefore somehow wasted. However, since Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe, it is of no surprise that increasing consumption ranks high on the agenda of remittance-receiving households.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ CBS-AXA—2006 Sociological Research, in IOM Kiev (2007) *Labour Migration Assessment for the WNIS Region*.

communities). However, existing Moldovan communities abroad do not qualify, with some exceptions, as established communities that help their country politically and financially (in the sense, fuelling money directly into the economy). However, Moldovan communities maintain a strong link to their home community, which is materialized through the sending of remittances, but this only indirectly helps the country. Such a connection can, however, be further developed by creating institutionalized mechanisms for accessing and mobilizing Moldovan migrants.

1. Immigrants

1.1. Number of immigrants

----- 440,121⁶ (2005)

As percentage of total population-----10.5 (2005)⁷

Gender ratio-----57.8% female (2005)⁸

Table 1. Flows of temporary immigrants in Moldova, 2001-2006

Number of temporary stay permits issued to foreigners						
2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
925	1219	1750	1743	1763	1961	9361
Number of fixed-term stay permits issued to foreigners						
1105	2360	3185	2892	3130	3144	15816

Source: Cross-Border Cooperation/Soderkoping Process, <http://soderkoping.org.ua/page12515.html>

Note: In 2007, 2,070 immigrants have been admitted to Moldova (i.e., 100% of the allocated quota): 1,002 for labour migration, 847 for family reunification, and 221 for studies.⁹

1.2. Status of immigrants

Refugees¹⁰-----161 (2006)

Asylum seekers¹¹-----78 (2006)

On 31 December 2007, 230 aliens were registered with the Office for Refugees: 89 refugees, 64 on humanitarian protection, and 79 asylum seekers.¹²

⁶ World Bank, Development Prospects Group (2008) *Migration and Remittances Factbook*, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/Moldova.pdf>. Their source is the UN Population Division statistics that show the estimated number of international migrants (both sexes) at mid-year.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ministry of Interior (2008) Note on the Activity of the Office for Migration and Asylum in 2007 (Nota informativa privind activitatea Biroului migrație și azil în anul 2007).

¹⁰ UNCHR (2006) *Statistical Yearbook 2006. Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons*. Figures represent end-of-2006 statistics. Data are provisional and subject to change. Status as of 15 June 2007. The figure refers to "Persons recognized as refugees under the 1951 UN Convention/1967 Protocol, the 1969 OAU Convention, in accordance with the UNHCR Statute, persons granted a complementary form of protection and those granted temporary protection".

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ministry of Interior (2008) Note on the Activity of the Office for Migration and Asylum in 2007 (Nota informativa privind activitatea Biroului migrație și azil în anul 2007).

Flows of labour migrants

2005 ¹³	2006 ¹⁴	2007 ¹⁵
731	828	1002

1.3. Main countries of origin of immigrants

Turkey, Ukraine, Russia, Romania, Azerbaijan, USA, Belarus¹⁶

Table 2. Bilateral estimates of immigrant stock, 2007

Country	Number
Belgium	749
France	9,724
Italy	6,093
United Kingdom	1,619
United States	373
Others	6,092
Total	24,650

Source: World Bank 2007¹⁷

2. Emigrants

2.1. Number of emigrants

-----705,333 (2005)¹⁸

As percentage of total population-----16.8 (2005)¹⁹

Table 3. Bilateral estimate of migrant stock, 2007

Country	No.
Belarus	2778
Canada	2655
Germany	16430
Greece	5511
Ireland	1510
Israel	19243
Italy	6927
Kazakhstan	7875
Latvia	4498

¹³ Ministry of Interior (2007) Note on migration and asylum in 2006 (Nota Informativa cu privire la situatia in domeniul migratiunii și azilului pe parcursul anului 2006), <http://www.migratie.md/about/moldova/dept/statistic/>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ministry of Interior (2008) Note on the Activity of the Office for Migration and Asylum in 2007 (Nota informativa privind activitatea Biroului migrație și azil în anul 2007).

¹⁶ Ministry of Interior (2008) Note on the Activity of the Office for Migration and Asylum in 2007 (Nota informativa privind activitatea Biroului migrație și azil în anul 2007), http://www.migratie.md/cgi/jump.cgi?DB=Document&view=Doc_File_ro&ID=1135.

See also World Bank, Development Prospects Group (2008) *Migration and Remittances Factbook*, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/Moldova.pdf>.

¹⁷ Ratha and Shaw (2007) Bilateral Estimates of Migrants Stocks Database, *South-South Migration and Remittances*, World Bank, Washington, D.C.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Portugal	3564
Romania	39292
Russian Federation	279909
Spain	5010
Turkey	2461
Ukraine	218830
United States	22811
Other	66,230
Total	705533

Source: World Bank 2007²⁰

2.2. Status of emigrants

Refugees-----11,680 (2006)²¹

Asylum seekers-----1,265 (2006)²²

Labour migrants

As of mid-2006, approximately one-quarter of the economically active population of Moldova was working abroad. This suggests that 345,000 individuals are migrant workers representing 25.4 per cent of Moldova's economically active population.²³ According to the same source, 58.4 per cent of migrants are male and 41.6 per cent are female, with the main sectors of employment of Moldovans abroad being construction (51.6%), transport (10.8%), housekeeping and care (7.8%), trade (11.6%), services (21.4%), industry and mining (5.5%), and agriculture (3.9%).

A system of collecting adequate information on labour migration and its effects is being gradually developed in Moldova. In particular, the problems of Moldovan labour force migration were presented in a separate volume of the 2004 Census results (the census counted 242,300 Moldovan labour migrants in 2004). Another major source of information on the number of long-term labour migrants is the results of the labour force survey that are collected on a quarterly basis by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Data show that, starting from 1999, the number of Moldovan labour migrants has been increasing (from 57,000 in 1999 to almost 430,000 in 2005). Nevertheless, grasping the exact number of Moldovans abroad is a daunting exercise. According to some sources, estimates may exceed 800,000.²⁴

2.3. Main countries of destination

In the early 1990s, Israel was the predominant destination of Moldovan emigrants, and to a lesser extent, Germany and the United States. By the end of the 1990s, emigration directions

²⁰ Ratha and Shaw (2007) Bilateral Estimates of Migrants Stocks Database, *South-South Migration and Remittances*. World Bank, Washington, D.C.

²¹ UNCHR (2006) *Statistical Yearbook 2006. Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons*. Figures represent end-of-2006 statistics. Data are provisional and subject to change. Status as of 15 June 2007. The figure refers to "Persons recognized as refugees under the 1951 UN Convention/1967 Protocol, the 1969 OAU Convention, in accordance with the UNHCR Statute, persons granted a complementary form of protection and those granted temporary protection".

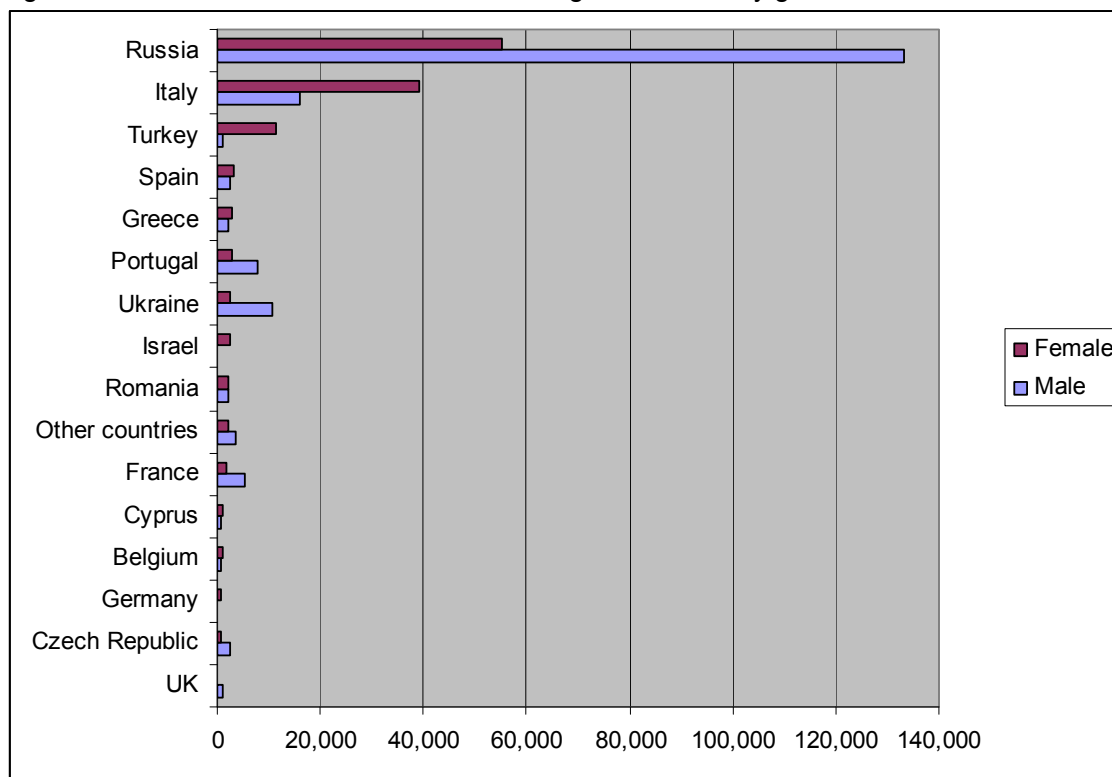
²² Ibid.

