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## United Nations Development Programme

### Project Document template for projects financed by the various GEF Trust Funds



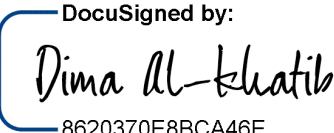
<b>Project title:</b> Conservation and sustainable management of wetlands with focus on high-nature value areas in the Prut River basin		
<b>Country:</b>  Republic of Moldova	<b>Implementing Partner (GEF Executing Entity):</b> Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova	<b>Execution Modality:</b> <i>Full NIM</i>
<b>Contributing Outcome (UNDAF/CPD, RPD, GPD):</b> <i>The people of Moldova, especially most vulnerable, benefit from enhanced environmental governance, energy security, sustainable management of natural resources, and climate and disaster resilient development</i>		
<b>UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Category:</b> <i>Substantial</i>	<b>UNDP Gender Marker:</b> <i>GEN 2</i>	
<b>Atlas Award ID:</b> 00111724	<b>Atlas Project/Output ID:</b> 00110584	
<b>UNDP-GEF PIMS ID number:</b> 6551	<b>GEF Project ID number:</b> 10650	
<b>LPAC meeting date:</b> 2 April 2022		
<b>Last possible date to submit to GEF:</b> 31 December 2021		
<b>Latest possible CEO endorsement date:</b> 2 April 2022		
<b>Project duration in months:</b> 60 months		
<b>Planned start date:</b> 9 August 2022	<b>Planned end date:</b> 9 August 2027	
<b>Expected date of Mid-Term Review:</b> <i>This is not required for MSPs</i>	<b>Expected date of Terminal evaluation:</b> 9 May 2027	
<b>Brief project description:</b> The objective of the project is to achieve ecological integrity of key floodplain wetlands in the Prut river basin, ensuring positive status of biodiversity, land and water resources, as well as ecosystem services. This will be achieved through provisions for the minimum environmental flow and hydrological repair of declining wetlands and strengthening the PAs management hosting valuable wetlands habitats and key species. The GEF investment will be based on an integrated river basin management approach that ensures the continuity of wetland ecosystem services sustaining livelihoods in the Prut river basin at approximately 20,803 ha of high value wetlands in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, the Royal Forest Nature Reserve and surrounding floodplain. The project-driven hydrological repair of Camenca river's floodplain, will bring an additional 8.3 million m <sup>3</sup> of water annually to nourish declining wetlands in the Prut river mid-section, ensuring the survival of approximately 11,175 ha of valuable floodplain habitat even under a severe climate induced water scarcity scenario. The project-		

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supported improvements of legal and financing frameworks for wetlands and protected areas will enable sustainable management of Prut basin's wetlands, hosting globally important migratory aquatic birds species such as herons, egrets, spoonbills, ibises nesting and feeding in these areas. The project's demonstration activities and strengthened regulatory framework will pave the way for a more systematic approaches to improving wetlands condition. Involving private sector and strengthening knowledge about voluntary environment certification and "greening" businesses as well as strengthening regulatory framework and legal enforcement will reduce the threats to biodiversity values coming from sectoral land and resource use (agriculture, forestry, food industry, oil exploitation). Supporting local communities accessing affordable financing for their local businesses will help alleviate the pressure on natural resources.	
<b>FINANCING PLAN</b>	
GEF Trust Fund grant	USD 863,242
UNDP TRAC resources	USD 50,000
Confirmed cash co-financing to be administered by UNDP	USD 913,242
<b>(1) Total Budget administered by UNDP</b>	<b>USD 913,242</b>
<b>CO-FINANCIERS THAT WILL DELIVER PROJECT RESULTS INCLUDED IN THE PROJECT RESULTS FRAMEWORK (FUNDS NOT ADMINISTERED THROUGH UNDP ACCOUNTS)</b>	
<i>European Union</i>	<i>USD 13,000,000</i>
<i>Ministry of Environment</i>	<i>USD 1,100,000</i>
<i>Agency "Moldsilva"</i>	<i>USD 4,200,000</i>
<i>Agency "Moldovan Waters"</i>	<i>USD 100,000</i>
<i>Local authorities- Cahul district</i>	<i>USD 150,000</i>
<i>Local authorities-Glodeni district</i>	<i>USD 150,000</i>
<i>Institute "Botanical Garden"</i>	<i>USD 150,000</i>
<i>Institute of Zoology</i>	<i>USD 150,000</i>
<i>National Institute for Research and Development in Forestry (ICAS)</i>	<i>USD 300,000</i>
<i>Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration/ Government of Romania</i>	<i>USD 100,000</i>
<i>Austrian Development Agency (ADA)</i>	<i>USD 949,728</i>
<i>"Verde e Moldova"</i>	<i>USD 322,000</i>
<b>(2) Total confirmed co-financing</b>	<b>USD 20,671,728</b>

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<b>(3) Grand-Total Project Financing (1)+(2)</b>		<b>USD 21,584,970</b>
<b>SIGNATURES:</b>		
<b>Signature: Iuliana CANTARAGIU, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Moldova</b>   FCA2269433A5421...	<b>Agreed by Implementing Partner</b>  Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova	<b>Date/Month/Year:</b>  23-aug.-2022
<b>Signature: Anatolie RISINA, Public Institution Environmental Projects Implementation Unit (EPIU)</b>   72EDDAA97BA9492...	<b>Agreed by Responsible Party</b>  Public Institution Environmental Projects Implementation Unit (EPIU)	<b>Date/Month/Year:</b>  23-Aug-2022
<b>Signature: Dima AL-KHATIB, Resident Representative</b>   8620370E8BCA46E...	<b>Agreed by UNDP Moldova</b>	<b>Date/Month/Year:</b>  22-Aug-2022

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## List of Acronyms

AWP	Annual Work Plan
AFPMDD	Women's Association for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development ( NGO)
ANTRIM	Moldova's Association of Inbound Tourism
ARFC	Agency for Land Relations and Cadaster
BAU	Business as Usual
BL	Budget Line (under the Total Budget and Work Plan)
CACS	Technical Committee of the Forest Research and Management Institute/ICAS
CBO	Community-based organization
CC	Climate change
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CPD	Country Programme Document (UNDP Moldova)
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
EPIU	Environmental Projects Implementation Unit (under the Ministry of Environment)
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
FH	Family farms (smallholders)
GAAP	Gender Assessment and Action Plan/Gender Action Plan
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism (UNDP)
IP	Implementing Partner
IBA	Important Bird and Biodiversity Area
ICAS	Forestry Research and Management Institute
ICPDR	International Commission for the Protection of Danube River
IW:LEARN	International Waters Learning Exchange & Resource Network
KBA	Key Biodiversity Area
KM	Knowledge management
LAGLP	Local Action Group "Lower Prut"
MOE	Ministry of Environment
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODIMM	Organization for Small and Medium Enterprises Sector Development
PIMS	Project Information Management System
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PMU	Project Management Unit
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SECU	Social and Environmental Compliance Unit
SES	Social and environmental standards (UNDP)
SESA	Strategic environmental and social assessment
SESP	Social and environmental screening procedure (UNDP)
SRL	Limited Liability Company
STAP	Scientific Technical Advisory Panel (GEF)
TBWP	Total Budget and Work Plan (Section VIII/Project Document)
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNPDF	United Nations Partnership for Development Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP CO	United Nations Development Programme Country Office
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

## I. DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE

### Overall Development Context

1. The socio-economic transformations and land reform (1991) after the breakup of the Soviet Union together with the climate change effects are accelerating the degradation of natural resources in Moldova. A closer integration with the European Union has anchored successive governments' policy reform agendas but reforms that look good on paper often face implementation challenges. A vulnerable political system, a polarized society, low productivity, demographic challenges, skills mismatches, declining natural capital and a high vulnerability to both climate-related and external shocks are key challenges (World Bank).

2. Moldova is a small lower-middle income, landlocked country<sup>1</sup> bordering Ukraine and Romania. The country has a highly fragmented administrative and territorial structure including 898 municipalities, 32 districts (rayons), 5 municipalities (cities with special status) and two autonomous territories Gagauzia and Transnistria, the latter- a narrow strip of land bordering Ukraine, is a breakaway region claiming independence, unrecognized as a nation by any member of the UN despite declaring its independence in 1990. Being a multi-ethnic and diverse country, Moldova has historical ties with the CIS in particular the Russian Federation in terms of trade and migration. However the EU accession and alignment with EU requirements, strengthening relations with Romania, are the country's key foreign policy goals. This diversity and fragmentation in such a small country makes it extremely challenging to bring all elements of society together and effectively deliver public services. The overall fragile social cohesion, as well as tensions in the ongoing settlement process with the Transnistria region and lack of progress of the work of the Moldovan-Gagauz parliamentary working group, warrant continued monitoring of social cohesion in Moldova. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in Moldova has also aggravated these ongoing dynamics<sup>2</sup>.

3. The entry into Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement with the EU has been a milestone that offered an increased access to the world's largest market but will progressively expose Moldovan producers to a greater competition. Agriculture is one of the main sectors of the national economy, responsible for about 15.5% of GDP and employing a third of the country's population. Of the agriculture workforce around 25% are directly employed by agri-enterprises while others are classified as self-employees (FAO). Moldova's main products are vegetables, fruits/grapes, grain, sugar beets, sunflower seeds, tobacco, beef, milk and wine. The agriculture sector in Moldova is highly vulnerable to land degradation as well as climate change and variability, leading to serious problems of production loss and threats to food security. Land degradation induced economic losses are estimated at 251million USD annually. Agricultural productivity in Moldova is very low. Current land use and soil management practices in areas with steep slopes have up to 20-30% losses in soil fertility from torrential rains and annual losses of nutrients caused by erosion that far exceed replenishment by fertilizers. Droughts are accounting for 13% of total climate change induced hazards. The 2007 drought related economic losses were estimated at 1 billion USD<sup>3</sup>. The industry sector represents about 22.8% of GDP employing 17% of the active population. Traditionally, the country's main industries have been manufacturing, agriculture and food processing, textile, apparel and footwear. This sector faces a double challenge: loss of heavy industry, since the self-proclaimed independence of Transnistria and heavy dependence on imported energy resources. The largest contributor to the country's GDP (54%) is represented by the services sector, employing half of the workforce in Moldova, driven by insurance, legal consultancy and telecommunication-ICT sectors<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> except for a 200 m direct river-sea exit at Giurgiulesti International Free Port on the Danube-Prut River

<sup>2</sup> UN 2020, "Covid-19 Socio Economic Response and Recovery Plan"

<sup>3</sup> Moldova National LDN Report

<sup>4</sup> <https://santandertrade.com/en/portal/analyse-markets/moldova/economic-outline>

4. The large scale out-migration combined with decreasing birth rate led to a sharp decline of the population which currently stands at just 2.65 million people<sup>5</sup>, down by almost 30% compared to 1989. The unemployment rate increased exponentially to 8% in 2020 from 5.1 % in 2019 due to the negative impact of the pandemic, with urban areas most affected. In rural areas, a majority of farm households are smallholders, who tend to be poorer and have limited buffers against shocks. About 42% of the rural population is affected by poverty, an increase since 2009<sup>6</sup>, and many of them rely on the use of biodiversity and natural resources for their livelihoods. In 2014, 19% of Moldova's rural population lived below the absolute poverty line compared to five percent of the urban population<sup>7</sup>. Analysis of the distribution according to socio-economic groups of population shows that the highest poverty rate is inherent for farmers (33%) and agricultural workers (39%), in contrast with non-agricultural workers (9%). The main cause of rural poverty is high vulnerability of the agricultural sector to land degradation and the increased frequency of extreme weather and climate events which directly affect small holder farmers and agricultural workers whose income is 40-70% weather depended and comes from agriculture<sup>8</sup>.

5. Although rated among the poorest countries in Europe, Moldova has made significant progress in reducing poverty and promoting inclusive growth during past decades. The economic performance has been relatively strong over the past few years but repeatedly hindered by the unfavorable global situation or by the effects of the climate change impact. After a subdued economic growth in the second half of 2019, Moldova's economy collapsed in 2020 due to COVID-19 outbreak. The economy contracted and registered a negative growth balance of 4.5% primarily due to a poor performance in agriculture, wholesale, retail and a decrease in remittances. Approximately 17% of households reported a reduction or loss of income, 8.3% a reduction or loss of remittances and 3.6 % withholding of salaries or pensions and social benefits<sup>9</sup>. In the private sector, annual sales declined by 57% on average with small businesses affected the most. Roughly 13% of the companies have cut their workforce and companies have already delayed payments in an effort to cope with the decline in sales. In 2020, well over half of the companies in Moldova have fallen into arrears on outstanding liabilities<sup>10</sup>. At its meeting of February 28, 2021, the National Extraordinary Commission on Public Health instituted a state of emergency at national level, as of March 19 2021. A comprehensive fiscal package has been adopted (as per two 2020 State Budget Amendments), following several targeted fiscal measures to support businesses and vulnerable households, such as expanding unemployment benefits and strengthening existing targeted social assistance, tax relief for sectors affected by state-imposed restrictions, delaying tax payment deadlines, suspending tax audits and increasing state budget allocations to the health sectors and mortgage guarantee programs<sup>11</sup>.

6. According to 2012 data, the population of Moldova affected by multidimensional poverty was 0,9 percentage points, implying that people may live just above income poverty line and are experiencing multiple deprivations in key human development areas such as health, education, overall living standard. Moldova ranks 107 out of the 189 countries and territories in the Human Development Index (HDI) which measures national progress in health, education and income. Moldova lost 10.4 percent of overall human development progress due to persisting inequalities. By comparison, the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region's average is at 12.7 percent while Western Europe's 9.4 percent. Over the past years, before the pandemic hit, the analysis of Gini coefficient (measuring overall inequality) highlighted a decrease in inequalities, possibly due to the "cushion effect" of the remittances and possibly due to the increase of government's expenditures on social assistance. The situation after Covid-19 outbreak had worsened however, with poor households with 3 or more children and returning migrants and their families more severely affected. Remittances accounted for approximately 16% of the GDP, placing Moldova among the 20 most remittance-dependent countries worldwide. Without remittances, 224,000 people in Moldova would fall below the poverty line.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> WB, 2020

<sup>6</sup> IFAD, 2012

<sup>7</sup> UNDP, 2015

<sup>8</sup> WFP, 2012

<sup>9</sup> <https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/185631608708604109/Moldova-Economic-Update-Special-Focus-Dec-22.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://blogs.worldbank.org/europeandcentralasia/growing-impact-covid-19-moldovas-private-sector>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19>

<sup>12</sup> UN 2020 "Covid-19 Socio Economic Response and Recovery Plan"

7. Women have been affected more severely by the pandemic than men, due to the already persisting gender inequalities recorded before the COVID 19 outbreak. The pandemic caused women to lose their jobs or incomes, as they had to manage remote working while performing all domestic and caring responsibilities, which increased significantly with the restrictive measures. The existing gender norms and stereotypes concerning women's and men's roles in the society led to women bearing a disproportionate burden of performing domestic activities, caring for children and supporting them with online learning, while continuing to perform their work responsibilities, which unfortunately in many cases became an unsafe space due to increased risk and exposure to all forms of gender-based violence. The Burden Index<sup>13</sup> indicates the number of household activities for which women (or men) reported increases in time spent during the COVID-19 outbreak. On average, women reported an increase in time spent on at least three household chores – 3.2 activities per woman, compared to 2.3 activities per man<sup>14</sup>.

### Environmental Context

8. Moldova has a temperate continental climate and the topography of the country is dominated by a moderately hilly plateau with forest steppe ecosystems located in the north and central areas of the country and arid steppe in the south and south-east. The country straddles three main European eco-regions: the Central-European mixed forests, the Pontic steppe, and the East European forest steppe. Many plant and animal species typical for each of these regions are at the limit of their natural range in Moldova. It is estimated that 15% of the country still remains under some form of natural vegetation cover, much of which is however in a degraded state. The majority of the remaining natural vegetation cover in Moldova comprises forest habitats (12.1% of the country), predominantly located in the central region of the country. Steppe habitats (1.9% of the country) tend to occur in the north and the south of the country, while wetland habitats (2.8% of the country) are commonly associated with the aquatic systems of the Prut and Nistru (Dniester) rivers. 'Rocky habitats' (limestone rocks) covers 0.68% of the country. The country has a rich biota relative to its size, especially considering that the highest elevation reaches only 430 meters. The country hosts 1,842 species of vascular plants and nearly 4,600 species of lower plants and fungi. This includes 13 relictual genera, 126 *Red Data Book* species and 4 species at the boundary of their natural distribution. There are about 16,540 species of animals (461 vertebrates and more than 16,000 invertebrates) reported for Moldova. This includes 55 Ponto-Caspian relictual species (of which 10% are endemic to the Black Sea basin) and 116 rare, threatened and endangered species.

9. The agriculture and urban ecosystems cover almost 85% of the territory while natural and semi-natural ecosystems cover a modest 15% of which extended areas are subject to degradation. The country has a very low level of forest cover. For the period spanning from 2002 to 2012 the forested area has just increased by 0.6% (from 10.3% to 10.9%). Moldova is one of the smallest country in the Danube River Basin. The Danube touches the southern point of Moldova over approximately 340 meters at the International Free Port of Giurgiulesti, the country's only sea-river port located on Danube River. About 60% of the country waters are tributaries of Nistru (Dniester) River; about 34% flow into Prut River; the rest are feeding many small streams that open straight into the Black Sea. The Prut River is the second largest tributary of the Danube, with its confluence just upstream of the Danube Delta. For much of its length, the Prut River forms the border between Romania and Moldova. The country hosts 60 natural lakes and 3000 reservoirs. The largest lakes (Manta and Beleu) are located in Lower Prut River basin. The largest reservoir is Stanca Costesti (678 million m3) on Prut River, operated jointly by Romania and Moldova. The reservoirs in the northern and central regions are responsible for seasonal regulation of water while in the south they mainly serve for inter-annual distribution due to the region's great water deficit. Moldova has an overall low humidity, unevenly distributed rainfall, periods of freezing in late spring and early autumn. These have a negative impact on the cultivation of plants and result in considerable damage and loss as well as a negative impact on biodiversity, especially aquatic birds. Climate change induces patterns of extreme weather events such as drought and flood that are more severe and unfolding on prolonged period of time.

10. The total area of wetlands, lakes and riparian zones in Moldova are estimated at approximately 94,000 ha<sup>15</sup>, having dramatically decreased over the past decades due to past river engineering which affected ground water table and discharge, land use change and extensive water drainage to make way to agricultural lands. The total surface of the wetland protected areas is approximately 94,706 ha, including Moldova's only three Ramsar sites: The Lower Prut Lakes situated in

<sup>13</sup> The index ranges from 0 to 11, where 0 represents no increase in any household tasks, and 11 corresponds to an increase in all tasks

<sup>14</sup> UN Women, 2020 "Women at the forefront of COVID-19 response in Europe and Central Asia"

<sup>15</sup> Sixth National Communication to the CBD

the Lower Prut River Basin ; the Lower Nistru and the Unguri-Holosnita in Nistru Basin. These wetlands are hosting some of the oldest European forest floodplains and meadows, reedbeds, lakes and swamps, providing critical wintering and feeding habitats for hundreds of thousands of water birds migrating along various Eurasian-African flyways. The global KBA data base lists three main KBAs located in the Prut River Basin on Moldovan territory: Stanca Costesti Lake (2691 ha) part of the Hydro-power plant and dam, managed jointly by Moldova and Romania; Padurea Domneasca (Royal Forest) stretching over 6412 ha overlapping with the existing nature reserve and Lower Prut Manta-Beleu Lakes (8353 ha) included in the existing Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve.

### **Legal and Institutional Context**

11. The government of Moldova has prioritized the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, the reduction of land degradation and the protection of its freshwater sources as part of their national environmental programmes and plans. The legal framework is complex and subject to continuous adjustment in view of a better alignment with the EU policy framework. The harmonization process is challenging, to date great efforts have been made on adjusting the national legislation in order to better align the domestic legislation with EU directions e.g. EU Water Framework Directive, EU Habitats Directive and EU Birds Directive. Moldova is party member of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), ratified in 1995; Ramsar Convention, ratified in 2000; CITES in 2001; Convention on European Treaty for Conservation of Nature (Bern Convention) in 1994. Moldova has recently signed the Nagoya Protocol (2016) and became a member of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (2012). The NBSAP (2015-2020) has prioritized national efforts towards increasing the efficiency of PAs coverage, acknowledging the importance of Prut River basin wetlands such as Padurea Domneasca (Royal Forest) and supporting a transboundary biosphere reserve in the Lower Prut and Danube Delta region that would implement harmonized wetlands conservation measures. The Association Agreement between the EU and Republic of Moldova (Art 368) highlights biodiversity importance and acknowledges that its sustainable use is a key element for the achievement of sustainable development. The Environmental Strategy and Action Plan 2014-2023 provides an overall policy framework for extending the protected areas and ensuring their sustainable management (envisaged increase from 5.5 to 8% coverage) highlighting the need of increasing protection status of key biodiversity areas in order to reduce negative anthropic impact. (Please see Annex 18 Legal and Institutional Framework).

12. There are several threats to wetlands of Moldova that the project will address and each of them has a number of underlying factors that are discussed below.

### **Threats and their immediate root causes**

13. Threats to Moldova's Prut river KBAs are common to most wetlands, and most of these stem from the changes in land use practices particularly from agriculture and forestry, river engineering; pollutants runoffs, unsustainable tourism development, unsustainable and illegal use of resources as well as climate change effects. In Moldova's Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, the exploitation of oil resources in the core area represents an additional threat.

14. Disturbed hydrological regime. Thousands of hectares of forests and wetlands were cleared during 1950-1980 to make way for more arable land. Approximately 33,000 ha of floodplains and lakes in the Prut River were drained for agricultural purposes and past river regulation has altered water regimes affecting the remaining lakes. According to Moldova's Fifth and Sixth National Communications to the CBD, wetland areas in Moldova are "degraded and are disappearing, and key habitats for important waterfowl are decreasing" further highlighting that the main threats to biodiversity are coming from "the irrational exploitation of natural resources, fragmentation of natural habitats, environmental pollution, poor institutional framework for protected areas management and increasing climate change impacts". The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan NBSAP (2015-2020) has included measures for wetland sustainable management with the aim of enhancing legal protection and international designation of wetland areas. Engineering works in the Prut River have been conducted mainly to prevent major flooding. In 1978, governments of Moldova and Romania have finalized the construction of a large hydropower dam at Stanca Costesti, with a total capacity of 1,285 million m<sup>3</sup>. The Stanca Costesti Dam (and reservoir) is situated in the upstream stretch of the Prut River, between Romania and Moldova, just 16 km away from the Royal Forest Reserve. According to Moldova's Prut Basin Management Plan, the rationale for its construction was the protection against regular floods of 34 settlements located downstream. The Prut tributaries (notably Camenca) are

also regulated by over 300 reservoirs that are affecting the river flow. The main dam at Stanca Costesti and the smaller reservoirs on tributaries have irremediably changed the water regime and river flow and has significantly affected the pathway of the migratory fish species including sturgeons. The natural riparian forest galleries in the Royal Forest Reserve, formed by species such as ash, willows and elms, hosting key habitats for waterbirds are drying out and are gradually replaced by species such as the Boxelder maple *Acer negundo*. Regular seasonal floods are very rare and underground water level dropped significantly.

15. Apart from the negative impact of the Stanca Costesti dam, the main Prut tributary- Camenca River- which used to flood the floodplains in the middle section of the Prut basin, has been altered as well. Some of the past engineering works have modified the river Camenca's course such that the water flows back into the Prut river instead of flooding the lower reaches (Annex 17 Target Landscape Profile). This has led to the surrounding wetlands including Padurea Domneasca (Royal Forest) Nature Reserve no longer receiving water from the Camenca. Furthermore, these wetlands are not able to receive water from Prut river either, as the water level in the Prut river has dropped due to factors such as climate change, and the Stanca Costesti dam. The PPG research and field missions have noted that the situation on the ground is even further worsened by the construction of several small ad-hoc dams and artificial ponds, used by local communities for poultry farming and irrigation, further altering the remaining active course of the Camenca river and diverting scarce water resources from reaching the floodplains. These small constructions are considered illegal by the experts. Local authorities are sharing the same view but nevertheless their silence and inaction look a lot like a tacit approval of these practices.

16. In the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, the alteration of flooding regime compounded by climate change and the construction of artificial ponds and smaller reservoirs on tributaries led to a drastic decrease of water levels in both Manta and Beleu lakes and run-off from nearby agricultural fields and land erosion have increased siltation. According to the Climate Vulnerability Assessment study commissioned by ADA<sup>16</sup>, the Prut river is characterized by a high water regime variability. There is no hydrological monitoring in Moldova in the Lower Prut and the best estimation can be made based on data obtained from Ungheni hydrological station located upstream. The maximum flow at Ungheni is measured in July with the average of 594 m<sup>3</sup>/sec. The minimum flow of approximately 20 m<sup>3</sup>/sec is recorded during cold months. Assumptions based on hydroclimatic modelling indicated that the average annual flow with a one in two years return period (approximately an average runoff) in the lower course of the Prut adjacent to Lower Prut is 75,8 m<sup>3</sup>/sec. Average annual flow with a three in four years return period (corresponding to a dry year) is 50.5 m<sup>3</sup>/sec, and the average flow with a return period of 19 in 20 years (a very dry year) is 35 m<sup>3</sup>/sec. During 1981-2015 the average flow was decreasing at the relatively slow rate of 0.12 m<sup>3</sup>/sec per year. In the same period, the minimum flow decreased more significantly by 0.17 m<sup>3</sup>/sec per year, while the maximum flow grew by 0.98 m<sup>3</sup>/sec. These trends are in line with the runoff studies in the Carpathians. The Stanca-Costesti hydropower plant upstream of Lower Prut regulates the flow of the Prut by redistributing it over time. High floods are therefore intercepted and flattened. Yet heavier rainfall in summer has caused strong floods in 2008, 2010 and 2020. Excessive logging and the resulting deforestation in the Carpathian Mountains also contributes to the rapid concentration of runoff which generates large floods. On the other hand, the frequent advances of the Danube waters through the Prut riverbed, reaching as high as upstream of Cahul, can also considerably increase water level in the Prut river and, consequently, in Beleu and Manta lakes (Lower Prut Biosphere reserve) connected to it. Finally, local intensive rainfall can flood the Prut floodplain too through ephemeral and perennial watercourses. In addition to low-lying areas (both populated and in natural state) floods can also threaten poorly protected oil wells at Valeni (near Lake Beleu- a strictly protected zone in the Lower Prut Biosphere reserve) which results in spill overs polluting lake Beleu, only 30 km away from the confluence with Danube.

17. The projected steady reduction of the average runoff will lead to progressive decreased of water levels at Beleu and other floodplain lakes within Lower Prut Biosphere reserve. With evaporation already high and growing, water losses will unavoidably exceed the supply irrespective of frequent floods on the Prut and the periodic rise of the Danube. Furthermore, while water quality of the Prut remains moderately polluted, the lakes are increasingly affected by pollution from surrounding areas and decreasing water level due to evapotranspiration and variable water regime. Thus, water quality in lake Manta and Beleu are already qualified as poor, and as temperature and evaporation rise, the water quality will further

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<sup>16</sup> Climate Vulnerability Assessment study commissioned under the Project "Enhancing climate resilience in Lower Prut Biosphere reserve" financed by Austrian Development Agency and implemented in Moldova by EcoContact, 2020.

decrease. The water regime modification triggers other alterations such as the hydro morphological, chemical and biological changes of the water bodies especially the lakes ecosystems. As the dam at Stanca Costesti has altered the seasonal natural flooding of the Prut River floodplains, now the expert community identifies two additional factors that are affecting lakes and wetlands ecosystems downstream of the dam: a) the sudden releases of large volumes of water are causing floods in the low lying areas destroying nesting and feeding sites and b) the altered thermal regime of waters associated with such releases are inconsistent with the natural species reproduction cycles, consequently affected by the unnatural lower temperatures of water releases in spring/summer and warmer temperatures in winter/spring.

18. Pollution from agriculture and poor waste management Agriculture is the main source of income for 798,000 people (approximately 22.4% of the total population) living in Prut River basin, of which 74% are living in rural areas. There are 447 villages and 15 towns in the Prut river basin. Diffuse agricultural water pollution, illegal waste deposits on riverbanks and sub-standard wastewater treatment are the usual pollution sources. Agriculture is a traditional economic sector in Moldova, accounting for over 1/3 of the total GDP and 13% of the total exports, involving approximately 32% of the active population. The Prut River Basin is a typical agrarian region and agricultural land (irrigated and non-irrigated) covers over 76.8% of the area. The applicable norms with regard to the use of pesticides and fertilizers as well as waste management are highlighted in the Environment Strategy of Moldova (2014-2023), Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for Waste management (2013-2027) and regulated by Law 209/2016 and Law 277/218. Implementation, however, remains a challenge due to the lack of public investments in the upgrading of existing waste management infrastructure, lack of adequate ecological inspections and enforcement and insufficient understanding of and awareness on the consequences of pollution on natural ecosystems and livelihoods. The contamination with pesticides, estimated to cover approximately 330 ha as well as the improper disposal of solid waste continue polluting the soil and water. Chemical compounds utilized in agriculture (fertilizers and phytosanitary products) are regulated however the norms are not always respected by the economic operators. In the project area, there are approximately 26 operators in Cahul rayon, 32 in Falesti rayon and 17 in Glodeni rayon. In addition, contamination with solid waste is a key threat as these rayons do not have the infrastructure and capacity to manage solid waste appropriately. Out of the existing waste disposal units only 5% are managed by specialized entities according to the applicable norms. In rural areas, such units however do not exist and waste is disposed of inappropriately, mainly on river banks or on ad-hoc landfills, ending up in the river and lakes. The Management Plan of the Prut River Basin based on 2013 water quality assessments, shows that the status of Prut surface water quality oscillates between moderate and poor ecological status. One of the measures to address water pollution listed in the management plan envisages progressive reduction of nitrate pollution and the restoration of riparian forests.

19. Oil exploitation in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve Another source of pollution is generated by the occasional oil leaks which have been observed but not regularly monitored in Beleu Lake, in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. The Company Valiexchim Ltd. is the concession holder for oil exploitation in Beleu Lake, previously held by Redeco Ltd. and started exploitation in 2007. Prior to that, the Law on Protected Areas (art.26) was adjusted in order to allow oil exploitation in strictly protected areas, provided that environmental standards are respected. The Concession Agreement concluded with the Government that Valiexchim inherited from Redeco Ltd, includes obligatory environmental standards and mandatory impact assessments that would need to be endorsed by the Ecological State Inspectors. However, an inspection exercise conducted in 2013 exposed that the company is operating without all the legally mandatory documentation. Based on the Concession Agreement, the company manages a large area of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve including in the Beleu Lake but the environmental standards are subpar. The inappropriate oil exploitation infrastructure is prone to regular oil spills and fire hazards which, despite local communities protest, seem to be overlooked by the local authorities in charge with ecological inspection. In March 2020 the oil field caught fire due to a malfunction at the oil exploitation site, and the subsequent spread has damaged 240 ha of wetland habitat of which 37 ha riparian forest galleries and 203 ha of reed and other lacustrine vegetation hosting valuable bird species nesting sites.

20. Unsustainable agricultural practices Wetlands situated in Prut and Camenca river basin harbour a rich biodiversity yet local communities are continuing the destructive agricultural practices such as overgrazing and illegal tree cutting which are degrading most of the riparian grassland and forests. Recent floristic surveys conducted by research institutes in Camenca River Basin floodplains (Prut River's mid-section, in and around Royal Forest Reserve) revealed 42 new geographic records for the country's flora, some species were recommended to be introduced in the Red Book (e.g. yarrow *Achillea distans*; cow wheat *Melampyrum bihariense* and water speedwell *Veronica catenate*). Out of the 660 species of vascular plants identified in the area, approximately 30% are protected. The adequate level of humidity in the Prut and Camenca

basins is required for these mosaic wetland vegetation associations to survive (i.e. patches of reed *Phragmites australis*, reed mace *Typha angustifolia*, reed manna grass *Glyceria maxima*, marsh spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris* and floodplain grass species such as *Agrostis stolonifera*, *Lolium perenne*, *Elytrigia repens*. While the existing Royal Forest Reserve benefits from some legal form, the surrounding floodplain area encompassing the proposed 9,671 ha buffer zone proposed to be nominated for Ramsar designation, is under a constant threat from unsustainable agricultural practices and inefficient legislation enforcement.

21. Wetlands have been largely drained for agriculture and are now severely degraded, having been mowed and grazed intensively. The excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers in the agriculture sector, coupled with the increased sediments in water due to soil erosion, have detrimental effects on aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity. As pastures are degrading, local people are increasingly letting their animals enter forests for grazing. Grazing is a big issue for the country, especially in seasons when rain/water is missing. It has an impact on both the land per se and biodiversity. When the quality of pasturelands worsens because of climatic or other conditions, grazing happens in riparian protective forest strips, floodplain forests and/or protected areas, then it becomes illegal and unsustainable. Enforcement of legislation is still a problem as no alternative measures are proposed by authorities, so communities are mostly left on their own. Unemployment and poverty together with price increases for energy resulted in an increase in illegal deforestation and poaching. An alarming situation is registered in actual consumption of firewood in Moldova, which practically equals the average of total increase of forests<sup>17</sup>. There are no interconnecting forest corridors and most of the ecosystems of small forest riparian areas are degraded to a large extent.

22. In terms of land use, all three districts under the project scope (Cahul in the south, Glodeni and Falesti) are predominantly agricultural, more than half of their area being used for this purpose. The forest and grasslands within targeted districts are estimated at: 37,700 of pastures and 40,800 ha of forest plantations, the latter of which divided into 29,500 ha owned by state, 11,200 ha owned by local municipalities and the rest by private individuals or entities (please see Annex 17 Target landscape profile). The forest resources are unevenly distributed and fragmented, subject to frequent illegal cutting estimated at an average of 857 cubic meter per 1000 ha of forest. The River Prut Basin's grassland and floodplains are mostly located on communal land and therefore severely affected by overgrazing. The effects of grassland degradation and grassland biodiversity decline in all three districts are reflected by their low productivity (estimated at 1-3 t dry matter/ha) and soil degradation.

23. Grassland management is regulated by art.5 of the Law on Animal Husbandry, Government Decision 667/2010 for the approval of the Regulation on Grazing and Mowing, which stipulates that local authorities must develop appropriate management systems for communal pastureland. Sylvopastoral systems are used by the authorities as agroforestry arrangements that combine fodder plants with shrubs and trees. However many valuable floodplain pasture areas fall outside of protected areas or of sylvopastoral systems. There are no management measures included in the local strategies for their sustainable use and maintenance of floodplains biodiversity. These forest and grassland resources are therefore neither monitored nor properly managed. Under the predicted climate change impact the unsustainable management of the grassland and forest land is accentuating land degradation. According to the data of the Land Cadaster, the eroded land resources are registered on 877,644 ha, including 504,777 ha - slightly eroded, 259,332 ha - moderately eroded and 114,165 ha - heavily eroded. The surface of eroded soils has increased over the last 40 years by 283.4 thousand ha, advancing by 7,086 ha annually. Cahul district is among the worst affected, registering a value of 44.4% of the eroded lands from the total available land resources. Degradation of river banks, overgrazing of the riparian strips of grasslands and forests are increasing the sediment transport in the river systems and lakes siltation.

24. Prut riverbanks are fragmented by a network of highly eroded ravines, and run-off water (with stones, debris and agricultural organic matter) enter the lakes, therefore increasing the siltation process which is also clogging the channels connecting these lakes with the Prut River. So far, concrete restoration measures are not systematically planned and implemented. Beleu Lake in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve is particularly affected by progressive siltation caused by i) the Manolescu brook built during 1930<sup>th</sup> for industrial fishing through enlargement of a natural brook, ii) land erosion from nearby hills (deforested after 1991<sup>st</sup>) and iii) by the large amount of soil brought from nearby quarry for the

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<sup>17</sup> Capcelea et al., 2012

construction of the infrastructure for the oil exploitation, such as roads that cut across the core area of the reserve. Manta lakes complex had been a large water body (several times larger than Lake Beleu) comprising a collection of rather distinct lakes until separated by a dam during Soviet times. A sizable area of Manta was subsequently transformed into a pond system used for fish farming called “Crihana pond”, which collapsed in 1990<sup>th</sup> and after a subsequent short term privatization, it is now abandoned and used by locals for fishing. Both Beleu and Manta lake systems have nearly lost their natural connectivity with the Prut river. During dry seasons, water level decreases significantly. Under these conditions, both Manta and Beleu lakes are losing the natural connections with the river completely. The dramatic droughts of 2015 and 2019 have resulted in an almost complete lake Beleu dry out (average water level dropped to 15 cm) while lake Manta has temporarily morphed into a pasture area.

