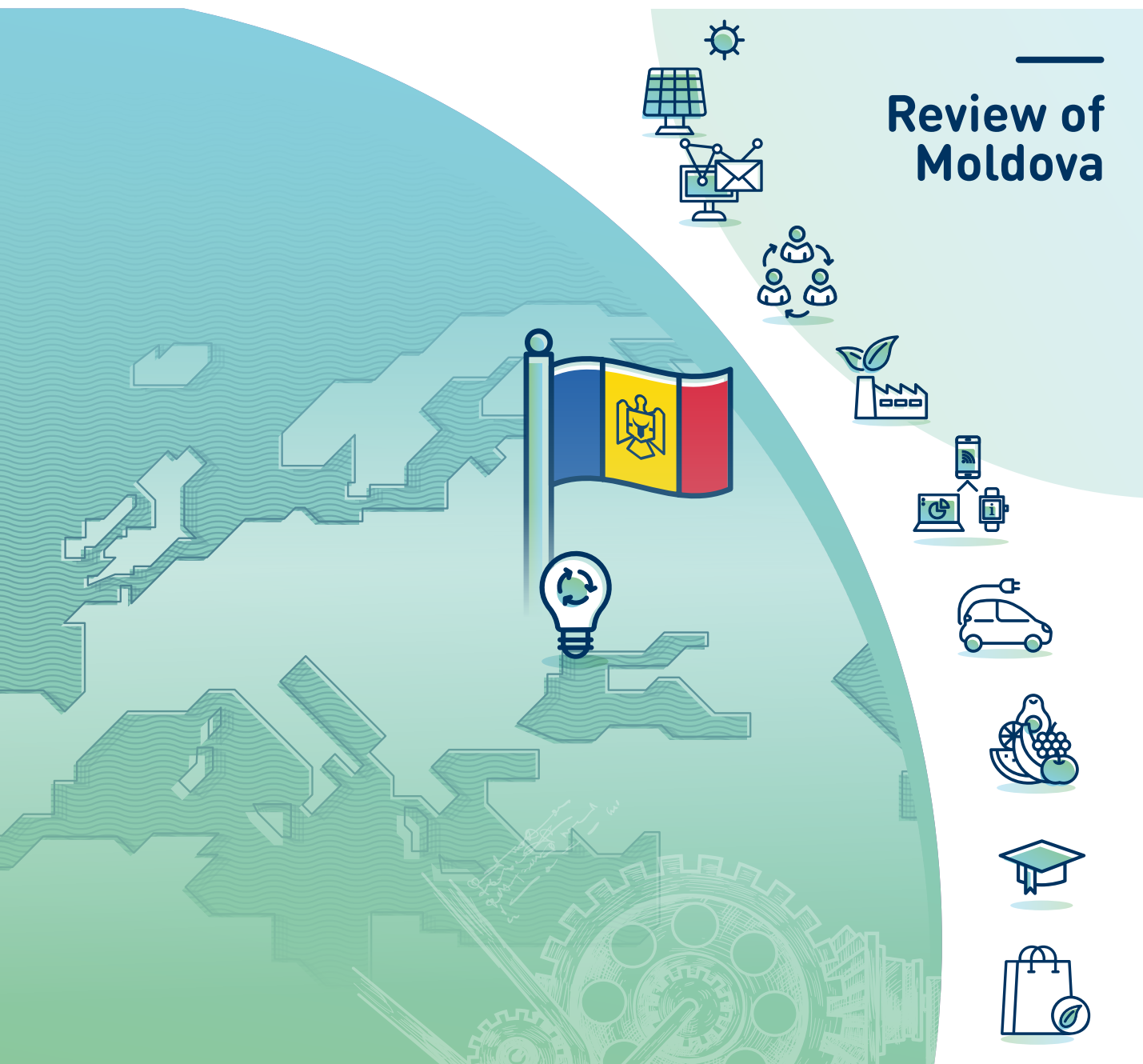


**UNECE**

# Innovation for Sustainable Development

## Review of Moldova



**UNITED NATIONS**



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# FOREWORD

Since independence, Moldova has navigated the challenging transition to a market economy while achieving significant, albeit volatile, economic growth, reduced poverty levels and the status of a lower-middle-income economy. However, productivity growth has declined as original drivers of structural change in the early post-independence era have run out of steam. Moldova's commitments under the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the imperative to transition towards a more circular and inclusive economy, will mean that innovation, in the form of systematic experimentation with ideas, must take centre stage in development efforts. Recent events have made such an approach even more important to ensure a resilient post-pandemic recovery.

Over the past decade, Moldova has made significant efforts to improve its business environment and encourage innovation through regulatory reform, providing better conditions for entrepreneurs and enhancing its national innovation system. Successful examples of innovative development taking root in Moldova can be found in the IT sector, Free Economic Zones, certain knowledge and technology-based firms in traditional industries as well as in the agri-food supply chain, all of which can be viewed as "pockets of excellence".

While commendable, current developments cannot fully address key future social, economic and environmental challenges until such experimentation is sufficiently widespread and embedded in the Moldovan economy. A clear, targeted focus on improving private sector capabilities, as well as those of public and private research organizations, to absorb and adapt ideas will be crucial, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Scaling up initiatives that work, drawing on the substantial potential of a highly-educated workforce and harnessing the diaspora's social capital will all require well-coordinated policy action at both the national and subnational levels. Effectively leveraging these key resources, alongside the nation's solid legacy in public research and its proximity to key European and Eurasian markets, could open the door to significant, innovation-driven sustainable development.