²³ Lücke, Matthias, Toman Omar Mahmoud, and Pia Pinger (2007) *Patterns and Trends of Migration and Remittances in Moldova*, International Organization for Migration.

²⁴ Schwartz, Raviv (2007) *Exploring the Link between Migrant Communities Abroad (MCA) and Moldova*, International Organization for Migration, Chişinău.

have changed towards the CIS countries, mostly the Russian Federation and Ukraine, and Western Europe, with large outflows to Italy.

Figure 1. Destination countries of Moldovan migrants, 2006, by gender



Source: Figures from the CBS-AXA Survey 2006 in Lücke, Matthias, Toman Omar Mahmoud, and Pia Pinger (2007) *Patterns and Trends of Migration and Remittances in Moldova*, International Organization for Migration.

3. Remittances

3.1. Quantitative aspects of remittances

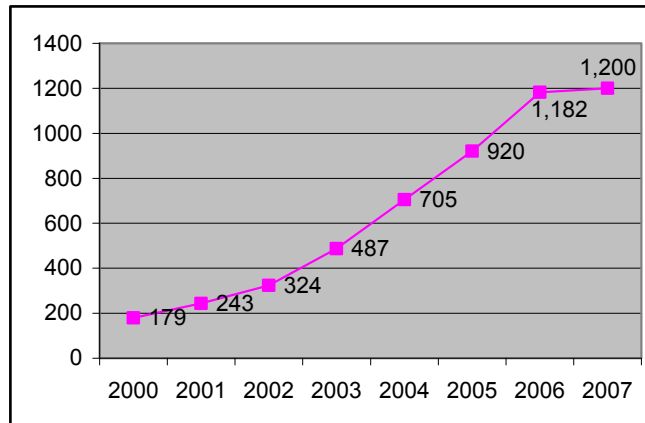
The volume of remittances to Moldova has increased gradually since the late 1990s, from USD 87 million in 1996 to USD 324 million in 2003 and to USD 1,182 million in 2006.²⁵ The ratio of remittances to GDP constituted more than 30 per cent in 2004, which represented the topmost ratio among the Central and East European economies and the CIS region and the third in the world after Tonga and Haiti (according to the World Bank 2006 report on remittances). Moldova's ratio of remittances to GDP was also the highest in the world in 2006 (36.2%, equal to that in Tajikistan).²⁶ According to the World Bank, remittances finance over 50 per cent of the country's trade deficit since the late 1990s and represent more than 30 per cent of the country's exports.²⁷ Thus, remittances have been one of the main drivers of economic growth since 2002, although with certain negative effects on inflation.

²⁵ World Bank, Development Prospects Group (2008) *Migration and Remittances Factbook*, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/Moldova.pdf>

²⁶ World Bank Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/Developing.pdf>

²⁷ Mansoor, Ali and Bruce Quillin (2006) *Migration and Remittances. Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union*, World Bank, Washington.

Figure 2. Remittances to Moldova, 2000-2007 (in USD millions)

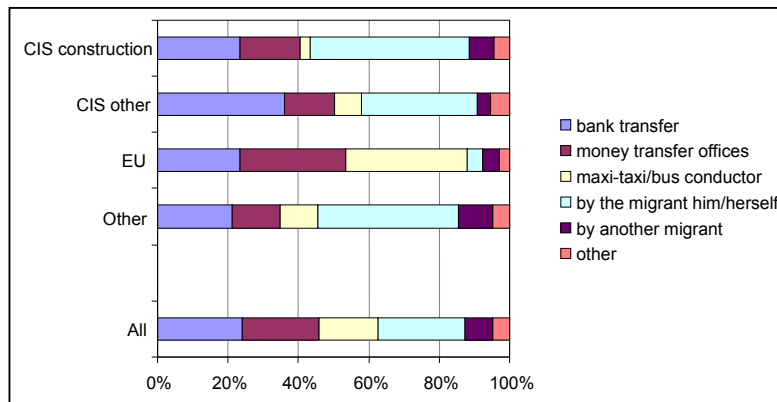


Source: World Bank Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008; estimates for 2007

3.2. Qualitative aspects of remittances

According to an IOM-commissioned survey of Moldovan households in 2006,²⁸ migrants use three principal methods to transfer remittances: bank transfers, express money transfer services, and cash transfers by informal courier or by themselves. The use of channel varies across migrant groups. Apparently, migrants in the CIS or other non-EU countries, mostly seasonal, are likely to bring their earnings back themselves. Among EU migrants who tend to be away from Moldova for extended periods, both electronic transfers (through banks or express money transfer services) and informal money couriers are more important (coach couriers). Overall, 30 per cent of remittances have been reported to be transmitted through bank transfers. Only 5 per cent more of transfers are done by conductors (train or bus) in rural areas than in urban ones. The prevalence of other methods that have been used to transfer funds is: through money transfer offices, 25 per cent; train and maxi-taxi/bus conductor, 21 per cent; migrant brings remittance on a visit, 28 per cent; and someone else brings it on a visit, 9 per cent (more than one method could be used).²⁹

Figure 3. Main channels of remittance transfer from Moldovan migrants by region of destination, 2006



Source: CBS-AXA survey 2006, in IOM Chisinau (2007) *Remittances in the Republic of Moldova: Patterns, Trends, and Effects*, International Organization for Migration, Chisinau, p. 10.

²⁸ CBS-AXA Survey 2006, in IOM Chisinau (2007) *Remittances in the Republic of Moldova: Patterns, Trends, and Effects*, International Organization for Migration, Chisinau.

²⁹ Ibid.

Moreover, other research studies point out that the amount of financial remittances transmitted via formal channels by Moldovan migrant workers increased from USD 87 millions in 1996 to USD 317 millions in 2003.³⁰ The increasing level of remittance income has various effects. Ghencea and Gudumac (2004)³¹ affirm that remittances constituted on average 87 per cent of the remittance-receiving households' budgets in 2003, with the largest share invested either in housing, university/school fees, or medical treatment. In addition to money, more than 30 per cent of labour migrants sent home goods such as clothes, food, household appliances, or medicine. Moreover, in two-thirds of migrant households, remittances constituted the main or the only source of income. The findings of the 2006 IOM-commissioned survey³² also suggest that remittances may contribute to poverty reduction. After the economic crisis in 1998, which triggered a massive wave of migration, both migrant and non-migrant households experienced similar poverty incidence of almost 40 per cent. In 2006, the poverty incidence has fallen to around 20 per cent for migrant households and to 32 per cent for non-migrant households.³³ Furthermore, remittances constituted over 30 per cent of the household expenditures in Moldova in 2004,³⁴ while the IOM research³⁵ found that more than half of current expenditures in almost 60 per cent of all remittance-receiving households is financed through remittances. Another finding of this research is that remittances increase asset ownership for their recipients, relieving the financial constraints of the household and offering investment opportunities. Thus, it is estimated that the recent real estate boom has been triggered partially by remittances. The IOM survey data also show that remittances are invested in human capital development. The results of the survey demonstrate that youngsters in migrant households are more likely to enrol in undergraduate and graduate studies than their counterparts in non-migrant households. Likewise, households with member(s) abroad are almost four times more likely to have savings exceeding USD 500.

4. Migrant Communities/Diasporas

A recent research,³⁶ focused on the Moldovan migrant communities in Italy, the Russian Federation, and Israel, identified several positive aspects of this community such as their large numbers and geographic concentration in certain large urban centres (i.e., Moscow); the image of Moldovans as adaptive, reliable, and motivated workers; the organic nature of their link with the homeland; the existence of voluntary individual/community initiatives designed to improve the plight of migrant communities abroad; and the active role of the church. Presently, approximately one-quarter of the economically active population of Moldova is located abroad. According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) compiled by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the number of labour migrants grew from less than 100,000 in 1999 to more than 400,000 at the end of 2005.³⁷ The majority of Moldovan migrants (59%) are found in the Russian Federation, most of whom are men employed in construction. Italy is also a significant destination of Moldovan migrants (approximately 17%) as are, to a lesser extent, the other "Latin" countries of Portugal and Spain. However, the precise figures of Moldovans abroad are hard to grasp. Perhaps equally blurred is the answer to whether there are established diasporas' communities. The research mentioned

³⁰ European Neighbourhood Policy, Moldova Country Report 2004, <http://www.ec.europa.eu>

³¹ Ghencea, Boris and Igor Gudumac (2004) Labour Migration and Remittances in the Republic of Moldova, Moldova Microfinance Alliance, Chişinău, http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00002327/01/Raport_Migration_Remittances_2.pdf

³² CBS-AXA Survey 2006, in IOM Chisinau (2007) *Remittances in the Republic of Moldova: Patterns, Trends, and Effects*, International Organization for Migration, Chisinau.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 11..