25. Climate change According to Moldova’s Fourth National Communication to the UNFCCC, over the past 127 years the country has become warmer with the average temperature increase higher than 1.2 degree Celsius while the increase of precipitations is estimated at 55.6 mm<sup>18</sup>. Climate models are invariably indicating a continuous upward trend in temperature rise with different intensities in all seasons. During the past 20 years the most significant temperature increase has been recorded in the summer season, when temperature rose on average by 0.9-1.3 degree Celsius per decade, compared with winter season, with an increase of 0.4-0.6 degree Celsius per decade. Despite an overall increase in precipitation during 1891-2019 by 0.6 mm/year there was an opposite trend in the south of the country (affecting the targeted areas in Lower Prut) where a decrease of 1.38 mm/year was observed. These trends are weak in comparison with the annual or seasonal rainfall but clearly an overall decrease in precipitation is to be expected during the next 80 years. The frequency of extreme weather events have increased during the past 10 years and will continue this trend. Cahul district was largely affected by increased drought occurrences (41 cases during 2010-2020) and by heavy rains and hail (50 cases) all causing significant economic losses e.g. the highest economic damage was caused by frost (94.9 million lei 5 million USD), heavy rains (78 million lei, approx. 4.3 million USD) and drought (70 million lei/ 3.9 million USD).<sup>19</sup>

26. The past years have been increasingly warmer and the river’s flow has decreased especially during summer months. For example, in 2019 the official hydrometeorological data indicated “hydrological drought” during July-September, with the Prut river discharge decreasing by 0.4-0.7 m (near Costesti) and by 0.8-1.3 m (further downstream, near Giurgiulesti). In 2019, the discharge of Prut river and tributaries had decreased by approximately 35-65 % compared to the multi-annual average. The projected steady reduction of the average runoff are already affecting the water levels at Beleu and other floodplain lakes within Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. With evaporation already high and increasing, water losses will unavoidably exceed the supply irrespective of frequent floods on the Prut and the periodic rise of the Danube water level. During the predicted climate change induced temperature variation and decreased hydrological regime, will inevitably alter species composition in the wetlands meadows and may negatively impact their ecological integrity whereas siltation of lakes due to floods/flush floods, erosion of slopes, is modifying the lacustrine ecosystems. The effectiveness of wetland management depend on the ability to maintain sustainable minimum water levels that are required to support ecological processes. These minimum water requirements should be defined in water management and environmental policies.

27. The recent 2019-2020 monitoring results in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve indicates an alarming decrease of the water level in Lake Beleu causing reduction of aquatic plants and increased fish mortality. Long dry seasons and the decrease of the water level led to the relocation or disappearance of sensitive species, such as the great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* no longer observed in recent years. Newts are valuable indicator species of healthy ponds and biodiversity rich small wetlands. Increased lake siltation leads to water retreat and spread of wetland wooded vegetation on areas formerly occupied by lakes. Furthermore, according to expert community, species’ migration patterns and timing may have started to change. Prolonged warmer autumns are delaying migration of aquatic birds and those who remain behind can become affected by sudden frosts, as it was observed in 2020 in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve when 30 individuals of swans *Cygnus olor* have starved or frozen to death, caught by the snow and ice storm.

28. In Lower Prut wetlands there are 118 threatened species that are vulnerable to climate change. These include 27 species of plants, 16 species of mammals, 34 species of birds, 9 species of amphibians, 7 species of reptiles, 9 species of fish, 9 species of insects and 7 species of molluscs. The most vulnerable are water bird species, followed by amphibians

<sup>18</sup> Second National BUR/UNFCCC

<sup>19</sup> ADA-Eco Contact “Climate Vulnerability Analysis”, 2020

and reptiles . The key risk factors associated with a changing climate are the increasing temperature, the decreasing air humidity, fires, the drying up of water basins, and the food scarcity resulting from climate impacts on species down the food chain. For the valuable key species, the most important but also the most vulnerable habitats are aquatic and marsh ecosystems, meadows, forests and muddy wetland areas with sandy or stony beds, bushes, shrubs and reeds. In order to reduce the negative effects of climate change, integrated monitoring of water, soil, air, and biota is needed in order to identify appropriate adaptation measures such as the reconstruction of degraded habitats, formation of ecological corridors between fragmented habitats, and the exclusion of anthropogenic pressures that prevent the expansion of areas occupied by endangered species , so that, depending on the evolution of climate, a sufficient number of individuals of each of the threatened species can survive.<sup>20</sup>

29. In Padurea Domneasca (Royal Forest) Nature Reserve, the annual monitoring of tree species shows the indicator of growth in the main species (oak, poplar, willow) was deviated by 3-6 days compared to normal growth cycle. The most worrisome trend in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve is the drying out of valuable wetlands ecosystems. This is not occurring necessarily due to the decrease of the Prut river runoff (as this area is rarely flooded by the Prut waters) but due to the engineering works on Camenca river which used to provide for the seasonal flooding of the floodplains and forest ecosystem. Camenca water course has been cut from its lower reaches and subsequently the ground water level and moisture have decreased affecting the Royal Forest Nature Reserve and adjacent floodplain. In addition, increased temperature and drought incidence during the past decades have reduced the frequency and impacted area of Camenca river's seasonal floods. A number of small illegal ponds and constructions along Camenca remaining active water course, is further worsening the situation, diverting water and increasing the surface of areas subject to water evaporation. In the absence of any remedial hydrotechnical measure, the valuable floodplains and forest ecosystems in Camenca Basin and the Royal Forest Reserve will gradually dry out and replaced, partly by invasive species such as *Acer negundo* and *Amorpha fruticosa*, as well as herbaceous arid steppe species such as *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* and *Xanthium spinosum*.

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## II. STRATEGY

### Long term solutions and barriers that need to be addressed

30. Long-term Solution: The Long term solution for the sustainable development and conservation of the high value wetland ecosystems in Moldova includes promotion of effective wetlands management models, aligned with Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) principles, within the context of supporting and securing sustainable and resilient livelihoods for local resources users, whose daily existence depend greatly on the integrity and productivity of these high value wetland. The project targets the KBAs and wetland areas which best demonstrate the values and the problems of wetland conservation and management in Moldova's Prut Basin: 1) Padurea Domneasca ( Royal Forest) Nature Reserve IBA/KBA located in the middle section of River Prut, hosting Moldova's oldest floodplain forests, stretching over 6,032 ha and 2) the MAB/UNESCO Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve covering 14,771 ha, hosting the country's largest natural lakes, also designated Ramsar sites (Annex 17 Target Landscape Profile ).

31. Key past and ongoing interventions consists in initial concrete steps taken by the Government of Moldova towards the firm acknowledgement of the importance of wetlands such as: the country's ratification of the Ramsar Convention in 2007; prioritization of wetland conservation under the relevant policies and programmes; setting up a Ramsar Committee; elaborating management plans for the Ramsar areas i.e. Lower Dniester; Unguri Holosnita and the Lakes Manta and Beleu; past awareness raising events targeting wetlands and protected areas. Within the current Theory of Change and baseline situation, the project's strategy considers the investments in several adaptation measures including afforestation/reforestation of riparian areas, silvo-pastoral arrangements and measures to attenuate soil erosion as well as creation of new protected areas.

32. The GEF with UNDP support, and other multilateral organizations and bilateral donors (ADA, SIDA, GIZ, FAO, WB, IFAD) have been investing for a number of years in developing Moldova's national capacity for climate change adaptation, sustainable land and water management and protected areas management. Financial incentives have been provided for

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<sup>20</sup> ADA-Eco Contact "Climate change vulnerability assessment", 2020

small and mid-size farmers mainly through micro-grants with some progress. However, wetland restoration and sustainable management has been less of a priority.

33. On-going interventions in the field of relevance are listed below:

- **National Environmental Strategy for 2014-2023** aims at establishing basic principles and priorities of the environmental governance, ground the necessary reform in the field of environment and further align the national legislation with the EU Directives. The Strategy has 8 specific objectives and it is covered by several budgetary sub-programmes e.g. (i) Policies and Environmental management; (ii) Ecological security ; (iii) Environment quality monitoring; (iv) Weather forecast; (v) Ecological security at local level. The Strategy defines the use of economic tools in the field of environment, under Objective 4 improving measures for reducing environmental pollution. The annual allocation to the budgetary sub-programmes is 910 million MDL (approx. 51 million USD) out of which in 2019 there have been 120 million MDL disbursed (approx. 11.8 million USD).
- **National Waste Management Strategy 2013-2027** aims at developing the necessary waste management infrastructure and services to protect environment and public health. It also aims at supporting the institutional framework required to for the gradual alignment to EU Directives. The annual budget is 80 million MDL (approx. 4.5 million USD). The 2019 disbursements under the budget sub-programme “Integrated waste management” are 7.3 MDL (approx. 412,000 USD).
- **National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2014-2020** takes into consideration economic resource management and social challenges in agriculture and rural development. It aims at the agriculture sector development for 2014-2020, consistent with the European Union policies and instruments. The Strategy prioritizes the coherence between agriculture, environment and rural development, which represent economic, environmental and social problems. The priority budgetary programmes and sub-programmes are: Agriculture Development and National Forestry Sector Development, and the annual budget allocated is 2 million MDL (approx. 112,900 USD) . The expenditures recorded in 2019 are 1.9 billion MDL (approx. 107 million USD).<sup>21</sup>
- **National Plan for Expanding Forested Areas 2019-2023** with a total budget of 545.8 million MDL (approx. 30.9 million USD) implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Moldsilva Agency, ICAS- Forest Research and Management Institute. It aims at the afforestation of 11thousand ha of degraded land, 1.7 thousand riparian protection areas, and planting 0.3 thousand ha of forest shelter belts for the protection of agricultural land
- **EU4Moldova Focal Regions/EU4Cahul 2019-2025**, funded by the EU (25.8 million USD), implemented by UNDP, is aiming at supporting the development of smart, inclusive and sustainable regional growth poles in Cahul and Ungheni districts of Moldova, to bring a better quality of life and new opportunities to citizens. The EU Focal Regions supports both Cahul and Ungheni districts to improve the necessary public services and infrastructure, involving private sector and stimulating investments, improving employment and equal opportunities for men and women. The EU4Cahul Project is the main co-financier of the GEF project under Outcome 3.1, supporting new sustainable income streams and biodiversity friendly local business in 9 municipalities located within the perimeter of Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve in Cahul district. The GEF will invest in technical assistance and preparation of eligible proposals to be financed by the EU4Cahul project, encouraging sustainable, nature-based local businesses and the EU4Cahul will support these businesses through targeted financial assistance and facilitation of joint development platforms (e.g. “Focal Region Business Association of Tomato Producers, Processors and Exporters”, “ Focal Region Tourism and Recreation Association”).
- **Enhancing Climate Resilience in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve 2020-2023** with a total budget of 1 million EUR from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the project is implemented by Eco Contact (NGO), aiming at supporting sustainable management and resilience of the wetland ecosystems in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve considering climate change impacts and increasing local livelihoods and their adaptation capacities. The ADA project is co-financing some of the proposed activities under the GEF project, especially under the following outputs: Output 3.1.1. (referring to the proposed joint activities with the Local Action Group “Lower Prut”), Output 2.1.1 (joint capacity building activities on climate change and biodiversity conservation topics) and Output 4.1.1. (joint awareness raising activities). Furthermore, the GEF project will build on the results of Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment developed by Eco Contact/ ADA project in designing its strategy. Given the fact that both

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projects are targeting Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve communities, both projects will capitalize on the opportunities for synergic such as: joint capacity building and awareness activities on the importance of the wetland ecosystems services for adaptation to climate change.

- **Restoring Danube Delta Wetlands and Steppe (2019-2023)** with a total budget of 4 million USD is financed by Rewilding Europe in in three countries: Romania, Moldova and Ukraine, with the aim of restoring 40,000 ha of wetlands in Danube basin and Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. Activities in Moldova are implemented by Verde e Moldova (NGO) in the area of Lake Beleu, where the project is implementing topo-bathymetric studies that will serve as a basis for future desilting works. Both the Rewilding and the GEF projects are focusing on Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve in Moldova, and there are opportunities for knowledge sharing and join capacity building and awareness raising activities that will be further explored during the project implementation.
- **Competitive Agriculture in Moldova (MC-P), Phase II 2021-2023**, with a total budget of 1.5 million USD, it is implemented by the Ministry of Environment (including its agencies: Moldsilva and ICAS) and the World Bank, aiming at the rehabilitation of 2200 ha of forest belts for the protection of agricultural fields in the center and the north regions and generation of GHG emission reductions estimated at kt 43 CO<sub>2</sub>eq.
- **NAP2 Advancing Moldova's National Climate Change Adaptation Planning 2020-2024**, GCF grant of 2.1 million USD implemented by UNDP and FAO is aiming at reducing climate change related risks by strengthening institutional and technical capacities that support integrated climate change adaptation planning and programming, expands and deepens the national approach in climate change adaptation planning at different levels, strengthening synergies both vertically, at different levels of governance, and horizontally between the sectors affected by climate change (UNDP), with particular focus on agriculture sector (FAO) to improve integration of agriculture development and responsiveness to a changing climate while improving food security. The GEF project will coordinate its work with the FAO activities, in view of sharing knowledge and experience.
- **"Strengthening the institutional framework in the water and sanitation sector in Moldova" Project 2018-2021**, with a budget of 3.3 million MDL (approx. 190,000 USD) is funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and implemented by Moldovan Waters Agency, Moldsilva Agency and ICAS. The project is aiming at Inventory and delimitation of the riparian strips by categories of use for the rivers Ciuhur, Nîrnova, Cahul, Căinar, Ciuluc and Botna; Elaboration of execution projects for 60.2 ha forest protection shores for the rivers Ciuhur, Nîrnova, Cahul, Căinar, Ciuluc and Botna; Planting of 60.2 ha of forest crops for the protection of the banks for the six rivers included in the project. The GEF project will build on the knowledge and experience in management and afforestation of riparian strips, working together with ICAS and Moldsilva agencies, for the wetland restoration activities under Component 3
- **"EU4Environment" 2019-2022** is a regional project funded by the European Union (EU contribution 19.5 million EUR) aiming at supporting environmental governance in the targeted countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine). It supports environment-related activities, unlocking green growth potential and setting better mechanisms to manage environmental risks and impacts. The GEF project will work with the EU 4 Environment project in Moldova on the necessary amendments to the National Environmental Fund Regulation. The Eu4Environment is currently working on a new Operational Manual of the NEF targeting administrative aspects. The GEF will be incremental to the current efforts, in that it will specifically address the efficient use of funds under the NEF and will prioritize wetlands restoration and PA management among select funding areas
- **"Sustainable and resilient communities through women empowerment" 2020-2023**, funded by the Sweden Development Agency, with a total budget: 2.28 million USD, implemented by UNDP, aims at building inclusive and resilient communities and create an enabling environment for women's economic and social empowerment through (i) sustainable climate resilient and environmentally sound livelihoods, local capacities and knowledge on environment, climate change and gender (ii) capacitated NGOs to support local authorities and women associations and local women in the field of resilience to climate change (iii) supporting women and women headed households to implement climate resilience projects and practices (iv) supporting climate resilience local business models. The GEF project will build on gender sensitive assessments, and will use the training manuals developed and knowledge and experience generated by this project in promoting women empowerment measures at local level.
- **"Promotion of climate change and disaster risk reduction in the water and civil protection sectors for enhanced rural resilience" Project 2018-2021**, with a total budget of 1 million EUR funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), and implemented by the UNDP, is aiming at supporting the implementation of climate smart water management solutions for agriculture, flood management and fire prevention and expansion of community based

rescue/firefighting teams in rural communities in Moldova with the purpose of reducing exposure and vulnerability of the rural communities to climate change and disasters. The GEF project will build on the knowledge generated by the technical manuals developed and training seminars and drills implemented under this project, the knowledge generated in preventing and fighting fire and flood hazards.

- **“Nistru River Hydro Power Complex Social and Environmental Impact Study” 2018-2021** with a budget of 653,000 USD implemented by UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Environment is supporting the negotiations of the Agreement on the Nistru Hydropower Complex between Moldova and Ukraine. This intervention aims at providing technical and legal expertise to the negotiation process and the necessary assessments regarding the potential environmental impact of the hydro power complex. The GEF project will use the knowledge and experience generated and will learn from the conclusions and findings of various assessments especially the environmental impact assessments on Nistru River.
- **“DanubeParks- Transdanube Travel Stories” 2020-2022**, is a regional project implemented by DanubeParks and funded by the Interred Danube Transnational programme with a total budget of approx. 1.82 million EUR. The project is aiming at providing improved management strategies, tools and platforms for supporting transnational tourism in Danube region by implementing innovative concepts, new narratives and sustainable mobility management tools. The final objective is to support Danube basin countries to use their touristic potential of cultural and natural heritage fully and sustainably. The GEF project will cooperate with DanubeParks project for the development of a cross-border integrated tourism package Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve (Moldova) and Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve (Romania). The two project will further explore the implementation of joint stakeholders meetings and events that will promote innovative, cross-border safe and sustainable tourism.

34. The projected baseline scenario. Under the baseline scenario, continued degradation of wetlands in Moldova will be expected as a result of water pollution from agriculture, poor waste management and exploitation of oil resources, and incoherent legislation that prioritizes conservation and sustainable wetland management. Water pollution due to agriculture, illegal waste deposits and oil exploitation will continue to represent major problems, alongside a flawed legal framework, inefficient enforcement of legal environmental norms, weak collection of pollution charges and weak collection of local taxes on natural resources exploitation. The key strategic framework documents do not contain a detailed description of measures to finance wetlands biodiversity conservation. The main Regulation of the Stanca Costesti Dam does not include provisions for the minimum ecological flows informed by accurate analysis that accounts for climate change. The National Ecological Fund will remain insufficiently capacitated to acknowledge the critical financing needs of wetlands and protected areas; therefore, it would not re-direct funds towards wetland management and reconstruction measures. Contextualization of the key wetland areas of the Prut River Basin into the broader local development landscape will not be enabled by the local development policies and land use plans under the baseline scenario. The targeted PAs management will remain insufficiently capacitated and legal inadequacies will continue to perpetuate confusion with regard to their legal status. The Moldsilva Agency’s protected areas management units will lack technical capacities, basic biodiversity management tools and trained personnel. The Royal Forest Nature Reserve, managed by “Moldsilva” agency will not have an adequate management plan, no key species monitoring system will be in place and no adequate management capacity. Wetlands in and around Padurea Domneasca Nature Reserve will continue to dry out gradually, due to the past engineering of Camenca river which has altered the river course. The unregulated small earth dams in the Camenca river valley, will continue to divert water and contribute to the overall negative impact on natural ecosystems. The local communities will be unprepared to access the available sources of financing in order to implement sustainable local development measures.

35. Where the GEF can be incrementally valuable is to address some of the remaining barriers and complement other government and donor funded programmes, focusing specifically on the wetlands in Prut river basin, implementing strategic measures that will address some of the lingering legal/regulatory confusions that affects wetland management and financing, while at the same time, mobilizing investments in the repair of wetland hydrology and implementation of measures to attenuate wetland loss that is associated with climate change. Furthermore, impacts on biodiversity that stem from PAs management capacity constraints, or inadequate national response to the international status of key biodiversity values such as Ramsar or MAB-UNESCO, or biodiversity-negative development of tourism, forestry, agriculture, and oil exploitation need and can be addressed in an integrated manner and with respect to the international status of key biodiversity values. In the baseline scenario, many individual elements of the PA system are at risk of existence in name only, in the register, and on paper. Inadequate management and business planning have stalled the

appropriate understanding of the potential role that PAs can play. The lack of understanding, incorporating, and implementing international best practice guidelines leads to deterioration of the biodiversity values with the risk of serious damages and eventual loss of the international designations.

### 36. Barriers and Theory of Change

#### Legal Framework Inadequacies.

37. Moldova has ratified the major UN environmental treaties and it is in the process of harmonizing its legislation with the main EU Directives. Although the domestic legislation that translates Moldova's international commitments is comprehensive, there are key legal inadequacies with significant impact on protected areas management and permitting system over natural resource use. For example the Law on Protected Areas (article 26) does stipulate that economic activities affecting natural ecosystem are forbidden in the scientific reserves but provides an exception for the exploitation of natural and mineral resources that are of national interest (such as oil and gas) with the only caveat to respect environmental norms, the latter of which are not observed by private entities. The article 56 of the same law however forbids any economic activity in a core area of a MAB UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, however the oil exploitation platform in a core area of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve is still operational. The Ministry of Environment is seeking to reach a final resolution on the oil exploitation in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve.

38. Although a series of economic operators have introduced ISO 9000 certification, there is no account of ISO 14001 and other certifications systems such as the EU ECO Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) implemented in the country. Voluntary environmental reporting, except for Lafarge cement plant, does not exist in the country. In case of Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve (a former scientific reserve) this provision proved to be disastrous, as oil exploitation is happening in a core protected area, in Beleu Lake next to key birding and nesting areas. Oil leaks are occurring especially during (but not limited to) flooding period due to poor safety standards of the operations.

39. Moldova has ratified the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance by Parliament Decision no. 504-XVI of July 14, 1999 and became a member of this Convention in June 2000 when the "Lakes of the Lower Prut" Wetland was included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance. Among these, the Law on Protected Areas (Law 1538/1998) was amended in 2006 to include the definition of "wetlands" and provisions for granting protection status of the Ramsar sites (amendment approved by the Parliament, 2006). The organization and functioning of wetlands of international importance is established by the Framework Regulation of wetlands of international importance (Government Decision No. 665/2007). This acknowledgement however does not guarantee the allocation of funding, development of a management plan and assignment of institutional administrative responsibilities. The Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve represents a fortunate instance, whereby the Ramsar site (Lower Prut Manta Beleu lakes) overlaps with the perimeter of the former Lower Prut Scientific Reserve (now Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve) and for these reasons it does benefit from the presence of a permanent PA administration, funding and management plan.

40. Another element of concern is the lack of harmonization of the Protected Areas categories with the IUCN categories and a lack of clarity in the provisions that are meant to give effect to international law obligations and instruments facilitating transboundary protected areas agreements. The Law on Protected Areas (Law 1538/1998) defines 11 different categories of protected areas in Moldova, of which only 7 categories correspond to IUCN classification system. The provisions based on international best practices (e.g. IUCN Guidelines for PAs) have not been included in the PA Law despite existing studies, recommendations and civil society requests. Furthermore, there may be instances when there are conflicting legal aspects that perpetuate confusion of terms and PA management approaches. The term "scientific reserve" and "nature reserve" are used interchangeably, as convenient, as is the case of the Royal Forest protected area which, *de jure*- according to the Law on PAs, is a *scientific reserve*<sup>22</sup> with a strict protection regime, however *de facto* it is managed

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<sup>22</sup> As per the Law on Protected Areas (Law no 1958/1998) the official title is "Royal Forest Scientific Reserve" covering 6,032 ha <http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=311614>

by Moldsilva agency as a “*nature reserve*<sup>23</sup>”, with a different management regime, allowing forest exploitation. These types of confusions among terms, agency mandates and conflicting views between different institutions, are also highlighted by the conclusions of the Environmental Audit Report on the efficiency of the PA system (Decision of the Court of Accounts No. 26/2015<sup>24</sup>).

41. The Water sector related legislation provides for water management norms and consumption regime; however it is not harmonized with the Protected Areas legislation. Guaranteed minimum ecological flow for the survival of lakes, natural water bodies and wetlands and methodology for establishing critical thresholds are not embedded in the legislation. It is expected that water deficits will be exacerbated under the climate change impact and sectorial water demands will increase. In case of artificial water bodies, the current norms envisage the existence of technical parameters to be implemented which include the minimum water requirements, however, these requirements are not observed nor implemented. Prut river flows have decreased during the past decades due to regulations on Prut and its tributaries, and even more so during past years, due to climate change. Stanca-Costesti Dam operates based on an old Regulation (currently under revision) to account for the climate change induced decrease of the river flows. Moldova’s technical capacity to engage in transboundary hydrological management and negotiations over revised ecological flows in Prut basin needs to be strengthened. (Please see Annex 18 Legal and Institutional Framework).

National Ecological Fund inadequate in its current operational mode for financing of restoration and conservation of wetlands.

42. Revenues from pollution charges are regulated by the Moldovan Pollution Charge Law (no 1540/1998) and by a number of additional environment related taxes. The Government’s vision about the application of the environmental economic tools is provided for in the Environment Strategy 2014-2023; Objective 4 provides for reducing the negative impact of the economic activity on the environment and for improving the measures for the prevention of environmental pollution. This objective will be achieved by improving and streamlining economic tools in the field of environment protection and by reforming financing mechanisms e.g. National Environmental Fund (NEF) and developing specific expenditures programmes. NEF resources have not only decreased significantly starting with 2014 but its efficiency of using the financial resources (revenues) is at 70-80%, which clearly reveals a series of deficiencies in planning and use of resources. For example NEF does not have any expenditure plan structured by funding areas, which would allow compliance with the goals set in the National Environmental Strategy. At the same time, the financial resources accumulated by the environmental funds (National Environmental Fund (NEF) and Local Environmental Funds (LEFs) as a result of receipt of payments for pollution are used mainly for the development of public works, especially for water supply and sewerage works, sanitation and greening of localities.

43. The final evaluation of the UNDP/GEF project “*Environmental Fiscal Reform*” implemented during 2011-2015, pointed out that the project has delivered extensive legal assessments and proposals which were not fully implemented due to the political volatility. One of the main recommendations of the final evaluation was for future GEF project to build on the proposals and assessments delivered by the Environmental Fiscal Reform project and explore opportunities to further support the reform of the NEF. Furthermore, a 2013 Study on the extension of Protected Areas (developed under the GEF Project “*Improving coverage and effectiveness of the protected area system in Moldova*”) highlighted that the budget dedicated for financing the protected areas represent only 53% of the basic management costs and the financing gap of the protected area is estimated at approximately 1.9 million USD annually for the basic management measures and 2.8 million USD for the optimum management. The Study underlined the importance of the NEF in increasing the available resources destined to the management of protected areas, proposing to increase the financing of protected areas from the NEF and direct up to 15% of the total taxes and funds collected by the NEF towards the projects that are focused on the management of protected areas, including wetlands.

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<sup>23</sup> As per the Gov Ordinance 150/2010 approving the Regulation of Moldsilva Agency, the PA is given the title “State Enterprise Royal Forest Nature Reserve” covering 5907 ha [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=124354&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=124354&lang=ro)

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=85287&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=85287&lang=ro)

44. The NEF is currently undergoing a reform in view of improving its management effectiveness and reforming its Operational Manual with the support from OECD/ EU4Environment Project. A notable conclusion of the recent assessments conducted by *Expert Group* in 2020 is that in Moldova the level of revenues from environmental taxes is comparable to those of the EU countries. The revenues from the collection of the environmental pollution fees (including for air pollution, toxic discharges in water bodies and solid waste) is almost twice as much as in the EU and the largest part of these revenues are represented by taxes on goods that pollute the environment; the fees from water pollution is not significant despite the pollution of surface waters due to the limited wastewater infrastructure and non-observance of environmental standards by the private entities discharging pollutants in the surface waters. On the same time, the study reveals that despite the solid revenues from environmental fees and taxes, these are not directed towards solving environmental problems e.g. in 2019 the collected environmental fees and penalties are estimated 4.9 billion lei (approx. 274 million USD or 2.4% of the GDP) whereas the governmental investments into environmental measures are estimated at 200 million lei (approx. 11 million USD) i.e. 0.1% of GDP only.<sup>25</sup>

#### Missing know-how and inadequate capacities for protection and restoration of wetlands

45. Currently, the PAs system in Moldova covers 189,385.9 hectares (or 5.61% of the country's territory). A third of it is managed by the National Forests Authority Moldsilva (government agency, under the Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment); the rest is mostly located on community or private lands. Protected areas (PAs) located outside the Moldsilva Agency have almost no effective protection (although they are covered by law, no management is undertaken). The PAs system is neither representative of species nor of habitat diversity across the terrestrial biomes. The capacities of Moldsilva protected areas management units are better equipped for forestry management and they lack technical capacities and trained conservation biologists. In such a case of forestry management authorities in charge with PA management it is always difficult to determine the proportion of time allotted to PA work by the staff with multiple responsibilities<sup>26</sup>. The Royal Forest Nature Reserve is currently managed by the Royal Forest Enterprise, a state company founded by Moldsilva agency, with 56 permanent staff. The total annual budget dedicated for the management of Royal Forest Reserve is approximately 560,000 USD. According to the 2013 Study on the extension of Protected Areas (developed under the GEF Project "*Improving coverage and effectiveness of the protected area system in Moldova*") the financing gap of protected areas, in general, is around 50%. Funding for Royal Forest management is sourced from wood harvesting and tourism revenues.

46. A serious threat to key wetland ecosystems in this area is the lack of regular floods due to regulation of the Prut river and its tributary, Camenca. The existing unregulated small earth dams in the river valley are further diverting water away from natural ecosystems. Climate change is also contributing to the decrease of the river flow. The Moldsilva agency is currently implementing some restoration work that limits the expansion of the Box elder, *Acer negundo*, the spreading of which tends to gradually replace the native riparian forest galleries, however without being able to address the underlying causes of wetland destruction which is the lack of regular floods. The main problem and key barrier is that the Royal Forest Nature Reserve does not have a management plan of the protected area, and as a result, key wetland restoration measures on the Prut tributary (Camenca river) that could improve flooding regime in the area and increase the chances of wetland survival, cannot be contextualized in the landscape, properly planned and budgeted for. The main activities in the area consist of forestry management measures, protection against poaching and illegal logging. The institutional capacity is weak in terms of technical expertise on biodiversity conservation. There is no integrated monitoring data base and regular field inventories. In addition, there is little interaction with and outreach to local communities.

47. The Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve is managed by the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve's administration, under the authority of Moldsilva agency. The management plan of the protected area was developed and submitted to the Ministry of Environment more than a year ago. The current management team of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve consist of 20 permanent staff and a Consultative Council. With an annual budget allocation of 223,180 USD, the staff are implementing

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[https://www.expert-grup.org/media/k2/attachments/Eng\\_-\\_Studiu\\_Instrumentele\\_fiscal-bugetare\\_aplicate\\_yn\\_domeniul\\_mediului\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.expert-grup.org/media/k2/attachments/Eng_-_Studiu_Instrumentele_fiscal-bugetare_aplicate_yn_domeniul_mediului_compressed.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> <https://propark.ro/en/publicatii/assessment-of-capacity-development-needs-of-protected-area-staff-in-eastern-europe-187.html>

some management and monitoring measures mostly in the core areas (the former Lower Prut Scientific Reserve area) and the management unit does not have the resources and capacities to cover the entire biosphere reserve's territory. Moreover, considering that the Lower Prut region and Danube Delta are part of the Lower Danube Euroregion, there are no coordinated management and monitoring measures with the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and no best practices and lesson learnt transferred to Moldova. In addition, the PPG dialogue with representatives of both Protected areas and Moldsilva Agency as well as with the Ministry of Environment and National Ecological Fund, have highlighted the limited capacity to develop eligible projects for the mobilization of domestic and international biodiversity financing. The National Ecological Fund's Manual includes Biodiversity and Protected Areas among the priorities for financing. During the PPG discussions, the representatives of the Ministry of Environment have claimed that the lack of good eligible projects received from the PAs administrations is one of the reasons that impedes financing of PAs through the National Environmental Fund.

Absence of planning and enforcement framework to mainstream biodiversity in the wider local development policies, planning and budgets

48. The capacity of natural resources management at district level is very weak. Currently for example, important key biodiversity consideration is not used in the process of allocation of land to various uses. In order to conserve biodiversity outside PAs, there is a need for local strategies and local-level land use plans to not only fully take into consideration biodiversity conservation considerations but to also effectively budget appropriate resources for addressing environmental threats and effectively implement environmental legal compliance. The existing legal framework for biodiversity monitoring is not fully in place and its enforcement is still a problem, mostly because of weak protected areas management capacities and lack of coordination among stakeholders (governmental, science/academia, NGOs, community, private) and lack of interest in and understanding for species/habitat conservation at site level in and outside protected areas. Effective biodiversity management outside PAs, especially the rich biodiversity of floodplain meadows, is very important to maintain the ecological integrity of Moldova's ecosystems and ensuring that their biodiversity is rationally conserved. Under the Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment, the State Ecological Inspectorate (SEI) operates at the district level to enforce environmental legislation while the Local Public Authorities (LPAs) and Municipalities are responsible for enforcement of biodiversity related legislation at a local level, as well as for enforcement of land use plans (where they exist). Moldsilva is responsible for the enforcement of forestry regulations on forest land under their jurisdiction. There is however limited technical capacity to deal with biodiversity mainstreaming in local development policies. Moreover, there are weak capacities for permitting, monitoring, and enforcing biodiversity-friendly development at the district level with respect to managing threats at wetlands.

49. The local development strategies of Cahul district which hosts the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve; and Glodeni and Falesti districts located near the Royal Forest Nature Reserve don't include concrete sustainable management measures of the pastures and meadows. The three districts targeted by the projects are in the process of developing their new Local Development Strategy 2021-2025. The PPG research has analyzed the applicable local development strategies. While Cahul and Falesti districts are still in the process of developing their local strategies 2021-2025, Glodeni district has finalized it at the time of this project writing. The local planning approach has been largely unchanged compared to previous years. The local strategies are anchored in the overall National Development Strategy 2030 and have a general loose focus on environment. Local measures such as afforestation of degraded areas are mentioned in the action plans,<sup>27</sup> although no concrete amount from the local budget is usually indicated. The territorial planning framework continues to be deficient primarily because biodiversity conservation around PAs is not taken into account and the lack of coordination with the PAs Administrations has contributed to random land allocation and development leading to ecosystem fragmentation. Biodiversity conservation and rational use is considered mainly within perimeters of protected areas, however as much of wetlands reside outside protected areas there is a need for local level development planning to fully take into account biodiversity considerations which are also effectively monitored and implemented.

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<sup>27</sup> The current applicable local strategies are available at these links (in Romanian language): <http://cahul.md/programul-de-dezvoltare-a-raionului>); <http://www.cr-falesti.md/index.php/raionul-falesti/strategia-de-dezvoltare-socio-economica-a-raionului-falesti>); [http://www.glodeni.md/sites/default/files/SDD\\_r\\_Glodeni\\_2021-2025.pdf](http://www.glodeni.md/sites/default/files/SDD_r_Glodeni_2021-2025.pdf)).

### Local communities have limited opportunities for alternative sources of income

50. Cahul is located in the south-west border of Moldova and it is hosting the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. The socio-economic development is mainly based on commerce, agriculture and potential for tourism. According to 2017 data, in Cahul there are 785 businesses with 10,008 employees, of which 10 large companies and 605 micro-enterprises. The monthly average salary is approx. 25% lower than the country average. In the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, the 9 local villages have formed a Local Action Groups (LAGs) with own strategy and priorities for environment and local development objectives, but this work requires support and development of concrete models of alternative livelihood opportunities on wetlands. A thorough analysis of the economic potential of the local community in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve has been conducted at PPG and the results shared with the EU4Cahul project team. The EU4Cahul is envisaging calls for proposals targeting local entrepreneurs. In the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, agricultural entrepreneurs own and process approx. 27.47 thousand hectares of which approx. 83% are arable land, 15.5% are vineyards and less than 1% orchards. The largest areas of arable land are in Slobozia Mare, Crihana Veche and Giurgiulesti. At the same time, Slobozia Mare, Văleni and Manta have the largest vineyards. Relatively important orchards are only Brânză, Cășlița Prut and Văleni villages. There is a clear fragmentation of the agricultural areas managed by entrepreneurs, but there is a need to diversify the economy using local resources. The consultations with local communities highlighted that opportunities for diversification of livelihoods rest with: vegetable farming, viticulture, beekeeping and rural (eco) tourism.

### Insufficient awareness about wetlands status and understanding of threats

51. Moldova's priorities are revolving around key issues under the EU Association Agreement. The 2019 EU Report on Moldova's progress under the Association Agreement highlighted several priorities related to environment: organic farming, management of waste from electric and electronic equipment and chemicals, climate change. Similarly, among potential national opportunities under the Green New Deal, the political discourse in Moldova is touching upon air quality and air monitoring, energy efficiency, waste management and low carbon transport, land use and spatial planning, afforestation of riparian and degraded land, eco-tourism, reducing air/water/soil pollution. A sharpened focus and increased awareness and political backup are needed to address the causes of wetlands decline since healthy wetland ecosystems services are the basis of many political priorities under Moldova's EU accession agenda.