This review takes an in-depth look at the factors, both positive and negative, that have a bearing on innovation-led sustainable development in Moldova and provides tailored recommendations to tap the potential for resilient and inclusive social and economic transformation.

UNECE advisory work in the field of innovation draws on longstanding engagement across the countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, including the recently published Subregional Innovation Policy Outlook 2020: Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. This review also builds on the policy best practices developed by the UNECE Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships and is the result of a concerted, comprehensive approach with systematic stakeholder engagement and peer review.

Olga Algayerova

Executive Secretary

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe



# PREFACE

Research, analysis and advice on innovation and competitiveness policies is part of UNECE work on economic cooperation and integration that aims to harness innovation as a driver of sustainable development. National reviews of innovation policy, carried out at the request of Member States, have developed significantly since their inception more than a decade ago. Today, they follow a recently updated methodology and approach that has resulted in Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews. This new approach addresses national priorities under the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The research for the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review (I4SDR) of Moldova began in January 2020 with consultations to agree upon the scope of the I4SDR with the national authorities and other stakeholders during the research phase of the UNECE Sub-regional Innovation Policy Outlook 2020: Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. This was followed by a fact-finding mission that was conducted online from February to April 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. National priorities for sustainable development were selected for in-depth consideration in three elective chapters covering: science-industry linkages and technology commercialization; innovation and technology transfer infrastructure; and leveraging the diaspora for innovation-driven sustainable development.

While this is the first I4SDR conducted for Moldova, it builds on and complements the findings of the Sub-regional Innovation Policy Outlook 2020: Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. This review provides detailed policy recommendations on innovation policy governance to strengthen the national innovation system and reflects the national specificities and sustainable development priorities of Moldova.

The I4SDR is the result of in-depth dialogue and consultation among the UNECE Secretariat, leading experts on the subject matter, Government officials, academia, private sector actors and other innovation stakeholders in Moldova. During August and September 2021, the draft text underwent peer review by national stakeholders and international experts before the findings and recommendations were endorsed by national stakeholders on 16 December 2021 during a virtual roundtable.

The final text of the review was prepared for publication by the UNECE Secretariat and reflects the outcome of the above-mentioned consultations, as well as feedback received from key stakeholders.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The UNECE Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Moldova was developed under the auspices of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships with financial support from the Government of Sweden. UNECE expresses its gratitude to the national focal point partners: Ms. Aliona Onofrei and Ms. Olga Tretiacov, the Research and Innovation Policy Directorate at the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova (MER). Their dedication and support have been instrumental in the successful implementation of this review.

The publication was drafted under the leadership of Ms. Elisabeth Tuerk, Director of the UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, and under the overall supervision and guidance of Mr. Anders Jönsson, Chief of the UNECE Innovative Policies Development Section. Mr. Christopher Athey, UNECE Economic Affairs Officer, led the implementation of the review, including the fact-finding and peer review of policy recommendations. The authors of the chapters were Mr. Anders Jönsson and Ms. Tatiana Rosu (Chapter 1); Ms. Lyudmyla Tautiyeva and Mr. Anders Jönsson (Executive Summary, Chapter 2, Chapter 3); Mr. Slavo Radosevic (Chapter 4); Ms. Lisa Cowey (Chapter 5); and Mr. Aleksandr Gevorkyan (Chapter 6). Ms. Lyudmyla Tautiyeva provided valuable coordination support throughout the project. Mr. Sergiu Porcescu and Ms. Diana Russu, both national consultants, carried out essential background research and facilitated the fact-finding process. Ms. Ludmila Boichuk provided technical and administrative assistance throughout the project while Mr. Ian Silver edited the text and Mr. Thierry Alran developed the design and layout of the publication.

The continuous engagement of the MER, the lead national partner for this review, was essential throughout this process. Valuable inputs were provided at the fact-finding stage by national stakeholders from the public sector, including the Ministry of the Economy (MoE), the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development (MIRD), the National Agency for Research and Development (NARD), the State Chancellery, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research, the National Bureau of Statistics, the State Agency on Intellectual Property, the E-Government Agency, the Office of the President of Moldova, the Organization for Development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (ODIMM), the Institute of Power Engineering, and the Institute of Genetics, Physiology and Plant Protection. Valuable insights were also provided by private sector stakeholders, particularly the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), the Republican Businessmen Club «Time», the Moldovan Association of ICT Companies (ATIC), the Free Economic Zone Balti, the Tekwill project team, the Soroca Business Incubator, innovation incubator staff at InnoCenter, innovation incubator staff at the State University of Moldova, the “Berries of Moldova” association and the companies «TOPAZ», “ELIRI” and CodeFactory. Finally, international partners with a local presence in Moldova, in particular, the Delegation of the European Union, the Mission of International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Moldova Competitiveness Project team made valuable contributions to this review. The United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Moldova also provided useful support throughout the review process.

In addition to the UNECE's internal deliberations, several other organizations reviewed and commented on the review's findings and recommendations, including the Diaspora Relations Bureau of Moldova (DRB), the Economic Council to the Prime Minister of Moldova, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in the Republic of Moldova, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Embassy of Sweden in Moldova and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency Representation in Moldova.

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