³⁴ According to Mansoor, Ali and Bruce Quillin (2006) *Migration and Remittances. Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union*, World Bank, Washington, D.C. p. 65.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, note 26.

³⁶ Schwartz, Raviv (2007) *Exploring the Link between Migrant Communities Abroad (MCA) and Moldova*, International Organization for Migration, Chişinău.

³⁷ Labour force survey data, in Lücke, Matthias, Toman Omar Mahmoud, and Pia Pinger (2007) *Patterns and Trends of Migration and Remittances in Moldova*, International Organization for Migration, p. 18.

above states that given the relative brief history of migration from Moldova, it is rather difficult to label it as such as compared to the Israeli or Armenian diasporas.³⁸

4.1. Description of the relationship between diasporas and country of origin

Whatever the exact size of the Moldovan community abroad, their allegiance to the home community is indisputable. Increasing remittances are the principal means through which Moldovan emigrants express their link to Moldova. Section 3 above has highlighted the important role remittances play both at the macro and micro levels. As the recent research has found, migrants tend to interpret remittances as “their contribution to the wellbeing of Moldova”.³⁹ Likewise, the research has identified as a major drawback in the relationship between the emigrants and the home community the insufficient deployment of diplomatic staff (i.e., far too less consulates, for example, in Italy and Russia) while many migrants also contest its efficiency and role in representing them beyond bureaucratic help. Likewise, the lack of regular and reliable means of receiving information from the home community disrupts the prospective relationship between the diasporas and Moldova. For example, there are no Moldovan newspapers published in Italy or Russia, while newspapers or magazines published in Moldova are rarely available on time for emigrants; yet most of the Moldovan newspapers have an Internet version. Still, a considerable part of Moldovan migrants in Italy and most of migrants to Russia do not have access or do not know how to use the Internet.

In spite of these, Moldovans abroad maintain a strong connection with Moldova. This link, claims the research, is primarily family related rather than pertaining to a larger collective identity. De facto examples of individual or community-based initiatives emerge, however. For instance, permanent residents in Italy, of Moldovan origin, found voluntary organizations to assist Moldovan migrants in matters related to their status in Italy. Similar efforts have been identified in Russia and Israel (see also next subsection for more information on Moldovan diasporas’ organizations).

4.2. Migrant communities/diasporas’ organizations⁴⁰

(Please note the list below do not purport to be exhaustive or representative. IOM does not take responsibility for the accuracy of the contact details.)

Russian Federation

- **Moldova Cultural Center in Moscow** (http://www.moldembassy.ru/kultura_ru/)
Located at the Moscow School #164, an elementary school featuring a large number of Moldovan children and even a room dedicated to Moldovan culture and artifacts and offering Moldovan language instruction.

Moscow, Костромская ул. 14в
Tel.: 902-2227 (in Moscow)

- **Cultural and Commercial Center of Moldova**
Moscow, Проспект Мира д.5 стр.2
Tel.: 208-8557 (in Moscow)

³⁸ Schwartz, Raviv (2007) *Exploring the Link between Migrant Communities Abroad (MCA) and Moldova*, International Organization for Migration, Chişinău.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 17..

⁴⁰ The following information is the result of IOM investigations and inquiries with the Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

- **Moldovan Orthodox Church** in Moscow
Representative: Father Irineu
- **“Speranța” Moldovan Cultural and Educational Society**
Representative: Lydia Mikheeva
Tel.: +79261240674 (in Moscow)

United States

- **The Moldova Foundation** (<http://foundation.moldova.org/pagini/rom/10/10/>)
This is the only organization outside of Moldova advocating for more support to Moldova from Western countries (mainly the United States and the European Union). Incorporated in Virginia, its network includes professionals from Australia, Israel, Moldova, Nigeria, Sweden, and the United States. Its main goal is to increase support for the economic reforms and democratic transformations in the Republic of Moldova, to strengthen freedom of speech, pluralism, and private initiative.
- **Moldovan-American Chamber of Commerce** (<http://www.racc.ro/macc/>)
New York
- **Partnership with Moldova**
(http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/international/new_site/Moldova.htm)
North Carolina State University:
- **Moldovan Soccer Club in Seattle “Haiduc Moldova”**
(<http://www.haiducmoldova.com/echipa.html>)

Italy

- **Moldovan Citizens’ Association**, Rome
Representative: Eduard Gherciu
- **Association of Moldovan Women**, Trieste
Representative: Doyna Babenko
- **Asociația De Integrare Socio-Culturală Cetățenii Moldoveni În Italia**
(<http://www.moldaviinitalia.com/chiesa.htm>)

Romania

- **Organization of Basarabian Students** (<http://www.basarabeni.ro/>)

Ireland

- **Eastern European Association of Ireland** (<http://www.easterneuropean.org>)
This association represents several European countries including Moldova.

United Kingdom

- **Moldova-London Interest Group** (<http://opensociety.meetup.com/35/>)
A social group; website not targeting exclusively Moldovans living in London; caters also to those who are interested in Moldovan culture.
- **Moldovan Community in the UK** (<http://unitedmoldovans.blogspot.com/>)
Members meet monthly in London and other cities.
Tel.: (London) 077 030 16947 - Serafim (Comitetul Organizatoric Central); (Northampton) 078 179 23855 – Denis, Bradford - 078 908 31163 – Ion, Soccer team (Fotbal "Moldovans United") - 079 023 52168 – Igor
Email: unitedmoldovans@yahoo.com

Israel

- Association of Bessarabian Jews in Israel

5. Irregular migration

5.1. Figures and information on irregular movements

Inflows

Table 4. Foreign citizens and stateless persons who committed serious violation of stay in Moldova

Number of deported persons from Moldova					
2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
260	524	560	470	305*	2119
Number of persons to which the period of stay in Moldova has been reduced					
49	241	452	505	397*	1595

Source: Data for 2003: 2006 Cross-Border Cooperation/Soderkoping Process⁴¹; Data for 2007: Ministry of Interior⁴²

*Number of decisions issued by judicial authorities for each item.

⁴¹ Available at <http://soderkoping.org.ua/page12510.html>

⁴² Ministry of Interior (2008) Note on the Activity of the Office for Migration and Asylum in 2007 (Notă informativă privind activitatea Biroului migrație și azil în anul 2007).

Outflows

Table 5. Irregular migration of Moldovan migrant workers, 2006

Migrant workers by destination regions and employment industry	People who went abroad illegally (%)	People who lived abroad illegally (%)	People who worked abroad undocumented (%)
Construction workers in CIS countries	20	33	37
Migrants employed in other industries in the CIS	14	24	22
Migrant workers in the EU countries and Israel	38	44	35
Migrant workers in other countries	22	43	41
Total	24	35	32

Source: CBS-AXA—2006 Sociological Research, in IOM Kiev (2007) Labour Migration Assessment for the WNIS Region⁴³

There is a high percentage of irregular migration to EU member states. According to the IOM CBS-AXA survey 2006,⁴⁴ one-third of Moldovan workers living outside their countries of origin are irregular and almost half of them live in the EU without the required permits.

5.2. Figures and information on return migration flows

Between 2005 and 2006, 638 individuals have returned to Moldova through IOM voluntary assisted return programmes. Below is the breakdown of returned people by country of last residence and year.

Table 6. IOM assisted voluntary returns by country of last residence and year

Return from	2005	2006	2007	Total
Austria	92	182	44	318
Belgium	77	62	2	141
Czech Republic	46	6		52
Germany	28	16		44
Hungary		3		3
Ireland	13	9	16	38
Italy		2		2
Netherlands	10	9		19
Portugal	1	4		5
Serbia and Montenegro		18		18
Slovakia	7	33	8	48
United Kingdom	9	28	30	67
Russian Federation	3			3
Other	1		1	1
Total	287	372	101	739

Source: IOM AVR Database

⁴³ Perhaps surprisingly, but respondents of the research choose to answer openly to the question on the status of the migrant(s) belonging to that household. Thus, figures above are quite accurately depicting the irregular migration of Moldovan citizens.

⁴⁴ CBS-AXA—2006 Sociological Research, in IOM Kiev (2007) Labour Migration Assessment for the WNIS Region.

6. Assessment and analysis of migration issues

6.1. Ministries responsible for migration policy and contacts with expatriate communities

The **President of the Republic of Moldova** (<http://www.president.md/>) has powers on decisions regarding acquisition and termination of citizenship and the development of strategic approaches to migration policy as well as the monitoring of its implementation. The **Information and Security Service** (<http://www.sis.md/md/>), under its supervision, acts to counter and prevent irregular migration, human trafficking, and organized crime.

The **Parliament** (<http://www.parlament.md/>) adopts the relevant legislation and ratifies the international legal instruments in the field of migration.

The **Government** (<http://www.gov.md/>), jointly with the Parliament and the President, ensures the management and coordination of the activities of the ministries' and of other government agencies for migration policy implementation. It also establishes annually the immigration quota.