52. In addition, the local communities living in the project areas are not fully aware of the importance of wetland ecosystems services for their livelihoods and the negative consequences of the wetlands decline, especially exacerbated by climate change, on their food security and wellbeing. The PPG observations revealed that for example around the Royal Forest Nature Reserve, in the Camenca River's floodplain area, local villagers are building (potentially illegal) small dams on the active course of the river and use the water for poultry farming or irrigation, unaware of/not fully understanding the cumulative negative impact of these dams on the overall water availability. The Camenca River Basin Management Plan (2019-2024) developed with the support of the Austrian Development Agency has highlighted the need for local public consultations in the Royal Forest Nature reserve area in order to implement any hydrological repair and restorations in the area. In the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, there are nine local communities living within the perimeter of the reserve. According to a local awareness assessment primarily focused on the perception of climate change impact on their livelihoods it seems that in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, the local communities are more aware of the importance of key lake and wetlands ecosystems and the importance of maintaining their ecological integrity, condemning the lack of tangible investments in infrastructure and measures for the environment protection and protesting against pollution sources, especially the solid waste and oil pollution at the oil exploitation field in lake Beleu. The overwhelming majority of interviewees are aware of, and have witnessed the negative aspects of the climate change during the past decade, expressed through longer drought period, decreased precipitations and diminished water resources and a more frequent occurrence of extreme weather patterns<sup>28</sup>.

53. The project's **Theory of Change** is that multiple benefits of ecosystems resilience and healthy watersheds can be unlocked when key wetlands, lakes and riparian zones are managed effectively, and adequately contextualized in the

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<sup>28</sup> ADA/Eco Contact "Climate vulnerability assessment", 2020

surrounding landscape and aligned with IWRM principles . The project's components are closely aligned, linked, and grouped into three Impact Pathways. The project interventions are called to reduce threats, barriers and negative effects on wetland biodiversity and to facilitate an enabling environment that provides for effective wetlands protection and management that ensures the continuity of wetland ecosystem services sustaining livelihoods. KBAs in Prut River Basin hosting globally important biodiversity should be protected from negative effects deriving from agriculture and oil exploitation, from insufficient conservation arrangements and climate change. The PA management strengthening interventions, provisions for minimum ecological flow and hydrological repair of endangered wetlands will address habitat loss while provisions for increased financing and improve management arrangements for wetlands will elevate this topic on the political agenda. With the current baseline of little or no consideration on wetland habitat loss, the project's demonstration activities and strengthened regulatory framework will pave the way for a more systematic approaches to improving wetlands condition. Furthermore, involving private sector and strengthening knowledge about voluntary environment certification and "greening" businesses as well as strengthening regulatory framework and legal enforcement will reduce the threats to biodiversity values coming from sectoral land and resource use (agriculture, forestry, food industry, oil exploitation). Supporting local communities accessing affordable financing for their local businesses will help alleviate the pressure on natural resources.

54. For an integrated river basin landscape approach, an adequate policy, legal and financing framework must support multiple types of management measures. For example, water must be managed in a way that facilitates the minimum ecological flow to ensure the survival of wetland ecosystems located downstream, adjusted to counteract the predicted climate change induced water deficits. In addition, protected areas including key wetland ecosystems must be adequately planned and managed, appropriately contextualized within the river's basin landscape. Both biodiversity and livelihoods depend on land and water that are not polluted and not degraded and on vegetation that is resilient and provides fodder and critical habitats. Both livelihoods and biodiversity depend on adequate flows of water and many livelihoods depend on different components of biodiversity. The project aims to put all these different types of on-the-ground management practices in place: support the regulatory adjustments to increase the water flow and optimize water releases, prevent pollution and improve PAs management effectiveness of key wetland areas; contextualize wetland areas into broader district's landscape by introducing concrete sustainable management measures in local development strategies and prioritizing investments; increasing awareness on wetlands ecosystem services at local and at national decision making levels and elevating wetland conservation higher on the political agenda. The proposed interventions are sequenced in order to include adaptive management strategies encompassing integrated and participative approaches to wetland management, financing and restoration, included in specific impact pathways, reinforced consistently through learning and awareness raising, considered necessary for removing existing barriers. Assumptions and drivers of change have been identified and contextualized.

55. The Governance pathway includes the project's alternative interventions proposed under Component 1: Enhanced regulatory and financing environment. The Governance Pathway is strengthening the regulatory framework for long term resilience of wetland ecosystems. The alternative interventions are sequenced as follows: (i) the project's incremental value lies in the revisions of the Regulation document, that governs the operations of the Stanca Costesti Dam particularly the provisions related to minimum ecological flows, which would not be otherwise addressed. The project's alternative pathway will provide for the adequate volumes and timing of water releases that will account for climate change induced water deficits, with particular impact on the resilience of the Lower Prut KBAs; (ii) the adjustments of the current legal inadequacies identified in the protected areas related legislation will lead to a better compliance with the international IUCN guidelines, international commitments under EU Strategies, MAB/UNESCO and Ramsar conventions and more prominence of wetlands management issues on the political agenda and negotiations with the EU, including within the new NBSAP (which will be developed in the coming year). The tripartite cross-border MAB/UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Lower Prut and Danube Delta (Moldova-Romania-Ukraine) and the harmonization of the management and monitoring of these protected areas will lead to an improved condition of the KBAs/IBAs in the Lower Prut region (iii) The proposed environmental standards (ISO 14001) applicable to all private entities with operations in the proximity of wetlands and Protected Areas are expected to minimize and hopefully remove the existing risks of water and wetland pollution and risk of fire hazards; (iv) the prioritization of wetland repairs and wetlands financing through amendments of the National Ecological Fund (NEF) Regulations are expected to direct funds towards wetlands restoration and sustainable management. In addition, targeted capacity building seminars for the Protected Areas administrations will be organized

in order to support preparation of NEF eligible projects. The drivers of change are represented by: (a) the current ongoing work on improving the Regulation governing the Stanca Costesti Dam, both by Moldova and Romania authorities; (b) the ongoing reform of the National Environmental Fund, (c) the development Moldova NBSAP, aiming at a better alignment with the post 2020 Biodiversity Framework and with the new EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

56. The Ecological Integrity Pathway encompasses two project components: Component 2: Improved protection and management of KBAs at wetlands and Component 3: Demonstrating sustainable use and livelihoods at wetlands. The alternative interventions will lead to healthy KBAs/IBAs in the Prut River Basin, an improved management efficiency of 20,803 ha of PAs/wetlands and the restoration of 14,225 ha of floodplain and lakes ecosystems. The interventions are sequenced as follows: (i) the inventory of the condition of the existing 17,456 ha of KBAs/IBAs in Prut River Basin (i.e. Stanca Costesti Reservoir; Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and the Royal Forest Nature Reserve) and the study of the hydro-ecological requirements for healthy wetlands, lakes and riparian areas will provide the necessary technical knowledge and information base for adequate management decisions of 20,803 ha of wetlands; (ii) strengthening the institutional and technical capacities of the targeted PAs administrations will result in a stabilization of key species populations and a better integration of biodiversity into the broader landscape; (iii) the ecological restoration of the targeted wetland are strategically selected in such a way as to respond to the most pressing drivers of biodiversity degradation; as such, the restoration of 50 ha of riparian strips strategically selected in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve will diminish the transport of sediments and waste into approximately 3,000 KBAs/IBAs ecosystems hosted by the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve (i.e. lakes Manta and Beleu) and it will restore riparian forest ecosystems which are hosting important nesting and feeding habitats. Similarly, the project-driven restoration of the Camenca river old course (main Prut River tributary) will bring an additional 8,3 million m<sup>3</sup> of water flow to Camenca floodplain and wetlands ecosystems, will improve ground water level and moisture conditions benefiting approximately 11,175 ha of floodplain and riparian forests. The higher level of the underground water will limit the expansion of boxelder and other species that tend to replace valuable riparian galleries in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve. The cumulative effect of the governance and ecological pathways are expected to maintain the ecological integrity of Prut River Basin wetlands and attenuate the effects of the climate change-induced water deficit. The civil society's constant pressure on decision makers to prioritize sustainable wetlands management and the improved management of the protected areas and zoning, are considered drivers of change towards sustainable wetlands management.

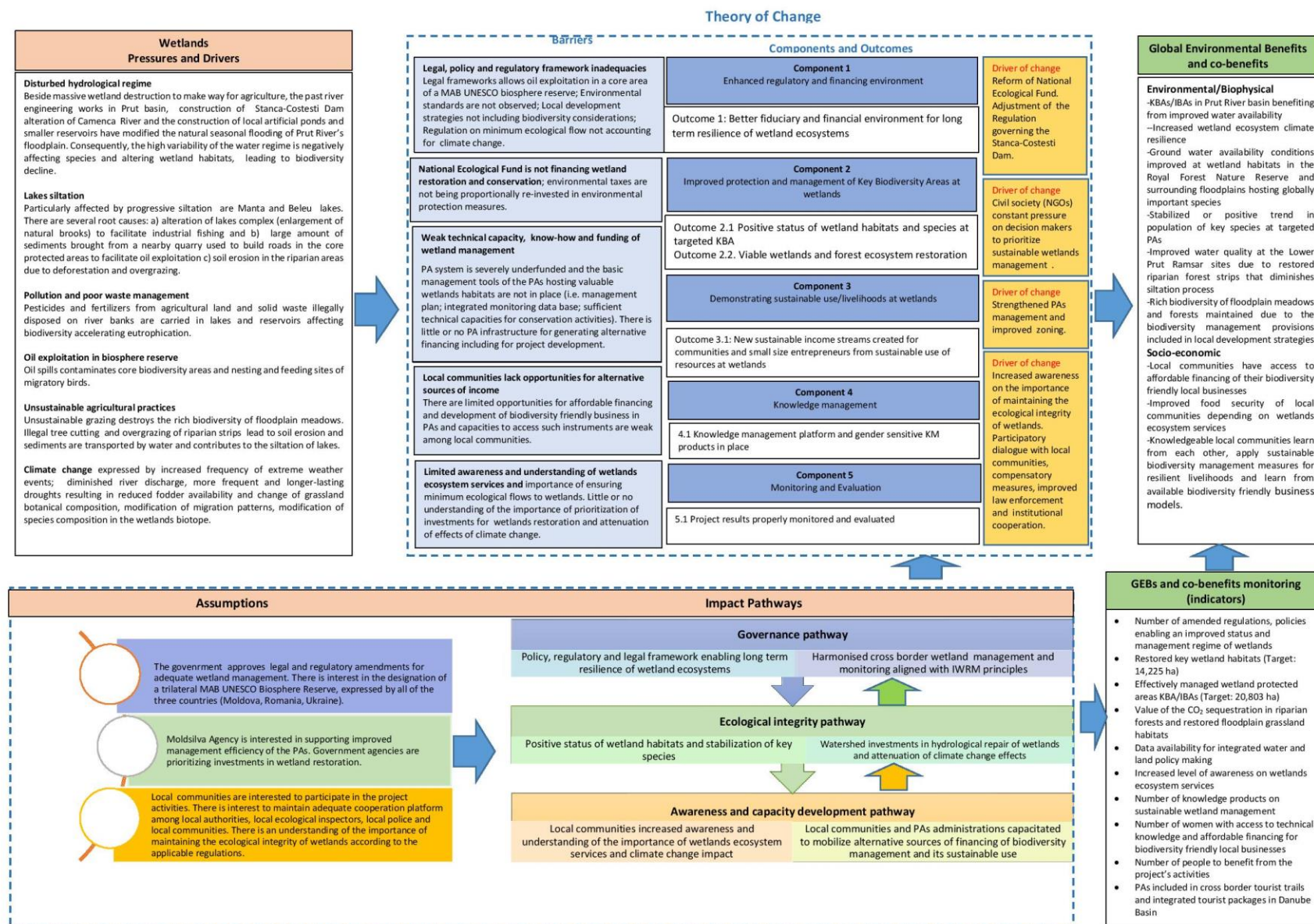
57. The Awareness and Capacity Development Pathway includes the Component 4 of the project: Knowledge management. The alternative interventions will provide for the adequate level of technical knowledge deemed critical to achieving the outcomes and are sequenced as follows: (i) decision makers are acknowledging the need to prioritize sustainable wetlands management and financing; (ii) local communities increase their awareness on wetlands ecosystems services and understand that these are dependent on adequate amounts of water in order to survive; and they improve their understanding on the importance of the sustainable use of wetlands, that doesn't pollute water and overexploits grasslands and riparian forests; (iii) local businesses are responsible and knowledgeable on ISO 14001 and environmental certification and capacitated to mobilize alternative sources of funding of biodiversity friendly local businesses. In addition, adequately monitored and evaluated and gender sensitive results and knowledge products are supporting evidence-based policy making for improved management and financing of wetland protected areas.

58. The project's Theory of Change includes several key assumptions that will be monitored throughout the project. It is expected that political will exists, to approve and implement the legal and regulatory amendments produced by the project, expected to lead to adequate wetland management ( Output 1.1.1, Output 1.1.2, Output 1.1.3). It is assumed that there is government interest to actively promote transboundary cooperation with Danube Delta Administration in Romania and Ukraine, in order to support compatible wetland governance measures in the Lower Prut Region (Output 2.1.1). It is assumed that Moldsilva Agency is interested to support the strengthening of the focus on the PAs management efficiency (Output 2.1.2) and it is also expected that the government will prioritize investments in wetland restoration (Output 2.2.1). Similarly, it is assumed that the local communities will be interested to participate in the project's activities and that there will be adequate cooperation among several local institutions in support of project's activities. It is assumed that local rural tourism is still in demand and that the post COVID recovery voluntary protocols for travel and tourism sector are open to outside expert contribution (Output 3.1.1, Output 3.1.2). It is expected that a critical mass of awareness (Output 4.1.1) on the wetlands ecosystem services and their importance to environmental and local livelihoods will improve the awareness of decision makers on wetlands threats and needed actions and will improve the understanding

of the local communities on the importance of wetlands for their livelihoods, understanding and support of the planned restoration project activities (Output 2.1.1). Overall it is expected that the project partners stay committed and provide declared co-financing. It is assumed that KBA values are not affected by extreme climatic events and disasters such as extreme drought.

59. Risks that may hamper the project development are mostly associated with: the non-materialization of the expected co-financing for the restoration works; Potential limitations of the Implementing Partner's capacity to adhere to UNDP/GEF standards. In addition, the project may be affected by the government's volatility and frequent changes of cabinet that may trigger a change of government priorities. Conflicting sectoral interests (e.g., environment vs oil industry), limited capacity to effectively enforce environmental regulations at local level, a perceived lowered importance of the environment field within the mandate of the Ministry of Environment can significantly affect the project outcomes.

60. The Theory of Change diagram is presented below:



### III. RESULTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

**Expected Results:** The project's objective is to achieve ecological integrity of key floodplain wetlands ensuring positive status of biodiversity, land and water resources, as well as ecosystem services.

61. **Component 1** Enhanced regulatory and financing environment.

62. **Outcome 1.1.** Better fiduciary and financial environment for long term resilience of wetland ecosystems. This project outcome will allow overcoming barriers that prevent an increase of financing, conservation and sustainable management of wetlands.

63. **Output 1.1.1 Regulations and by-laws developed, consulted and adopted by relevant institutions that promote identification, monitoring and wise use of wetlands under international treaties.**

64. **Activity 1.1.1.1. Development of legal amendments to address improved wetlands management including support to the new NBSAP.** Although the national legislation that translates Moldova's international commitments is comprehensive, there are key inadequacies with significant impact on protected areas, management (wetlands included), permitting system over natural resource use and delegated institutional responsibilities aligned with the international commitments. Although there is no policy covering wetlands specifically, there are several legal acts that govern different related aspects. The project will conduct a review of key legislation identified in policy baseline as follows: the Land Code ( No. 828 XII of 25-12-1991) and Forestry Code (No 887 XIII of 21-06-1996); Law on Environmental protection (No 1515 XI of 16-06-1993); Law on Water and River basin Protection Zones and Riparian Strips ( No 440 pf 27-04-1995); Law on Animal Kingdom (No 439 XIII of 27-04-1995); Law on Protected Areas State Fund ( No 1538 of 25-02-1998); Law on Red Book of the Republic of Moldova (No. 325 of 15-12-2005); The law of the vegetal kingdom (No. 239-XVI of 8-11-2007); Law on the Ecological Network (No. 94 of 05-04-2007); The Law on Water (No. 272 of 23-12-2011); Law on Environmental Impact Assessment (No. 86 of 29-05-2014) and related government decisions and framework regulations as well as on-going legislation harmonization with EU framework (please see Annex 18 Institutional and Legal Framework). The experts will build on and use (as relevant) the draft legal amendments provided by the previous GEF funded projects: *"Improving coverage and management effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Moldova"* (GEF ID 3675), *"Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into Moldova's territorial planning policies and land -use practices"* (GEF ID 5259) and *"Environmental Fiscal Reform"* (GEF ID 4183). The legal amendments proposed by the project will address some of the problems identified during the project preparation related to wetlands management:

- Legal mainstreaming of the guaranteed/mandatory ecological flow for wetlands and revised norms for water releases that account for predicted climate change-induced water deficits;
- Improved legal mainstreaming of the provisions of international requirements under Ramsar and MAB UNESCO Conventions and clarification of the obligations and institutional responsibilities including strengthening the Ramsar Committee;
- Provisions for mandatory Ramsar zone management and PAs Scientific Councils;
- Improved alignment of the PA Law and regulations with the international MAB/UNESCO Convention provisions and Ramsar requirements; Revision of PAs classification and clarification of the legal status of Royal Forest Scientific Reserve/Nature Reserve; Clarification of the legal status of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve vis-à-vis oil exploitation in core area;
- Mainstreaming provisions for mandatory ISO14001 standards for economic entities operating in and around wetlands and/or PAs;
- Revision of PA classification/categories and harmonization with the IUCN Guidelines;
- Mandatory wetlands/ PAs management plans and disclosure of approval in the Official Gazette (e.g. amendment to the Wetlands Framework Regulation of International Importance para 10);
- Mandatory mainstreaming of Biodiversity Passports of rare and endangered species into territorial, land use planning and local strategies.

- Regulations, templates, guidelines for the sustainable management of wetlands and establishment of associations of wetlands land owners and knowledge exchange platforms.
- Review of the legal amendments that may have inadvertently included valuable wetlands within areas suitable for agriculture (e.g. Zirnesti area and related irrigation system from the Prut basin; drainage system in Cahul etc).

36. In addition, the project will hire a national technical expert to support the development of NBSAP and provide technical inputs to emphasize the importance of wetlands and stipulate clear actions for their sustainable management and adequate financing. The new Moldova NBSAP will be aligned with the Biodiversity Framework post 2020 and the new EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030. The project experts will ensure that gender issues are integrated into NBSAP, setting the framework for gender-responsive biodiversity planning and programming at national and local levels. Through the consultations on NBSAP, the project will seek to build understanding of the national institutions and agencies with mandate on biodiversity conservation and wise use, to recognize and consistently integrate gender issues in environmental policy and law making. The project supports the Ministry of Environment responsible for NBSAP implementation to take advantage of a wide network of strategic partners, including the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection as well as various women organizations and NGOs targeting women in the context of natural resource use, to support more effective, gender responsive NBSAP development and implementation. SESA approach will be applied to all the project-supported legal and policy amendments under Component 1 such that potential social and environmental downstream impacts arising from the development of subsequent regulations/policy/guidelines are considered as an explicit part of the amended laws and policies (*please see Annex 6 SESP and Annex 10 ESMF*).

37. Activity 1.1.1.2 Stakeholders engagement The UNDP/GEF project will deploy multi-stakeholders participatory approaches, by facilitating workshops and roundtable meetings to discuss existing legal inadequacies and the project-born amendments and guidelines addressing legal loops or ambiguities that could undermine sustainable wetlands management. The process of development and adoption of the legal amendments will include close cooperation primarily with the institutions responsible for the PAs and watershed management: i.e., the Ministry of Environment; Moldovan Waters Agency; Moldosilva Agency; Moldovan Parliament (relevant committees); the Environment Agency, the Environmental Reference Laboratory, Local Government Authorities, Local ecological inspectorates. The project will further partner with a Coalition of Environmental NGOs for advocacy activities e.g. Eco Contact, National Council of Environmental NGOs and Association of Environment and Eco-tourism Journalists in Moldova to raise awareness on, and advocate for, an adequate legal, policy and financing framework for sustainable wetlands management (Output 4.1.1). In addition, the project will facilitate cross-border dialogue with the Romanian counterparts on the scientific data underpinning the adjusted minimum ecological flow and the negotiations on the amendments to the Regulation of the Stanca Costesti Dam and the meetings will be chaired by the Moldovan government representatives (under Activity 1.1.1.3). Formal and informal partnerships will be developed and established with gender balance and gender mainstreaming approaches in mind. The project team will ensure that gender-mainstreaming aspects are addressed and integrated throughout all aspects of the project's stakeholder engagement activities. The project will make sure to integrate a gender perspective into all legal and policy amendments and stakeholders consultations, advocating for women rights and striving to offer equal participation opportunities in deliberation processes.

65. Activity 1.1.1.3 Support to the revision of the Regulation governing the Stanca Costesti Dam to include the revised minimum ecological flow accounting for climate change. Past years have been increasingly warmer and the Prut river flow, especially during summer months has decreased such that in 2019 the official hydrometeorological data indicated "hydrological drought" during July-September, with the Prut river discharge decreasing by 0.4-0.7 m (near Costesti) and by 0.8-1.3 m (further downstream, near Giurgiulesti). In 2019, the discharge of Prut river and tributaries had decreased by approximately 35-65 % compared to the multi-annual average. Similar conditions have been recorded in 2020 during July-September, the decrease of river flow downstream Stanca Costesti Dam from 45 m<sup>3</sup>/s to 33 m<sup>3</sup>/s.

66. Commissioned in 1978 and operated jointly by Romania and Moldova, Stanca Costesti Hydroelectric Power Plant is located on Prut River and has a capacity of 1.4 billion cubic meters. The Stanca Costesti Dam's construction was primarily aimed at protecting downstream villages against floods, providing for irrigation of agricultural fields and electricity, as well as water supply for local communities. In 2010, both countries have signed the *Agreement on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable use of Prut River and Danube Waters* and in May 2011 the countries have established the *Inter-governmental (Joint) Hydrotechnical Commission* to observe the implementation of the said Agreement. The

responsibilities of the Hydrotechnical Commission are determined by the need for protection and sustainable use of water resources and the operation of the hydrotechnical works as well as scientific and technical assistance to implement the Agreement. These responsibilities are embedded in the *Regulation* of the organization and functions of the Hydrotechnical Commission, approved in 2012.

67. The amendment of the current Regulation has started in 2020, aiming at improving the dam's operations considering the decrease of the Prut river flow in the past years. The current work on the Regulation is described in the bilateral "*Memo*"- an official document agreed by both parties, listing the necessary modifications and envisaged works. Initially at PIF and re-confirmed at PPG the Moldovan Waters Agency have highlighted the opportunity for the project's support. The project's entry point is the area (agreed in the *Memo*) that would otherwise not be addressed, such as the calculation of the minimum river flows required by lakes and other downstream water bodies. The project will therefore assist the joint Hydrotechnical Committee, by providing technical expertise, technology and methodologies for calculation of new amended minimum ecological flows that accounts for climate change and predicted water deficit. The project will use GEF resources to establish the minimum ecological flow under the predicted climate change impacts and will recommend measures for the optimization of water volumes and timing of water releases. The project will support the amendment of the bilateral Regulation on Stanca Costesti Dam, and will align with the *Memo* (Section 6) which includes provisions related to the functioning of the Stanca Costesti Dam and water exploitation regimen. In its current form, the Stanca Costesti Regulation stipulates that the minimum ecological flow is preliminarily estimated at 30m<sup>3</sup>/s until a realistic calculation of the lakes and wetlands requirements will be provided (which is what the project will do). In the current form of the Regulation, there is no specification on the timing of water releases in order to simulate natural seasonal floods, which would support fish reproduction and stabilization of flora and fauna population especially in lower Prut lakes.

68. The project's support is proposed to be sequenced as follows:

- Setting-up a Working Group to support the joint Hydrotechnical Committee and provide science based revised minimum ecological flow requirements. The project experts will work with specialists from Moldovan Waters Agency, Moldsilva Agency, Environment Agency, Hydrometeorological Agency; The Working Group will be chaired by the Ministry of Environment. The project experts will facilitate the tasks of the Working Group and the cross-border dialogue with the Romanian Waters Agency and knowledge exchange with regard to scientific norms and requirements of lakes, reservoir and wetlands.
- Developing the methodology and required norms for the calculation of the minimum ecological flow and optimal water releases. Facilitation of cross-border round table meetings between both Romanian and Moldovan parties (either in-person or on-line) for the approval of the Methodology; Support the joint Hydrotechnical Commission in order to amend the Regulation of the Stanca Costesti Dam and include the Methodology;
- Calculation of the minimum ecological flow as follows (i) conduct field missions and hydrological, climate, ecological studies and data processing (ii) hydroclimatic modeling and analysis of climatic scenarios (iii) finalization of the study and identification of the minimum ecological flows needed for lakes and wetlands and recommendations for optimal water releases and an improved harmonization of water releases with the Danube hydrological regime; This work will be done in coordination with the project's development of the Study of the Prut wetlands hydro-ecology (Activity 2.1.1.5).
- Supporting Moldovan Water Agency to engage in cross-border dialogue between Moldovan and Romanian stakeholders in view of securing consensus upon the minimum ecological flows and time releases that account for climate change-predicted water deficits;
- Working with the Joint Hydrological Committee and develop/mainstream the project-born amendments into the Regulation, and align with the Official Memo /Section 6, related to the calculation of the minimum ecological flow for the wetlands and lakes.
- Supporting Moldovan Waters Agency and work with the legal department of the Ministry of Environment and develop a new Government Ordinance to give effect to these changes.

69. Based on the PPG experts' assessment it is recommended that for the hydroclimatic modelling the software option should be either InfoWorks ICM (Integrated Catchment Monitoring), allowing for a complete hydroclimatic modelling 1D/2D of rivers, streams and floodplains; or HEC-RAS system, a complex platform allowing the analysis of many integrated parameters. The project will hire the expertise of an expert company (or individual) to support the hydroclimatic modeling

using any of these software for which there is available expertise and official license in the country. Optimal water requirements and timing of water releases will be estimated, the latter being extremely important especially in the lower Prut section. The improved timing of water releases from Stanca Costesti Dam will be complementing the natural seasonal flooding and retreat of Danube waters in the lower Prut sections, so that the level of water in Beleu and Manta lakes in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, would remain at the required level to allow ecological integrity. The amendments will include provisions to address the altered thermal regime of waters associated with water releases that are inconsistent with the natural reproduction cycle of the species. Appropriately scoped ESIA will be conducted during the process of the establishment of the minimum ecological flow according to UNDP SES requirements (as per ESMF Annex 10).

## **70. Output 1.1.2 National Ecological Fund (NEF) capacitated to prioritize financing of wetland conservation and sustainable use**

**71. Activity 1.1.2.1 Improvements in the legal framework governing the National Ecological Fund, for increased PAs and wetlands support** The PPG analysis highlighted that the NEF is an economic instrument based on annual allocations from the state budgets. It does not collect taxes *per se*, these are collected directly by the state treasury and as such, the NEF has no control over the total collected fees and funding priorities (unless the legislation is amended). The Ministry of Finance authorizes the distribution of allowances, based on the Ministry of Environment indicated priorities, approved by the Board of Directors. The funds allocations are approved according to the national legislation regulating the development of the national budget ( Law 181/2014) based on which no increase of the funding (e.g. for PAs) beyond legal provisions is permitted. In 2020, 148 projects were submitted for funding, of which only 5 projects for biodiversity conservation, the amount of funding for these 5 projects reaching only about 2.3%. Project proponents (e.g. Moldsilva, NGOs etc.) consider that funding of PAs is not among NEF priorities, whereas the NEF representatives highlight the lack of quality biodiversity projects.

72. The National Ecological Fund (FEN) operates based on art. 83-86 of the Law on Environmental Protection (No. 1515/1993), the Law on Payment for Environmental Pollution (No. 1540/1998), the Regulation on Ecological Funds (Gov Ordinance (GD) No. 988/1998) and the Order of the Ministry for the Approval of the Regulation on the Administration of National Ecological Fund (No. 73/2013). The detailed analysis of the NEF regulatory framework reveals that the Regulation on the Ecological Funds (Gov Ordinance No. 988/1998) does not correspond to the current legal environmental framework (Law on Environmental Protection 1515 /1993) and needs a full revision<sup>29</sup>. The most important inconsistencies identified in Gov Ordinance 988 refer to: (i) The purpose of NEF; (ii) NEF sources; (iii) NEF beneficiaries and types of funding; (iv) Criteria to allocate resources.

73. The project will be incremental to these baseline efforts, in that it will support key legal amendments and bylaws to address these gaps and prioritize wetlands/PAs financing, otherwise not included in the on-going reform or under existing expert studies. The project will work with the legal department of the Ministry of Environment to support the following proposed amendments (and others, if additional potential amendments will be identified):

- Regulation of the Ecological Funds (Gov Ordinance 988/1998) will be revised and harmonized with the Law on Environment Protection ( 1515/1993);
- Law on Environmental Protection ( No 1515/1993) will be amended specifically art. 84 referring to prioritization of thematic areas for NEF funding; a distinct amendment referring to financing of wetlands and PAs will be introduced and harmonized with the Regulation on Ecological Fund (Government Decision 988/1998);
- Law on PAs (No 1538/1998) will be amended specifically art.90, in order to introduce reference to NEF as a source of financing of protected areas and Ramsar sites;
- Law on Payment for Environmental Pollution (No 1540/1998) art. 1/c will be amended in order to introduce a clear definition of the NEF, its purpose and categories of eligible projects that are to be financed from the NEF including procedures for external funding. These amendments will be harmonized with the Regulation on Ecological Funds (Gov Ordinance 988/1998);

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<sup>29</sup> Expert Group, Moldova 2020

- Ministry Order for the Approval of the Regulation on the administration of the National Ecological Fund (73/2013) will be modified/replaced by a new Ministry Order which will include a revised category of “Areas of Financing” to include a) Wetlands sustainable management; b) PAs sustainable management; c) sustainable livelihoods of local communities living in and around PAs; d) Protected Areas Flora and Fauna conservation measures;
- The Contravention Code (No 218/2008) will be amended in order to increase fines for environmental offenders set out under Chapter IX articles 109-149.

74. In addition, the project will work with the Ministry of Environment in order to elevate wetlands funding higher on the Ministry agenda, and therefore mainstream this issue among funding priorities put forward on annual basis for the Ministry of Finance approval. The project will further support stakeholders’ consultations and approval of these amendments (in coordination with Activity 1.1.1.2 and the Awareness raising activities under Component 4) and a SESA approach will be applied as per the ESMF Annex 10.

**75. Output 1.1.3 Biodiversity compatible local development strategies in target districts designated and under implementation**

76. Activity 1.1.3.1 Strengthen technical capacities for biodiversity mainstreaming into local plans and strategies. Although some maps of biodiversity priority areas exist, they are not reflected in district level development strategies and land use plans (where they exist). The proposed project will support mapping of key wetlands habitats in the targeted protected areas (under Output 2.1.) and will work with the district authorities to integrate the main biodiversity consideration and provisions for natural resource management and biodiversity monitoring in a) in as much as possible at the midterm revision of the current strategies (2020-2024) and/or b) into the new local development strategies (2024-2028). In addition, the project’s experts will work with the local districts’ authorities in Cahul (hosting the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve) and Glodeni and Falesti districts (hosting the Royal Forest Reserve) and organize 6 training and coaching sessions (two meetings for each district in the third year of the project implementation) to help local authorities with the biodiversity mainstreaming into local development planning and the revisions of the local development strategies at midterm. The beneficiaries of these meetings and coaching sessions will be the staff from the targeted district councils, and the local councils and municipalities of targeted localities, local branches of the Ministry of Environment, Agency for Land Relations and Cadaster, Moldsilva Agency, PAs administrations, and State Ecological Inspectorate. Training topics will revolve around: (i) Locality Master Plans and Environmental Provisions (ii) Legislation and permitting for natural resources use (iii) Protected areas and legal regimes (iv) Biodiversity monitoring (v) Monitoring of the use of natural resources, legal enforcement and applicable fines (vi) Wetlands ecosystem services and their importance to environment and livelihoods (vii) Integrated land use planning considering biodiversity and ecosystem approaches (viii) Sylvo-pastoral practices (pastoral forests) applied to maintain local biodiversity; (ix) Differentiated ways men and women use natural resources and importance of gender dimension in local development strategies. The project will make sure to integrate a gender perspective into all the capacity building events and stakeholders consultations, advocating for women rights and striving to offer equal participation opportunities in trainings and awareness events and decision making processes. SESA approach will be applied to the amendments to the local strategies (*please see Annex 6 SESP and Annex 10 ESMF*).

77. Activity 1.1.3.2 Develop biodiversity passports for critical species and mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into local development plans The three targeted districts encompassing 37,700 ha pastures and 14,300 ha of forests are hosting biodiversity rich areas outside the protected areas. The previous GEF funded biodiversity initiatives in Moldova have developed Passports for the PA system, and their GEF Terminal Evaluation recommended the use of these methodology in future GEF initiatives. The Species and Habitat Passport provides a detailed description of a species/habitat (figures, area, individuals, maps, GIS, actions, recommendations etc.) that could span state land, community land and/or private land. The project will replicate this experience for critical wetland species/habitats outside PAs in the three districts, bearing in mind that species migrate. Agricultural fields, be they community or private land, can serve as habitats and food niches for a number of rare and endangered species.

78. This will include the following proposed steps:

- Advocate for the legal amendments (developed under Activity 1.1.1.1) in support of mandatory development and mainstreaming of Biodiversity Passports for Red list species in the territorial and urban planning process outside PAs.
- Work with local councils in the three provinces and support the midterm revisions of the current local development strategies by mainstreaming the Biodiversity Passports and other concrete biodiversity friendly measures for the sustainable management of pastures and forests landscapes. (The project will use as a reference the PPG expert reports with proposed environmental measures).
- Work with the Institute of Zoology, State University of Moldova and the Botanical Garden Institute, as well as with other NGOs (e.g. Society for Birds and Nature Protection) and conduct an inventory of red list species outside the PAs. Develop the Biodiversity Passports for these species and their habitats based on the previous GEF project passport-approach;
- Develop mandatory conservation actions that the local public authority and land owner must undertake in order to conserve the species/habitat;
- Facilitate consultations with local land owners in order to raise awareness on, and acceptance of the conservation measures.
- Provide the approved Passports and mandatory conservation actions to district level environmental inspections (State Ecological Inspectorate and Cadaster office for further monitoring).
- Support local and district authorities to include these Passports into other official permitting system and other planning tools (such as hunting, tourism, fishing and water use documentation).

79. Implementing the Passport-based approach to monitoring rare and endangered species and biodiversity *hot-spots* in floodplains habitats, outside Protected Areas will require a closer dialogue between Ministry of Environment and local and district level authorities and State Ecological Inspectorate. The project will further support a series of round table meetings, awareness raising events (under Output 4.1) and trainings (Activity 1.1.3.1) as well as the development of a Manual : Guidelines for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Local Development and Territorial Planning, with clear steps to include biodiversity and monitoring of rare and endangered species and habitats based on Passport approach and will advocate for official approvals and institutionalization of this Manual in order to support replication of these good practices of mainstreaming biodiversity in production areas and in local development strategies and plans.

## 80. **Component 2** Improved protection and management of Key Biodiversity Areas on wetlands

81. Work under this component focuses on improved protection of KBAs/IBAs and species populations through increasing the management effectiveness of existing wetland protected areas. This will enable stable population/positive changes in the population dynamic of key species (Outcome 2.1) and planning and budgeting for strategic restoration activities to improve wetland habitats and ecosystem services (Outcome 2.2). The project's work under this component will create the prerequisites for improvements in wetland protection in targeted protected areas, will facilitate international designation and will provide for the necessary basic management tools such as a management plan (and revision of the existing one), key habitats mapping and zoning, species inventory, identification of indicator species, monitoring protocols and species conservation activities, strengthening enforcement and patrolling capacities, planning and budgeting for key restoration activities. The activities will seek to strengthen management arrangements for the existing protected areas in Prut River Basin, order to ensure compliance with the international requirements for the protection of valuable biodiversity within KBAs and other international biodiversity hot-spots.

## 82. **Outcome 2.1. Positive status of wetland habitats and species at targeted Key Biodiversity Areas**

83. **Output 2.1.1 Revised PA category upgraded international designation, improved zoning, mapping, management and business plans for Lower Prut Biosphere reserve (including assistance for its integration into the Trilateral Biosphere Reserve with Ukraine and Romania) and Royal Forest Nature Reserve.**

84. **Activity 2.1.1.1 Designation of Royal Forest Ramsar Site.** The project will use GEF resources to bring past efforts to fruition and finalize the official designation of Royal Forest Nature Reserve as Ramsar site – a priority objective under Moldova NBSAP (2015-2020)- that had started in 2008 by NGO and academia community. At the same time, the project will support the development of the Management and Financial Plan covering the entire proposed Ramsar site. Building

on past inventories the GEF resources will be used to identify information gaps and design targeted inventories of key species and critical wetlands habitats. and will update any existing information. Moreover, the project will also gather the necessary information in order to lay the groundwork for a later (potential) designation of the Royal Forest Nature Reserve/Ramsar site as a National Park ( IUCN IV or V), to be led by Moldsilva Agency.

85. The proposed Ramsar area, includes the IBA/KBA MD003<sup>30</sup> and covers approximately 15,468 ha, situated at approximately 16 km downstream of Stanca Costesti dam, within the administrative boundaries of Glodeni and Falesti districts (Annex 17 Target Landscape profile). The core area of 6,032 ha of the proposed Ramsar site corresponds to the current Royal Forest Nature Reserve. The additional 9,436 ha is proposed to be added to the existing reserve (6,032 ha) that overlaps the KBA/IBA area and be designated as Ramsar site, including a mosaic of habitats: some of the oldest wooded floodplains of Europe, rivers, meadows, marshes, relict lakes and active river channels; hayfields and pastures and 10 villages. The area supports globally threatened species included in the IUCN Red List and the Moldovan Red Book and it shelters a large colony of herons ( approximately 150 nests at site and 70 breeding pairs) encompassing the nesting areas of three rare species: Grey heron *Ardea cinerea*, Night heron *Nycticorax* and Little egret *Egretta garzetta*. Currently this area is in decline due to a growing water deficit and scarcity of seasonal floods (caused by past Camenca river regulations and exacerbated by climate change). Over the past 5 years, the Royal Forest staff has documented a decline in the number of herons (breeding pairs) and the species' tendency to move their nesting sites closer to Prut river.

86. The project's support to the finalization of the Ramsar dossier will be conducted in coordination with the preparatory inventories and assessments for the development of the Royal Forest Nature Reserve Management Plan and will include: (i) Assessment of the existing inventories and information need to update the existing Ramsar fiche; (ii) Field inventories, flora , fauna and habitat mapping, data collection and analysis, working together with experts of Botanical Garden Institute and Institute of Zoology (iii) Organization of 5 local round table meetings in order to raise awareness of the local communities on the importance of wetlands and their ecosystem services for their livelihoods. Braniste, Avraneni, Balatina, Cuhnesti, Bisericani, Moara Domneasca, Viisoara, Calinesti, Pruteni, Drujeni villages. The meetings will help local authorities and local communities understand the benefits of the Ramsar designation and secure their consensus, as well as their participation in designing the management of the proposed Ramsar area, through improved zoning. According to the applicable legislation (Law 1538/1998) landowners within the PA/ Ramsar area perimeter must ensure compliance with the PA/Ramsar protection regime, therefore the project will ensure that any potential or perceived restriction on the use of natural resources will be discussed and addressed by designing compensatory measures. In line with the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, the project will inform local communities about the UNDP Grievance Mechanisms and will ensure that any complaint can be submitted to UNDP Country office in Chisinau; (iii) Securing consensus of the local communities; The stakeholders consultations about the Ramsar designation and what this involves, will be part of the Process Framework, implemented as a risk mitigation measure in order to prevent or reduce/minimize the risks of economic displacement resulting from the PAs new international designation and/or stricter zoning enforcement (please see Annex 10-ESMF).(iv) Preparation of the Ramsar dossier in consultation with the Botanical Garden Institute and the Institute of Zoology; (v) Securing formal endorsement from Ramsar Secretariat; (vi) Working together with the Directorate for Biodiversity Policy, the project will support the development of the necessary formal legal/regulatory provisions that will enforce the Ramsar designation.

87. Activity 2.1.1.2 Development of the Management Plan for the Royal Forest Nature Reserve/Ramsar site The project will support the development of the Royal Forest Nature Reserve management plan, to cover the total area to be included under Ramsar designation 15,468 ha. Additional field inventories and habitat mapping will be carried out to bridge the information gaps, working together with the Botanical Garden Institute, the Institute of Zoology experts, as well as specialized NGOs and Moldsilva partners. The inventories underpinning the management plan for the Royal Forest Scientific (Nature) Reserve will be conducted synergistically with the inventories for the finalization of the Ramsar designation, in fact the same team can work on both activities. The development of the Royal Forest Nature Reserve management and business plans will include the following steps:

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<sup>30</sup> <http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/royal-forest-iba-moldova/map>

- Comprehensive analysis of existing assessments and identification of the information gaps; Organization of additional key species and habitats inventories as needed to bridge the information gaps for the proposed Ramsar site; the project will support the Royal Forest Nature Reserve to mainstream international requirements and best practices for Ramsar wetlands into the management plan of the PA and incorporate climate change adaptation scenarios and resilience measures to address the climate risks for vulnerable wetland and freshwater ecosystems
- Socio-economic assessments (including identification of local business opportunities) of the local villages included in the proposed Ramsar area (Braniste, Avraneni, Balatina, Cuhnesti, Bisericani, Moara Domneasca, Viisoara, Calinesti, Pruteni, Drujeni);
- Based on the updated inventories an appropriate zoning, the project will establish the limits of the acceptable use and development activities in the proposed Ramsar site (which includes the existing Royal Forest Scientific (Nature) Reserve and adjacent land). The project will aim at preparing/updating the existing 2008 Ramsar fiche (which was prepared but not completed and therefore it was not submitted to Ramsar Secretariat) and collect the necessary information for improved zoning;
- The Process Framework (Stakeholder's consultations as per UNDP SES requirements): Includes communication and consultation processes with all affected villages included under the proposed Ramsar site mentioned above villages. The meetings will help local communities understand the benefits of the Ramsar designation and will be aiming to secure agreement over the proposed management measures according to Ramsar requirements and improved zoning. The local consultations will address any risk of economic displacement that may arise due to improved/stricter zoning. The community round table meetings will cover: a) Ramsar designation and what this stands for; agreement on Ramsar requirements; b) Consensus on the PA proposed zoning aligned with the Ramsar requirements; c) Agreement on ecological corridors and buffer areas; d) Discussions about potential restrictions, law enforcement and local needs. e) Agreement on the Management Plan of the PA including the proposed Ramsar area. If the risk of economic displacement is validated by the Process Framework, then a Livelihood Action Plan will be developed and compensatory measures designed in order to facilitate an alternative source of income (please see Annex 10 ESMF). The project team will ensure that gender-mainstreaming aspects are addressed and integrated throughout all aspects of the project's stakeholder engagement activities.
- Finalization of the Management and Business Plans and formal approval. The business planning will be used as a basis for sustainable resource use, including, as appropriate, eco-tourism, sustainable grazing in the buffer and economic areas, regulated collection of marketable flora. The socio-economic assessments will offer the baseline information for the identification of local business opportunities and ways of engaging with the local communities. The PA staff will be trained in business planning, accounting practices, budgeting, and grant writing. Working together with the Directorate for Biodiversity Policy, the project will support the development of the necessary formal regulations that will formally endorse the Management/Business Plan, to be issued by the Minister of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment.

88. Activity 2.1.1.3 Updating the Management Plan of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve The project will use GEF resources to support the updating of the current draft management Plan of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. The PA designation as a Biosphere Reserve has been prepared with the support of the EU project "*Consolidation of the nature protected areas network for biodiversity protection and sustainable development in the Danube Delta and Lower Prut Region-PAN Nature*" funded from the Joint Operation Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova 2007-2013. The official MAB UNESCO designation was received in October 2018 and subsequently the Moldovan Parliament endorsed the designation through the Law 132/July 2018 on the foundation of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. Within the said project, a draft Government Decision comprising the Regulation on the Operationalization of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve has been submitted for approval to the cabinet of ministers and it is under public debate due to re-examinations prompted by the Ministry of Finance. The status of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve is currently in limbo. Despite the constant pressure coming from the NGO community, the status quo has not changed, partly also due to the constant political upheaval of the past years. The Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve includes three categories of PAs and this adds to the legal confusion: a) the former Lower Prut Scientific Reserve covering 1691 ha; b) the Ramsar area *Lower Prut Lakes* covering 19,152 ha and c) the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve covering 14,771 ha. The three areas overlap and the PA, although officially designated as a MAB UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, is still functioning on the basis of its former PA

category i.e., as a scientific reserve, in the absence of the Government Decision that approves the Regulation to govern the operations of the new Biosphere Reserve.

89. There are currently two draft management plans prepared: 1) a draft Management Plan prepared for the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve within the framework of the programme “Strengthening the institutional framework in the water and sanitation sector” funded by the Austrian and Swiss Development Agencies. This draft Management Plan has obtained all the local communities approvals and has been through the local consultation processes and it is currently submitted for final approval by the cabinet of ministers; the approval was delayed due to institutional reforms of Moldavia; 2) a second draft Management Plan was prepared for the Ramsar Lower Prut Lakes (Manta and Beleu) only, developed by the Institute of Ecology and Geography with funding from the Ministry of Education. The PPG team has discussed the existence of these separate management plans with the relevant departments in the Ministry of Environment, and based on the recommendations received, the project’s support will be sequenced as follows:

- The project experts will work with the research institutes (e.g. Botanical Garden Institute and Institute of Zoology) and specialized NGOs, Moldavia and the Administration of Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and will facilitate the review of both draft management plans, analyzing the existing information and identifying information gaps including climate vulnerability assessment gaps to inform adaptation approaches; additional inventories will be planned together with the participating institutes/experts; Climate resilience measures and adaptation scenarios will be offered to complement the existing management plan for the PA.
- Ground truthing and GIS supported mapping of habitats and additional flora and fauna inventories will be conducted in order to bridge the (potential) gaps and correct or update existing maps;
- The project experts will then update and merge relevant information into one single final Lower Prut Management Plan;
- The project will offer further technical support for the development of a Business Plan. The Business Plan will be based upon best international experience and will help with identifying potential economic opportunities, breakdown investment costs, examine potential markets, and provide instructions on how to develop and maintain sustainable biodiversity friendly businesses and engaging local entrepreneurs and communities. The PA staff will be trained in business planning, accounting practices, budgeting, and grant writing. The PA’s existing infrastructure will be strengthened, to attract tourists, researchers and promote key biodiversity MAB UNESCO values. The project will also help to identify the investment opportunities to fuel implementation of the business plan.
- The draft Management and Business Plan will be submitted for official approval of local and national authorities;
- The project will work with the NGO community and will advocate for the expedient formal approval of the Government Decision/Regulation on the Operationalization of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and the approval of the Management and Business Plans; the awareness raising and education activities under Output 4.1. will support the advocacy efforts.
- Further support will be provided for the development of an Integrated Monitoring Data that will be harmonized with the monitoring database developed by the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve (in Romania) and strengthening the management unit’s capacity to implement conservation and monitoring activities. The monitoring database will encompass biotic and abiotic environmental parameters such as: hydrology, hydrobiology, water quality, soil quality, biodiversity, natural resources, economic activities, local population. The data base is envisaged to enable data exchange on wetlands condition ( biotic and abiotic parameters) in Prut and Danube’s basin, hence an important aspect that the UNDP/GEF project will ensure is the compatibility with the existing monitoring data bases in Danube Delta. The UNDP/GEF Project will hire a specialized company/experts to support this endeavor.
- Process Framework (Stakeholders Consultations, please see ESMF Annex 10): With the support of the *Local Action Group Lower Prut* (LAGLP)<sup>31</sup>the project will organize additional local consultations with all the 9 localities within the reserve perimeter. Although the local communities have been consulted during the preparation of the exiting Draft Management Plan and formal approvals have been received/recorded, additional consultations may be needed in view of the updated inventories and habitat assessments that the project will conduct. In this regard, the Process Framework will be used to facilitate consultations with the local communities and mitigate

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<sup>31</sup> Set up under EU LEADER programme, the LAGLP includes the local authorities of the localities situated within the reserve

any potential risks of economic displacement (as per the Annex 6 SESP and Annex 10 ESMF). If site specific screening will confirm that such risks exists then a Livelihood Action Plan will be developed by the project and compensatory measures designed. The project will make sure that women, youth and other vulnerable groups are involved in the consultations.

90. **Activity 2.1.1.4 Support to the cross-border dialogue and designation of the Trilateral Biosphere Reserve Danube Delta Lower Prut** The project will support the compilation of the MAB UNESCO dossier for the designation of a 641,174-ha<sup>32</sup> trilateral biosphere reserve envisaged to link the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve in Moldova with the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve in Romania and the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve in Ukraine. The intention of creating a trilateral cross-border protected area has originated since the early meetings of the Joint Trilateral Ministerial Committee of the Euroregion Lower Danube (established in 1998) and it is aimed at the harmonization of the biodiversity management and conservation measures of the wetlands in the lower Prut-Danube region. The foundation has been laid down by the EU funded project “*Consolidation of the nature protected areas network for biodiversity protection and sustainable development in the Danube Delta and Lower Prut Region-PAN Nature*” funded from the Joint Operation Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova 2007-2013, which has supported the creation of the Lower Prut MAB UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in Moldova. This was a prerequisite for the participation of Moldova Lower Prut Reserve in the envisaged trilateral PA and the eventual MAB UNESCO designation of a cross-border MAB UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Danube Delta and Lower Prut. The necessary steps to build up the trilateral dialogue will be led by the Ministry of Environment (Moldova) with support from the UNDP/GEF project. The project will work with the Directorate of Biodiversity Policies of the Ministry of Environment (Moldova) to support the facilitation of the Trilateral Ministerial Committee meetings and the compilation of the necessary technical information provided by the administrations of Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve in Romania and Ukraine for the development of the MAB/UNESCO dossier.

91. **Activity 2.1.1.5 Hydro-ecological and climate resilience assessment of Prut river wetlands** The Prut river’s wetlands are important regulators of the hydrological cycle and provide vital habitat for rare and endangered species. However, wetlands are vulnerable to many influences, which include climate change, changes in water availability caused by abstraction of sub-surface or groundwater, flood management (such as operation of dams) and internal management of ditch water level and vegetation. The project will assess the status of the existing IBAs/KBAs in Prut River Basin namely: (i) **Costesti Stanca Lake** (Reservoir) MD002 (4,162 ha) (ii) **Lower Prut and Manta Bealeu Lakes** MD007 (19,152 ha); (iii) **Royal Forest** MD002 (13,089 ha) and will validate/re-assess the total IBA hectareage, up-dating Moldova’s entry in the IBA global data base. The project will develop a *Study of the hydro-ecological conditions for adequate wetlands management, climate resilient measures and adaptation scenarios* focusing on the targeted wetlands in the Prut River Basin. The Study will be conducted in coordination with the field research and hydroclimatic modeling for the establishment of the minimum ecological flow (Activity 1.1.1.3), and it will include practical recommendations for decision makers to improve wetlands management. The assessments and proposed solutions for sustainable wetlands management will be consulted with the key stakeholders. Based on these recommendations, the project will develop additional legal/regulatory amendments for the improvement of wetlands management framework.

92. **Output 2.1.2 Management units and communities at targeted PAs capacitated to comply with/enforce management/buffer zone regimes, ensure proper monitoring of biodiversity and key wetland ecosystems, undertake species-focused conservation activities and PA patrolling.**

93. The project’s support will focus on building the technical and institutional capacities needed to address key management weaknesses and abate critical wetland threats. The project will particularly contribute to reducing threats to and improving in-situ conservation status of identified globally threatened biodiversity in target PAs, based on the results of METT, conducted at the PPG stage. At the same time, the project will conduct assessments of ecotourism and other local biodiversity friendly income generating potential and will develop practical measures and actions included in

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<sup>32</sup> **641,174 ha**, of transboundary wetland areas with MAB/UNESCO status comprising the Lower Prut MAB UNESCO Biosphere in Moldova (14,771 ha), Danube Delta MAB UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in Romania and Ukraine (626,403 ha)

the Business plans for both targeted PAs, expected to leverage additional income to PAs and local communities. These assessments will be made available to local natural resource users, local authorities.

94. Activity 2.1.2.1 Targeted support to PAs infrastructure PAs management barriers are associated with deficiencies in management planning and implementation of PA management plans, insufficient capacities for patrolling and monitoring, unrealized opportunities for sustainable tourism development and income generation, a lack of outreach and public engagement. Inadequate enforcement of relevant regulations remains one of the important underlying causes of biodiversity loss. Weaknesses in the management of protected areas (including insufficient funding, technical and human capacities) give rise to a range of pressures leading to negative trends in biodiversity.

95. In the Royal Forest Nature Reserve (including the proposed Ramsar area) the project will focus on compliance and enforcement mechanism against illegal hunting, fishing and tree cutting; promoting sustainable tourism and ensuring monitoring of the key biodiversity values, and Ramsar requirements. The UNDP/GEF project will help ensuring improved management measures for the proposed Ramsar site, and mainstream international requirements and best practices for Ramsar wetlands into the management and operational planning for the area. The Ramsar designation and improved zoning as well as the envisaged restoration of the Camenca river's old water course (described under Output 2.1) will improve wetlands and ground water level condition which will, in time, contribute to positive changes in the population of key species at breeding sites compared to the baseline. Currently, the on-going monitoring in the Reserve has identified 100 individuals of Little egret (*Egretta garzetta*); 30 species of Black crowned heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*); 45 individuals of Great egret (*Ardea alba*); 55 individuals of Grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*); one pair of White tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) spotted now after almost 30 years- its habitat is under the pressure of illegal tree cutting and if measures are not taken urgently even this single pair may not last too long in the area. The project will re-assess and update information on the ecological status of the Royal Forest IBA MD003 and the recorded trigger species population of Grey faced woodpecker *Picus canus* (estimated at 100-120 pairs). The IBA area overlaps with the proposed Ramsar and the inventory activity will also cover the IBA/KBA assessment. Further key project-supported steps include:

- The project will support the clarification of the Royal Forest Nature Reserve PA regime. The current confusion stems from the fact that the terms “scientific reserve” and “nature reserve “ are used interchangeably. According to the Law on PAs, the area is represented in the legislation as a *scientific reserve* with a strict protection regime intended for conservation and scientific activities. However, based on a subsequent regulation, the area is managed by Moldsilva Agency (under the Ministry of Environment mandate) as a “*nature reserve*”, in order to enable economic activities such as forest exploitation, which is generating revenues, partly used to cover protected area management measures. The project will conduct all the preparatory work for improved zoning, development of suitable management and business plans that will reconcile economic development and biodiversity priorities and the finalization of the Ramsar dossier. Based on the project's work, the Ministry of Environment and Moldsilva agency could later designate the area as a National Park, to provide for a clearer delineation and a better management of the PA/Ramsar area.
- Delineation of the PA zoning on the ground will be done through appropriate signage and demarcation of the territory and the corresponding zonation; designation of entrance, support to basic research and monitoring protocols, improving demarcation of tourist trails. The delineation of the new Ramsar site on the ground will be accompanied by erecting signs, information boards along the boundaries of the protected area with the required information. The PA staff will be equipped with operational GIS devices and field equipment: binoculars, camera traps, mobile communication devices; GPS navigators, basic field equipment and boats, expected to improve patrolling capacity.
- Organization of community outreach activities and facilitating community representatives' participation into the management decisions concerning the designated Ramsar area. The project will ensure that women and youth and other vulnerable groups are fully participating in the consultations.
- Development of Joint agreements with local police will be facilitated and PA management unit will strengthen the capacities for patrolling the protected areas and fighting against poaching and illegal logging. The project will ensure that the PAs Management Plan in the targeted areas will encompass measures for patrolling/enforcing the environmental regulations and engagement with local communities with respect to human rights principles, understanding the local community's rights and needs.

- New eco-tourism potential will be explored in cooperation with local private businesses and tourism operators, involving local communities, including breaks at local restaurants and/or linked with local traditional festivals. The project will offer further support for setting up 5 PA information boards, printing of information material for tourists.
- The project will hire a specialized company to develop an integrated monitoring data base and will make sure that the integrated monitoring data based will have compatible data formats with the integrated monitoring data base of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve in order to support data exchange of wetland flora and fauna in Prut River Basin. The data base will record biotic and abiotic parameters and the species monitoring protocol will be established by the project experts, collaborators from research institutes and specialized NGOs.
- The project will analyze the dynamic of the Boxelder (*Acer negundo*) in and around Royal Forest Nature Reserve and will develop an Action Plan encompassing measures to manage the apparent aggressive spread and limit the potential replacement of the old riparian forest ecosystem.

96. In the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve the project's incremental support to updating the Management Plan will be accompanied by strengthened capacities for the implementation of the management measures, expected to lead, in time, to a more stable population of key species and increase of breeding sites. Currently the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve management unit is not capacitated to conduct consistent monitoring activities that cover the main KBAs and the entire Ramsar site (encompassing both Manta and Beleu lakes). Currently the monitoring of aquatic birds targets Beleu lake only. This is due to the fact that the Regulation on the Operationalization of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and management plan that cover the entire MAB UNESCO designated territory are not yet officially approved. The Lower Prut Biosphere reserve Administration is therefore not sufficiently capacitated to implement an effective management of the entire MAB UNESCO area.

97. The project's incremental support will target the finalization of the Management Plan for the entire MAB UNESCO area and the advocacy for a speedy official approval of both the Regulation and the Management Plan. Further steps are envisaged as follows:

- Advocacy for the official approval of the Regulation on the Operationalization of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and the Management and Business Plan for the area (to be developed under Act. 2.1.1.3)
- Strengthening PA infrastructure by supporting appropriate signage and demarcation of the territory and the corresponding zonation.
- Support for the construction of a small enclosure for wounded wildlife, at the PAs old headquarter premises, especially for birds affected by frost.
- Facilitation of joint activities between the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and the local communities represented by the Local Action Group Lower Prut (LAGLP) in order to promote eco-tourism, including traditional festivals, wine/gastronomy and biodiversity routes (in coordination with Activity 3.1.2.1).
- The project will further work with the LAGLP for the development of a community-based environmental monitoring scheme and anti-poaching activities.
- Strengthening PAs field equipment for monitoring and patrolling: operational GIS devices and field equipment: binoculars, camera traps, mobile communication devices; GPS navigators, basic field equipment and boats.
- The UNDP/GEF project will hire a specialized company for the development of an integrated monitoring data base that provides clear monitoring metrics that will establish/strengthen the monitoring programme and integrated monitoring data base, conservation targets and protocols to measure change (e.g. clarity on what and how to measure, biotic and abiotic parameters). With the support of an integrated monitoring data base, the overall monitoring activity would be expected to be guided by scientific principles in order to provide information into the ecological processes at work and point directly to if, when, and how an active management may need to be employed in order to prevent the loss of biodiversity. Through such specific management planning instruments, the project will offer concrete management solutions aimed at PA management response to the climate-induced and other emerging threats, to be further incorporated into the monitoring programme and management plan. With the support of the Ministry of Environment specialized Directorate for Biodiversity Policy, the project will coordinate with the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration (Romania) through dedicated meetings (both in person and online), to make sure that the integrated monitoring data base in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve will be compatible with the existing integrated monitoring data base in Danube Delta (in coordination with Activity 2.1.1.4).

- Support will be offered to help with the development of the first MAB UNESCO report and overall, with the implementation of MAB UNESCO requirements, especially identifying and implementing measures to prevent and/or eliminate and where not possible reduce the risk of oil pollution and fire hazards (caused by substandard oil exploitation operations).
- The project will support/facilitate interinstitutional agreements to address emergency interventions especially fire hazards originating mainly from the oil exploitation platform and targeted trainings of economic operators on ISO14001 and green business models (described under Output 3.1.1. Activity 3.1.1.2) .
- The project will offer further technical assistance for the development of an integrated package focused on eco-tourism in the wetlands of Lower Prut and Danube Basin, with the support of the Danube Parks project “Transdanube. Travel. Stories 2020-2022)<sup>33</sup>”, promoting biodiversity MAB UNESCO and RAMSAR values, the rich cultural heritage and local cuisine and wine in both countries (in coordination with Activity 3.1.2.2).

98. Activity 2.1.2.2. Strengthening technical capacity of Protected Areas staff. Based on the METT scorecards and discussions with PA managers, the project is expected to support several general capacity strengthening measures for all PAs, as follows:

- Assessments of management gaps and preliminary round table meeting with PAs staff;
- Training Needs Assessment TNA and development of training modules.
- Delivery of 10 training seminars based on the TNA results and discussions with PAs staff. The targeted capacity building seminars for both PAs will be organized with the support of Moldsilva Agency and a specialized NGO/private company that will deliver the trainings. The UNDP/GEF project will support 10 joint training seminars (for both protected areas) i.e. 2 trainings per year, starting with the first year of project implementation.
- Strengthening capacities of PAs rangers for patrolling and monitoring. Targeted trainings on patrolling and legal enforcement will be included in the training seminars for rangers and PA staff, border inspectors, local police and central and local authorities with an emphasis on human rights principles (in line with the UNDP SES). PAs management plan will include human rights-based measures/actions for PAs rangers concerning patrolling and application of fines, search and arrest and interaction with local communities, aiming at promoting collaborative approaches.
- During the PPG discussions, the representatives of the Ministry of Environment have claimed that the lack of good eligible projects received from the PAs administrations is one of the reasons that impedes financing of PAs through the National Environmental Fund (NEF). Therefore, the project will include in the training module specific coaching on biodiversity project writing, followed by assisted development of at least 2 projects per PA to be submitted to NEF.

99. Specific species and key habitat centered conservation activities for each PA based on identified threats will be harmonized with the gaps identified in the METT. For Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, the METT at PPG stage scored 31 points and the project will target specific capacity improvements reflected in the METT questions: 1,2,6,7,9,10,12,14,15,21,21a, 21c, 22, 24b, 28, 29. The Royal Forest Scientific (Nature) Reserve baseline assessments at PPG stage indicated a METT score of 57 points and the project will target incremental capacity improvements as indicated by the questions: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6,7,8,9,10,11,13,20,21,22,24,28. The project will support activities and measures that will lead to an envisaged 10% increase in the METT scores for the targeted PAs and a positive change in the population of rare and globally threatened species. the project implementation, a much more comprehensive assessment of management gaps and assessment plans will be conducted, to better plan and implement targeted, on-the-ground conservation and threat reduction measures. Strengthening research and monitoring capacities, including climate-induced changes of species distributions, altered migration patterns and/or habitat change, will include technical support to improve species and habitats databases and monitoring protocols. An integrated monitoring data base will be developed for both targeted PAs by a specialized company (Activity 2.1.2.1).

100. **Outcome 2.2 Viable wetland and forest ecosystem restoration options demonstrated.**

<sup>33</sup> <https://danubeparks.org/projects/transdanubetravelstories-2020-2022>

101. **Output 2.2.1 Riparian forest strips restored acting as a barrier to agricultural and waste runoff in Lower Prut, at Manta-Beleu Lakes network. High value forested floodplain ecosystems in Padurea Domneasca (Royal Forest) area restored through optimization of flooding regime in Camenca River Basin and regulation of the ground water table.**

102. **Activity 2.2.1.1 Reforestation of degraded riparian forest ecosystems in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve.** The project work will focus on the restoration of degraded riparian forest strips, in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. The reforestation activities will be primarily covered by GEF resources with the support from “Moldsilva “ Agency and technical support from Forestry Research and Management Institute (ICAS) and will be implemented on approximately 50 ha around Manta and Beleu lakes, in strategic locations, with the aim of not only restoring degraded land and reducing soil erosion but also acting as a barrier against domestic waste and agriculture run-offs entering 3,000 ha of lakes ecosystems in Manta-Beleu lakes network and increasing siltation. Addressing land degradation is a priority for Moldova. Intensive use of land resources and poor adaptability of applied agricultural practices along with ineffective risk governance have increased a wide-ranging impact of environmental degradation related to severe soil fertility decline and reduction in ecosystem resiliency.

103. The PPG expert team has conducted a feasibility analysis and methodology for the implementation of the reforestation works, please see Annex 19: Reforestation works- Feasibility proposed interventions. The design and implementation of the reforestation works will be carried out as per the provisions of the technical regulations approved by the Moldsilva Agency ( i.e. norms and technical guidelines, guides, standard projects). At the PPG stage, a number of 33 plots have been selected for reforestation works with a cumulative area of 50,02 ha. One of the important aspects in the reforestation work will be soil analysis. The presence of saline lands is characteristic for much of the river meadows in Moldova and reforestation/afforestation of saline lands, although possible, represents one of the most difficult task in agro-forestry. The forest vegetation hardly supports the excess of soluble salts and the high alkalinity of the soil and for this particular reason the number of species used for reforestation/afforestation of saline lands is relatively limited. The choice of species recommended for the demonstration sites is based on the guidelines of E. Migunov “ Technical guide on afforestation of degraded lands, ICAS, 2005. The recommended species have been selected to meet the following requirements: (i) capacity to strengthen riparian strips; (ii) reduction of surface runoff and infiltration of water; (iii) flood resistance; (iv) salt resistance; (v) protection of the water basins from excessive evapotranspiration during drought periods; (vi) diminishing the degree of siltation by retaining the agriculture run-offs; (vii) ability to strengthen land and ensure restoration success; (viii) survivorship and growth, ability to ensure a good forest regeneration success; (ix) suitability as microhabitat for key species. The location of reforestation plots are as follows: (i) *Crihana Veche*: 7 sectors with total surface area of 7,11 ha; (ii) *Manta - Pașcani*: 11 sectors with total surface area of 10,94 ha; (iii) *Vadu lui Isac*: 2 sectors with total surface area of 2,65 ha; (iv) *Colibași*: 9 sectors with total surface area of 21,62 ha; (v) *Brânza*: 2 sectors with total surface area of 13, 66 ha; (vi) *Văleni*: 2 sectors with total surface area of 2,83 ha.

104. The proposed species for the demonstration areas are mainly native tree species such as: White willow (*Salix alba*), Goat willow (*Salix caprea*), White poplar (*Populus alba*), Black poplar (*Populus nigra*); Pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*); Common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Tatar maple (*Acer tataricum*); Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*); European white elm (*Ulmus laevis*); Field elm (*Ulmus minor*); Mahaleb cherry (*Prunus mahaleb*); South European flowering ash (*Fraxinus ornus*); European wild pear (*Pyrus pyraeaster*); Sea buckthorn (*Tamarix ramosissima*) ; Hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*); and others (as per Annex 19) . In addition, a limited number of non-native species adapted/acclimatized in Moldova for the past 50-70 years is proposed to be use for re-vegetation, as these species have demonstrated a good adaptability and regeneration success on difficult salty degraded ravines. The proposed species are the following: Strandzha oak (*Quercus hartwissiana*), Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*), Austrian pine (*Pinus nigra*). For the river banks with excess moisture the following species are recommended: white and black poplars, and willow and on higher lands, oak and ash can be used as basic species. Secondary species and shrubs will be further used to improve the ecosystems conditions for the basic species and strengthen the soil. The recommended secondary species that can be used are for example the field maple, European white elm, Tatar maple, South European flowering ash.

105. In order to consolidate the riparian areas, it is often necessary to use species with strong and rich roots; from this perspective, the following species are recommended: Ash, Lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*), Dogwoods (*Cornus florida*), Black pine, Sophora etc. The selection of species for reforestation works proposed at PPG stage, was carried out in accordance with

the provisions of the applicable official technical guidelines<sup>34</sup> as well as based on a preliminary assessment of the soil conditions at each proposed demonstration plot. Further description of the methodology is captured under Annex 19. The reforestation works will be carried out according UNDP SES requirements and site level procedures for will be conducted at every demonstration site prior to the start of the reforestation activities (as per ESMF Annex 10). An important element in the success of reforestation is reducing the risk of fire hazards in forest plantations by limiting the use of inflammable materials. Adequate distance between plantations rows and requirements for fencing and protection against domestic livestock grazing will be established at the implementation phase based on the technical projects at each site. The project will work with Moldsilva Agency, Apele Moldovei Agency and the local municipality authorities for the design of technical projects and it will hire a specialized company for the execution of the works (Annex 19).

106. Activity 2.2.1.2 Rehabilitation of the old natural watercourse of Camenca River. This activity will be sequenced in more stages as explained further below. The full feasibility study and execution of the hydrotechnical works should be implemented only after a comprehensive stakeholders consultations and appropriately addressing the existing illegal small earth dam construction on Camenca river.

107. In the past, Camenca river, the primary Prut tributary, used to flow through a meandering watercourse, parallel to Prut river, on approximately 45 km, ensuring the seasonal flooding of adjacent floodplains covering approximately 25,000 ha, positioned between Camenca and Prut river in the Prut mid-section (please see Annex 20 Pre-feasibility study). In 1976, as a part of the wetland-draining state policy in the quest for more arable land, the construction of a canal near Balatina village has re-directed Camenca waters straight into the Prut river, by cutting off the old watercourse. Consequently, the ground water level dropped, water salinity increased (up to 3g/l) and there was an intense alluvial soil leaching observed. These have led to continuous degradation of the floodplain grassland and forest vegetation. For a short period of time, following the construction of a hydrotechnical node on Camenca river in 2001, the old watercourse has been restored. The beneficial impact has been subsequently observed<sup>35</sup>: water levels in groundwater wells increased by 30-35 cm, the level of water salinity decreased and approximately 75% of Royal Forests Reserve's forest ecosystems have been reinvigorated and benefited by the increase of the underground water level (according to ICAS and Royal Forest Reserve administration monitoring records). Unfortunately, the situation has been reversed and the old Camenca water course was eventually completely closed.

108. The potential benefits of the rehabilitation of the old river water course have been preliminarily validated by the pre-feasibility study commissioned at PPG stage. The GEF alternative scenario provides for the hydrological repair of the Camenca river old watercourse which would bring an additional 8.3 million m<sup>3</sup> water in the Camenca floodplain. It is estimated that approximately 11,175 ha of floodplain will benefit from increased groundwater level. It should be noted that the seasonal flooding that would follow the repair of Camenca old watercourse is unlikely to reach up to all the forest ecosystems located inside the Royal Forest Nature Reserve because the latter is situated on higher elevation (approx. 3-5 m higher). Nevertheless the increase of the level of the ground water is the main positive element that will benefit the forest ecosystems inside the PA. The seasonal flooding will mostly impact the grassland and forest ecosystems located outside the PA, largely covering the area proposed for Ramsar designation, with floodplain forest and grassland vegetation, small lakes and ponds harboring an equally rich biodiversity.

109. The climate change vulnerability is a compounding factor that exacerbates degradation of Camenca floodplain. Climate models are invariably indicating a continuous upward trend in temperature rise, an increase of evapotranspiration and a decrease of the annual water runoff, with different intensities throughout the seasons. During the past 20 years the most significant temperature increase has been recorded in the summer season, when temperature rose on average by 0.9-1.3 degree Celsius per decade. The decrease of the minimum water runoff during summer months will continue to further degrade wetland ecosystems, especially considering that the small streams such as Camenca are most vulnerable to climate change.

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<sup>34</sup> (Technical guidelines on regeneration and afforestation of state forest funds, CACS, 1996; Technical guide on afforestation of degraded lands, ICAS, 2015)

<sup>35</sup> ICAS official records

110. Under the GEF alternative scenario, the hydrological repair of Camenca old watercourse is expected to bring an additional annual water volume of 8.3 million m<sup>3</sup> in this floodplain area that otherwise would be severely degraded due to the predicted climate-induced water scarcity. The pre-feasibility study has analyzed the impact of the estimated additional 8.3 million m<sup>3</sup> of water in Camenca floodplains under the existing climate scenarios for Moldova, and the main highlights are the following: During the next 20 years the average water runoff will not change considerably and this area will benefit from 8.3 million m<sup>3</sup> water annually despite the climate warming. The most optimistic climate scenario even indicates a small increase of water flow by 2100 in the area. The worst climate model scenario indicates that approximately 50% (no less than 40%) of the envisaged 8.3 m<sup>3</sup> water volume will still reach the 11,175 ha of Camenca floodplains by 2100. In other words, even under the worst climate conditions, re-activating the old watercourse of Camenca river will secure at least 4 million m<sup>3</sup> water annually in Camenca basin.

111. The local livelihoods will stand to benefit from the intervention due to the increased water availability. The total floodplain area (11,175 ha) is encompassing 5,787 ha state property largely representing small ponds and lakes and areas of the Royal Forest Nature Reserve; an additional 4,554 ha belong to local public authorities, represented by communal grasslands and small ponds; and 834 ha are private agricultural lands. The restored seasonal flooding of Camenca river's adjacent lands, expected after the rehabilitation of Camenca watercourse is unlikely to affect large areas and are not expected to lead to floods due to the fact that Camenca is a small river. It is estimated that the seasonal flooding will translate into an increase of ground water level. On some plots, the groundwater may reach the surface, replenishing existing lakes and ponds and raising soil moisture in the grasslands, as the entire floodplain ecosystems will gain water from the replenished aquifer. Water levels in the existing lakes and ponds and water wells is likely to rise. The extent of the water level increase will be rigorously assessed during the full feasibility study. However prior data indicated that water levels in the ground water wells have increased with 30-35 cm in the past, after the old watercourse was restored for a brief period of time. Nevertheless, the hydrological works will be carried out based on UNDP SES requirements and the project will apply the precautionary principle to assessing any flood hazards and impacts on local livelihoods. The project will launch the stakeholders consultations early in the project implementation phase through the Process Framework in order to discuss the feasibility study conclusions and assess the local livelihood impacts and local conditions. The Process Framework is deemed necessary in order to assess any real or perceived economic displacement and facilitate conflict resolution. The local conditions are complicated by an illegally constructed small size earth dam on Camenca, that will be affected by the restored old water course, in that the water will be directed straight into its old riverbed. This will, undoubtedly, elicit a negative response from the local people that are now benefiting from the illegally diverted water (used for poultry farming and/or irrigation). Although this construction is illegal, and located on state property, there have been no legal measures taken so far. Therefore, the local dialogue facilitated by the project together with the national and local authorities will first and foremost raise awareness and educate the local communities about the benefits of the restoration works and secondly will find an agreeable solution to enforce the applicable legislation/regulations concerning the illegal construction. The local dialogue will be addressing especially the concerns of people from the villages situated in the immediate proximity of the envisaged hydrological works, in particular Balatina village. Any potential economic displacements resulting from the preparatory activities and post-hydrological works will be addressed following UNDP SES guidelines and the project will develop a Livelihood Action Plan as required. Women, women headed households, youth, veterans, poor families, will have priority, and will be helped first, if any risk of economic displacement will be confirmed. (Annex 10 ESMF). The project actions are proposed to be sequenced as follows:

- During the inception phase, the project will start the Process Framework's first round of comprehensive consultations at local level, in the affected villages, involving the Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment; the Moldovan Waters Agency and Moldsilva Agency with the PA Royal Forest Nature Reserve staff as well as the local environmental inspectors and local authorities namely the mayors of the villages located in the proximity of the envisaged hydrological works- especially Balatina village. The village has about 3815 people, and the discussions will aim in principle to inform about the intended works, assess local acceptance, raise awareness on the benefits of the rehabilitation of the old watercourse and agree on the next steps, identify the households located near the proposed hydrological intervention site and assess potential impact on these households, and identify the appropriate measures to address illegal earth dam constructions on the old water course of Camenca river. Addressing the existing illegal constructions is of outmost importance.