The **Border Guards Service** (http://www.border.gov.md/index_m.htm) monitors border crossings, acting to identify and deport migrants who cross the border illegally or who attempt to enter the country in other illegal ways (e.g., using false document and so on).

The **Ministry of Interior** (<http://www.mai.gov.md/>) has the primary responsibility over controlling and managing migration processes in the Republic of Moldova. The Ministry has the following functions according to a Decree of the Government of the Republic of Moldova:⁴⁵ monitoring and coordination of migration processes; analysis and control over compliance with legislation in the field of migration and granting asylum; development of draft legislation in the field of legal status on regulatory activity of foreign citizens and stateless persons; issuance of letters of invitation, extension of visa validity, and issuance of exit visas from the territory of the Republic of Moldova; and granting of immigrant, refugee, and repatriation status.

The **Bureau on Migration and Asylum** (<http://www.mai.gov.md/biroul-migratie/>), which is under the Ministry of Interior, enforces the execution of the aforementioned functions and has powers to carry out operational and investigative activities. The structure of the Bureau includes the departments of immigration and repatriation; refugees; combating irregular migration; the division of research, planning, and strategy development; the accommodation centre for asylum seekers; and the centre for temporary reception of foreigners.

The **Ministry of Economy and Trade** (<http://www.mec.gov.md/>; <http://www.anofm.md/ro/>) is responsible for labour market regulation, makes suggestions regarding state policy on international labour migration, and issues work permits to foreigners. Through the National Employment Agency and Section for Migration Policies, the Ministry exerts the following functions:

- elaborates, promotes, and implements state policy on labour force migration
- advances proposals on the priorities of the state's migration policy
- ensures harmonization of domestic labour force migration policy with international standards
- drafts proposals on development strategies regarding labour force migration, according to the National Conception on Migration Policies

⁴⁵ Decree of the Government of the Republic of Moldova No. 529 dated 17 May 2006, "On measures for reorganization of central branch public administration bodies" in Pribytkova, Irina and Juris Gromovs (2007) Migration Trends 2004-2006, Soderkoping Process Countries, <http://soderkoping.org.ua/page70.html>

- analyzes the impact of labour force migration on the socio-economic situation of the country and proposes measures to alleviate the negative effects of this phenomenon
- establishes bilateral and multilateral cooperation on labour force migration
- ensures cooperation with international bodies active in the field.

The **Bureau on Interethnic Relations** (<http://www.bri.gov.md>) within the Government is responsible for coordinating and forging ties with the Moldovan diaspora.

6.2. International legal framework in place relevant to migration

Key International Treaties

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, for accession
- Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty 1989, for ratification
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, for accession
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 2000, signed on 14 December 2000 and in force as of 16 October 2005
- Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 2000, signed on 14 December 2000 and in force as of 16 October 2005
- European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers 1977, signed on 11 July 2007 and in force as of 1 October 2006
- ILO Convention on Labour Migration (1949), ratified on 29 July 2005 and in force as of 11 December 2006

Regional Multilateral Instruments

- Agreement on the creation of the Advisory Council on labour, migration, and social protection of the population of the member states of CIS (1992), signed on and in force as of 13 November 1992
- Agreement on the cooperation of the CIS member states on the fight against irregular migration (1998), signed on 6 March 1998, ratified on 28 February 2002, and in force as of 28 June 2002

Bilateral Labour and Social Security Agreements⁴⁶

- Moldova-Italy agreement on quota for labour migrants and regularization, signed in 2003

⁴⁶ The Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family of the Republic of Moldova has signed cooperation agreements with its counterparts in Italy and Slovenia.

- Agreement on employment and social protection of citizens of the Republic of Belarus employed on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, and of citizens of Moldova employed on the territory of the Republic of Belarus, signed in 1994
- Agreement between Ukraine and Moldova on labour activity and social protection of citizens of Ukraine and Moldova working beyond the borders of their states, signed in 1993 and entered into force in 1994
- Agreement of 27 May 1993 between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Moldova on work activity and social protection of citizens of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Moldova working beyond the borders of their states⁴⁷
- Agreement on cooperation between the National Relations Department of the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Ukrainian Ministry of Nationalities and Migration Problems, signed in Kiev on 19 February 1996 and in force as of 19 February 1996
- Convention between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of the Russian Federation on labour activity and social protection of the Moldovan and Russian citizens employed abroad, signed in Moscow on 27 May 1992, ratified on 12 October 1993, and in force as of 14 October 1993
- Common Statement between the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family of the Republic of Moldova and the Ministry of Labour and Labour Force Participation of the Kingdom of Belgium on cooperation on labour issues, signed in Geneva on 5 June 2000 and in force as of 5 June 2000
- Memorandum on cooperation on social security and labour market between the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family of the Republic of Moldova and the Ministry of Labour of the Republic of Albania, signed in Chişinău on 1 November 2004, ratified on 18 February 2005, and in force as of 9 June 2005
- Agreement on cooperation on social and labour protection of the population between the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family of the Republic of Moldova and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Azerbaijan, signed in Baku on 26 October 2004, ratified on 14 January 2005, and in force as of 10 February 2005
- Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Azerbaijan on labour activity and social protection of the Moldovan citizens working temporarily on the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan and of the Azerbaijani citizens working temporarily on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, signed in Chişinău on 21 April 2005, ratified on 15 December 2005, and in force as of 28 January 2006
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of the Republic of Belarus on labour activity and social protection of Moldovan citizens working on the territory of the Republic of Belarus and of Belarusian citizens working on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, signed in Chişinău on 5 May 1994, ratified on 9 June 1994, and in force as of 25 February 1997

⁴⁷ It applies to workers and their families. In general, the legislation of the country of residence of the workers applies. Contains provisions on equality of rights and obligations with citizens regarding working conditions and access to social services and to cultural and sports activities.

- Memorandum on cooperation on social security and labour market between the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Bulgaria, signed in Sofia on 20 May 2004 and in force as of 20 May 2004
- Protocol on the cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of the Hellenic Republic on social security and labour market, signed in Chişinău on 29 March 2004, ratified on 11 October 2004, and in force as of 1 March 2005
- Declaration on the intentions of cooperation between the Ministry of Economy and Trade of the Republic of Moldova and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Federal Republic of Germany on labour legislation, relations, and protection, signed in Berlin on and in force as of 15 May 2006
- Agreement on cooperation on labour, labour force participation, and social protection between the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, signed in Bishkek on and in force as of 17 April 2004
- Convention between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of Ukraine on labour activity and social protection of the Moldovan and Russian citizens employed abroad, signed in Kiev on 13 December 1993, ratified on 14 January 1994, and in force as of 25 February 1994

Readmission Agreements

- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Swiss Federal Council on readmission of individuals on irregular stay, signed in Chişinău on 6 November 2003, ratified on 4 March 2004, and in force as of 1 June 2004
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway on readmission of own and third country citizens, signed in Chişinău on 31 March 2005, ratified on 23 June 2006, and in force as of 9 August 2006
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of the Czech Republic on readmission of individuals at the state border, signed in Prague on 7 August 2003, ratified on 24 November 2003, and in force as of 9 September 2004
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of the Republic of Italy on readmission of individuals on irregular stay/residence, signed in Rome on 3 July 2002, ratified on 31 December 2003, and in force as of 1 May 2004
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on readmission of individuals with illegal entry or irregular stay on the territory of the Republic of Moldova or that of the Republic of Lithuania, signed in Chişinău on 6 December 2001, ratified on 4 March 2002, and in force as of 14 February 2004

- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of Romania on readmission of aliens, signed in Bucharest on 27 July 2001, ratified on 4 October 2001, and in force as of 3 July 2002
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of the Republic of Ukraine on readmission of persons with illegal stay, signed on 3 July 2002
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of Poland on the taking over and transfer of the illegal persons on the territory of both states, signed on 15 November 1994
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of Hungary on the transfer and taking over of the illegal persons on the territory of both states
- Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Moldova on the readmission of persons residing without authorization, signed on 10 October 2007 and in force from 1 January 2008.

6.3. Migration policies in place

The prospects of EU accession have created the need for the legislative and executive powers of the Republic of Moldova to review its migration policy and to reorganize the government institutions responsible for its implementation. In 2002, a migration policy framework was designed (ratified by the Parliament⁴⁸), a new version of the Law on Migration was prepared, and the national legislation was adjusted to international standards. The main objective of the reform was to strengthen the control mechanisms over migration processes and the optimization of their management in the Republic of Moldova. However, Moldova went through several stages in forming its migration policy and system for migration management.

The first one refers to the 1990-1994 period. The migration policy was based on the **Law on Migration (December 1990)** and was directed towards preserving the ethno-national identity of republics and preventing irregular immigration to Moldova from other former USSR republics. For this purpose, an annually revised immigration quota was introduced not exceeding 0.05 per cent of the population⁴⁹ in Moldova. Labour migration was regulated through a number of legislative acts, including the following government resolutions:

- **On Ratification of Regulations on Temporary Employment of Citizens of the Republic of Moldova Abroad and Foreign Citizens in the Republic of Moldova (1992),⁵⁰** and
- **On Ratification of the Rules of Issuing Certificates and Licenses to Individuals and Organisations that Act as Intermediaries in Arranging Temporary Employment of Citizens of the Republic of Moldova Abroad (1992).⁵¹**

⁴⁸ Official Gazette 2002 No. 146–148.

⁴⁹ The Law of the Republic of Moldova On Migration (No. 418-XII of 19 December 1990), in International Organization for Migration (undated) Compendium of Legislative Acts of CIS and Baltic States on Migration Issues, Citizenship and Related Aspects, Moscow (published in Russian).

⁵⁰ Government Decision No. 717 of 24 December 1991 on approving the Rules for Temporary Employment of Citizens of the Republic of Moldova Abroad and of Foreigners in the Republic of Moldova.

⁵¹ Government Decision No. 157 of 6 March 1995 on Amendment of Certain Government Decisions, Official Gazette 20/1995, Art. 142.

The second stage in the formation of the migration policy reform took place between 1995 and 2000. In November 1997, the government issued a resolution **On Temporary Employment of Migrant Workers**.⁵² According to this resolution, arrangements for temporary employment abroad of citizens of the Republic of Moldova could only be made by licensed economic agents.⁵³ The regulations that were ratified by this resolution contained a list of companies that were granted the right to mediate citizens' employment abroad. At the same time, the EU increased pressure on governing bodies of the Republic of Moldova to take measures for regulating migration and preventing illegal migration and human trafficking, especially for women. The Moldovan government, having realized the massive scope of labour migration and the increasing amount of remittances, started showing a greater interest on labour migration.

During the third stage of Moldovans' migration policy development (2001–2006), the government tried to promote and facilitate the legalization of migrant workers and the protection of their rights in foreign countries. For this purpose, efforts were invested into intensifying activities and raising the authority of specialized government structures in the sphere of migration.

After 2001, the government has strengthened its efforts on migration issues. For this purpose, the status and significance of respective bodies in the structure of executive bodies were strengthened. For instance, instead of a department within the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, the **State Migration Service** was created under the auspices of the Cabinet of Ministers. Its main tasks were the implementation of state policy re-settlement, citizens' immigration and repatriation, labour migration, control of legislation application, and designing of drafts of international treaties on temporary employment and social protection of migrants. The State Migration Service concentrates most of its functions on those relating to migration processes especially labour migration.⁵⁴ In 2002, the Service was transformed into the **Department on Migration** of the Republic of Moldova, and its status and functions were determined not by the Government as before but by the Parliament. In this context, the Government introduced a major reform (mentioned in the first paragraph of this section). Furthermore, Moldova joined a number of international treaties/agreements: overall, it ratified more than 20 international legal acts on protection of human rights, labour migrants, and refugees. On 25 June 2002, the Parliament adopted the **Law on Refugee Status**, which came into force on 1 January 2003.

In May 2005, a number of measures were put in place to redesign Moldova's government bodies to make them similar to their corresponding agencies in the EU countries. As a result, the National Bureau on Migration was created by reshuffling the Department of Migration, the Department for Statistics and Sociology, and the Department of Interethnic Relations.

However, the practical results achieved by the government bodies were rather modest. The number of labour contracts signed by labour migrants with state assistance is insignificant compared to the actual number of Moldovan labour migrants seeking employment abroad (i.e., 682 in 1990–1994, 4,605 in 1995–2000, and 1,491 in 2001–2004; out of the total of 6,678 contracts certified by state migration structures, 5,963 relate to Israel).⁵⁵

The fourth stage in the reform of the migration management system in Moldova started in the second half of 2006. The focus is on reconsidering conceptual approaches to migration

⁵² Government Decision No. 1077 of 20 November 1997 on Temporary Employment of Migrant Workers, Official Gazette 84-85/1997

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ In March 2001, within the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, a department was created for coordinating and monitoring problems of refugees and asylum seekers. Sometime later, this department was transferred to the Ministry of Justice and transformed into the Central Directorate for Refugees Affairs.

⁵⁵ Anuar statistic privind fluxurile migraționale în Republica Moldova 2003. – Chișinău, DSM, 2004. – p. 9; Anuarul statistic al Republicii Moldova. 2005. – Chișinău, Statistica, 2005. – p. 67.

policy and institutional reforms. In May 2006, the National Bureau for Migration was abolished and its functions were divided between the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Economy and Trade.

To date, no concrete policy has been formulated to encourage return of Moldovans abroad.

Diaspora

Following a considerable increase in Moldovan diasporas abroad, the government became increasingly mindful of and sensitive to the needs and concerns of the hundreds of thousands of Moldovans currently living and/or working abroad. Emphasis was given to collaboration with Moldovans abroad and coordination of Moldovan cultural associations in foreign countries. Thus, an action plan for diaspora management was formulated by the Bureau of Interethnic Relations, the institution charged with diasporas' policies. The **Action Program for supporting persons born in the Republic of Moldova residing abroad (Moldova Diaspora) for 2006-2009** has been approved by Government Decision No. 809, dated 10 July 2006. Its focus areas are: rights' protection and education and training of didactic personnel; promotion of Moldovan traditions, language, and culture; supporting ethno-cultural organizations; social protection and support of commercial and economic activities; and information dissemination through mass media and other means. The agencies involved in its implementation include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, diplomatic missions, Bureau of Interethnic Relations, Moldova's Academy of Science, Ministry of Education and Youth, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Economy and Trade, local public administration authorities, Ministry of Finance, art unions from Moldova, Teleradio-Moldova Company, Agro-industrial Agency Moldova-Vin, Ministry of Informational Development, and Radio Communications State Enterprise.

The IOM mission in Moldova, together with its government counterparts, performed an array of activities to complete the compilation and systematization of information materials for dissemination among Moldovan communities from the main destination countries of Moldovan migrant workers.⁵⁶ The aims of these activities were:

- to build migrant community networks to serve as communication bridge between the Moldovan government (through diplomatic missions) and overseas nationals, with a view to maximize diaspora participation in Moldova's (migration) policy formulation and implementation, as well as to facilitate the diaspora's contribution to Moldova's economic development, and
- to assist the Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in the elaboration, publishing, and dissemination of information relevant to migrant communities with a view to facilitate diaspora contributions to Moldova's economic development.

Additionally, in collaboration with MFA, IOM compiled information on government policies, legislations, and practices on business registration and operation, banking and finance system regulations, tax regulations, pension and social security schemes, public health, out-of-country registration and voting, visa information, assisted return programs, labour migration agreements, migrant rights and obligations, remittances channels, investment opportunities, and access to credit. To ensure that the provided information is in full compliance with policies of the different arms of the Moldovan government, the MFA officially coordinated this information compilation with the relevant ministries and agencies. Following

⁵⁶ See also http://www.iom.md/materials/press_060626.html. IOM in collaboration with a team from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs compiled the information and published these brochures.

the feedback received from all these agencies, all the information was structured into three separate information brochures, titled Migrants Guides.

The country legislation regulates the general issues regarding the diasporas in several acts, but the only specific act is the **Government Decision No 809**, dated 10 July 2006.

6.5. Labour market characteristics and migration

Currently, the labour market is in a process of transition to the market economy, undoubtedly a tough and complicated change. The changes,⁵⁷ which occurred after the declaration of independence on 27 August 1991, led to three scenarios:

- Increase in the unemployment rate as well as increase in the number of people who are under-utilized because of hardships in the economic sectors. As the post-independence crisis hit hard both the industrial and agriculture sectors of the economy, an important part of the population either lost their jobs or became under-utilized. This led to hidden unemployment, as the work system has been reduced in terms of time.
- Increase in the number of unemployed in the private sector and decrease in the number of unemployed in the public sector. The number of employees in the public sector has decreased due to lower salaries that led to the migration of a part of the former employees.
- Increase in the number of labour migrants.

Generally, men were more affected by unemployment than women because many industrial plants and factories disappeared where male labour force was dominant, such as the technology-intensive and machinery industries. In contrast, women gained easier access to new activities developed in the services sector.

One of the main problems in Moldova is that the old jobs are not replaced at a sufficient quick rate by more productive ones. The tremendous lack of synchronization between jobs creation and abolition negatively affects to a large extent the employees' opportunities to pass from one less productive job to a more productive one. The main factor, which determines the slow rate of jobs creation, is the high cost of starting a new business in Moldova. Red tape, corruption, and high taxes are other reasons for the low entrepreneurial activity in Moldova.

Another main cause of the impaired functioning of the Moldovan labour market is the lack of harmonization between the supply of the educational system and the demand and requests of the labour market. This explains the experts' surplus particularly in the fields of law, economics, and foreign languages on the one hand and the shortage of sought-after workers such as house painters, plasters, welders, and electricians on the other. Mass migration also causes shortages in some of the sectors of the labour market. Moreover, another labour market problem is the low work productivity due to the high quota of population engaged in agriculture (about 40.5%) that has a low level of salaries.