- Support to legal compliance, due diligence as needed: Camenca River watercourse is located on state property and according to the Government Decision 882/2014 the Agency *Moldovan Waters* is the main administrative authority of the subordinated water fund of the Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment. Some of the segments of Camenca's old river bed are registered in the Land Cadaster as state property belonging to the local municipality of Balatina and Cuhnesti villages. The project will analyze if any legal acts are needed to potentially transfer the land from local cadaster to national state owned land fund in order to be able to implement the envisaged hydrotechnical works.
- The GEF funds will be made available to develop a Full Feasibility Study after the above steps have been addressed namely (1) National and local authorities have appropriately addressed the illegal constructions on Camenca river and local communities are supportive of the intervention; (2) The project has secured the approval of the necessary legal background papers. In addition, the full commitment to co-financing from the national partners will be again validated. The Feasibility Study should not be commissioned if the above stages are not completed, as there is a substantial risk of unforeseen complications that can lead to unmanageable delays due to the fact that the process may take years of negotiations, clarifications and enforcement of the legal provisions. (please see Risk Register Annex 7) .
- The development of a full Feasibility Study is estimated to take approximately 6 months (of which 2 months of field assessments). The preliminary assessments at the PIF stage have indicated that a possible hydrotechnical solution to re-activate the old Camenca watercourse would be to build a small size lock on Camenca to prevent waters flowing back into the Prut river (between the villages of Balatina and Pruteni), and redirect the river back to its old course. At the PPG stage the pre-feasibility analysis has recommended the most technically feasible option that, in addition, would have little or no impact on private land. The hydrotechnical works are proposed on the state property land and the construction site will be managed such that there will be minimal or no impact on the private plots situated near the site (as per the ESMF described under Annex 10). The Feasibility Study will further analyze the proposed solution and develop the technical project design. A socio economic assessment will be included in the Feasibility Study, and recommendations to manage risks of potential displacement identified.
- The final round of consultations will be held after the Feasibility Study will be finalized. The project will work with the existing Camenca Sub-basin Committee and hold local consultations aiming at fully engaging the local communities located in the floodplain area. There are 14 villages located in the area but only a handful of them are located more or less in the proximity of the project intervention site (Balatina, Cuhnesti and Tomestii Noi and Movileni in particular). The project will facilitate the approval of the feasibility study by the local authorities. If any economic displacement will be validated the project will develop a Livelihood Action Plan (please see Annex 10 ESMF) and will design compensatory measures (non-cash low value grants, according to UNDP procedures) for the affected households. Should the need for such compensatory measures be validated during the local consultations, these measures will be designed based on the socio-economic context analysis and results of the local consultations, and will aim at supporting local family farms/ businesses.
- The execution of the hydrotechnical works will be preceded by the on-site procedures as per UNDP SES requirements (please see Annex 10).

112. The overall costs of such an intervention has been estimated at 1,700,000 Moldovan lei (approximately 98,000 USD) and the full feasibility study including risks assessments and risk management analysis are preliminarily estimated at 2 million Moldovan lei ( approx. 112,500 USD). The project will use GEF resources to finance the feasibility study and risks assessments (up to 100,000 USD). Other costs, including the execution of the hydrotechnical works will be co-financed by the Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment. The proposed intervention is aligned with the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) principles and it is reflected in the Management Plan of the Camenca River Basin 2019-2024. The project will work together with the Association of Women for Environment and Sustainable Development<sup>36</sup> and the regional branches of the Ministry of Environment Protection to deploy participatory approaches and multi-stakeholder consultation throughout the implementation of the restoration work.

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<sup>36</sup> The draft Camenca River Basin Management Plan was developed by the Women Association for Environment Protection and Sustainable Development, through a project funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and by the Austrian Development Agency

113. **Component 3** Demonstrating sustainable use/livelihoods at wetlands

114. This project component will support local communities in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve to develop and implement local initiatives, improving their livelihoods.

115. **Outcome 3.1 New sustainable income streams created for communities and small size entrepreneurs from sustainable use of resources at wetlands.**

116. **Output 3.1.1 Strengthened capacities of the “Local Action Group Lower Prut” and local entrepreneurs to implement local biodiversity friendly development initiatives.**

117. Under this output, the project will work with local communities in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve to support local biodiversity-friendly rural businesses and will coordinate with the EU funded project EU4Cahul. The EU funded project has four specific objectives: 1) To strengthen transparency, accountability of local public authorities and people’s participation in local governance processes in the focal regions; 2) To improve citizens’ access to quality public services and utilities in the focal regions; 3) To create employment opportunities for men, women and youth in the focal regions and improve attractiveness of the focal regions for investors and entrepreneurs; 4) To promote the smart specialization of the economy of the focal regions through the development of the clustering and value chain approach in key economic sectors. The cooperation opportunities between the two projects have been identified at PPG stage. The UNDP/GEF project will offer technical assistance to the rural entrepreneurs from the 9 villages situated in the Lower Prut to apply under the calls for proposals that will be organized under the EU4Cahul project. Furthermore, the two projects will cooperate and will organize joint training sessions for the local SMEs and rural entrepreneurs on green/ biodiversity-friendly business models.

118. Activity 3.1.1.1. Technical assistance to rural entrepreneurs to access EU4Cahul financing schemes. There are 9 villages included in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve: Branza, Caslita Prut, Colibasi, Crihana Veche, Giurgiulesti, Manta, Slobozia Mare, Vadul lui Isac and Valeni (Please see Annex 17 Target Profile Landscape). Given the traditional occupation of the local communities and the rich chernozem soils most of the local entrepreneurs are active in the field of agribusiness, owning together approximately 27,470 ha of land, of which 83% is arable land, 15.5 % vineyards and less than 1% are orchards. The largest areas of arable land are in Slobozia Mare, Crihana Veche and Giurgiulesti while Slobozia Mare, Valeni and Manta have the largest vineyards and some relatively important areas of orchards can be found in Branza, Caslita Prut and Valeni villages. The land is highly fragmented, most local entrepreneurs are registered as *Peasant farms*, rarely exceeding 10 ha. Peasant farms can be considered semi-subsistence in nature, and a significant number of them have a clearly commercial orientation, while individual households produce mostly for self-sufficiency. Peasant farms can be also called private family farms with a commercial orientation, as they rely heavily on family labor. These farms produce mainly high-value-added, high-labor-intensive crops such as fruits, nuts, grapes, vegetables, and potatoes, and they sell surpluses on the local markets<sup>37</sup>. The biodiversity, native seed varieties, sustainable practices and local and traditional knowledge that peasant farmers maintain-even under difficult conditions- are key to rebuilding ecological resilience. Various studies have shown that diversified, sustainable small farms can withstand the variability of climate change far better than industrial monoculture.

119. The PPG expert team have analyzed the local economic opportunities and identified the main needs of the local entrepreneurs in each of the nine villages situated within the perimeter of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and has shared the local report with the UNDP implemented EU4Cahul project to support the preparations and due diligence for the organization of the local calls for proposals targeting local entrepreneurs. (Annex 21 Local economic opportunities in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve-Baseline and feasibility analysis for Outcome 3). The local economic opportunities that will be supported by the UNDP/GEF project, will be aligned with the recommendations of the *“Roadmap on the dynamization of the local economic development in Cahul focal region”* developed by the local authorities with the support of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Cahul region within the framework of the EU4Cahul Project. There are four main economic directions that are prioritized in Cahul region: growing wine grapes and small wineries, rural tourism, sheep breeding (one of the oldest occupation of the local rural population). Milk and grapes are the most value-added agricultural products, highlighting the importance of milk for rural households as food and source of cash.

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<sup>37</sup> “Smallholders and family farms in the Republic of Moldova”, FAO, 2019

120. All the nine villages located in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve territory will be eligible to apply under the EU4Cahul calls for proposals. The villages have formed the *Local Action Group Lower Prut* (LAGLP) set up under EU LEADER programme, the mayors of these villages are permanent members in the LAGLP representing their community. The project has liaised with the LAGLP at the PPG stage during the development of the Report on local economic opportunities and will further work with the LAGLP on the selection of five rural entrepreneurs/local SMEs that will be assisted to apply under the EU4Cahul calls for proposals. Possible local initiatives that could be supported include: (i) beekeeping; (ii) fruits and vegetables processing; (iii) milk and wool processing; (iv) ecotourism. The project will hire specialized expertise (Economist) to support at least five local rural entrepreneurs prepare eligible proposals and coach/train them on proposal writing and cost benefit analysis. The project will advocate for women participation and will offer equal participating opportunities to women and men to all the training events.

121. Activity 3.1.1.2 Delivery of targeted trainings on green business models and enhanced environmental standards. In addition, the UNDP/GEF project will work together with the Organization for Small and Medium Enterprises Sector Development (ODIMM)<sup>38</sup> to develop and deliver green business modules to local entrepreneurs and SMEs. The project will complement the series of SMEs green business trainings implemented by ODIMM. Two modules will be developed with GEF resources. The first training module will focus on ISO 14001 environmental standard. The UNDP/GEF together with ODIMM and with the support of a special services of a certified ISO14001:2015 audit company will organize two training workshops for auditors (ToT) in Chisinau and three training workshops with representatives of SMEs and economic operators in Chisinau and Cahul, especially involved in mining and extractive industries and other water polluting businesses, with negative impact on wetlands.

122. The two ToT trainings will be delivered in Chisinau, in accordance to the requirements of the International Register of Certificated Auditors (IRCA), Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA) or similar standards. At the end of the course the successful participants/ToTs will be awarded an external certification by a world-wide recognized institute of other similar body related to the global environmental and waste management systems such as IEMA or IRCA. The scope of these trainings is to develop knowledge and understanding on ISO14001 among the community of auditors and among SMEs and local business operators. Three additional training courses for SMEs and businesses on ISO14001 will be organized in Chisinau and in Cahul. The courses should provide participating SMEs with the knowledge, skills and understanding of: (i) Fundamental concepts of Environment, Environmental aspects and impacts of business operations; (ii) Understanding requirements of the Quality Management System Standard ISO:14001 and their application to effectively and efficiently manage the process of the organization; (iii) Practical training to establish, document, implement, maintain and continually improve Environmental Management System as per the standard; (v) In-depth knowledge and practice to plan, conduct, report and close of internal Environmental Management System audit and continuous improvement of effectiveness of the Internal Audit Process; (vi) Learning and practicing effective management of Corrective Actions and Continuous Improvement Practices; (vii) Train the trainer techniques. These efforts will be complemented by awareness raising activities and by project-born legal/regulatory amendments on mandatory increase of environmental standards in the private sector (Activity 1.1.1.1).

123. The second training module will be developed by the project experts (Senior Tourism Expert) and delivered through 2 targeted workshops in Cahul or Valeni, jointly with ODIMM on green entrepreneurship/eco-tourism and will include information on green businesses (with particular focus on eco-tourism in PAs), existing financing instruments and a how-to guide on mobilization of funding, be it concessional loans for sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism or grants, or other source of funding.

124. The project will ensure balanced representation and meaningful participation of women and men in capacity building events and equal opportunities to benefit from the activities and business opportunities created under the project.

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<sup>38</sup> <https://www.odimm.md/en/>

125. **Output 3.1.2 Eco-tourism packages for wine/gastronomy routes adjusted to incorporate biodiversity observation in 2 communities.**

126. The project tourism experts will build on the results of previous local and cross-border initiatives that have identified and marked tourist routes in Lower Prut area such as “Drumul lui Petru Rares” developed by the Valeni municipality and wine routes (“Drumul Vinului”) that are appreciated by tourists. Most routes include different combinations of the same natural attractions (reservations, forests, rivers, lakes), cultural heritage (archeological sites, museums, churches, medieval artefacts, cultural monuments, local handicraft workshops), traditional food and accommodation facilities (guesthouses small hotels), including ad-hoc folk music representations, local fish dishes and wines. The PPG expert team has developed the baseline and feasibility analysis for this output under Annex 21 Local economic opportunities in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. The project will engage women participation through the *Local Action Group Lower Prut* and will offer equal chances to men and women to benefit from green business opportunities created with the project’s support. The proposed tourist routes will be screened against UNDP SES requirements in order to ensure that potential social and environmental risks associated with these tourist routes will be identified. Safeguards measures will be mainstreamed into the tourist route development process and will be consulted with local communities/stakeholders.

127. **Activity 3.1.2.1 Development of local tourism routes involving at least 2 local municipalities in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve** The project will support the development of one local eco-tourist initiative that would expand the existing tourist routes and add other components such as bird watching tours in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. The tourist route should be developed based on the analysis and application of the international best practices in promoting sustainable tourism in PAs and UNEP/CBD International Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism, MAB UNESCO and Ramsar guidelines. The project-supported tourist route at local level is proposed to combine the natural attractions of the Lower Prut area with the tradition of local cuisine, which has a specificity highlighted by several fish, vegetable and lamb dishes combined with local wines from the wine area “Valul lui Traian”. The principle applied by most localities in the Local Action Group Local Prut /LAGLP is to promote individual local routes for each locality with the presentation of attractions, crafts, the specifics of the traditional port, but also the food specialties offered by the women in these villages. An example is the locality of Văleni which has developed its own route “Drumul lui Petru Rareș (Petru Rares Route)” also called “Drumul Peștelui (Fish Route)”, which includes 10 important tourist attractions, including: the natural monument „Colinele de Aur” (Golden Hills), Lake Beleu, local handicraft workshops. Meals are served at two local guesthouses where tourists are presented with a collection of various bread specialties traditionally from southern Bessarabia (please see the description of the proposed routes under Annex 21) . The project will use GEF resources for hiring a Senior Tourism Expert, with knowledge of rural eco-tourism principles, to develop the specificities of a new local tourists route, facilitate consultations with the LAGLP and proponent municipalities and with larger Danube Tour Operators, in order to link the local routes to pan-Danube cruises. In addition, the project will offer incremental support to the development of information boards and information materials for tourists.

128. **Activity 3.1.2.2 Development of a cross border (Moldova-Romania) tourist package.** In cooperation with the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, the project will develop an integrated tourist route including attractive cross border itineraries that links the Lower Prut (Moldova) and Danube Delta Biosphere Reserves (Romania). The project will cooperate with Danube Parks, within the framework of their project “Tansdanube.Travel.Stories”<sup>39</sup> to develop and promote the cross-border tourist package on regional platforms. The cooperation between Moldova and Romania and the development of the cross-border tourism package will be facilitated by Danube Parks. The discussions with Romanian Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority (DDBRA) and Danube Parks representatives have been initiated during the PPG and a first online Zoom meeting has been organized on 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2021, aiming at a preliminary agreement on the joint activities. The main tourist attractions that could be considered for the development of the cross-border route are listed under Annex 21, where the PPG experts have indicated the main tourism attractions that are usually visited by tourists. The project team will refine these itineraries and will include specific elements and tourists attraction according to what will be discussed and agreed with the Romanian Danube Delta Biosphere reserve Authority and DanubeParks representatives. During the first year of implementation, starting with the inception phase, the project team together

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.danubeparks.org/projects/transdanubetravelstories-2020-2022>

with Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve Administration and Local Action Group Lower Prut will organize two meetings in Moldova in order to identify the exact destinations and tourists attractions that would be included in the cross-border tourist package. These meetings will be attended by the local Moldovan and Romanian rural entrepreneurs from both protected areas, tourism operators, representatives of Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority (Romania) and Danube Parks. The travel costs of the Romanian delegation will be covered by the Danube Delta Biosphere reserve Administration and DanubeParks funding. Two additional meetings are envisaged to be organized by the Romanian partners in Tulcea (Romania) in order to finalize the cross-border tourist route, financially supported by Danube Parks (please see Minutes of the preliminary meeting at PPG stage with DDBRA and DanubeParks representatives under Annex 9 Stakeholders Engagement Plan). The project will further use GEF funds to support infrastructure elements of the cross-border tourist package (local information boards marking the proposed itinerary) as well as information brochures and other information materials.

129. Activity 3.1.2.3. Innovation Challenge In addition, the project will use GEF resources to organize an Innovation Challenge for the identification of innovative SMART “Protected Areas Passport”, a downloadable *Smart Phone App* that would give access to information on protected area sites and tourism facilities in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and the Royal Forest Nature Reserve and the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve in Romania. The project will build on UNDP prior experience on working with innovative private sector solutions. The UNDP/GEF project will organize the Innovation Challenge according to UNDP rules and will invite private sector participation (e.g. mobile operators) and will explore opportunities for further co-financing from the private sector to make the winning SMART products operational.

130. Activity 3.1.2.4. Support to COVID safety protocols and tourism recovery. There aren’t any official anti-COVID 19 protocols in Moldova at the moment of the project writing. The project manager and the Senior Tourism Expert will participate in the technical working group led by the National Tourism Authority (Investment Agency) working on official safe protocols and will provide technical inputs. The PPG consultations with the National Tourism Authority led to a preliminary agreement on a possible project approach that could be translated into the project’s participation in the national working group and provision of technical inputs into the development of national anti-COVID 19 standards for the tourism and hospitality sector. The project will apply/test the anti-COVID protocols at targeted sites. The project will use the "Guide with Recommendations of Sanitary Protocols for Enterprises in the field of inbound and inbound tourism in the Republic of Moldova in the context of the epidemiological crisis caused by COVID-19 virus", recommended by the National Tourism Authority (Investment Agency) and developed by ANTRIM ( USAID project, 2020). For the 2021 tourist season, clearer measures are foreseen regarding the application of some requirements dedicated to tourism however, these requirements will be strongly influenced by the health protocols promoted by EU countries, who are also the main providers of incoming tourists in Moldova. The criteria for screening of the proposals will be aligned with UNDP SES requirements (please see ESMF Annex 10).

#### 131. **Component 4 Knowledge management**

132. Project’s focus under this component will be on raising awareness on wetlands and their main problems, using digital channels, and local partnerships, targeting decision makers, NGOs, the public and local resource users.

#### 133. **Outcome 4.1 Knowledge management and gender sensitive KM products developed and disseminated.**

##### 134. **Output 4.1.1 Online awareness raising campaign targeting central and local authorities and decision makers. Local and regional education seminars.**

135. Activity 4.1.1.1. On-line awareness campaign on the importance of wetlands in the Prut River Basin: Designed to grab attention and elevate the issues related to the threats on wetland habitats higher on the political agenda, the campaign will use the knowledge products developed within the framework of this project and the support of the project’s technical experts and PR/media to raise the public’s awareness on the importance of wetlands ecosystem services and the threats to their fragile balance. With the support of a specialized PR/media company, the project will deliver 20 (twenty) gender sensitive awareness raising events to contribute to a better public awareness on the drivers of wetland degradation in Prut River basin, climate-change induced water scarcity and decline of biodiversity and wetland ecosystems goods and services. The on-line awareness campaign strategy will identify the target audience and the

communication needs of each category of stakeholders such as the national decision makers and relevant parliamentary committees, economic operators/private companies that are located in and around targeted PAs, the general public etc. and will use the most suitable communication channels to deliver the messages in Romanian and Russian languages. Social media, a dedicated website, online streams, blogs and moderated platforms, press releases via preferred news channels will be used to explain in accessible language and formats the main problems and solutions to the current status of the wetlands and protected areas in the Prut river basin, as highlighted by the main project's Knowledge Products (*please see the targets for Indicator 12/ Project Results framework and the Annex 5: Monitoring Table for Indicator 12*) species inventories, project-supported seminars and debates etc. The main messages directed to the decision makers will revolve mainly around: wetland and water pollution, water scarcity and need for wetland financing and the need for ISO14001 certification in order to raise the environmental standard in the private sector and prevent polluting water and wetlands ecosystems. The messages sent through these digital channels will also emphasize the necessary regulatory measures that need to be in place to address the threats and barriers identified in the baseline. The Moldsilva Agency, Moldovan Academy of Science, the Institute of Zoology and the Botanical Garden Institute and other partners that will conduct species inventories are expected to work with the project's technical experts and support the easy-to-read background materials for the on-line awareness campaign.

136. The messages will have different contents depending on the different target groups. The communication/awareness messages for the decision makers should include wetlands advocacy elements and will be tailored around : (i) enabling policies and regulations for an improved wetland management, specifically the advocacy for the management of the oil exploitation in Lake Beleu in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve i.e. either closure of the oil operations or significant improvement of the environmental standards at the oil exploitation platform) (ii) increased prominence of wetlands financing on the political agenda (iii) increased percentage of financing of PAs and wetlands sustainable management through the National Environmental Fund ; (iv) sustainable wetlands management issues given more prominence in the EU-Moldova negotiations agenda. With regard to targeting private sector and economic operators especially those in and around protected areas and wetlands, the messages should be developed around the following topics: (i) information on the quality of surface waters and the negative effect of pollution on surface and ground waters, impacting environment and public health; (ii) pollution fees and environmental taxes; (iii) benefits and financing sources of sustainable and biodiversity friendly businesses located at wetlands; (iv) training opportunities for greening businesses (in cooperation with ODIMM); (v) information on ISO14001 standards: benefits and requirements.

137. According to a 2018 USAID Study<sup>40</sup> the preferred information source of the Moldovans are: TV/Radio, social media and news-media sites. The project will establish the targeted stakeholder groups and for each groups will determine the preferred communication channel and the most frequently utilized mass media sources . The project will explore the possibility of concluding and MoU with the National TV/Radio posts including several targeted broadcasts on environment and wetlands in Prut regions featuring possibly prominent public speakers and influencers . The Radio Talks will be particularly designed to spread the targeted messages to local communities and will include gender sensitive messages and tailored topics for women entrepreneurs, women farmers etc and gender related knowledge. The project will implement tailored events in both targeted areas inviting local communities and local decision makers.

138. Activity 4.1.1.2 National and local awareness and education events. The project will coordinate with the existing initiatives especially those in the targeted project areas (i) the project will explore coordination with the GEF WWF project " Danube River Basin Hydro-morphology and River restoration DYNA" to raise awareness on the negative impacts of the unsustainable agricultural practices that amplifies soil erosion around lakes and riparian areas leading to lakes siltation. (ii) Joint activities with the EU funded EU4Cahul programme will be explored and best practices shared, at least 1-2 awareness seminars are envisaged to be organized jointly. (iii) The project will work together with Eco-Contact and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) to identify opportunities for organization of events around climate resilient wetland ecosystems and the importance of healthy ecosystems and ecosystems services to resilient livelihoods in Lower Prut. The project could join other development partners and offer support to EcoContact and the National Council of Environmental NGOs for the organization of the Forum of Environmental NGOs and bring to the decision makers attention the persisting barriers to sustainable wetland management and financing. (iv) The project will coordinate with "Verde

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/03\\_INTERNEWS\\_Final%20report\\_25.10.18\\_RO-web.pdf](https://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/03_INTERNEWS_Final%20report_25.10.18_RO-web.pdf)

e Moldova” and Rewilding Europe to explore potential joint awareness and education events that could be delivered locally in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve for the benefit of local natural resource users. round table meetings, farmers-to-farmers interactions in the targeted villages. The project will hold at least 3 local awareness raising and education seminars, jointly with other existing projects and donor initiatives in both protected areas.

139. The project’s results and lessons learnt will be disseminated through online channels and the local seminars as well as through the support of the Bilateral Committees and Trilateral Committees that are active in the Prut-Danube basin and other regional project partners such as DanubeParks and the International Commission for the Protection of River Danube ICPDR platform.

140. **Output 4.1.2 Innovative gender sensitive knowledge products and services from the project synthesized, packaged and disseminated.**

141. The Project Management Unit (PMU) will be responsible for implementing the project’s Knowledge Management (KM) and M&E Plan, including the project’s evaluations while integrating the evaluative knowledge further in the project’s adaptive management and sharing the lessons learned with key partners and collaborators, other GEF and non-GEF projects.

142. **Activity 4.1.2.1 Systematizing project experience** The Knowledge Management approach is mainly geared towards addressing capacity gaps and barriers :

- Knowledge dissemination, training, addressing knowledge gaps through Capacity building (PAs management; Writing funding proposals for wetlands financing; Training on Greening businesses; Trainings on certification ISO14001) through awareness and education events via social media, TV and radio talk shows, blogs, awareness raising seminars, fairs and other events. The project will make sure that all the KM products are gender sensitive and will address the differentiated ways men and women utilizes natural resources.
- Innovation focus: creation of new knowledge, new products such as: Innovation Challenge- developing innovative SMART protected areas financing products and cross-border Moldova-Romania eco-tourism package in the Lower Prut-Danube Delta;
- Growth and change focus: cooperation, replication, scaling in and scaling out (including ICPDR and other Danube platforms, IW:Learn; National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) which scales up wetlands management approaches tested by the project. The Knowledge Management approach includes the preparation of a *Scaling Up and Replication Strategy*, ensuring that the valuable knowledge generated during the project implementation, documenting the trailblazing efforts driving progress towards sustainable wetlands management and mainstreaming of biodiversity in production zones, will be replicated to other regions of Moldova.

143. The Project Manager will ensure the collation of all the project experiences and information. This knowledge database will then be made accessible to different stakeholder groups in order to support better future decision-making processes in mainstreaming biodiversity and sustainable land management in Turkmenistan and more consistent adoption of best practices. (*please see Annex 22 Knowledge management Plan*). The Internal KM focus will be on: continuous learning from other projects’ experience, from evaluative knowledge, from internal (M&E), operational and technical efficiency and effectiveness. The project team will implement the Knowledge Management (KM) Plan in line with the GEF requirements to foster learning and sharing from relevant projects and initiatives and evaluations and contribute to the project’s overall impact and sustainability.

#### 144. **Component 5. Monitoring and Evaluation**

145. **Outcome 5.1** Project results properly monitored and evaluated

146. **Output 5.1.1 Set of monitoring activities implemented**

147. During the project implementation the M&E will be conducted following GEF and UNDP guidelines and according to the M&E plan described in Section V of this project document. The main tasks of the M&E plan include an annual monitoring of indicators in the project results framework, annual project implementation reports (PIR), ongoing

monitoring of environmental and social risks and implementation of SES requirements, supervision missions, updating GEF core indicators and METT (at midterm and project end), monitoring of Global Environmental Benefits, ongoing monitoring of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and the Gender Action Plan, Project Board meetings, oversight mission by the UNDP-GEF team, mid-term and terminal GEF7 Core Indicators and METT updates, an Independent Terminal Evaluation (TE), project final conference. The Project Manager will ensure the collation of all the project evaluative knowledge and information, supporting the project's adaptive management, and final project report.

#### Partnerships:

148. With pressures coming from different economy sectors, the project's partnership approach for wetlands conservation and sustainable use is contributing to a better understanding of the linkages between the KBAs/PAs in the Prut River basin and the sectors that impact the valuable wetlands and ecosystem and a better understanding of the hydro-ecological conditions required by the wetlands to maintain their ecosystem services. On the same time, the project's supported partnerships are bringing the wetland resilience topic higher on the political agenda, and support other current initiatives, that cumulatively would lead to an improved management and financing framework that enable wetlands' ecological integrity. Highlights of the project's partnership current and expected roles are summarized in the Table 1 below and under the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (Annex 9). The project will build on traditional partnerships with the Ministry of Environment and the affiliated agencies Moldsilva Agency and Moldovan Water Agency, supporting the local PAs administrations and local authorities and stakeholders, forging new partnerships with media and journalists, NGOs and education and research institutes, SMEs and private sector. The partnerships will be actively managed and communication will be regularly maintained using a series of appropriate tools and channels media (online) and in person round table meetings, workshops and seminars, while feedback will be sought on the partners satisfaction with the participation in the project activities and adjustments or corrective measures implemented as necessary (please see KM Plan under Annex 22).

#### Stakeholder engagement:

149. The project's design incorporates several features to ensure ongoing and effective stakeholder participation in the project's implementation. UNDP is committed to ensuring meaningful, effective, and informed participation of stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of UNDP Programmes and Projects. Principally UNDP requires that its projects are designed with meaningful and effective participation of all stakeholders. This foundation for sustainable development assures that local peoples and other stakeholders play a key role in advancing achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). UNDP's commitment to stakeholder engagement arises from internal policies, procedures, and strategy documents as well as key international human rights instruments, principles and numerous decisions of international bodies, particularly as they relate to the protection of citizens' rights related to freedom of expression and participation. Beyond regular consultations, the project's Stakeholder Engagement Plan (Annex 9) Gender Action Plan (Annex 11) and KM Plan (Annex 22) provide the basis for the establishment of effective communication channels and the building of working relationships necessary for successful project implementation, seeking to define a technically and culturally appropriate approach to consultation and disclosure. These plans ensures that all key stakeholders are fully familiar with the components of this project and that they remain committed to and supportive of the related activities in the project. The project is applying multiple strategies to ensure stakeholders engagement. First and foremost the project will be launched by a Project Inception multi-stakeholder workshop which presents another opportunity to reinforce the partnerships agreed at PPG stage and present the most updated information on the project and the project work plan. Second, the Project Steering Committee (Project Board) will be constituted to ensure broad representation of all key interests throughout the project's implementation (as discussed further in the Section VII of this Project Document) involving UNDP's long-standing partners such as the Ministry of Environment, Moldsilva Agency, Moldovan Water Agency. The project team will further establish and maintain the project partnerships. To secure their participation the stakeholders will be contacted and engaged with using different strategies and methods that best suit their contributions and interests in the engagement program. Learning opportunities and technology transfer from peer countries will be further explored during project implementation. To present opportunities for replication in other countries, the project will share knowledge and case studies through the available platforms and will leverage the partnership with the Danube Parks organization, bilateral and trilateral commissions (Romania-Moldova-Ukraine) and through the International Commission for the Protection of River Danube ICPDR platform.

**Table 1 Summary of Stakeholder Engagement**

<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Legislative mandate and functions relevant to the project</b>	<b>Role for the project</b>
Ministry of Environment (MOE) and its “Implementation Unit for Environmental Projects/ EPIU”	<p>The Ministry is responsible for the development of legislation, action plans, norms and standards in environment, agriculture and regional development. The Directorate of policies in the area of biodiversity of MOE has the basic mission of developing and promoting the state policy in the sphere of reasonable use of natural resources, conservation of biodiversity, state protected natural areas, forest stock, hunting stock and biological security, within the limits of its competence and conditions provided by the environment legislation in force, by the Regulations of the Ministry and Regulations of the Directorate</p> <p>In order to support the implementation of environmental framework and external finance system in the country (including the donor funded projects) the ministry has founded the Environmental projects Implementation Unit (EPIU) as per the Law nr.98/2012 (art 4, point b), GD 695/2017 (7th point), GD145/2021 and GD 1249/2018.</p> <p>The EPIU is the public institution under the IP mandate, responsible to contribute to policy implementation through specific projects Minister of Environment is Chair of EPIU Steering Committee</p> <p>The Minister of Environment is the Chair of the Steering Committee of all the Projects implemented by EPIU.</p>	<p>The Ministry is the Project Implementing Partner. The Directorate of Biodiversity Policies hosts the GEF OFP office.</p> <p>The Ministry will provide leadership to the project management team that will be hosted by the EPIU and will support the liaison with government authorities from different sectors and make sure that the project will coordinate with other relevant projects and initiatives.</p> <p>MOE will review and approve the project-born draft policy and legislation relevant to wetlands, protected areas, pollution charges and amendments to the National Ecological Fund’s Regulation. The Ministry will lead the NBSAP development, to which the project will contribute by providing specialized technical expertise. The Ministry will provide political and institutional supervision for the overall project activities on behalf of the Government of Moldova. The Ministry will design/enforce policy measures in support of project endeavors and ensure parallel co-financing aimed at improving wetlands and PAs financing and sustainable management.</p>
National Ecological Fund	The National Ecological Fund operates under the Ministry, managed by an Administrative Council, chaired by the minister.	The project will partner with the NEF and will coordinate with the project Eu4Environment which is implementing NEF reform for the implementation of output 1.1/Act. 1.1.2.1. The project will be incremental to the existing initiatives in that it will support key legal amendments and bylaws to prioritize wetlands/PAs financing, otherwise not included in the on-going reform or under existing expert studies. To this end, the project will work with the NEF staff and the legal department of the

		Ministry of Environment to support targeted legal amendments to the NEF regulatory framework.
Agency” Moldsilva”	Moldsilva Agency is a semi-autonomous state enterprise that operates under MOE, develops and organizes the application of measures on the conservation, ecologic reconstruction of the forests in the state protected natural areas managed by it; develops and presents proposals on the construction of state protected natural areas in the conditions established by the legislation, ensures the observance of the regime of management of the inventory of natural areas, conservation and protection of the objects of the vegetal and animal kingdoms from such areas. Through the territorial subordinated entities, it manages approximately 50 % of the total surface of the state protected natural areas.	Moldsilva will be a key partner for the implementation of the project activities and the PAs restoration work i.e. reforestation activities on degraded lands, as well as for their related duties in the protected areas management. Through its state forestry units, the agency will provide technical assistance, co-financing and support in implementing project components. Moldsilva will help build cooperation with local communities where it operates.
ICAS- Forest Research and Management Institute	ICAS mission is to substantiate on a scientific basis the management and development of the forestry sector by producing and disseminating scientific and technical information, providing specialized advice, recommending and implementing new and modernized technologies, developing innovative products that contribute to increase competitiveness of the forestry sector.	ICAS will be a key partner especially in implementing the reforestation work in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. The main responsibilities will revolve around re-validation of the demonstration areas that were selected at PPG stage; support to screening and targeted assessments of the reforestation areas (as per UNDP SES requirements), facilitation of engagement with local authorities; technical assistance in developing the technical projects based on which the reforestation works will be implemented and support to monitoring of the reforestation success.
Agency “Moldovan Waters”	The Moldovan Waters Agency is the administrative authority subordinated to MOE, which is responsible for the implementation of the state policy in the area of water resources management; it manages the lands of the water inventory, surface water bodies and hydrotechnical constructions in the public property of the state, on the basis of the Nistru and Danube-Prut and Black Sea hydrotechnical basins located on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.	“Moldovan Waters” Agency will be the main counterpart under Component 1 (Output 1.1.1), and will facilitate coordination with the Romanian counterparts, regarding the hydro-ecological models and revisions to the existing Regulation of the Stanca-Costesti Dam, in order to increase the ecological flows to downstream wetlands, lakes and riparian ecosystems.
Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve	Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority (Romania) is a public institution subordinated to the Ministry of	DDBRA is an important partner in the project for the implementation of Act. 2.1.1.4. support to designation of a Trilateral Biosphere Reserve

Authority DDBRA (Romania)	<p>Environment and Forestry of Romania and manages the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve.</p> <p>The DDBRA has partnered with DanubeParks for the implementation of the project “Trans-Danube.Trave.Stories” (2020-2022).</p> <p>Danube Parks is a network of Protected Areas of nine Danube Basin countries.</p>	<p>Danube Delta Lower Prut and the project’s PA work under the Act. 2.1.1.3, in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and for the development of a cross border tourism package Romania-Moldova linking nature/cultural heritage based tourism itineraries in Danube Delta and Lower Prut Region with regional platforms promoted by other international organizations such as Danube Parks, under Act. 3.1.2.2, as well as other awareness raising activities that may be explored jointly with DDBRA and DanubeParks.</p>
Inspectorate for Environmental Protection	<p>The state control and supervision, prevention and fighting the infringements in the sphere of protection of flora, fauna and protected natural areas in order to ensure a high level of supervision and protection of the environment, public interests, ecological security of the state are performed by the Inspectorate for Environment Protection subordinated to MOE.</p>	<p>The Inspectorate for Environmental Protection will be a key project partner in implementing the provisions of the PAs management plans, the provisions of the biodiversity conservation measures mainstreamed in the local strategies and supporting the project’s ecological restoration works. It is also a project beneficiary and will participate in the project capacity building workshops.</p>
Environment Agency	<p>The Environment Agency, subordinated to MOE, performs the monitoring of the quality of state protected natural areas, monitoring of the state and use of the water and soil resources, monitoring of the vegetal and animal kingdom, monitoring of the state of the underground, monitoring of air pollution, geological monitoring, monitoring of environment pollution for the purpose of providing to natural and legal person information on the quality of environment, developing the statistical indicators in the sphere of environment protection (<i>GD No. 549/2018 on the creation, organization and operation of the Environment Agency</i>).</p>	<p>The Environment Agency is a beneficiary and will participate in the capacity building events.</p>
Local Public Authorities (LPAs) at the district and village/community levels	<p>The authorities of the local public administration (ALPA) organize the management of the protected areas the landholders of which they are; implement protection measures ensuring the protection regime corresponding to the instituted management category (art. 15, Law 1538/1998). In accordance with the environmental legislation, ALPA has the role of being responsible for the organization of implementation, at a</p>	<p>District and village/community public administrations have a significant role to play in the projects. Their responsibilities are to promote cooperation among all land users and owners, to implement biodiversity-friendly practices, to support agri-businesses and rural sustainable (eco) tourism initiatives supported by the project, to participate in the Process framework (aligned with UNDP SES requirements) and identify compensatory mechanisms for any potential economic displacement risks that may arise as a</p>

	local level, of the policy on environmental protection and reasonable use of natural resources.	result of the project activities and support the project's awareness seminars and events at local level. The local authorities are responsible for the design and implementation of the local development policies and will support the mainstreaming of the project-born "Biodiversity Passports" of key species and related biodiversity conservation measures and sustainable management of biodiversity resources outside PAs.
Local Action Group "Lower Prut" and clusters of small tourism entrepreneurs	<i>The Local Action Group Lower Prut (LAGLP)</i> was set up under EU LEADER programme and the members are all the local authorities of the 9 villages located in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve.	The LAGLP will mobilise local communities' participation in biodiversity monitoring measures and ecotourism initiatives under Component 3 and will support the organization of the awareness seminars. The LAGLP will support/facilitate the technical assistance seminars and selection of rural entrepreneurs to participate into different calls for proposals under the EU4Moldova programme.
Private sector: Farmers associations; fishermen; concessionary companies (fisheries); tourism companies; oil extraction/mining	Rural population, farmers and fishermen, small tourism entrepreneurs and oil extraction company "Valiexchim SRL" (currently the latter's contract expired and the company filed for bankruptcy) are the most important stakeholders for the implementation of Component 2 and Component 3 and will be closely involved in restoration activities, PAs work/consultation meetings during the development of the PAs management plans and biodiversity monitoring measures, development of different regulatory amendments with regard to permitting system in protected areas and will participate into various capacity development activities.	
NGOs: Association of Environmental and Ecological Tourism Journalists; the Women in Sustainable Development of Moldova (WISDOM); Regional Environmental Center (REC); Ecological Society BIOTICA; National Council of Environmental NGOs; Eco Contact; other international organizations.	<p>All NGOs will participate in stakeholder consultation during the development of the protected areas management plans development and revision in targeted areas, and in the awareness raising seminars as relevant. Joint activities will be explored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joint awareness and education activities in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, with the NGOs implementing activities in the targeted PAs such as Eco Contact, Verde e Moldova and WWF/DYNA Projects.</li> <li>- Avifauna inventories in both targeted areas engaging the Society for Birds and Nature Protection</li> <li>- Awareness raising seminars engaging the Association for Environmental and Ecological Tourism Journalists.</li> <li>- With the Coalition of Environmental NGOs for advocacy activities e.g. Eco Contact, National Council of Environmental NGOs and Association of Environment and Eco-tourism Journalists in Moldova, the project will partner in order to raise awareness on, and advocate for, an adequate legal, policy and financing framework for sustainable wetlands management.</li> <li>- Participation of the Women Association for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development in the consultations on the full Feasibility Study of the envisage hydrotechnical works on Camenca river.</li> <li>- Partnership with the Association for Tourism Development in Moldova for the support to the development of COVID-19 protocols in tourism industry.</li> </ul>	
Research Institutes	The Moldovan Academy of Science, the Institute of Zoology, the Botanical Garden Institute, experts from the Moldova State University etc will be important partners supporting various (flora and fauna) species inventories, technical analysis and reports on the hydro-ecological conditions of wetlands in the Prut basin, development of the "Biodiversity Passports" and	

Botanical Garden Institute  Institute of Zoology  Moldova State University	support to mainstreaming biodiversity into local development strategies as well as support to the projects on-line awareness campaign and other seminars, writing easy-to-read papers on the biodiversity rich wetlands hosted by Prut basin's wetlands, their threats and climate vulnerability.	
Organization for Small and Medium Enterprises Sector Development (ODIMM)	ODIMM is a business support organization in Moldova, focused on Moldovan migrants, women entrepreneurs, business support programmes and organization of targeted training seminars.	UNDP/GEF project will work together with the Organization for Small and Medium Enterprises Sector Development ( ODIMM) <sup>41</sup> to develop and deliver green business modules to local entrepreneurs and SMEs. The project will complement the series of SMEs green business trainings implemented by ODIMM.