⁵⁷ Moldova suffered one of the deepest economic declines in the CIS after independence in 1991. The loss of traditional trade linkages and payments, and the distressing terms of trade resulted in considerable economic disruption as domestic prices adjusted to international levels. Real GDP growth declined by around 10 percent per year on average until 2000. Living standards fell sharply, poverty increased, and the quality of social services deteriorated.

Although a series of laws have been adopted including the Labour Code, the changes in the labour market are superficial. Also, as long as the employers will continue to avoid working on the basis of the new institutional and legislative background and to appeal to these institutions, there is hardly any chance for improvements. According to the Law 102/2003 on employment and social protection of the registered job seekers,⁵⁸ an employer must announce a vacancy to the public employment agencies within five days. Usually, the economic agents prefer to make an announcement only when there is a great necessity and when the vacant jobs are not well paid. The problem is that the unemployed, which have to be suited for the vacant jobs, usually do not have access to the information and thus are at a disadvantaged. In addition, most employers usually do not subscribe to the agencies' services as they usually engage the paid services of recruitment agencies, thus increasing the service charge of the workforce agencies to be paid by the employer. Nevertheless, the economic agencies also use alternative methods that are less costly, such as publishing the vacancy notices in local newspapers or using informal channels such as their acquaintances or friends to recruit candidates.

In addition, although the labour legislation was modified in 2003, it has gaps and is still restrictive. In fact, based on a World Bank study on Doing Business in 2006,⁵⁹ Moldova was ranked 135th out of 155 countries in the rigidity of employment indicator and 70th in the firing cost indicator.⁶⁰ Each indicator takes a score of between 0 and 100, with the higher amount representing more rigid laws or provisions.

Meanwhile, in a classification developed by the European Employers Federation (FedEE), which included 48 European states, the citizens of the Republic of Moldova emerged as the worst paid.⁶¹ The raw minimum salary for every hour of work is 3.27 lei (about EUR 0.20) while the maximum salary for every hour of work is 336.43 lei (about EUR 21.5). This hourly rate is 65 times lower than that in Denmark, which occupies the first place in the classification. Another characteristic of the labour market in the Republic of Moldova is the lack of balance between the salaries of management and those in lower positions. According to the same study, the difference is over 12.9 times (see the "Pay in Europe 2007" report issued by FedEE). The smallest hourly salaries are received by unskilled workers (3.27 lei) while the higher remunerations are paid to the company presidents (336.43 lei/hour). The FedEE data show that those who work in foreign companies are 2.6 times better paid than those who work in local firms. The minimum salary legislated in the Republic of Moldova is also the smallest minimum salary in Europe. Under these conditions, the population is not motivated to work given the very small salaries, which do not even cover their essential needs and do not ensure a decent life. Thus, a high share of the labour force is provoked to try other labour markets.

Another labour market tendency is the existence of a significant rate of persons engaged in the informal and shadow economy. The size of the informal economy in Moldova is estimated at 49.4 per cent according to the study "The Size of Shadow Economies in 145 Countries from 1999 to 2003" by Friedrich Schneider).⁶² Because the labour force supply exceeds the work force demand, which results in a large amount of surplus labour, many individuals agree to work even without a written contract, thus evading the labour and tax legislation. At the same time, they are left out from the social protection system and from

⁵⁸ Adopted on 13 March 2003, valid from 1 July 2003, published in Official Monitor No. 070 on 15 April 2003. Modified as LP100-XVI on 27 May 2005, published in Official Monitor No. 95-97 on 15 July 2005.

⁵⁹ See the World Bank report at http://www.doingbusiness.org/documents/DoingBusiness2006_fullreport.pdf

⁶⁰ The firing cost indicator measures the cost of advance notice requirements, severance payments, and penalties due when terminating a redundant worker, expressed in weekly wages. If the firing cost adds up to eight or fewer weeks of salary, a score of 0 is assigned for the purpose of calculating the aggregate ease of doing business ranking. If the cost adds up to more than eight weeks of salary, the score is the number of weeks. See

<http://www.doingbusiness.org/MethodologySurveys/EmployingWorkers.aspx>

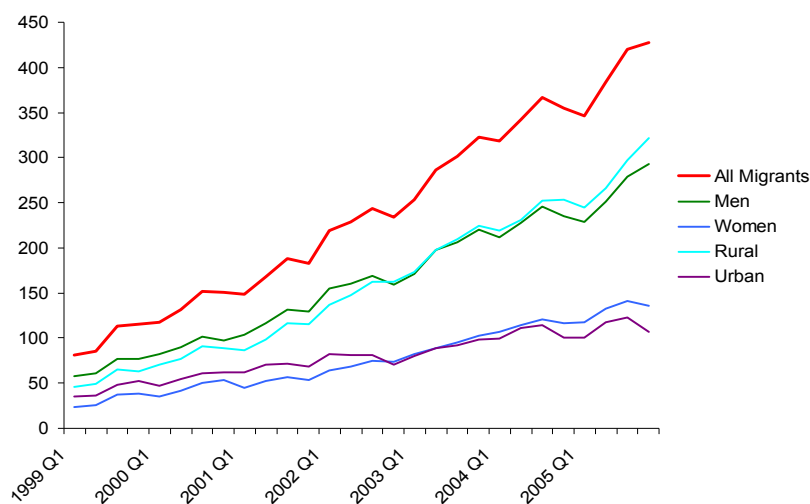
⁶¹ At the elaboration of the classification was taken into calculation the average wage per hour registered at 1 February 2006.

⁶² See http://www.economics.uni-linz.ac.at/schneider/ShadEconomyWorld145_ladha2.pdf

certain benefits (e.g., issuance of notice in case of dismissal, provision of allowances in case of dismissal, payment of yearly leave benefits and medical leave benefits, and so on). In addition, although the use of private connections or acquaintances is recognized up to the present as the most efficient method to obtain workers, there has been an increasing tendency of employment made on the basis of fair competition.

External migration of the labour force is a widespread and unavoidable trend in a globalized world. Moldova is certainly an active participant in the field of labour migration, which started soon after the declaration of its independence. Moreover, migration as a social phenomenon has expanded massively to a critical size of the population, which to a significant extent, inhibits today's economic growth given its overwhelming consequences on the social setting and on the psychological mindset of the population. Migration also further contributes to the worsening of the demographic imbalance. The geographical proximity of more profitable labour markets of the Russian Federation and Western Europe and the denseness of the population create favourable conditions for the migration of a great number of Moldovans.

Figure 4. Migrants abroad, 1999–2005 (in thousands)



Source: Labour Force Survey⁶³

The principal factors that propel the migration of Moldovans are the low incomes vis-a-vis the big financial necessities to finance current expenditures, the high unemployment rate, and the worsening poverty situation in the country. For the youth, an important consideration for choosing to migrate is the need for security to establish a family in the future.

Labour migration profoundly affects the economic and social development of Moldova. As of mid-2006, approximately one-quarter of the economically active population was employed abroad. Remittances from migrant workers to their families in Moldova amounted to one-third of Moldova's GDP. The number of migrants and the volume of remittances have grown steadily since 1999 with no indication yet that this trend might reverse. This raises difficult questions on how the Moldovan economy and society will deal with the resulting challenges in the years to come.

⁶³ In Lücke, Matthias, Toman Omar Mahmoud and Pia Pinger (2007) *Recent Trends in Migration and Remittances in Moldova: The CBSAXA Survey 2006*, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, http://www.iom.md/materials/patterns_en.pdf

In the analysis of migration flows,⁶⁴ the distinction between push and pull factors has traditionally played an important role. On the whole, push factors seem to be relatively more important for Moldovan migrants in CIS countries, both in the construction industry and in other sectors (Table 7). Among these groups, almost 40 percent indicated that the absence of a job made them leave Moldova. This figure is significantly lower for migrants in the EU and other European countries (26% and 33% percent, respectively). It is also interesting to note that the poverty incidence⁶⁵ among households with migrants in the CIS countries (25%) is almost twice as high as among households with migrants in the EU (13%) and also higher than for households in other countries of Europe (21%).⁶⁶ At the same time, close to one-half of households with migrants in CIS and EU countries, but only one-third of households with migrants elsewhere, mentioned “increasing consumption” as their key motive for emigration.

By contrast, pull factors appear to be relatively more important for migration flows to Western Europe and other non-CIS countries. Networks played a somewhat larger role in these countries than in CIS countries, with many individuals choosing non-CIS countries because they already had social contacts or even a guaranteed job there. Good working conditions were also an important reason for choosing Western Europe as a destination, while lifestyle concerns (“better way of life”) did not play a large role. Finally, low travel costs to the destination country were a key pull factor in favour of CIS countries, given their geographic proximity and possibility of visa-free travel. About two-thirds of CIS migrants mentioned this factor, while travel costs did not play a large role in attracting migrants to non-CIS countries.

Taken together, this analysis of push and pull factors suggests a dichotomy of the underlying migration motives. Migrants in CIS countries are more likely to find themselves pushed by poverty and poor employment prospects at home, whereas migrants in non-CIS countries are more likely to find themselves pulled by social networks in destination countries and an expectation of good working conditions.⁶⁷ In this sense, migration to CIS countries tends to be needs-driven, while migration to non-CIS countries is more likely to be opportunity-driven.

Table 7. Push and pull factors for migration in Moldova (in percent)

	Migrants to CIS countries (construction industry)	Migrants to CIS countries (other sectors)	Migrants to EU countries	Migrants to other countries in Europe	All
Push factors					
absence of a job	38.61	37.72	26.43	33.01	34.27
consumption reasons	49.62	50.17	46.55	32.90	46.78
poor	24.87	24.30	12.69	20.68	20.51
Pull factors					
existence of social contacts	22.48	20.83	31.90	50.97	27.54
existence of guaranteed job	33.97	33.91	38.57	42.18	36.06

⁶⁴ IOM Migration and Remittances Study 2006, in Lücke, Matthias, Toman Omar Mahmoud, and Pia Pinger (2007) *Patterns and Trends of Migration and Remittances in Moldova*, International Organization for Migration.

⁶⁵ A household is considered poor when it assesses its own living standard as very bad (not enough for bare necessities) or bad (just enough for bare necessities).

⁶⁶ One should not over-interpret this finding. The observed poverty levels could be both a determinant and a result of migration: Due to the higher remittances by EU and other migrants, households with such migrants may have improved their living standards much better than the households with migrants in CIS countries.

⁶⁷ However, one should bear in mind that Russia's ongoing economic boom has also created an enormous demand for low-skilled labour, especially in the construction sector. Without this demand, many Moldovans would probably not have been able to find work in Russia.

good working conditions	29.90	32.52	44.72	25.36	34.21
country was recommended by other people when asked for advice	36.20	35.51	51.55	43.21	40.86
better way of life abroad	0.63	4.65	5.89	2.21	3.36
low costs of migration	66.66	68.96	14.18	27.64	49.10

This dichotomy is also reflected in the socioeconomic characteristics of the four groups of migrants in Table 7. In 2006, overall, the average Moldovan migrant was about 35 years old, male from a rural area, and typically had secondary or tertiary college education.

6.6. Irregular migration routes and policies to address irregular migration

The Republic of Moldova is a source country of irregular migration (see also Section 5), while it remains attractive to foreign citizens from high-risk sending countries, including some aliens with international terrorist and criminal links. Therefore, irregular migration remains a serious problem in the country, which has received increasing policy attention from authorities. The Ministry of Interior, through operational monitoring of migration flows in the country, has been taking measures in accordance to the national legislation for combating irregular migration and related international and domestic criminal activities. The Direction for Combating Irregular Migration, under the Office for Migration and Asylum in the Ministry of Interior, is the main authority in the field. Furthermore, in the beginning of the 2002 migration policy reform, the government tried to legally protect not only Moldovans who work abroad but also irregular migrants in Moldova. For this purpose, following EU pressure, the State Agency for the Employment of Moldovan Citizens Abroad was created in 2002.

Combating irregular migration starts at the country border. Foreign citizens and stateless persons who committed serious violations of stay in the Republic of Moldova receive expulsion orders and are requested to leave the territory. Shortening the period of stay in the country has been one of the practices for tackling migration legislation violations.

The vast majority of Moldovan migrants enter the EU as tourists and subsequently find unofficial jobs in the informal sector of the host countries' economies. "Tourist" firms⁶⁸ (some of them without legal license) specialized in obtaining Schengen visas have proliferated in Moldova, and the fees paid by Moldovan tourists have escalated to a large degree. The cost of migration to the EU amounted to almost USD 3,600 in 2006 versus around USD 100 for CIS countries and around USD 880 for other countries of destination (IOM Migration and Remittances Study 2006). Other irregular channels used as reported by law enforcement authorities include the smuggling of migrants as sportsmen or participants in conferences and other types of events. Tourist visas are also used to enter EU and then later for overstay and work under irregular conditions. Another mode reported is the use of forged EU countries' passports or ID cards.⁶⁹

The routes for irregular migration are as follows: Western Ukraine – Slovakia – Austria – Italy (Spain); Romania – Hungary – Slovenia-Italy (Spain); Romania – Bulgaria – Greece; Chisinau airport – Prague – Germany (UK); and Ukraine – Russia (regular entry then overstay for work purposes).

6.7. Trafficking in human being and policies to address it

According to the US State Department Report on Trafficking in Persons, Moldova is a major source, and to a lesser extent, a transit country for women and girls trafficked for the purpose

⁶⁸ See, for example, an instance of irregular issuance of visas through tourism firms (<http://stiri.rol.ro/content/view/76891/2/>)

⁶⁹ See the Romanian police information on use of forged documents by Moldovan citizens.

of commercial sexual exploitation.⁷⁰ In fact, Moldova is a country of origin for various forms of trafficking. In only a handful of instances have foreign victims been identified and assisted in Moldova.⁷¹ The US State Department Report placed Moldova on the Tier 2 Watch List⁷² because it did not provide evidence that the government is effectively addressing human trafficking. According to the report, recent efforts by authorities are eclipsed by trafficking corruption at all levels of government.

However, the government has strived to combat trafficking. Since 2002, the government legislation has become stricter in order to eliminate deficiencies of previous approaches to migration regulation. Moldova prohibits trafficking for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labour through Article 165 (Trafficking in Human Beings) and Article 206 (Trafficking in Children) in its Criminal Code. Specifically, the new Criminal Code (adopted in 2002) increased penalties prescribed for human traffickers to up to life imprisonment.⁷³

Also, the government initiated a series of actions aimed at combating trafficking in persons by establishing the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (Government Decree No. 1219 of 9 September 2001), and by adopting the National Plan of Action for Preventing and Combating Trafficking of Human Beings (Government Decree No. 903 of 25 August 2005). On 17 February 2005, the Moldovan Parliament ratified the UN Palermo Counter-trafficking Protocol of 15 November 2000. Following this, a special Law on Prevention and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings was adopted on 20 October 2005. At the same time, the criminal legislation has been brought in line with this new law, particularly by establishing the criminal responsibility of legal persons for trafficking in human beings, by improving the protection of the participants in criminal proceedings, and by adding Article 361/1 (Organization of Irregular Migration) to the Criminal Code.

The main state institution dealing with combating trafficking in human beings is the Centre for Combating Trafficking in Persons (CCTP) (<http://www.mai.gov.md/centrul-combatere/centr-comb-traffic/>), established on 6 September 2005 within the Ministry of Interior as a task force type of body with criminal investigative competencies. The CCTP joins together specialists from the Border Guards Service, Customs Service, Information Security Service, Centre for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption, and General Prosecutor's Office.

Following the adoption of the Law on Prevention and Combating the Trafficking in Human Beings, the General Prosecutor's Office established on 2 February 2006 a specialised section on prevention and combating trafficking in human beings (<http://www.procuratura.md/md/struct/#sdom>). The section is represented in the CCTP and is actually leading all the criminal investigations undertaken by the CCTP.

The Moldovan Parliament also ratified on 30 March 2006 the Council of Europe (CoE) Warsaw Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of 16 May 2005, which sets up regional standards in the field. The CoE Convention has been entered into force (including for Moldova) on 1 February 2008.

The number of victims of trafficking (VoTs) is difficult to estimate. There are non-government organizations (NGOs) and international organizations that assist VoTs and thus several (underestimated) statistics can be provided. For instance, in 2006, IOM provided assistance

⁷⁰ US State Department (2007) Trafficking in Persons Report, <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007/82806.htm>

⁷¹ Surtees, Rebecca (2005) *Second Annual Report on VoTs in South-Eastern Europe*, Regional Clearing Point.

⁷² US State Department (2007) Trafficking in Persons Report, <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007/82806.htm>. This means that the country legislation and policies do not comply with the minimum standards to eliminate trafficking in human beings.

⁷³ Decree on the Promulgation of the Law on Amending the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code. Published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova, 2001, No. 97-99, Art. 802-803 (Decretul pentru promulgarea Legii privind completarea Codului penal și Codului de procedură penală // Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova, 2001, nr 97-99, art.802-803).

to 1,104 beneficiaries. This is more than twice the 464 beneficiaries assisted in 2005. Out of these, there were 295 newly registered trafficking cases as opposed to 265 new cases in 2005. In 2005, only 35 at-risk cases were assisted; in 2006, there were 512. Another 297 persons, who were already registered with IOM, benefited from continued assistance in 2006. In 2006, IOM has changed its approach of counting certified victims of trafficking to counting all beneficiaries.