#### Risks:

150. As per standard UNDP requirements the Project Manager (with the support of an M&E consultant) will monitor risks on a quarterly basis and report on the status of risks to the UNDP Country Office. The UNDP Country Office will record progress in the UNDP ATLAS risk log. Risks will be reported as critical when the impact and probability are high (i.e., when impact is rated as 5, and when impact is rated as 4 and probability is rated at 3 or higher). Management responses to critical risks, as well as environmental and social grievances will also be reported to the GEF in the annual PIR. The detailed risk management strategy for the project is included under Annex 7 UNDP ATLAS Risk Register. The project will deploy risk management measures to mitigate any implementation delays that may result due to potential reinstatement of the COVID-19 related restrictions. The mitigation measures will be aligned with the UNDP corporate guidance for "Managing programmes and projects in the age of COVID-19".

**Table 2 Summary of Project Risks**

Identified Risks and Category	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation Measures
National and local government institutions responsible for the district and local development strategies do not have adequate capacity to support, maintain and enforce integrated biodiversity considerations into local strategies	M	M	The risk has been mitigated through the project's strategy. The project will strengthen and expand the current capabilities of the key institutions responsible for the development planning at district and local levels and the enforcement of environmental regulation in three districts (Cahul, Glodeni and Falesti) and will offer support in the midterm revision of the local district strategies (2020-2024) to mainstream biodiversity and key habitats' considerations into local development plans.
Oil drilling in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve may jeopardize the project's results, and hamper project efforts to secure high value wetlands ecosystems.	H	M	The oil drilling in the PA falls under the incidence of a concessional contract between the government and a private company. Although the contract has presumably ended, the oil exploitation continued at least throughout 2020. The oil exploitation platform operates below the environmental standards, resulting in occasional oil spills in the core area of the Biosphere reserve (in the lake Beleu (KBA)) affecting key species nesting areas and posing fire hazards. In order to (indirectly) manage the risk and increase alignment with MAB/UNESCO

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.odimm.md/en/>

Identified Risks and Category	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation Measures
<i>(Risk related to the project Area of Influence, not under the project's control but it still needs to be monitored)</i>			requirements, the project will work with the Ministry of Environment and will develop legal amendments to clarify an ambiguity in the current legislation with regard to the permission for oil drilling in a core area of a MAB UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The decision to approve the legal amendments and (possibly) shut down the operations rests with the Government. The project will be working closely with a range of government stakeholders, partners, and resource users/managers, NGOs and potential investors. From a legal perspective, the project will work to identify any critical conflicts in government policies and normative acts related to the sustainable use of natural resources in the protected areas that would diminish the potential to achieve the project objective and will propose subsequent amendments (Component 1). In addition, the project will deliver capacity building on green businesses and introductory courses on ISO 14001 Standards to increase the environmental standards of economic operators, especially important for businesses with high risk of water and wetland pollution. The project will partner with NGOs and advocate for sustainable use of wetlands in line with international designation such as Ramsar and MAB/UNESCO.
The project's impact on the status of biodiversity and wetlands ecological integrity could be sensitive to changing climatic conditions in the future.	M	M	The project will demonstrate and put in place measures for degraded riparian land restoration in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and hydrotechnical works for restoration of natural flooding regime in Camenca floodplain in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve that is grounded by climate risk assessments, feasibility analysis and tested methodologies that will enable stakeholders to adapt sustainable natural resources management to any given context and threats. The hydrotechnical work on Camenca river for example, will be based on project-supported feasibility analysis and climate risk assessments. The PPG phase-conducted pre-feasibility analysis has highlighted that through the envisaged hydrotechnical works, an additional 8.3 million m3 water could be brought to the area, thus increasing wetland resilience even under the worst climate scenarios. Furthermore, under Component 1, the project will support amendments to the Regulation of the Stanca-Costesti dam in order to provide for adjusted minimum Environmental Flow that will take into account the climate induce water scarcity scenarios.
The National Ecological Fund may fail to increase financing toward sustainable wetland management .	M	M	Due to potential limited interest from the Ministry to change funding priorities and approve project-born legal amendments and/or due to a lack of capacities for competitive biodiversity projects submitted by the PAs, there is a risk that NEF will not prioritize wetland financing. The risk is mitigated through the project's strategy. The project will work closely with the Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment and will support/advocate for targeted amendments to the Regulation of the National Ecological Fund and relevant legislative acts in order to create the enabling environment for an increased funding available for wetlands' restoration and sustainable management. These amendments will be assessed and discussed with the Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment and the project will advocate for expedite formal approval. At the same time, the project will implement awareness activities (targeting decision makers) to highlight the risks and threats to the wetlands, raise awareness and understanding of wetlands problems, especially in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve, where key habitats are drying out in absence of regular flooding and in general make everyone aware of the

Identified Risks and Category	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation Measures
			wetlands' ecosystem services fragility under climate-induced predicted water scarcity. These problems are known by politicians; however it is possible that the full consequences are not properly understood, due to (in part) of a lack of data. The project will address the data gap as well, by generating relevant knowledge and hydro-ecological assessments to back up responsible wetland-centred policy making. Targeted trainings/coaching of PAs staff in project development/coaching and helping with the project writing, is expected to address the risk of a lack of quality wetlands management projects submitted for NEF funding.
Political instability and reshuffled political priorities may hamper the formal adoption of the project-born legal and regulatory amendments destined to improve wetlands management framework.	H	M	The project will capitalize on the good relations and cooperation between UNDP and the Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment (MARDE) and will work actively to reinforce political support and maintain the wetlands issues high on the political agenda. The Project will facilitate regular high level meetings between UNDP Resident Representative the Minister/Deputy Minister, Director of the Moldsilva Agency, the GEF OFP and CBD, Ramsar and MAB/UNESCO focal points in order to assess the progress towards the desired development outcome, test ToC assumptions and address risks.
Co-financing of the planned ecological restoration on Camenca river may not materialize.	H	M	Local dialogue facilitated by the project together with the national and local authorities will first and foremost raise awareness and educate the local communities as well as national decision makers about the benefits of the restoration works. Materialization of co-financing will be monitored by UNDP CO and the Project manager and addressed during the regular high level meetings between UNDP Resident Representative the Minister/Deputy Minister, Director of the Moldsilva Agency, the GEF OFP and CBD, Ramsar and MAB/UNESCO focal points.
There is a risk that the EPIU may fail to comply with UNDP NIM and GEF standards as it lacks familiarity with UNDP/GEF procedures. The project is likely to face operational difficulties and delays associated with the new execution modality.	M	M	Although the core capacities of the Environmental Projects Implementaiton Unit (EPIU) of the Ministry of Environment are sufficient to carry out the project activities, there are weaknesses in the organisational structure and staffing, accounting policies and procedures, and programme management as per the micro HACT assessment (2021). Capacity limitations along with the lack of direct experience with UNDP NIM implementation call for targeted capacity building. The UNDP CO together with the IP, will organize internal UNDP NIM and project management related trainings and the UNDP CO will provide the technical guidelines for day-to-day management and it will ensure that hands-on experience and learning by doing will complement the risk mitigation measures.
COVID-19 related travel limitations may affect intended project's support to alternative livelihoods and PA financing through local eco-tourism	M	M	The project will work with the Local Action Group Lower Prut and local communities' representatives as well as with Moldova's Association of Inbound Tourism (ANTRIM) and with line ministries (the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Health) to develop Safe Tourism standards, that will be applied by the project initially in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve .
COVID 19 related risks to the project implementation:	M	M	The project will develop COVID-19 mitigation measures during Project Inception phase and agree on ways to mitigate any implementation delays that may result due to potential reinstatement of the COVID-19

Identified Risks and Category	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation Measures
Project delays due to COVID 19 reinstated restrictions			related restrictions. UNDP issued corporate guidance on “Managing programmes and projects in the age of Covid-19” which will be used in devising tailored measures for this project, presented and approved at the Inception Workshop along with the main health safeguards to be deployed during the implementation, in order to protect people and environment and prevent the virus spread (i.e use of masks, social distancing, remote meetings whenever possible; remote field monitoring as much as possible). ). The risk to the project posed by potential reinstatement of restrictions (travel; lockdown, others) will be mitigated through several steps that could include (but will be not limited to) : (i) Re-assessment of the COVID-19 restrictions on the AWP implementation (ii) Create/activate stakeholders and key project partners Telegram/Zoom group and move all the meetings online (iii) if activities will be delayed a few months but workplan will deliver on time and within budget, no formal revision is needed (iv) if activities cannot be completed on time, workplan will be revisited and budgets revised/ clearance by online Board meetings (v) if local activities and local field staff can continue activities, monitoring will be done remotely (using photos from the field) or through a virtual mechanisms (project will reach out to community leaders and key partners in the field who can ensure that activities will be aligned with the needs and take into account the constraints faced by the community. The project will ensure that adequate protective gear is handed over to local field staff and community members and that social distancing and other health safeguards are in place. UNDP TRAC unspent balance can be repurposed to COVID-19 in case of <i>force majeure</i> .

151. Gender equality and Women’s Empowerment: A Gender Analysis and Gender Action Plan (Annex 11) were developed to guide gender mainstreaming during the project implementation and ensure that the project interventions targeting local communities will promote equal benefit sharing and women participation. The gender analysis has highlighted that women are underrepresented among decision makers at national and local levels. Women’s access to land and natural resources is hindered by stereotypes and by their lack of knowledge about their rights. In the rural area, women are managing approximately 19% of farmland area, a much smaller area than men, and the potential of generating income is more limited. The distribution of resources between women and men is uneven, and the pandemic and economic hardship deepens the gender gap. The project will promote an environment that will help overcome gender biases, promote women’ empowerment and foster inclusion and equal opportunities. According to the Gender Action Plan the key gender mainstreaming elements of the project strategy could be summarized as follows: (i) Balanced representation and meaningful participation of women and men in key project activities, including those related to capacity building and management planning for protected areas; (ii) Engagement and mobilization of individuals, local women groups, women NGOs to participate in project implementation and benefit from business opportunities that are created under different project components (iii) Better access for women entrepreneurs and women's businesses – sustainable tourism, “green” farming etc. to the opportunities provided by the project, to the technical assistance that they may need in order to apply under different calls for proposals launched by EU4Cahul project, coaching, participation into trainings and awareness seminars; (iv) integration of gender dimension into all the project-supported legal and policy work under Component 1 through a SESA approach. Gender considerations will be fully mainstreamed into project implementation and will inform rayonal (district level) and local development planning as well as community level project activities through creating a platform for participation in decision making at local level. Under Component 1 the project will support district and local authorities to include biodiversity conservation and monitoring into local development strategies and will support public advocacy for women’s rights and gender sensitive biodiversity conservation and management measures. Under Component 2, the project will support participatory approaches at local levels, in both

protected areas, during the consultations on the Management Plan of the Royal Forest Nature Reserve and during the local consultations on the revision of the draft Management Plan of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, and will include women NGOs and local community representatives to enable their participation into decision making over natural resources management, as women's input, knowledge and guidance are invaluable to any productive, sustainable efforts to restore wetlands, lakes and riparian zones. Under Component 3, the project's efforts will be directed towards strengthening local women entrepreneurship, enabling women participation into calls for proposals and different other local projects and education/awareness activities. The project will ensure that there is gender balance in all project activities (e.g. seminars, community level events) including access to project financial assistance. Following the UNDP-GEF Gender Mainstreaming Guide<sup>42</sup>, the Gender Analysis has identified key considerations that can advance gender integration and which overall, can enhance the outcomes associated with each of the related components in the project. The project will report on direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender, as a co-benefit of the GEF investment (Indicators 1,10,12 and 13). During the project implementation, the Gender Action Plan (GAP) proposed actions will be detailed and embedded in the Project Annual Workplans. A detailed gender work planning, target setting and reporting takes place in the project inception and implementation phase. The implementation of GAP will be tracked as one of the key project M&E elements. supported by the Project manager and the Gender expert.

152. Innovation The project will foster innovation in wetland management and will apply several innovative techniques based on international best practices. Under the Output 1.1.1. the project will strengthen Moldova's capacity to engage in bilateral coordination in Prut river basin and will support innovative hydro-climate modelling, accounting for climate change impact, that will generate different scenarios, runoffs and recharge estimates to back-up ecological risk assessment and identification of priority flow management and river restoration actions. Under Output 2.2.1 the project's work in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve/Ramsar site, will facilitate innovative hydrological restoration aimed at restoring the old course of the Prut river's tributary (Camenca river) that used to flood the riparian meadows and forests, and by so doing, it will increase the regularity of flooding and preventing the loss of key riparian forested floodplain and the rich biodiversity it hosts even under the worst climate change scenario. Under Component 3 (Act. 3.1.2.3) the project will organize an Innovation Challenge and it will develop SMART tools promoting the itineraries in Lower Prut and Danube Delta Biosphere Reserves encompassing nature, cultural heritage and wine/gastronomy dedicated routes in the lower Prut region and Royal Forest Nature Reserve/Ramsar site. The project will build on UNDP's prior experience on working with innovative private sector solutions. The UNDP/GEF project will organize the Innovation Challenge according to UNDP rules and will invite private sector participation (e.g. mobile operators) at the same time exploring opportunities for co-financing and operationalization of the winning SMART products. In addition, a partnership with the Danube Parks project "Tansdanube.Travel.Stories"<sup>43</sup> and the Romanian Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority (Act 3.1.2.2) will support the development of a cross-border tourist product aiming at combining natural and cultural heritage tourists attractions in Danube Delta (Romania) and Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve (Moldova) and its promotion with the support of Danubeparks regional platforms covering Danube basin countries.

153. Sustainability The project aligns with the STAP guidance (GEF/STAP/C.56/Inf.04) on achieving sustainable outcomes, including the following approaches: (i) Designing multi-stakeholder processes to engage key stakeholders, build stakeholder trust and motivation, and incentivize core actors for sustainable wetlands, lakes and riparian zones management (ii) Outlining a theory of change that recognizes the need for policy and financing frameworks' coherence and participatory approaches and emphasizes diversity and adaptive learning. The design and implementation will pay close attention to sustainability and its four components: financial, institutional, socio-economic, and environmental which are aligned with the ToC Impact Pathways: Governance, Ecological Integrity and Awareness and Capacity Development Pathways. The sustainability of the project's results will ultimately depend on how invested the stakeholders are and will depend on their long-term commitment (regulatory, policy, funding and resources) to scale-up and replicate best practices in sustainable land and natural resources management for sustainable livelihoods. During implementation, the project team will pay close attention to the likelihood of the sustainability of the project results and risk monitoring (Annex 7 Risk Register) including developing the project exit strategy to ensure project partners' commitment to long terms endurance of the project results. Institutional sustainability is ensured through strengthened technical institutional capacities and support to an improved legal and regulatory framework which provides for the

<sup>42</sup> UNDP -GEF (2016) Guide to Gender Mainstreaming in UNDP supported GEF Financed Project.

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.danubeparks.org/projects/transdanubetravelstories-2020-2022>

sustainable management of wetlands/protected areas (Output 1.1.1; 1.1.2; 1.1.3; 2.1.2). The project's support will be incremental in that it will strengthen the inter-sectorial coordination for improved wetlands management and local communities' participation during the development and revision of the management plans in the targeted area, which will enhance the likelihood of sustainability. In the Royal Forest Nature Reserve, the local communities and local authorities in the surrounding localities will be included in the development of a Protected Area management plan including the proposed Ramsar area, that will increase the sense of ownership of the local communities, but also their awareness on the main threats to biodiversity coming from agriculture and poaching. Representatives of other sectors such as agriculture, hunting associations, mining, tourism, fisheries etc. will be involved in the development of the management plan. Similarly, in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, the revision of the management plan will be based on participatory approaches and dialogue with all the interested economic sectors. The project will work with the Local Action Group Lower Prut and local communities' representatives in order to develop biodiversity measures and biodiversity monitoring activities with their involvement. The project participatory approaches will contribute towards empowered rural communities, conscientious and effective managers of natural resources, with increased awareness, understanding of wetlands problems and technical capacities to manage their land, access financing and enhance their livelihoods (Output 3.1.1). Financial sustainability will be ensured through the strengthened National Ecological Fund which will prioritize funding of the wetland conservation measures. The project will support regulatory amendments and will capacitate the National Ecological Fund to increase the percentage of funds redirected to wetland conservation measures, and it is expected that these regulatory amendments will provide institutional and financial sustainability of results (Act. 1.1.1.3 and 1.1.2.1). Socio-economic sustainability will be enhanced in the project by improving livelihoods of local communities, through promotion of local agri-businesses and ecotourism, trainings and awareness. Environmental sustainability will be enhanced by improving the management of the protected areas and through facilitating local wetlands restoration measures co-financed by the project's key partners, that will preserve the ecological integrity of Prut Basin wetlands taking major account of the climate-induced water scarcity.

154. Upscaling: The project is innovative and scalable in its design, and will employ mainstreaming, replication and linking of results in order to achieve greater impact. The project's objective is to achieve ecological integrity of key floodplain wetlands through improved financing and status of biodiversity, land and water resources, as well as ecosystem services. The project will build on the countries' efforts to shape the post 2020 biodiversity agenda- an opportunity to highlight the importance of conserving the wetland habitats not only for biodiversity but also as an important building block for water security. The project will implement measures to revise environmental flows, improve water quality, protect and restore critical wetland habitats and include wetlands priorities in the larger landscape's development. The project will also develop and revise the management plans of the targeted protected areas, which are valuable tools to plan and budget for measures that are proven successful, measures that work. Therefore, through the development of the management plans in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve and the revision of the existing one in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, the best practices and successful measures demonstrated by the proposed project and by other similar initiatives will be captured and budgeted for and will provide for replication and scaling up, as relevant. The project's best practices are expected to be upscaled through priority measures in key national policy document and actions, such as the National Biodiversity and Action Plan (NBSAP) that the project will support. Furthermore, the National Ecological Fund will be capacitated to prioritize wetland conservation measures, expected to replicate and scale up the project's best practices. The project's results will be further disseminated through the bilateral and trilateral commissions (Romania-Moldova-Ukraine) and through the International Commission for the Protection of River Danube ICPDR platform, Danube Parks regional platforms.

## IV. PROJECT RESULTS FRAMEWORK

This project will contribute to the following Sustainable Development Goal (s): <i>SDGs 2,5,8,12,13,15</i>				
This project will contribute to the following country outcome (UNDAF/CPD, RPD, GPD): <i>UNDP Country Programme Document 2018-2022 Pillar 3 Climate change, environment and energy ; UNDAF Outcome 3: The people of Moldova, especially the most vulnerable, benefit from enhanced environmental governance, energy security, sustainable management of natural resources and climate and disaster resilient development</i>				
	Objective and Outcome Indicators (no more than a total of 20 indicators)	Baseline <i>Must be determined during PPG phase</i>	Mid-term Target <i>Expected level of progress before MTR process starts</i>	End of Project Target <i>Expected level when terminal evaluation undertaken</i>
<b>Project Objective:</b> To achieve ecological integrity of key floodplain wetlands ensuring positive status of biodiversity, land and water resources, as well as ecosystem services	Indicator 1 ( <u>GEF Core Indicator 11</u> ): # direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)	0	20,000 (10,000 women)	40,000 (21,000 women)
	Indicator 2 ( <u>GEF Core Indicator 1 Sub-Indicator 1.2</u> ): Terrestrial protected areas under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (Hectares)	0	20,803 <sup>44</sup>	20,803 ha
	Indicator 3 ( <u>GEF Core Indicator 3 Sub-Indicator 3.4</u> ) ( <u>Sum of Indicators 9 and 10 below</u> ): Area of restored wetlands (Hectares)	0	Technical project of the envisaged reforestation work in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve completed. Feasibility study of the envisaged Camenca River restoration work completed. All legal matters addressed.	14,225 ha <sup>45</sup>
	Indicator 4 ( <u>GEF Core Indicator 6.1</u> ): Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated (metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> eq)	0	0	556,806
<b>Project component 1</b>	<b>Enhanced regulatory and financing environment</b>			
<b>Project Outcome</b> <b>Outcome 1.1</b> Better fiduciary and financial environment for long-term resilience of wetland ecosystems	Indicator 5: Number of approved new/amended regulations/policies/laws directly related to improving status, management and financing regimes of wetlands	0	Draft regulations and amendments prepared and submitted for approval	10
	Indicator 6: Number of approved new/amended regulations/policies/laws related to prioritization of the financing of wetlands through the National Ecological Fund.	0	Draft regulations and amendments prepared and submitted for approval	5

<sup>44</sup> Sum of: total area of the Lower Prut Biosphere reserve (14,771 ha) and Royal Forest Nature Reserve (6,032 ha) – the latter is calculated without the area proposed to be designated as Ramsar site in order to avoid double counting, as the proposed Ramsar site larger overlaps the restored Camenca floodplain counted under Indicator 3.

<sup>45</sup> The target represents the sum of 3,000 lakes restored in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve + 50 ha reforested riparian strips in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve+ 11,175 ha of floodplain restored in and around Royal Forest Biosphere Reserve (River Camenca floodplain)

<b>Outputs to achieve Outcome 1</b>	<p><b>Output 1.1.1</b> Regulations and by-laws developed, consulted and adopted by relevant institutions that promote identification, monitoring and wise use of wetlands under international treaties</p> <p><b>Output 1.1.2</b> National Ecological Fund (NEF) capacitated to prioritize financing of wetland conservation and sustainable use</p> <p><b>Output 1.1.3</b> Biodiversity-compatible local development strategies in target districts designed and under implementation</p>			
<b>Project Component 2</b>	<b>Improved Protection and Management of Key Biodiversity Areas on Wetlands</b>			
<b>Outcome 2.1</b> Positive status of wetland habitats and species at targeted Key Biodiversity Areas	<p><i>Indicator 7</i> Increase of METT score for the targeted national PAs</p>	<p><i>Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve 31</i></p> <p><i>Royal Forest Nature Reserve 57</i></p>	<p>33</p> <p>60</p>	<p>35</p> <p>63</p>
	<p><i>Indicator 8:</i> Stable status/positive changes in the population of globally significant biodiversity at the targeted PAs.</p> <p><b><u>Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve:</u></b></p> <p>Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>  Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>  Black-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax</i>  Eurasian Spoonbill <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>  Grey heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>  Ferruginous Duck <i>Aythya nyroca</i>  Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>  Red-breasted Goose <i>Branta rufficollis</i>  Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i></p> <p><b><u>Royal Forest Nature Reserve:</u></b></p> <p>Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>  Black-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax</i>  Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>  Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>  Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>  White-tailed Eagle <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i></p>	<p>Baseline: as indicated in the METT scorecards</p> <p>Baseline to be validated during inventories</p>	<p>Midterm target: As indicated in the METT scorecards</p>	<p>End project target: As indicated in the METT scorecards (at least 10% increase of METT score)</p>
<b>Outputs to achieve Outcome 2.1</b>	<p><b>Output 2.1.1</b> Revised PA category upgraded international designation, improved zoning, mapping, management and business plans for Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve (including assistance for its integration into the tri-lateral Biosphere Reserve with Ukraine and Romania) and Royal Forest Nature Reserve.</p> <p><b>Output 2.1.2</b> Management units and communities at targeted PAs capacitated to comply with/enforce management/buffer zone regimes, ensure proper monitoring of biodiversity and key wetland ecosystems, undertake species-focused conservation activities and PA patrolling.</p>			

<b>Outcome 2.2.</b> Viable wetland and forest ecosystem restoration options demonstrated	Indicator 9: Number of hectares of lakes and riparian ecosystems restored in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve	Baseline to be established at project inception	50 ha of riparian strips reforested	Positive change in the conditions of the 3,000 ha lakes and 50 ha riparian ecosystems, compared to baseline
	Indicator 10: Number of hectares of floodplain areas restored in and around the Royal Forest Nature Reserve	0 ha	Feasibility study for the hydrotechnical works developed  Local community consulted and supports the intervention  All legal matters addressed	Positive change at 11,175 ha of floodplain ecosystems, compared to baseline
<b>Outputs to achieve Outcome 2.2</b>	<b>Output 2.2.1</b> Riparian forest strips restored (through assisted regeneration or reforestation as feasible) acting as a barrier to agricultural and waste runoff in Lower Prut, at Manta-Beleu Lakes network. High value forested floodplain ecosystems in Padurea Domneasca (Royal Forest) restored through optimization of flooding regime in Camenca River Basin and regulation of the ground water table.			
<b>Project component 3</b>	<b>Demonstrating sustainable use/livelihoods at wetlands</b>			
<b>Outcome 3.1</b> New sustainable income streams created for communities and small size entrepreneurs from sustainable use of resources at wetlands	Indicator 11: Percentage of increase in monetary income to targeted entrepreneurs derived from sustainable wetland use and facilitated tourism (gender disaggregated)	Baseline to be established at project inception	Net Income men: \$X + 10% Net income women: \$X + 10%	Net Income men: \$X + 20% Net income women: \$X + 20%
	Indicator 12: Percentage of increase in the annual number of visitors in Lower Prut Biosphere reserve	Baseline visitation data for Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve  1300 tourists (2020 data)	Eco-tourism routes involving 2 municipalities in Lower Prut Biosphere reserve developed  Cross-border tourism package Moldova-Romania developed	40% increase compared to baseline
<b>Outputs to achieve Outcome 3</b>	<b>Output 3.1.1</b> Strengthened capacities of Local Action Group “Lower Prut” and local entrepreneurs’ to implement local biodiversity friendly development initiatives. <b>Output 3.1.2</b> Eco-tourism packages for wine/gastronomy routes adjusted to incorporate biodiversity observation in 2 communities.			
<b>Project component 4</b>	<b>Knowledge Management</b>			
<b>Outcome 4.1</b> Knowledge management and gender sensitive KM products developed and disseminated	Indicator 13: Number of knowledge products related to wetlands conservation considerations mainstreaming into policies, laws and regulations, developed and disseminated. Project knowledge products include, where feasible, an analysis of gender equity/empowerment in relation with the specific knowledge topic.	0	Draft methodologies developed  Draft analysis and studies developed	<b>20 gender sensitive awareness raising events and 6 Knowledge products:</b>  <b>KM product 1:</b> Methodology for calculation of the minimum ecological flow supporting the evidence-based amendments to the Regulation of Stanca Costesti Dam and PA legislation.  <b>KM product 2:</b> “Biodiversity passports” concept integrated into local development strategies.  <b>KM Product 3:</b> Hydroecological and Climate resilient assessment of Prut

				<p>River wetlands” supporting evidence-based wetlands/PAs related legislative amendments.</p> <p><b>KM Product 4</b> “ ISO 14001 Standards” training module developed/delivered supporting the environmental regulations.</p> <p><b>KM Product 5</b> “Feasibility Study of the Restoration of the old watercourse of Camenca River” developed, grounding the restoration works.</p> <p><b>KM Product 6</b> “ Socio-economic and Eco-tourist assessments” in pilot PAs including gender specific data and supports development of equal opportunities for men and women, included in the PAs management planning.</p>
	Indicator 14: Number of women and men getting access to the best available knowledge and practice, through project-supported knowledge products and training	0	2,000 (1,000 women)	5,000 (2,500 women)
<b>Outputs to achieve Outcome 4.1</b>	<b>Output 4.1.1</b> Online awareness raising campaign targeting central and local authorities/decision makers and local and regional education seminars <b>Output 4.1.2</b> Innovative gender sensitive knowledge products and services from the project synthesized, packaged and disseminated			
<b>Component 5</b>	<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>			
<b>Outcome 5</b> <i>Project results properly monitored and evaluated</i>	Indicator 15: Monitoring and Evaluation reports Evaluative knowledge available to project partners	0	Internal UNDP review based on UNDP M&E	Final GEF evaluation report
<b>Outputs to achieve Outcome 5</b>	Output 5.1 Monitored/evaluated project results, and evaluative knowledge incorporated in the project adaptive management			

## V. MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E) PLAN

155. Project level monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken in compliance with UNDP requirements as outlined in the [UNDP POPP \(including guidance on GEF project revisions\)](#) and [UNDP Evaluation Policy](#). **The UNDP Country Office is responsible for ensuring full compliance with all UNDP project M&E requirements including project monitoring, UNDP quality assurance requirements, quarterly risk management, and evaluation requirements.** Additional mandatory GEF-specific M&E requirements will be undertaken in accordance with the [GEF Monitoring Policy](#) and the [GEF Evaluation Policy](#) and other [relevant GEF policies](#)<sup>46</sup>. The M&E plan and budget included below will guide the GEF-specific M&E activities to be undertaken by this project. In addition to these mandatory UNDP and GEF M&E requirements, other M&E activities deemed necessary to support project-level adaptive management will be agreed – including during the Project Inception Workshop - and will be detailed in the Inception Report.

156. The Monitoring Plan included in **Annex 5** details the roles, responsibilities, and frequency of monitoring project results. Project-level monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken in compliance with UNDP requirements as outlined in the [UNDP POPP](#) and [UNDP Evaluation Policy](#). The UNDP Country Office is responsible for ensuring full compliance with all UNDP project monitoring, quality assurance, risk management, and evaluation requirements. The costed M&E plan included below, and the Monitoring plan in Annex, will guide the GEF-specific M&E activities to be undertaken by this project. In addition to these mandatory UNDP and GEF M&E requirements, other M&E activities deemed necessary to support project-level adaptive management will be agreed during the Project Inception Workshop and will be detailed in the Inception Report.

### **Additional GEF monitoring and reporting requirements:**

#### Inception Workshop and Report:

157. A project inception workshop will be held within 2 months from the First disbursement date, with the aim to:
  - a. Familiarize key stakeholders with the detailed project strategy and discuss any changes that may have taken place in the overall context since the project idea was initially conceptualized that may influence its strategy and implementation.
  - b. Discuss the roles and responsibilities of the project team, including reporting lines, stakeholder engagement strategies and conflict resolution mechanisms.
  - c. Review the results framework and monitoring plan.
  - d. Discuss reporting, monitoring and evaluation roles and responsibilities and finalize the M&E budget; identify national/regional institutes to be involved in project-level M&E; discuss the role of the GEF OFP and other stakeholders in project-level M&E.
  - e. Update and review responsibilities for monitoring project strategies, including the risk log; SESP report, Social and Environmental Management Framework and other safeguard requirements; project grievance mechanisms; gender strategy; knowledge management strategy, and other relevant management strategies.
  - f. Review financial reporting procedures and budget monitoring and other mandatory requirements and agree on the arrangements for the annual audit.
  - g. Plan and schedule Project Board meetings and finalize the first-year annual work plan.
  - h. Formally launch the Project.

#### GEF Project Implementation Report (PIR):

158. The annual GEF PIR covering the reporting period July (previous year) to June (current year) will be completed for each year of project implementation. Any environmental and social risks and related management plans will be monitored regularly, and progress will be reported in the PIR. The PIR submitted to the GEF will be shared with the Project Board. The quality rating of the previous year's PIR will be used to inform the preparation of the subsequent PIR.

#### GEF and/or LDCF/SCCF Core Indicators:

<sup>46</sup> See [https://www.thegef.org/gef/policies\\_guidelines](https://www.thegef.org/gef/policies_guidelines)

159. The GEF and/or LDCF/SCCF Core indicators included as Annex will be used to monitor global environmental benefits and will be updated for reporting to the GEF prior to MTR and TE. Note that the project team is responsible for updating the indicator status. The updated monitoring data should be shared with MTR/TE consultants prior to required evaluation missions, so these can be used for subsequent ground truthing. The methodologies to be used in data collection have been defined by the GEF and are available on the GEF [website](#). If relevant to the project: The required Protected Area Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METTs) have been prepared and the scores included in the GEF Core Indicators.