From 2000 to 2006, IOM Chisinau assisted 2,012 victims of trafficking, including 156 children. Since assistance was extended to women and children that has a high risk of being trafficked (potential VoTs), IOM has provided assistance to 555 persons, including 446 children (2003-2006). Victims assisted by IOM Moldova were exploited in 36 destination countries.⁷⁴

During the last seven years, trends related to destination countries have changed. In 2000-2003, the majority of victims (81%) were trafficked to Balkan countries. A significant decrease was seen during 2004-2005 when it fell to 10 per cent and again during 2006 when it declined further to 8 per cent. Correspondingly, the number of victims returned from other destinations has increased. This is especially true for Turkey and the Russian Federation, which accounted for more than half (62.5%) of those assisted from 2004 to 2006. Also in 2006, the number of victims returned from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) increased fourfold compared with those registered in 2005 (39 in 2006 and 9 in 2005),⁷⁵ due to efficient identification procedures, collaboration with UAE law enforcement authorities, and the hot line in Transdnistria. Also notable is the number of persons trafficked internally in Moldova, which almost tripled in 2006 (28 vs 10 in 2005). Referring agencies play a crucial role in the identification and return of victims. The majority of cases were referred by IOM missions in destination countries, local and foreign NGOs, and law enforcement agencies in Moldova and abroad.

According to the US Trafficking in Persons report,⁷⁶ authorities investigated 466 trafficking cases in 2006, up from 386 in 2005. Convictions were obtained against 71 traffickers in 2006, up from 58 convictions in 2005. Sentencing data for 2006 were inconclusive.

According to the CCTP statistics in 2007, investigations had been initiated for 298 cases of trafficking in human beings (47 of which were cases of trafficking in children). Out of these, 288 have been sent to the Prosecutor's Office, out of which 176 have been sent to the Court.

6.8. Refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons, and relevant policies in place

The Government of the Republic of Moldova has created the Section for Coordination and Monitoring of the problems of refugees and asylum seekers, under the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family (Decision 185/3 March 2001). Subsequently, the name was changed to Main Direction for Refugees, affiliated with the National Office for Migration. Through Government Decision No. 529/17.05.2006, the office was abolished and the Ministry of Interior has taken over the responsibilities on asylum and refugees. Currently, the Direction for Refugees is a section under the Office for Migration and Asylum of the Ministry of Interior. This is the main institution with capacities to administrate and resolve all issues concerning asylum seekers, refugees, and those under temporary or permanent humanitarian protection.

⁷⁴ IOM Chisinau (2007) Trafficking as it is – a statistical profile. 2005-2006 update. Moldova: Chisinau. Available at http://www.iom.md/materials/traff_eng.pdf

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁶ US State Department (2007) Trafficking in Persons Report, <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007/82806.htm>

The Direction works toward harmonizing the asylum system with the EU standards, according to Objective 46 in the National Programme for the Implementation of the Action Plan Moldova – EU.

Currently, the legislation governing the asylum system in Moldova includes the following:

- The Constitution of 29 July 1994
- Law 1518 on Migration of 6 December 2002
- Law 1286-XV of 5 July 2002 on the status of refugees
- Law 275-XIII/ of 10 November 1994 on the legal status of aliens and stateless persons in the Republic of Moldova
- Law 269-XIII of 9 November 1994 on exit from and entry to the Republic of Moldova
- Law 376 of 6 June 1995 on National Passport System
- Criminal Code of 18 April 2002

According to the UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database,⁷⁷ there were 11,680 refugees and 1,265 asylum seekers from Moldova in 2006. To date, there are no displaced populations either on the territory of Moldova or outside.

6.9. Projects and programmes on migration and development and their funders or implementers

Maximizing the gains from migration and remittances in Moldova is the objective of the project "Beyond Poverty Alleviation: Developing a Legal, Regulatory and Institutional Framework for Leveraging Migrant Remittances for Entrepreneurial Growth in Moldova". The project is implemented by IOM in partnership with the Ministry of Economy and Trade of the Republic of Moldova and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The project is funded by the European Commission in the amount of EUR 794,665.38 and co-funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the amount of EUR 198,666.35.

6.10. Other important migration actors within the country

External Donors

Donor(s)	Beneficiary	Main objectives	Total budget
Government of Austria	National Employment Agency (NEA), Ministry of Economy and Trade of the Republic of Moldova	Comprehensive long-term reintegration of Moldovan returnees from Austria through conciliation, professional orientation, and vocational and business trainings.	EUR 255,000
Government of Denmark	MoHSP, NGOs, victims of trafficking	Assist victims of trafficking and targeted public information interventions.	USD 426,153
	Policy development	Assessment of new possible dynamics and tendencies of migration and trafficking from	USD 44,339

⁷⁷ See <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/45c063a82.html>

	decision makers	Moldova, taking into account the emerging administrative and regulatory changes that will follow the Romanian accession to the EU	
Government of Greece	(Potential) victims of trafficking	Support the operations of the Chisinau Rehabilitation Centre by annually providing comprehensive medical and psychological care, shelter, food, and legal assistance to nearly 300 victims of trafficking; support identification and transit assistance of victims of trafficking; support the durable reintegration of victims of trafficking.	EUR 50,000
Government of Italy	NGOs, at-risk minors	Prevent trafficking and irregular migration through direct assistance and developing protection network, especially in Chisinau, Cahul, and Balti.	EUR 600,000
Government of the Czech Republic	Boarding schools and students	Support life skills development through art classes in boarding schools.	CZK 4,545,000
	Qualified workers, graduates of Czech secondary schools and universities	Information campaign	CZK 260,400
Government of Norway	Victims of human trafficking, relevant authorities, civil society	Developing sustainable support mechanisms and structures for the identification, return, rehabilitation, and reintegration of victims of trafficking within government and NGO agencies in Moldova	USD 600,000
Government of the United States/ PRM	Churches and vulnerable population	Capacity building of churches and faith-based organization to prevent trafficking in human beings	USD 350,000
EU	Ministry of Economy and Trade, migrants, potential entrepreneurs	Improving the normative and regulatory framework for the implementation of policies aiming to maximize economic gains from migrant remittances for development of small and medium business (SME) and economic growth, in accordance with national strategies	EUR 1,000,000
	Victims of trafficking, law enforcement bodies, civil society	Strengthening the ability, technical means, and instrumental base of relevant authorities, institutions, and civil society to provide protection and socio-economic reintegration assistance of victims of trafficking	EUR 300,000

EU TACIS Regional AP	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Improving migration management capacity with a particular focus on the treatment and protection of human rights of irregular migrants and to support the government's efforts to comply with and ensure international best practices and humanitarian standards, protection of the rights of the migrants in Moldova by improving access to suitable temporary accommodation, health care, and services.	EUR 755,000
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)	Victims of trafficking, MoHSP, and NGOs	Support phase-out of IOM's operational role in rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of trafficking	EUR 180,000
	Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Economy and Trade, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Ministry of Informational Development	Building government's capacity to develop policies for efficient migration management, based on the improved/enhanced data collection and analysis.	USD 937,553
SIDA/Greece/EC/Norway and possibly Japan, USAID	MoHSP, civil society and victims of trafficking	The project aims to hand-over capacity and operational responsibility for delivering long-term reintegration assistance for victims of trafficking to MoHSP and NGOs. The program also provides actual assistance services to the victims.	USD 500.000 – 1.000.000
Soroptimists (a Norwegian NGO) http://www.soroptimist-gbi.org	Boarding schools and students	Support reintegration of graduates from boarding schools.	NOK 1,800,000
Lakarmissionen (a Swedish NGO) http://www.lakarmissionen.se	Victims of trafficking and potential victims of trafficking	Medical assistance to victims of trafficking and hotline.	USD 42,925
Global Fund / Soros Foundation Moldova	Migrants and mobile population	Prevention of HIV/AIDS among migrants and mobile population in Moldova through behavioural study, nationwide information campaign and activities in the main countries of destination.	USD 133,000
World Childhood Foundation	Victims of trafficking	Rehabilitation of victims of trafficking; Construction of new shelter.	EUR 70,000

International Organizations

International Organization for Migration (IOM) (<http://www.iom.int/>, <http://www.iom.md/>)

United Nations Development Programme and Border Management/EUBAM (<http://www.undp.md/>, <http://www.eubam.org/>)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (<http://www.unhcr.org.md/>) for issues of refugees and asylum seekers.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (<http://moldova.usaid.gov/moldova.shtml>) for counter-trafficking issues

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (<http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/moldova.html>) for migration and children, and counter-trafficking issues.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (<http://www.osce.org/moldova/>) for counter-trafficking issues.

NGOs

Institute for Public Policies (<http://www.ipp.md/>) produces studies and publications on government policies.

Foreign Policy Association of Moldova (<http://www.ape.md/>) produces studies and publications on foreign policies.

La Strada Moldova (<http://www.lastrada.md/>) produces studies and publications on counter-trafficking and provides administration of the hotline.

Women of Legal Career Association (<http://www.antitraffic.md/>) implements the project "Centre for Prevention of Trafficking in Women", produces studies and publications on counter-trafficking, provides free legal and social assistance to victims and potential victims of trafficking, and conducts prevention campaigns.

International Association of Business and Parliament (<http://www.iabp.org/members/moldova.htm>) assists in border management and produces migration studies and publications.

Law Center of Lawyers produces studies and publication on refugee issues and provides legal assistance to refugees and asylum seekers. (Tel.: +37322 223 099, Fax: +373 22 213 709).

CBS-AXA (<http://www.cbs-axa.org/>) conducts surveys on migration and remittances.