#### Terminal Evaluation (TE):

160. An independent terminal evaluation (TE) will take place upon completion of all major project outputs and activities. The terms of reference, the evaluation process and the final TE report will follow the standard templates and guidance for GEF-financed projects available on the [UNDP Evaluation Resource Center](#). TE should be completed 3 months before the estimated operational closure date, set from the signature of the ProDoc and according to the duration of the project. Provisions should be taken to complete the TE in due time to avoid delay in project closure. Therefore, TE must start no later than 6 months to the expected date of completion of the TE (or 9 months prior to the estimated operational closure date).

161. The evaluation will be ‘independent, impartial and rigorous’. The evaluators that will be hired to undertake the assignment will be independent from organizations that were involved in designing, executing or advising on the project to be evaluated. Equally, the evaluators should not be in a position where there may be the possibility of future contracts regarding the project being evaluated. The GEF Operational Focal Point and other stakeholders will be actively involved and consulted during the terminal evaluation process. Additional quality assurance support is available from the BPPS/GEF Directorate. The final TE report and TE TOR will be publicly available in English and posted on the UNDP ERC (9 May 2027). A management response to the TE recommendations will be posted to the ERC within six weeks of the TE report’s completion.

#### Final Report:

162. The project’s terminal GEF PIR along with the terminal evaluation (TE) report and corresponding management response will serve as the final project report package. The final project report package shall be discussed with the Project Board during an end-of-project review meeting to discuss lesson learned and opportunities for scaling up.

#### Agreement on intellectual property rights and use of logo on the project’s deliverables and disclosure of information:

163. To accord proper acknowledgement to the GEF for providing grant funding, the GEF logo will appear together with the UNDP logo on all promotional materials, other written materials like publications developed by the project, and project hardware. Any citation on publications regarding projects funded by the GEF will also accord proper acknowledgement to the GEF. Information will be disclosed in accordance with relevant policies notably the UNDP Disclosure Policy<sup>47</sup> and the GEF policy on public involvement<sup>48</sup>.

164. **Monitoring Plan:** The project results, corresponding indicators and mid-term and end-of-project targets in the project results framework will be monitored by the Project Management Unit annually, and will be reported in the GEF PIR every year, and will be evaluated periodically during project implementation. If baseline data for some of the results indicators is not yet available, it will be collected during the first year of project implementation. Project risks, as outlined in the risk register, will be monitored quarterly. The Project’s **Monitoring Plan** is presented under **Annex 5**. The Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (M&E) and Budget is presented below:

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<sup>47</sup> See [http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/operations/transparency/information\\_disclosurepolicy/](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/operations/transparency/information_disclosurepolicy/)

<sup>48</sup> See [https://www.thegef.org/gef/policies\\_guidelines](https://www.thegef.org/gef/policies_guidelines)

<b>Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and Budget:</b>		
This M&E plan and budget provides a breakdown of costs for M&E activities to be led by the Project Management Unit during project implementation. These costs are included in Component 4 of the Results Framework and TBWP. For ease of reporting M&E costs, please include all costs reported in the M&E plan under the one technical component. The oversight and participation of the UNDP Country Office/Regional technical advisors/HQ Units are not included as these are covered by the GEF Fee.		
<b>GEF M&amp;E requirements</b>	<b>Indicative costs (US\$)</b>	<b>Time frame</b>
<b>Inception Workshop</b>	<i>Included under the project components from UNDP TRAC (TBWP BL 37)</i>	Inception Workshop within 2 months of the First Disbursement.
<b>Inception Report</b>	None	Within 90 days of CEO endorsement of this project.
<b>M&amp;E of GEF core indicators and project results framework</b>	7,500 (TBWP BL 27)	Annually and at mid-point and closure.
<b>GEF Project Implementation Report (PIR)</b>	None	Annually typically between June-August
<b>Monitoring of the safeguards implementation</b>	<i>Included under Project Component 2 (TBWP BL 9)</i>	On-going.
<b>Supervision missions</b>	None	Annually
<b>Learning missions</b>	None	As needed
<b>Travel related to GEF terminal evaluation</b>	3,000 (TBWP BL28)	2027
<b>Independent Terminal Evaluation (TE)</b>	24,750 (TBWP BL 27; BL29)	May 9, 2027
<b>TOTAL indicative COST</b> <i>Do not exceed 5 % when GEF project grant up to USD 5 million.</i>	<b>\$ 35,250</b>	

## VI. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

### Roles and responsibilities of the project's governance mechanism:

165. Implementing Partner: The Implementing Partner for this project is the **Ministry of Environment (MOE) with its affiliated institution- the Environmental Projects Implementing Unit (EPIU)**. The Implementing Partner is the entity to which the UNDP Administrator has entrusted the implementation of UNDP assistance specified in this signed project document along with the assumption of full responsibility and accountability for the effective use of UNDP resources and the delivery of outputs, as set forth in this document. The project is implemented according to the UNDP National Implementation Modality (NIM).

166. The Ministry of Environment has been selected as the IP as it represents the government institution responsible for the development of legislation, action plans, norms and standards in the field of environmental protection, sustainable use of natural resources, including management of protected areas, air, waste, water resources, water supply and sewerage system, ensuring compatibility of legal framework with Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA). The responsibilities of the Ministry of Environment will include:

- Project planning, coordination, management, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. This includes providing all required information and data necessary for timely, comprehensive and evidence-based project reporting, including results and financial data, as necessary. The Implementing Partner will strive to ensure project-level M&E is undertaken by national institutes and is aligned with national systems so that the data used and generated by the project supports national systems;
- Chairing the Project Board meetings;
- Monitoring the progress of the project at strategic level, towards the achievement of the development outcomes;
- Ensuring effective management of the Risks and Safeguards as outlined in this Project Document and management of new risks that may emerge during project implementation.
- Ensuring that the project partners will deliver the pledged co-financing;

- Ensuring that there is a coherent project organisation structure and logical set of work plans ;
- Set tolerances in the AWP and other plans as required for the Project Manager;
- Financial management, including overseeing financial expenditures against project budgets;
- Approving and signing the multiyear workplan;
- Approving and signing the combined delivery report at the end of the year; and,
- Signing the financial report or the funding authorization and certificate of expenditures.

167. During the PPG stage, the existing options for carrying out the project activities have been assessed, considering that the Ministry of Environment (MOE) has limitations in receiving donor cash advances e.g. The MOE cannot open separate budget accounts (i.e. for each project) other than the one opened at the Ministry of Finance to support execution of the assigned activities under the State Budget. This would preclude UNDP from tracking and monitoring the expenses as per the approved budget and procurement plans. Financial execution of a stand-alone donor-funded project or programme is beyond the scope and mandate of the MOE. To date, the Ministry led GEF projects have been implemented with UNDP CO support in order to mitigate these capacity gaps.

168. The ministry has founded the Environmental Projects Implementation Unit (EPIU) as per the Law nr.98/2012 (art 4, point b), GD 695/2017 (7th point), GD145/2021 and GD 1249/2018 in order to overcome the above mentioned barriers, and enable the receipt and management of the donor funded projects. The EPIU is the public institution, functioning under the MOE mandate, responsible to contributing to policy implementation through specific projects. The work of EPIU is monitored by the MOE and other state authorities as follows:

- Minister of Environment is Chair of EPIU Steering Committee
- Minister of Environment is Chair of the Steering Committee of the Projects implemented by EPIU, while the ministry's staff are regular members of the Project Boards
- Internal Audit Unit of the Ministry of Environment has the authority to conduct the audits of EPIU accounts
- State Financial Inspection has the authority to perform financial controls of EPIU
- The thematic and complex controls initiated by National Court of Accounts in environment area and sub-areas.

169. The UNDP Partner Capacity Assessment Tool (PCAT) confirmed that the Ministry of Environment (MOE) has the institutional mandate in a field that is relevant for the project and responds to the key programmatic criteria, having the capacities to ensure quality programme management, provide synergies, replicate and upscale project results, mobilize development partners and ensure national-level co-financing for the project. The MOE has experience and technical capacity to supervise, monitor, and ensure adaptive management and risk response towards delivery of project outcomes and outputs. MOE will be supported by the EPIU in the implementation of this project. From this perspective and under this arrangement, the MoE will have substantive supervisory, leadership and strategic planning functions and roles, while the project administration responsibilities and functions (contracting, recruitment of personnel and experts, finance administration and administrative support to project processes) will be conducted by the EPIU under the leadership of the MOE.

170. The Implementation Unit for Environmental Projects (EPIU): The Public Institution “**Implementation Unit for Environmental Projects (EPIU)**”<sup>49</sup> is the successor of rights and obligations of the former eight project implementation units of the former Ministry of Environment MOE (on different thematic areas such as ozone, biodiversity, climate change, environment pollution, biosecurity, etc.). Thus, the EPIU is mandated to implement various multilateral donor-supported projects (e.g. UNEP, UNIDO, WB) and bilateral donor funded initiatives. EPIU is a legal entity with individual state coat stamp, name and treasury accounts and was established with the purpose of supporting the Ministry of Environment to efficiently implement the external and internal financial and technical assistance projects, in accordance with the provisions of the national normative acts regarding the implementation of the requirements of the international conventions, and the alignment with the international standards in the field of environmental protection.

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<sup>49</sup> [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=113696&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=113696&lang=ro)

171. The UNDP Partner Capacity Assessment and HACT Micro Assessment have demonstrated that the EPIU is sufficiently well capacitated to provide administrative and financial support for carrying out the project activities. The overall risk rating of the EPIU is “Moderate”. Following the review and assessment of the findings and recommendations of the HACT Micro Assessment, during the Project Inception Phase and in consultation with the Ministry of Environment and EPIU, a set of UNDP NIM/Project Management related capacity building activities will be delivered in order to remove the identified capacity gaps highlighted by PCAT and HACT Micro Assessments. Oversight and monitoring of the capacity building implementation will be ensured by UNDP. Further capacity building activities will be identified during the planned spot-checks and other monitoring activities as part of the UNDP oversight function. Adequate UNDP TRAC resources have been budgeted and reflected in the TBWP for these targeted NIM and Project Management focused trainings of the IP/EPIU.

172. The EPIU will be accountable to the Ministry of Environment in accordance to as responsibilities and obligations outlined in the EPIU statute and Government Decision No. 1249/2018. The implementation support services to be provided by the EPIU will include:

- Contracting and contract management for procurement of goods, services, and works for the project at national level;
- Certification for contract performance and acceptance of goods and services as per Project Procurement Plan;
- Financial management, including payments for goods and services involving national consultants and made in national currency.
- Logistical support, including duty travel for project personnel and consultants, project event management within the country.
- Equipment and Asset Management services, including IT equipment maintenance, licenses, and ICT support for the project team and project activities.
- Administrative support for the project.

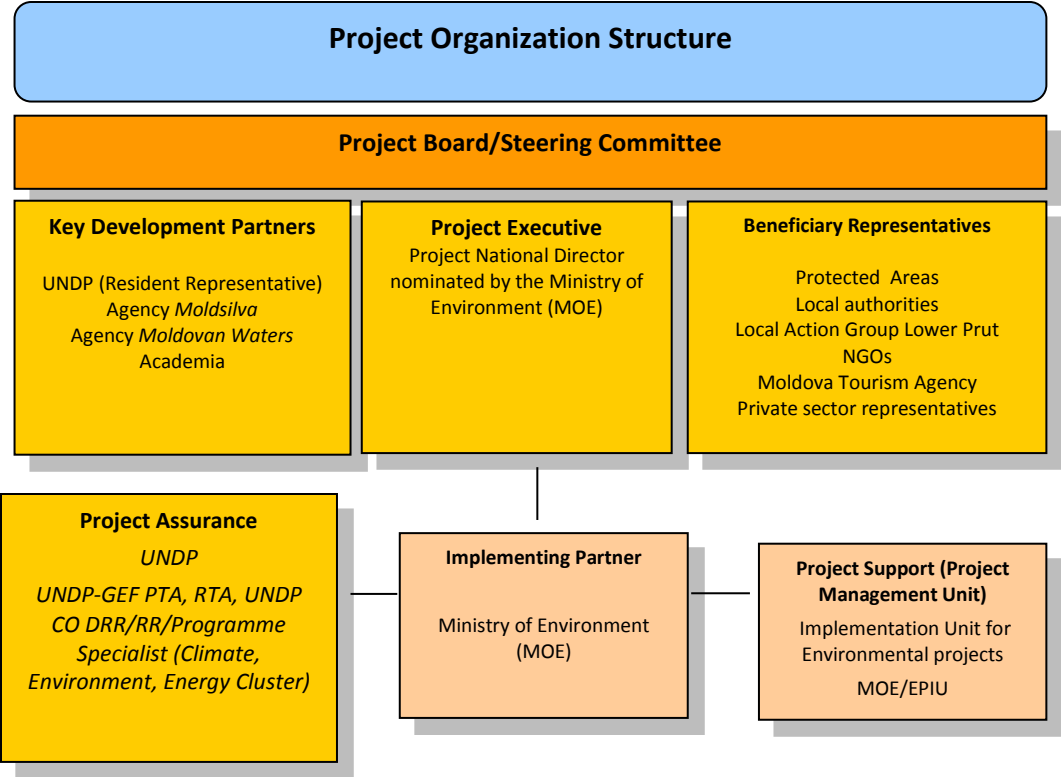
173. The EPIU will receive cash advances, as the HACT Micro- assessment has indicated that to date, EPIU had received cash advances on behalf of the Ministry of Environment from a number of donors and no difficulties have been encountered/reported with the management of those resources. The EPIU will support the implementation of project activities as per the Annual Work Plan, Procurement Plan and Budget, agreed with the Ministry of Environment and UNDP.

Project stakeholders and target groups:

174. The participation and contribution of stakeholders and key target groups are critical for the success of the project, for stakeholders at both the national and local levels. The project applies participatory approaches to ensure government ownership and full stakeholder engagement under each project component. The Project Board or Steering Committee involves the Ministry of Environment (MOE), UNDP, the Agency “Moldsilva”, representatives of the targeted Protected Areas Administrations, the Agency “Moldovan Waters”, representatives of the Local Government Authorities in targeted districts and localities, NGOs, CSOs, local entrepreneurs, Academia etc. Full membership will be identified during the Inception phase. Each organization will nominate a full member and an alternate.

175. UNDP is accountable to the GEF for the implementation of this project. This includes overseeing project execution undertaken by the Implementing Partner to ensure that the project is being carried out in accordance with UNDP and GEF policies and procedures and the standards and provisions outlined in the Delegation of Authority (DOA) letter for this project. **The UNDP GEF Executive Coordinator, in consultation with UNDP Bureaus and the Implementing Partner, retains the right to revoke the project DOA, suspend or cancel this GEF project.** UNDP is responsible for the Project Assurance function in the project governance structure and presents to the Project Board and attends Project Board meetings as a non-voting member. UNDP will oversee the implementation of HACT Micro-assessment and audit recommendations and requirements, will provide technical guidance and support targeted capacity building of the Implementing Partner in the areas highlighted by the HACT and PCAT assessments, based on a Capacity Building Plan that will be developed and agreed with the IP at the Inception stage.

Project organization structure:



176. **The Project Board.** All UNDP projects must be governed by a multi-stakeholder board or committee established to review performance based on monitoring and evaluation, and implementation issues to ensure quality delivery of results. The Project Board (also called the Project Steering Committee) is the most senior, dedicated oversight body for a project. The two main (mandatory) roles for the Project Board are as follows:

- **High-level oversight of the execution of the project by the Implementing Partner** (as explained in the [“Provide Oversight”](#) section of the POPP). This is the primary function of the project board and includes annual (and as-needed) assessments of any major risks to the project, and decisions/agreements on any management actions or remedial measures to address them effectively. The Project Board reviews evidence of project performance based on monitoring, evaluation and reporting, including progress reports, evaluations, risk logs and the combined delivery report. The Project Board is responsible for taking corrective action as needed to ensure the project achieves the desired results.
- **Approval of strategic project execution decisions of the Implementing Partner** with a view to assess and manage risks, monitor and ensure the overall achievement of projected results and impacts and ensure long term sustainability of project execution decisions of the Implementing Partner (as explained in the [“Manage Change”](#) section of the POPP).

177. The UNDP Resident Representative assumes full responsibility and accountability for oversight and quality assurance of this Project and ensures its timely implementation in compliance with the GEF-specific requirements and UNDP’s Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures (POPP), its Financial Regulations and Rules and Internal Control Framework. A representative of the UNDP Country Office will assume the assurance role and will present assurance findings to the Project Board, and therefore attends Project Board meetings as a non-voting member.

178. **The Requirements to serve on the Project Board:** (must be included in *the TOR of the Project Board*)

- Agree to the Terms of Reference of the Board and the rules on protocols, quorum and minuting.
- Meet annually; at least twice.
- Disclose any conflict of interest in performing the functions of a Project Board member and take all measures to avoid any real or perceived conflicts of interest. This disclosure must be documented and kept on record by UNDP.
- Discharge the functions of the Project Board in accordance with UNDP policies and procedures.

- Ensure highest levels of transparency and ensure Project Board meeting minutes are recorded and shared with project stakeholders.

179. Specific responsibilities of the Project Board (to be included in the TOR for the Project Board):

Consensus decision making:

- The Project Board provides overall guidance and direction to the project, ensuring it remains within any specified constraints, and providing overall oversight of the project implementation.
- Review project performance based on monitoring, evaluation and reporting, including progress reports, risk logs and the combined delivery report;
- The project board is responsible for making management decisions by consensus.
- In order to ensure UNDP's ultimate accountability, Project Board decisions should be made in accordance with standards that shall ensure management for development results, best value money, fairness, integrity, transparency and effective international competition
- In case consensus cannot be reached within the Board, the UNDP representative on the board will mediate to find consensus and, if this cannot be found, will take the final decision to ensure project implementation is not unduly delayed.

Oversee project execution:

- Agree on project manager's tolerances as required, within the parameters set by UNDP-GEF, and provide direction and advice for exceptional situations when the project manager's tolerances are exceeded;
- Appraise annual work plans prepared by the Implementing Partner for the Project; review combined delivery reports prior to certification by the implementing partner.
- Address any high-level project issues as raised by the project manager and project assurance;
- Advise on major and minor amendments to the project within the parameters set by UNDP and the donor and refer such proposed major and minor amendments to the UNDP BPPS Nature, Climate and Energy Executive Coordinator (and the GEF, as required by GEF policies);
- Provide high-level direction and recommendations to the project management unit to ensure that the agreed deliverables are produced satisfactorily and according to plans.
- Track and monitor co-financed activities and realisation of co-financing amounts of this project.
- Approve the Inception Report, GEF annual project implementation reports, mid-term review and terminal evaluation reports.
- Ensure commitment of human resources to support project implementation, arbitrating any issues within the project.

Risk Management

- Provide guidance on evolving or materialized project risks and agree on possible mitigation and management actions to address specific risks.
- Review and update the project risk register and associated management plans based on the information prepared by the Implementing Partner. This includes risks related that can be directly managed by this project, as well as contextual risks that may affect project delivery or continued UNDP compliance and reputation but are outside of the control of the project. For example, social and environmental risks associated with co-financed activities or activities taking place in the project's area of influence that have implications for the project.
- Address project-level grievances

Coordination

- Ensure coordination between various donor and government-funded projects and programmes.
- Ensure coordination with various government agencies and their participation in project activities

180. The composition of the **Project Board** must include the following roles:

**a)Project Executive:** This is an individual who represents ownership of the project and chairs the Project Board. The Executive is usually the senior national counterpart for nationally implemented projects (typically from the same entity as the Implementing Partner). In exceptional cases, two individuals from different entities can co-share this role and/or co-chair the Project Board. If the project executive co-chairs the project board with representatives of another category, it

typically does so with a development partner representative. The Project Executive for this project is the Ministry of Environment.

**b)Beneficiary Representative(s):** Individuals or groups representing the interests of those who will ultimately benefit from the project. Their primary function within the board is to ensure the realization of project results from the perspective of project beneficiaries. Often civil society representative(s), industry associations, or other government entities benefiting from the project can fulfil this role. The Beneficiary representatives for this project are: the regional, district and local level authorities; PAs representatives; tourism agencies; NGOs, CSOs, local entrepreneurs, SMEs.

**c)Development Partner(s):** Individuals or groups representing the interests of the parties concerned that provide funding and/or technical expertise to the project. The Development Partner(s) for this project are: UNDP, the Ministry of Environment; Agency “Moldsilva”; Agency “Moldovan Waters”, Academia (representatives).

181. **Project Assurance:** Project assurance is the responsibility of each project board member; however, UNDP has a distinct assurance role for all UNDP projects in carrying out objective and independent project oversight and monitoring functions. UNDP performs quality assurance and supports the Project Board (and Project Management Unit) by carrying out objective and independent project oversight and monitoring functions, including compliance with the risk management and social and environmental standards of UNDP. The Project Board cannot delegate any of its quality assurance responsibilities to the Project Manager. Project assurance is totally independent of project execution.

182. A designated representative of UNDP playing the project assurance role is expected to attend all board meetings and support board processes as a non-voting representative. It should be noted that while in certain cases UNDP’s project assurance role across the project may encompass activities happening at several levels (e.g. global, regional), at least one UNDP representative playing that function must, as part of their duties, specifically attend board meeting and provide board members with the required documentation required to perform their duties. The UNDP representative playing the main project assurance function is the UNDP CO Programme lead (Environment and Climate Change Portfolio).

183. **Project Management Unit:** Project management services including safeguards monitoring will be delivered by the Project Management Unit (PMU), hosted by EPIU under the Ministry of Environment mandate, staffed as follows:

- The Project Manager (PM) has the authority to run the project on behalf of the Implementing Partner, and will attend the Project Board meetings. The Project Manager is responsible for day-to-day management and decision-making for the project, including the mobilization of all project inputs, supervision over project staff, consultants and sub-contractors. The Project Manager’s prime responsibility is to ensure that the project produces the results specified in the project document, to the required standard of quality and within the specified constraints of time and cost. The Project Manager will oversee implementation of environmental and social safeguards and SESP updates, raising awareness about project-level Grievance and Redress Mechanism (GRM).
- The Project Manager will be supported by a Project Financial and Administrative Assistant, who will assist in project planning, revisions and budget execution documents, contracting of national / local consultants and all project staff, in accordance with UNDP procedures and national legislation requirements. In addition the M&E and Gender consultants will provide technical support services on the project and monitoring of safeguards. The PMU will be further supported by national technical experts, research institutes and NGOs. (Project Document Annex 8: *Overview of Project Staff and Technical consultancies*).

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## VII. FINANCIAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

184. The total cost of the project is USD 21,584,970. This is financed through a GEF grant of USD 863,242 and USD 50,000 in cash co-financing to be administered by UNDP and USD 20,671,728 other co-financing. UNDP, as the GEF Implementing Agency, is responsible for the oversight of the GEF resources and the cash co-financing transferred to UNDP bank account only.

185. Confirmed Co-financing: The actual realization of project co-financing will be monitored throughout the project implementation and during the terminal evaluation process and will be reported to the GEF. All project activities included in the project results framework that will be delivered by co-financing partners (even if the funds do not pass through UNDP

accounts) must comply with UNDP's social and environmental standards. Co-financing will be used for the following project activities/outputs:

Co-financing source	Co-financing type	Co-financing amount	Planned Co-financing in support of the: Activities/Outputs	Risks to co-financing being realized	Risk Mitigation Measures
UNDP TRAC	Cash	50,000	Project management, NIM training, community consultations ;	Low	Co-financing reported annually during PIR
European Union	Grant	13,000,000	Activities in support of sustainable wetland management and use (Component 2); Resilient ecosystems and livelihoods ; eco-tourism and biodiversity sensitive business models ; training on green business models ; trainings on ISO 14001.(Component 3); Mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into local strategies and actions (1.1.3); KM (Output 4.1.1. and 4.1.2).	Low	Co-financing reported annually during PIR
Ministry of Environment	In kind	100,000	Project management, office space, training, community consultations related to PA work.	Low	Co-financing reported annually during PIR
Ministry of Environment	Cash	200,000	Ecological restoration works on Camenca river (full support); Feasibility study (partial support); stakeholders engagement (Output 2.1.2)	High	The UNDP Country Office will monitor the co-financing contributions to the project through <b>ATLAS Risk Register</b> Co-financing reported annually during PIR
Ministry of Environment	Public investment	800,000	Review and approval of the legal amendments for improved legal and financing framework for wetlands/PAs (Output 1.1.1/1.1.2); Data collection, analysis, approval and implementation of the PAs Project Management Plans (Output 2.1.1); and KM (Output 4.1.1. and 4.1.2)	Low	Co-financing reported annually during PIR
Agency "Moldovan Waters"	In-kind	100,000	Review and approval of the minimum environmental flow methodology, analysis, results, hydro-climate modelling and approval of the Amendments to the Stanca Costesti Regulation (Output	Low	Co-financing reported annually during PIR

			1.1.1); and KM (Output 4.1.1. and 4.1.2)		
Local Authorities-Cahul	In-kind	150,000	Review and approval of biodiversity mainstreaming into local development strategies (Output 1.1.3); local consultations; and KM (Output 4.1.1. and 4.1.2)	Low	Co-financing reported annually during PIR
Local Authorities-Glodeni	In-kind	150,000	Review and approval of biodiversity mainstreaming into local development strategies (Output 1.1.3); local consultations; and KM (Output 4.1.1. and 4.1.2)	Low	Co-financing reported annually during PIR
Botanical Garden Institute	In kind	150,000	Species inventories; PAs management plan consultations (Output 2.1.1) Biodiversity mainstreaming in local strategies (1.1.3); and KM (Output 4.1.1. and 4.1.2)	Low	Co-financing reported annually during PIR
Institute of Zoology	In kind	150,000	Species inventories; PAs management plan consultations (Output 2.1.1) Biodiversity mainstreaming	Low	Co-financing reported annually during PIR
Agency "Moldsilva"	In-kind	200,000	Project management, office space, training, community consultations related to PA work.	Low	Co-financing reported annually during PIR
Agency "Moldsilva"	Public investment	4,000,000	PAs management (Output 2.1.1); PA Management Plan development and approval (Output 2.1.1); Training seminars (Output 2.1.2); Reforestation works (Output 2.2.1); and KM (Output 4.1.1. and 4.1.2)	Moderate	The UNDP Country Office will monitor the co-financing contributions to the project through ATLAS Risk Register Co-financing reported annually during PIR
National Institute for Research and Development in Forestry (ICAS)	In-kind	300,000	Reforestation activities (Output 2.2.1); Training seminars (2.1.2.) ; and KM (Output 4.1.1. and 4.1.2)	Low	Co-financing reported annually during PIR
Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration	In-kind	100,000	Support to the designation of the Trilateral Biosphere reserve Danube Delta-Lower Prut (Output 2.1.1); Support to transboundary eco-tourism product development (Output 3.1.2); and KM (Output 4.1.1. and 4.1.2)	Low	Co-financing reported annually during PIR
"Verde Moldova"/Rewilding Europe	Grant and in-kind	322,000	Support wetlands restoration works (Output 2.2.1) and KM (Output 4.1.1. and 4.1.2)	Low	Co-financing reported annually during PIR

Austrian Development Agency (ADA)	In-kind	949,728	Sustainable management of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve; Climate risk assessment; adaptation measures for resilient ecosystems and livelihoods (Output 2.1.1) and KM (Output 4.1.1 and 4.1.2).	Low	Co-financing reported annually during PIR
Total co-finance	In-kind + Grant+ Cash	<b>20,671,728</b>			
Total project	GEF + co-finance	<b>21,584,970</b>			

186. **Budget Revision and Tolerance:** As per UNDP requirements outlined in the UNDP POPP, the project board will agree on a budget tolerance level for each plan under the overall annual work plan allowing the project manager to expend up to the tolerance level beyond the approved project budget amount for the year without requiring a revision from the Project Board. It is strongly **strongly encouraged** to maintain the expenditures within the approved budget at the budgetary account and at the component level. Should the following deviations occur, the Project Manager and UNDP Country Office will seek the approval of the BPPS/GEF team (UNDP) to ensure accurate reporting to the GEF:

- a) Budget reallocations must prove that the suggested changes in the budget will not lead to material changes in the results to be achieved by the project. A strong justification is required and will be approved on an exceptional basis. Budget re-allocations among the components (including PMC) of the approved Total Budget and Work Plans (TBWP) that represent a value greater than 10% of the total GEF grant
- b) Introduction of new outputs/activities (i.e. budget items) that were not part of the agreed project document and TBWP that represent a value greater than 5% of the total GEF grant. The new budget items must be eligible as per the GEF and UNDP policies
- c) Project management cost (PMC): budget under PMC component is capped and cannot be increased

187. **Project extensions:** The UNDP Resident Representative and the UNDP-GEF Executive Coordinator must approve all project extension requests. Note that all extensions incur costs and the GEF project budget cannot be increased. A single extension may be granted on an exceptional basis and subject to the conditions and maximum durations set out in the UNDP POPP; the project management costs during the extension period must remain within the originally approved amount, and any increase in PMC costs will be covered by non-GEF resources; the additional UNDP oversight costs during the extension period must be covered by non-GEF resources, in accordance with UNDP's guidance set out in UNDP POPP.

188. **Audit:** The project will be audited as per UNDP Financial Regulations and Rules and applicable audit policies. Audit cycle and process must be discussed during the Inception workshop. The IP shall coordinate the audit process with UNDP throughout all its stages.

189. **Project Closure:** Project closure will be conducted as per UNDP requirements outlined in the UNDP POPP. All costs incurred to close the project must be included in the project closure budget and reported as final project commitments presented to the Project Board during the final project review. The only costs a project may incur following the final project review are those included in the project closure budget.

190. **Operational completion:** The project will be operationally completed when the last UNDP-financed inputs have been provided and the related activities have been completed. This includes the final clearance of the Terminal Evaluation Report (that will be available in English) and the corresponding management response, and the end-of-project review

Project Board meeting. **Operational closure must happen at the end date calculated by the approved duration after the Project Document signature or at the revised operational closure date as approved in the project extension. Any expected activity after the operational date requires project extension approval.** The Implementing Partner through a Project Board decision will notify the UNDP Country Office when operational closure has been completed. At this time, the project should have completed the transfer or disposal of any equipment that is still the property of UNDP.

191. Transfer or disposal of assets: In consultation with the Implementing Partner and other parties of the project, UNDP is responsible for deciding on the transfer or other disposal of assets. Transfer or disposal of assets is recommended to be reviewed and endorsed by the Project Board following UNDP rules and regulations. Assets may be transferred to the government for project activities managed by a national institution at any time during the life of a project. In all cases of transfer, a transfer document must be prepared and kept on file<sup>50</sup>. The transfer should be done before Project Management Unit complete their assignments.

192. Financial completion (closure): The project will be financially closed when the following conditions have been met: a) the project is operationally completed or has been cancelled; b) the Implementing Partner has reported all financial transactions to UNDP; c) UNDP has closed the accounts for the project; d) UNDP and the Implementing Partner have certified a final Combined Delivery Report (which serves as final budget revision). The project will be financially completed **within 6 months of operational closure or after the date of cancellation**. If Operational Closure is delayed for any justified and approved reason, the Country Office should do all efforts to Financially Close the project within 9 months after TE is completed. Between operational and financial closure, the implementing partner will identify and settle all financial obligations and prepare a final expenditure report. The UNDP Country Office will send the final signed closure documents including confirmation of final cumulative expenditure and unspent balance to the BPPS/NCE-VF Unit for confirmation before the project will be financially closed in Atlas by the UNDP Country Office.

193. Refund to GEF: Should a refund of unspent funds to the GEF be necessary, this will be managed directly by the BPPS/GEF Directorate in New York. No action is required by the UNDP Country Office on the actual refund from UNDP project to the GEF Trustee.

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<sup>50</sup> See

[https://popp.undp.org/\\_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/UNDP\\_POPP\\_DOCUMENT\\_LIBRARY/Public/PPM\\_Project%20Management\\_Closing.docx&action=default](https://popp.undp.org/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/UNDP_POPP_DOCUMENT_LIBRARY/Public/PPM_Project%20Management_Closing.docx&action=default).

## VIII. TOTAL BUDGET AND WORK PLAN

TOTAL BUDGET AND WORK PLAN			
Atlas Proposal (Award) ID:	00111724	Atlas Primary Output (Project) ID:	00110584
Atlas Proposal or Award Title as in Atlas:	Conservation and sustainable management of wetlands		
Atlas Business Unit	MDA10		
Atlas Primary Output Project Title as in Atlas:	Conservation and sustainable management of wetlands with focus on high-nature value areas in the Prut River basin		
UNDP-GEF PIMS No.	6551		
Implementing Partner	Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment		

Atlas Activity (GEF Component)	Atlas Implementing Agent	Atlas Fund ID	Donor Name	Atlas Budgetary Account Code	ATLAS Budget Account Description	Amount Year 1 (USD)	Amount Year 2 (USD)	Amount Year 3 (USD)	Amount Year 4 (USD)	Amount Year 5 (USD)	Total (USD)	See Budget Note:
COMPONENT 1: Enhanced regulatory and financing environment.	NIM / IP	62000	GEF	71300	Local Consultants	45,500	27,500	18,000	3,000	1,500	95,500	1
				71800	Contractual Services-Imp Partn	3,600	3,600	3,600	3,600	3,600	18,000	2
				71600	Travel	2,000	2,000	2,000	-	-	6,000	3
				72100	Contractual Services-Companies	-	-	9,000	-	-	9,000	4
				75700	Training, Workshops and Confer	3,000	2,000	1,000	-	-	6,000	5
				Total Outcome 1		54,100	35,100	33,600	6,600	5,100	134,500	
COMPONENT 2: Improved protection and management of Key Biodiversity Areas on wetlands	NIM / IP	62000	GEF	71300	Local Consultants	4,500	12,000	10,500	4,500	1,500	33,000	6
				71800	Contractual Services-Imp Partn	3,600	3,600	3,600	3,600	3,600	18,000	7
				71600	Travel	1,500	3,000	3,000	1,500	1,000	10,000	8
				72100	Contractual Services-Companies	55,000	210,324	55,000	-	-	320,324	9
				72600	Grants	-	10,000	-	-	-	10,000	10
				72300	Materials & Goods	27,500	12,000	-	-	-	39,500	11
				75700	Training, Workshops and Confer	6,000	5,000	5,000	-	-	16,000	12

		<b>Total Outcome 2</b>										
						<b>98,100</b>	<b>255,924</b>	<b>77,100</b>	<b>9,600</b>	<b>6,100</b>	<b>446,824</b>	
<b>COMPONENT 3: Demonstrating sustainable use/livelihoods at wetlands</b>	<b>NIM / IP</b>	<b>62000</b>	<b>GEF</b>	71300	Local Consultants	4,500	4,500	-	-	-	9,000	13
				71800	Contractual Services-Imp Partn	3,600	3,600	3,600	3,600	3,600	18,000	14
				71455	Innovation Awards	-	-	40,000	-	-	40,000	15
				71600	Travel	1,000	2,000	1,000	1,000	-	5,000	16
				72100	Contractual Services- Companies	-	-	20,000	-	-	20,000	17
				72200	Equipment and Furniture	-	2,500	-	-	-	2,500	18
				74200	Audio Visual&Print Prod Costs	1,000	2,000	-	-	-	3,000	19
				75700	Training, Workshops and Confer	3,000	2,000	1,000	-	-	6,000	20
				<b>Total Outcome 3</b>		<b>13,100</b>	<b>16,600</b>	<b>65,600</b>	<b>4,600</b>	<b>3,600</b>	<b>103,500</b>	
<b>COMPONENT 4: Knowledge management</b>	<b>NIM / IP</b>	<b>62000</b>	<b>GEF</b>	71300	Local Consultants	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	7,500	21
				71800	Contractual Services-Imp Partn	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	9,000	22
				71600	Travel	2,000	2,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	7,000	23
				72100	Contractual Services- Companies	-	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	20,000	24
				74200	Audio Visual&Print Prod Costs	1,000	2,000	2,000	1,000	2,000	8,000	25
				75700	Training, Workshops and Confer	3,192	4,000	3,000	1,500	1,500	13,192	26
				<b>Total Outcome 4</b>		<b>9,492</b>	<b>16,300</b>	<b>14,300</b>	<b>11,800</b>	<b>12,800</b>	<b>64,692</b>	
<b>COMPONENT 5: Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	<b>NIM / IP</b>	<b>62000</b>	<b>GEF</b>	71300	Local Consultants	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	5,250	11,250	27
				71600	Travel	-	-	-	-	3,000	3,000	28
				71200	International Consultants	-	-	-	-	21,000	21,000	29
				<b>Total Outcome 5</b>		<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>29,250</b>	<b>35,250</b>	

COMPONENT 6: Project Management Costs	NIM/IP	62000	GEF	71800	Contractual Services-Imp Partn	10,200	10,200	10,200	10,200	10,200	51,000	30
				71600	Travel	2,000	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	8,000	31
				72400	Communic & Audio Visual Equip	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	10,000	32
				74100	Professional Services	1,000	2,119	2,119	2,119	2,119	9,476	33
				Total Outcome 6		15,200	15,819	15,819	15,819	15,819	78,476	
	UNDP	04000	UNDP/ TRAC	71800	Contractual Services-Imp Partn	3,600	3,600	3,600	3,600	3,600	18,000	34
				72800	Information Technology Equipmt	14,500	-	-	-	-	14,500	35
				72500	Supplies	2,000	2,000	1,500	1,500	1,000	8,000	36
				75700	Training, Workshops and Confer	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	3,500	9,500	37
				sub-total UNDP		21,600	7,100	6,600	6,600	8,100	50,000	
	Total Project Management		36,800	22,919	22,419	22,419	23,919	128,476				
	TOTAL GEF						191,492	341,243	207,919	49,919	72,669	863,242
TOTAL UNDP						21,600	7,100	6,600	6,600	8,100	50,000	
PROJECT TOTAL						213,092	348,343	214,519	56,519	80,769	913,242	

Summary of Funds: <sup>51</sup>

	Amount Year 1	Amount Year 2	Amount Year 3	Amount Year 4	Amount Year 5	Total
GEF	191,492	341,243	207,919	49,919	72,669	863,242
UNDP-TRAC	21,600	7,100	6,600	6,600	8,100	50,000
UNDP (grant)	3,000,000	3,000,000	4,000,000	3,000,000	0	13,000,000
Ministry of Environment	200,000	200,000	300,000	300,000	100,000	1,100,000
Agency "Moldsilva"	400,000	800,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	4,200,000
Agency "Moldovan Waters"	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	100,000
Local Authorities-Cahul district	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	150,000
Local Authorities- Glodeni district	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	150,000
Institute "Botanical Garden"	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	150,000
Institute of Zoology	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	150,000
National Institute for Research and Development in Forestry (ICAS)	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	300,000
Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration	40,000	20,000	20,000	10,000	10,000	100,000
Austrian Development Agency (ADA)	549,728	400,000	0	0	0	949,728
"Verde e Moldova"	222,000	100,000	0	0	0	322,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,765,280</b>	<b>5,008,303</b>	<b>5,674,479</b>	<b>4,506,479</b>	<b>1,330,729</b>	<b>21,584,970</b>

Budget note number	Comments:
<b>1</b>	Contractual appointment of a team of local experts to provide professional, technical and scientific support to activities under Component 1 as follows: <b>a)</b> Ecologist/Wetlands Specialist (Output 1.1./2.2.). Total cost: <b>\$9,000</b> (60 days/\$150/day) during year 1 and 2; <b>b)</b> Hydrologist /Water management expert (Output 1.1./2.2) Total cost: <b>\$9,000</b> (60 days/\$150/day) during year1 and 2; <b>c)</b> Land use policy specialist (Output 1.3). Total cost: <b>\$4,500</b> (30 days/\$150/day) during year 3; <b>d)</b> Conservation Biologist/Botanist (Output 1.3). Total cost: <b>\$9,000</b> (60 days/\$150/day) during year 2 and 3; <b>e)</b> Conservation Biologist/Zoologist (Output 1.3). Total cost: : <b>\$9,000</b> (60 days/\$150/day)during year 2 and 3; <b>f)</b> Senior Biodiversity Specialist(for NBSAP Output 1.1/Act.1.1.1.1). Total cost: <b>\$10,000</b> (50 days/\$200/day) during year 1 and 2; <b>g)</b> Legal/policy expert Environmental governance (Output 1.1 and cross-cutting). Total costs: <b>\$15,000</b> (100 days/\$150/day) during years 1-5; <b>h)</b> Hydroclimatic modelling expert (Output 1.2). Total cost: <b>\$30,000</b> (60 days/\$500/day) year 1.
<b>2</b>	Cost of 20% of the Project manager salary. Total cost <b>\$ 18,000</b>
<b>3</b>	Includes: a) Travel expenses Total cost <b>\$6,000</b>
<b>4</b>	Costs of trainings services of a Company/NGO to deliver targeted trainings and coaching of local authorities (Output 1.3). Total cost <b>\$9,000</b> , year 3.

<sup>51</sup> Summary table should include all financing of all kinds: GEF financing, co-financing, cash, in-kind, etc...

<sup>52</sup> Data collection methods should outline specific tools used to collect data and additional information as necessary to support monitoring. The PIR cannot be used as a source of verification.

5	Includes costs of the organization of local/national round table meetings to discuss/agree on the legal amendments, including at least 2 cross-border meetings on Stanca Costesti regulations (Output 1.1.). Total costs: <b>\$6,000</b>
6	Contractual appointment of a team of local experts to provide professional, technical and scientific support to activities under Component 2 as follows: <b>a)</b> Agro-forestry expert/riparian forestry engineer (Output 2.2.1). Total cost: <b>\$6,000</b> (40 days/\$150/day) years 1-4.; <b>b)</b> Hydrologist/Water engineer (Output 2.2.1). Total cost: <b>\$9,000</b> (60 days/\$150/day) years 1-5; <b>c)</b> GIS specialist (Output 2.1). Total cost <b>\$ 9,000</b> (60 days/\$150/day) years 1-3; <b>d)</b> Protected Areas expert (Output 2.1.1) Total cost: <b>\$9,000</b> (60 days/\$150/day) years 1-4.
7	Cost of 20% of the Project manager salary. Total cost <b>\$ 18,000</b>
8	Includes travel expenses of project experts to targeted areas, in support of outputs 2.1 and 2.2. Total costs <b>\$10,000</b>
9	Includes costs of contractual services in support of outputs under Component 2 as follows: <b>a)</b> Specialised safeguards company/consortium (Output 2.2/Act 2.2.1.2; Output 2.2./Activity 2.2.1.1, Output 1.1./Activity 1.1.1.1) for the development of SESA, ESIA/ESMP and the full feasibility study of the hydrotechnical works on Camenca River. Total costs <b>\$ 100,000;</b> <b>b)</b> Specialised company for the execution of reforestation works including technical project (Output 2.2/Activity 2.2.1.1). Total cost <b>\$ 80,324;</b> <b>c)</b> Company/consortium/NGO for the Protected Areas project work (in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve- Output 2.1.1 Activity 2.1.1.1; Activity 2.1.1.2; Activity 2.1.2.1, Activity 2.1.2.2; in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve- Output 2.1.1./Activity 2.1.1.3; Activity 2.1.1.4; Activity 2.1.2.1; Activity 2.1.2.2: and both PAs training under Activity 2.1.2.2). Total cost: <b>\$110,000;</b> <b>d)</b> Specialised company for the development of Protected Areas Integrated Monitoring Data Bases (Output 2.1.2 Activity 2.1.2.1) in both targeted PAs. Total cost: <b>\$30,000.</b>
10	Include costs of micro- grants (i.e. Low Value Grants as per UNDP LVG procedure) to stimulate local rural family businesses, acting as compensatory measures for any potential economic displacement identified during the Process framework (Output 2.1/Act. 2.1.1.1.; 2.1.1.2; 2.1.1.3; 2.2.1.2). Total cost: <b>\$10,000.</b>
11	Includes costs of <b>a)</b> 10 PAs information boards for both PAs. Total cost: <b>\$2,500;</b> <b>b)</b> Field equipment Royal Forest Nature Reserve. Total cost: <b>\$10,000;</b> <b>c)</b> Field equipment Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. Total cost: <b>15,000;</b> <b>d)</b> Materials for a small enclosure to serve for the treatment and care of wounded wildlife in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve e.g., aquatic birds. Total cost: <b>\$10,000.;</b> <b>e)</b> Flora and Fauna field guides for both targeted PA. Total costs: <b>\$2,000</b>
12	Includes costs of <b>a)</b> consultations with local communities in both Protected Areas. Total cost: <b>\$ 4,000;</b> <b>b)</b> Three regional workshops in Chisinau, with the participation of three countries Moldova-Romania-Ukraine to discuss opportunities for the MAB-UNESCO Trilateral Reserve Danube Delta Lower Prut. Total cost: <b>\$12,000</b>
13	Contractual appointment of a team of local experts to provide professional, technical and scientific support to activities under Component 3 as follows: <b>a)</b> Economist/Technical expert on rural livelihoods (Output 3.1. Act. 3.1.1.1.). Total cost: <b>\$ 4,500</b> (30 days/\$150/day) years 1-2.; <b>b)</b> Senior Tourism Expert/Rural green tourism (Output 3.1.2 Act 3.1.2.1; 3.1.2.2; 3.1.1.2). Total cost: <b>\$4,500</b> (30 days/\$150/day) years 1-2.
14	Cost of 20% of the Project manager salary. Total cost <b>\$ 18,000</b>
15	Costs of Innovation Challenge prize (Total cost: <b>\$40,000</b> )
16	Includes travel costs related to activities under Output 3.1.2: <b>a)</b> Development of eco-tourism package in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and cross-border tourism package Lower Prut-Danube Delta. Total costs: <b>\$3,000.;</b> <b>b)</b> Travel expenses related to the eco-tourism training workshops. <b>Total costs: \$2,000.</b>
17	Includes costs of contractual services of a company to deliver training services on ISO14001:2015 Standard (Output 3.1.1. Activity 3.1.1.2). Total cost: <b>\$20,000.</b>
18	Includes costs of demarcation and information boards for the eco-tourism routes in Lower prut Biosphere Reserve (Output 3.1.2). Total cost: <b>\$2,500.</b>
19	Includes costs of printing information materials related to the new eco-tourism routes in Lower Prut Biosphere reserve and cross-border tourism package Moldova-Romania (Output 3.1.2). Total cost: <b>\$3,000.</b>
20	Includes costs related to the organization of training workshops on eco-tourism and round-table meetings with tourist operators with the participation of Romanian counterparts (Output 3.1.2). Total cost: <b>\$6,000.</b>
21	Includes the costs of a Gender consultant (implementation of Gender Action Plan/GAP). Total cost: <b>\$7,500.</b>
22	Includes 10% of the Project manager salary. Total cost: <b>\$ 9,000.</b>

<b>23</b>	Includes travel expenses to the project sites related to awareness raising events and Process framework (consultations with the local communities) to raise awareness on Ramsar and MAB/UNESCO values. Total costs: <b>\$7,000.</b>
<b>24</b>	Includes the costs of contractual services of a PR/media company for the implementation of the awareness raising campaign and media events. Total cost: <b>\$20,000.</b>
<b>25</b>	Includes <b>a)</b> the costs of Production, design and printing of the following KM products: (1) KM product 1: Methodology for calculation of the minimum ecological flow mainstreamed into Regulation of Stanca Costesti Dam and PA legislation; 2) KM product 2: “Biodiversity passports” Concept integrated into local development strategies ; 3) KM Product 3: “Hydroecological and Climate resilient assessment of Prut River wetlands” ; 4) KM Product 4 “ ISO 14001 Standards” training module. Total cost: <b>\$3,000.</b> <b>b)</b> Production and design and printing costs of other information materials printed and on-line. Total costs: <b>\$ 5,000.</b>
<b>26</b>	Includes costs of 3 awareness raising workshops organized jointly with other donor-funded projects in the targeted areas, and organization of local and national awareness raising events (Act. 4.1.1.2 and Act. 4.1.2.1) . Total costs: <b>\$ 13,192.</b>
<b>27</b>	Includes: <b>a)</b> costs of local M&E expert. Total cost: <b>\$7,500</b> (50 days/\$150/day) years 1-5; <b>b)</b> costs of a national evaluation expert to support GEF terminal evaluation. Total cost: <b>\$3,750 (25 days/\$150/day) year 5.</b>
<b>28</b>	Includes travel costs and DSA of M&E consultants (M&E) Total cost: <b>\$3,000</b>
<b>29</b>	Includes cost of an international GEF project evaluator to support GEF Terminal Evaluation. Total cost: <b>\$21,000</b> (30 days/\$700/day), year 5.
<b>30</b>	Includes a) Partial cost (10%) of the Project Manager salary. Total cost: <b>\$9,000</b> (10% of \$1500/monthx12monthsx5years); b) Full cost of a Project Financial and Administrative Assistant. Total cost: <b>\$42,000</b> (\$700x12monthsx5years).
<b>31</b>	Includes travel costs of the PM team (Total cost: <b>\$ 8,000</b> )
<b>32</b>	Costs of audio-visual equipment for distant work and video conferencing equipment (display, microphone and cameras, speakers; conferencing phone; internet connection). Total cost: <b>\$10,000.</b>
<b>33</b>	Includes costs of professional services for NIM audits. Total cost: <b>\$9,476</b>
<b>34</b>	Includes 20% of the Project manager salary. Total cost: <b>\$ 18,000</b>
<b>35</b>	Cost of procuring 3 desktops, 3 laptops, 2 printers and 1 data projector. Total cost: <b>\$14,500</b>
<b>36</b>	Costs of supplies, to support the project management unit. Total cost: <b>\$8,000</b>
<b>37</b>	Costs of UNDP/NIM related internal trainings and project management and planning workshops. Total cost: <b>\$9,500</b>

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## IX. LEGAL CONTEXT

194. This project document shall be the instrument referred to as such in Article 1 of the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement between the Government of (country) and UNDP, signed on (date). All references in the SBAA to “Executing Agency” shall be deemed to refer to “Implementing Partner.” This project will be implemented by the Ministry of Environment (“Implementing Partner”) in accordance with its financial regulations, rules, practices and procedures only to the extent that they do not contravene the principles of the Financial Regulations and Rules of UNDP.

195. Where the financial governance of an Implementing Partner does not provide the required guidance to ensure best value for money, fairness, integrity, transparency, and effective international competition, the financial governance of UNDP shall apply. The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations or UNDP concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

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## X. RISK MANAGEMENT

196. Consistent with the Article III of the SBAA *[or the Supplemental Provisions to the Project Document]*, the responsibility for the safety and security of the Implementing Partner and its personnel and property, and of UNDP’s property in the Implementing Partner’s custody, rests with the Implementing Partner. To this end, the Implementing Partner shall:

- a) put in place an appropriate security plan and maintain the security plan, taking into account the security situation in the country where the project is being carried;
- b) assume all risks and liabilities related to the Implementing Partner’s security, and the full implementation of the security plan.

197. UNDP reserves the right to verify whether such a plan is in place, and to suggest modifications to the plan when necessary. Failure to maintain and implement an appropriate security plan as required hereunder shall be deemed a breach of the Implementing Partner’s obligations under this Project Document.

198. The Implementing Partner agrees to undertake all reasonable efforts to ensure that no UNDP funds received pursuant to the Project Document are used to provide support to individuals or entities associated with terrorism and that the recipients of any amounts provided by UNDP hereunder do not appear on the list maintained by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999).

199. The list can be accessed via [http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/aq\\_sanctions\\_list.shtml](http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/aq_sanctions_list.shtml). The Implementing Partner acknowledges and agrees that UNDP will not tolerate sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse of anyone by the Implementing Partner, and each of its responsible parties, their respective sub-recipients and other entities involved in Project implementation, either as contractors or subcontractors and their personnel, and any individuals performing services for them under the Project Document.

200. (a) In the implementation of the activities under this Project Document, the Implementing Partner, and each of its sub-parties referred to above, shall comply with the standards of conduct set forth in the Secretary General’s Bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13 of 9 October 2003, concerning “Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse” (“SEA”).

201. (b) Moreover, and without limitation to the application of other regulations, rules, policies and procedures bearing upon the performance of the activities under this Project Document, in the implementation of activities, the Implementing Partner, and each of its sub-parties referred to above, shall not engage in any form of sexual harassment (“SH”). SH is defined as any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

202. a) In the performance of the activities under this Project Document, the Implementing Partner shall (with respect to its own activities), and shall require from its sub-parties referred to in paragraph 4 (with respect to their activities) that they, have minimum standards and procedures in place, or a plan to develop and/or improve such standards and procedures in order to be able to take effective preventive and investigative action. These should include: policies on sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse; policies on whistleblowing/protection against retaliation; and complaints, disciplinary and investigative mechanisms. In line with this, the Implementing Partner will and will require that such sub-parties will take all appropriate measures to:

- i. Prevent its employees, agents or any other persons engaged to perform any services under this Project Document, from engaging in SH or SEA;
- ii. Offer employees and associated personnel training on prevention and response to SH and SEA, where the Implementing Partner and its sub-parties referred to in paragraph 4 have not put in place its own training regarding the prevention of SH and SEA, the Implementing Partner and its sub-parties may use the training material available at UNDP;
- iii. Report and monitor allegations of SH and SEA of which the Implementing Partner and its sub-parties referred to in paragraph 4 have been informed or have otherwise become aware, and status thereof;
- iv. Refer victims/survivors of SH and SEA to safe and confidential victim assistance; and
- v. Promptly and confidentially record and investigate any allegations credible enough to warrant an investigation of SH or SEA. The Implementing Partner shall advise UNDP of any such allegations received and investigations being conducted by itself or any of its sub-parties referred to in paragraph 4 with respect to their activities under the Project Document, and shall keep UNDP informed during the investigation by it or any of such sub-parties, to the extent that such notification (i) does not jeopardize the conduct of the investigation, including but not limited to the safety or security of persons, and/or (ii) is not in contravention of any laws applicable to it. Following the investigation, the Implementing Partner shall advise UNDP of any actions taken by it or any of the other entities further to the investigation.

203. The Implementing Partner shall establish that it has complied with the foregoing, to the satisfaction of UNDP, when requested by UNDP or any party acting on its behalf to provide such confirmation. Failure of the Implementing Partner, and each of its sub-parties referred to in paragraph 4, to comply of the foregoing, as determined by UNDP, shall be considered grounds for suspension or termination of the Project.

204. Social and environmental sustainability will be enhanced through application of the UNDP Social and Environmental Standards (<http://www.undp.org/ses>) and related Accountability Mechanism (<http://www.undp.org/secu-srm>).

205. The Implementing Partner shall: (a) conduct project and programme-related activities in a manner consistent with the UNDP Social and Environmental Standards, (b) implement any management or mitigation plan prepared for the project or programme to comply with such standards, and (c) engage in a constructive and timely manner

to address any concerns and complaints raised through the Accountability Mechanism. UNDP will seek to ensure that communities and other project stakeholders are informed of and have access to the Accountability Mechanism.

206. All signatories to the Project Document shall cooperate in good faith with any exercise to evaluate any programme or project-related commitments or compliance with the UNDP Social and Environmental Standards. This includes providing access to project sites, relevant personnel, information, and documentation.

207. The Implementing Partner will take appropriate steps to prevent misuse of funds, fraud or corruption, by its officials, consultants, responsible parties, subcontractors and sub-recipients in implementing the project or using UNDP funds. The Implementing Partner will ensure that its financial management, anti-corruption and anti-fraud policies are in place and enforced for all funding received from or through UNDP.

208. The requirements of the following documents, then in force at the time of signature of the Project Document, apply to the Implementing Partner: (a) UNDP Policy on Fraud and other Corrupt Practices and (b) UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations Investigation Guidelines. The Implementing Partner agrees to the requirements of the above documents, which are an integral part of this Project Document and are available online at [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org).

209. In the event that an investigation is required, UNDP has the obligation to conduct investigations relating to any aspect of UNDP projects and programmes in accordance with UNDP's regulations, rules, policies and procedures. The Implementing Partner shall provide its full cooperation, including making available personnel, relevant documentation, and granting access to the Implementing Partner's (and its consultants', responsible parties', subcontractors' and sub-recipients') premises, for such purposes at reasonable times and on reasonable conditions as may be required for the purpose of an investigation. Should there be a limitation in meeting this obligation, UNDP shall consult with the Implementing Partner to find a solution.

210. The signatories to this Project Document will promptly inform one another in case of any incidence of inappropriate use of funds, or credible allegation of fraud or corruption with due confidentiality.

211. Where the Implementing Partner becomes aware that a UNDP project or activity, in whole or in part, is the focus of investigation for alleged fraud/corruption, the Implementing Partner will inform the UNDP Resident Representative/Head of Office, who will promptly inform UNDP's Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI). The Implementing Partner shall provide regular updates to the head of UNDP in the country and OAI of the status of, and actions relating to, such investigation.

212. UNDP shall be entitled to a refund from the Implementing Partner of any funds provided that have been used inappropriately, including through fraud or corruption, or otherwise paid other than in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Project Document. Such amount may be deducted by UNDP from any payment due to the Implementing Partner under this or any other agreement. Recovery of such amount by UNDP shall not diminish or curtail the Implementing Partner's obligations under this Project Document.

213. Where such funds have not been refunded to UNDP, the Implementing Partner agrees that donors to UNDP (including the Government) whose funding is the source, in whole or in part, of the funds for the activities under this Project Document, may seek recourse to the Implementing Partner for the recovery of any funds determined by UNDP to have been used inappropriately, including through fraud or corruption, or otherwise paid other than in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Project Document.

214. Note: The term “Project Document” as used in this clause shall be deemed to include any relevant subsidiary agreement further to the Project Document, including those with responsible parties, subcontractors and sub-recipients.

215. Each contract issued by the Implementing Partner in connection with this Project Document shall include a provision representing that no fees, gratuities, rebates, gifts, commissions or other payments, other than those shown in the proposal, have been given, received, or promised in connection with the selection process or in contract execution, and that the recipient of funds from the Implementing Partner shall cooperate with any and all investigations and post-payment audits.

216. Should UNDP refer to the relevant national authorities for appropriate legal action any alleged wrongdoing relating to the project, the Government will ensure that the relevant national authorities shall actively investigate the same and take appropriate legal action against all individuals found to have participated in the wrongdoing, recover and return any recovered funds to UNDP.

217. The Implementing Partner shall ensure that all of its obligations set forth under this section entitled “Risk Management” are passed on to each responsible party, subcontractor and sub-recipient and that all the clauses under this section entitled “Risk Management Standard Clauses” are included, *mutatis mutandis*, in all sub-contracts or sub-agreements entered into further to this Project Document.

## XI. MANDATORY ANNEXES

### Annex 1: GEF Budget Template

Expenditure Category	Detailed Description	Component (USDeq.)							Total (USDeq.)	Responsible Entity
		Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4	Sub-Total	M&E	PMC		(Executing Entity receiving funds from the GEF Agency)[1]
		Sub-component 1.1	Sub-component 2.1	Sub-component 3.1	Sub-component 4.1					
Equipment	Includes costs of a) 10 PAs information boards for both PAs. Total cost: \$2,500; b) Field equipment Royal Forest Nature Reserve. Total cost: \$10,000; c) Field equipment Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. Total cost: 15,000; d) Materials for a small enclosure to serve for the treatment and care of wounded wildlife in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve e.g. aquatic birds. Total cost: \$10,000.; e) Flora and Fauna field guides for both targeted PA. Total costs: \$2,000		39,500			39,500			39,500	NIM / IP
Equipment	Costs of audio-visual equipment for distant work and video conferencing equipments (display, microphone and cameras, speakers; conferencing phone; internet connection ). Total cost:\$10,000.					-		10,000	10,000	NIM / IP
Vehicle	Includes costs of demarcation and information boards for the eco-tourism routes in Lower prut Biosphere Reserve (Output 3.1.2). Total cost: \$2,500.			2,500		2,500			2,500	NIM / IP
Grants	Include costs of micro- grants (i.e. Low Value Grants as per UNDP LVG procedure) to stimulate local rural family businesses, acting as compensatory measures for any potential economic displacement identified during the Process framework (Output 2.1/Act. 2.1.1.1.; 2.1.1.2; 2.1.1.3; 2.2.1.2). Total cost: \$10,000.		10,000			10,000			10,000	NIM / IP
Contractual Services – Individual	Cost of 20% of the Project manager salary. Total cost \$ 18,000	18,000				18,000			18,000	NIM / IP
Contractual Services – Individual	Cost of 20% of the Project manager salary. Total cost \$ 18,000		18,000			18,000			18,000	NIM / IP
Contractual Services – Individual	Cost of 20% of the Project manager salary. Total cost \$ 18,000.			18,000		18,000			18,000	NIM / IP

<b>Contractual Services – Individual</b>	Costs of Innovation Challenge prize (Total cost: \$40,000)			40,000		40,000			40,000	NIM / IP
<b>Contractual Services – Individual</b>	Includes 10% of the Project manager salary. Total cost: \$ 9,000.				9,000	9,000			9,000	NIM / IP
<b>Contractual Services – Individual</b>	Includes a) Partial cost (10%) of the Project Manager salary. Total cost: \$9,000 ( 10% of \$1500/monthx12monthsx5years); b) Full cost of a Project Financial and Administrative Assistant. Total cost: \$42,000 (\$700x12monthsx5years).					-		51,000	51,000	NIM / IP
<b>Contractual Services – Company</b>	Costs of trainings services of a Company/NGO to deliver targeted trainings and coaching of local authorities (Output 1.3). Total cost \$9,000, year 3.	9,000				9,000			9,000	NIM / IP
<b>Contractual Services – Company</b>	Includes costs of contractual services in support of outputs under Component 2 as follows: a) Specialised safeguards company/consortium (Output 2.2/Act 2.2.1.2; Output 2.2./Activity 2.2.1.1, Output 1.1./Activity 1.1.1.1) for the development of SESA, ESIA/ESMP and the full feasibility study of the hydrotechnical works on Camenca River. Total costs \$ 100,000; b) Specialised company for the execution of reforestation works including technical project (Output 2.2/Activity 2.2.1.1). Total cost \$ 80,324; c) Company/consortium/NGO for the Protected Areas project work ( in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve- Output 2.1.1 Activity 2.1.1.1; Activity 2.1.1.2;Activity 2.1.2.1, Activity 2.1.2.2; in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve- Output 2.1.1./Activity 2.1.1.3; Activity 2.1.1.4; Activity 2.1.2.1; Activity 2.1.2.2: and both PAs training under Activity 2.1.2.2). Total cost: \$110,000; d) Specialised company for the development of Protected Areas Integrated Monitoring Data Bases ( Output 2.1.2 Activity 2.1.2.1) in both targeted PAs. Total cost: \$30,000.		320,324			320,324			320,324	NIM / IP
<b>Contractual Services – Company</b>	Includes costs of contractual services of a company to deliver training services on ISO14001:2015 Standard (Output 3.1.1. Activity 3.1.1.2). Total cost:\$20,000.			20,000		20,000			20,000	NIM / IP
<b>Contractual Services – Company</b>	Includes the costs of contractual services of a PR/media company for the implementation of the awareness raising campaign and media events. Total cost:\$20,000.				20,000	20,000			20,000	NIM / IP
<b>International Consultants</b>	Includes cost of an international GEF project evaluator to support GEF Terminal Evaluation. Total cost: \$21,000 (30 days/\$700/day), year 5.					-	21,000		21,000	NIM / IP

<b>Local Consultants</b>	Contractual appointment of a team of local experts to provide professional, technical and scientific support to activities under Component 1 as follows: a) Ecologist/Wetlands Specialist (Output 1.1./2.2.). Total cost: \$9,000 (60 days/\$150/day) during year 1 and 2; b) Hydrologist /Water management expert (Output 1.1./2.2) Total cost: \$9,000 (60 days/\$150/day) during year1 and 2; c) Land use policy specialist (Output 1.3). Total cost: \$4,500 (30 days/\$150/day) during year 3; d) Conservation Biologist/Botanist (Output 1.3). Total cost: \$9,000 (60 days/\$150/day) during year 2 and 3; e) Conservation Biologist/Zoologist (Output 1.3). Total cost: : \$9,000 (60 days/\$150/day) during year 2 and 3; f) Senior Biodiversity Specialist (for NBSAP Output 1.1/Act.1.1.1.1). Total cost: \$10,000 (50 days/\$200/day) during year 1 and 2; g) Legal/policy expert Environmental governance (Output 1.1 and cross-cutting). Total costs: \$15,000 (100 days/\$150/day) during years 1-5; h) Hydroclimatic modelling expert (Output 1.2). Total cost: \$30,000 (60 days/\$500/day) year 1.	95,500							95,500	NIM / IP
<b>Local Consultants</b>	Contractual appointment of a team of local experts to provide professional, technical and scientific support to activities under Component 2 as follows: a) Agro-forestry expert/riparian forestry engineer (Output 2.2.1). Total cost: \$6,000 (40 days/\$150/day) years 1-4.; b) Hydrologist/Water engineer (Output 2.2.1). Total cost: \$9,000 (60 days/\$150/day) years 1-5; c) GIS specialist (Output 2.1). Total cost \$ 9,000 (60 days/\$150/day) years 1-3; d) Protected Areas expert (Output 2.1.1) Total cost: \$9,000 (60 days/\$150/day) years 1-4.		33,000						33,000	NIM / IP
<b>Local Consultants</b>	Contractual appointment of a team of local experts to provide professional, technical and scientific support to activities under Component 3 as follows: a) Economist/Technical expert on rural livelihoods (Output 3.1. Act. 3.1.1.1.). Total cost: \$ 4,500 (30 days/\$150/day) years 1-2.; b) Senior Tourism Expert/Rural green tourism (Output 3.1.2 Act 3.1.2.1; 3.1.2.2; 3.1.1.2). Total cost: \$4,500 (30 days/\$150/day) years 1-2.			9,000					9,000	NIM / IP
<b>Local Consultants</b>	Includes the costs of a Gender consultant (implementation of Gender Action Plan/GAP). Total cost: \$7,500.				7,500	7,500			7,500	NIM / IP
<b>Local Consultants</b>	Includes: a) costs of local M&E expert. Total cost: \$7,500 (50 days/\$150/day) years 1-5; b) costs of a national evaluation expert to support GEF terminal evaluation. Total cost: \$3,750 (25 days/\$150/day) year 5.					-	11,250		11,250	NIM / IP
<b>Trainings, Workshops, Meetings</b>	Includes costs of the organization of local/national round table meetings to discuss/agree on the legal amendments,	6,000							6,000	NIM / IP

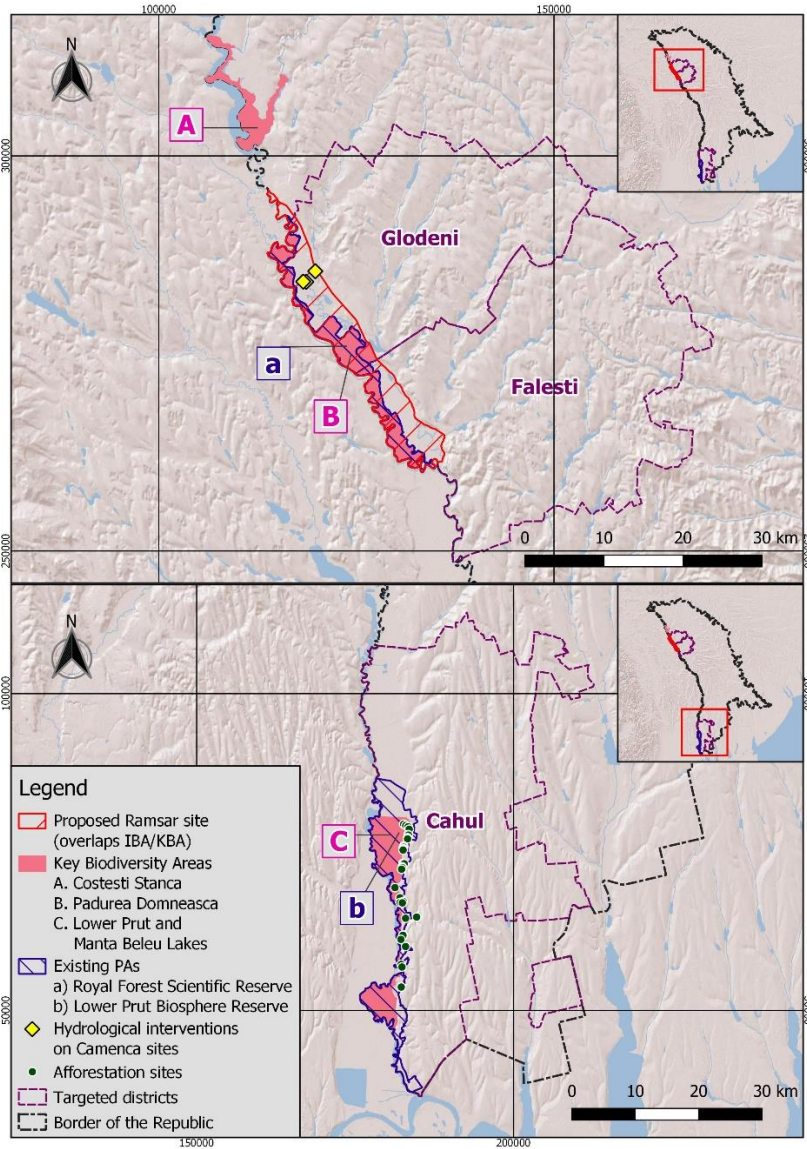
	including at least 2 cross-border meetings on Stanca Costesti regulations (Output 1.1.). Total costs: \$6,000									
<b>Trainings, Workshops, Meetings</b>	Includes costs of: a) consultations with local communities in both Protected Areas. Total cost:\$ 4,000 ; b) Three regional workshops in Chisinau, with the participation of three countries Moldova-Romania-Ukraine to discuss opportunities for the MAB-UNESCO Trilateral Reserve Danube Delta Lower Prut. Total cost: \$12,000		16,000			16,000			16,000	NIM / IP
<b>Trainings, Workshops, Meetings</b>	Includes costs related to the organization of training workshops on eco-tourism and round-table meetings with tourist operators with the participation of Romanian counterparts (Output 3.1.2). Total cost: \$6,000.			6,000		6,000			6,000	NIM / IP
<b>Trainings, Workshops, Meetings</b>	Includes costs of 3 awareness raising workshops organized jointly with other donor-funded projects in the targeted areas, and organization of local and national awareness raising events (Act. 4.1.1.2 and Act. 4.1.2.1) . Total costs: \$ 13,192.				13,192	13,192			13,192	NIM / IP
<b>Travel</b>	Includes: a) Travel expenses Total cost \$6,000	6,000				6,000			6,000	NIM / IP
<b>Travel</b>	Includes travel expenses of project experts to targeted areas, in support of outputs 2.1 and 2.2. Total costs \$10,000		10,000			10,000			10,000	NIM / IP
<b>Travel</b>	Includes travel costs related to activities under Output 3.1.2: a) Development of eco-tourism package in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and cross-border tourism package Lower Prut-Danube Delta. Total costs: \$3,000.; b) Travel expenses related to the eco-tourism training workshops. Total costs: \$2,000.			5,000		5,000			5,000	NIM / IP
<b>Travel</b>	Includes travel expenses to the project sites related to awareness raising events and Process framework (consultations with the local communities) to raise awareness on Ramsar and MAB/UNESCO values. Total costs: \$7,000.				7,000	7,000			7,000	NIM / IP
<b>Travel</b>	Includes travel costs and DSA of M&E consultants (M&E) Total cost:\$3,000					-	3,000		3,000	NIM / IP
<b>Travel</b>	Includes travel costs of the PM team (Total cost:\$ 8,000 )							8,000	8,000	NIM / IP
<b>Other Operating Costs</b>	Includes costs of printing information materials related to the new eco-tourism routes in Lower Prut Biosphere reserve and cross-border tourism package Moldova-Romania (Output 3.1.2). Total cost:\$3,000.			3,000		3,000			3,000	NIM / IP

<b>Other Operating Costs</b>	Includes a) the costs of Production, design and printing of the following KM products : (1) KM product 1: Methodology for calculation of the minimum ecological flow mainstreamed into Regulation of Stanca Costesti Dam and PA legislation; 2) KM product 2: “Biodiversity passports” Concept integrated into local development strategies ; 3) KM Product 3: “Hydroecological and Climate resilient assessment of Prut River wetlands” ; 4) KM Product 4 “ ISO 14001 Standards” training module. Total cost: \$3,000. b) Production and design and printing costs of other information materials printed and on-line. Total costs:\$ 5,000.				8,000	8,000			8,000	NIM / IP
<b>Other Operating Costs</b>	Includes costs of professional services for NIM audits. Total cost: \$9,476					-		9,476	9,476	NIM / IP
<b>Grand Total</b>		134,500	446,824	103,500	64,692	749,516	35,250	78,476	863,242	

**Annex 2: GEF execution support letter**

N/A

Annex 3: Project map and Geospatial Coordinates of project sites



Project sites	Centroid		Extent minimum		Extent maximum	
	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y
Glodeni district	47° 44' 24.9"	27° 30' 26.7"	47° 35' 04.4"	27° 24' 02.8"	47° 52' 12.3"	27° 27' 41.1"
Falesti district	47° 34' 20.0"	27° 43' 11.2"	47°22' 18.9"	27° 34' 18.3"	47° 46' 38.8"	27° 47' 00.6"
Cahul district	45° 51' 25.9"	28° 16' 52.4"	45° 27' 57.4"	28° 12' 50.9"	46° 09' 13.9"	28° 18' 16.0"
Proposed Ramsar site	47° 36' 48.0"	27° 23' 50.4"	47° 28' 25.8"	27° 30' 54.9"	47° 47' 31.2"	27° 15' 04.3"

## Annex 4: Multi Year Work Plan

Task	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Component/Outcome 1: Enhanced regulatory and financing environment</i>																				
<b>Outcome 1.1. Better fiduciary and financial environment for long term resilience of wetland ecosystems. This project outcome will allow overcoming barriers that prevent an increase of financing, conservation and sustainable management of wetlands</b>																				
<i>Preparatory activities/project Inception : Drafting Project NIM Capacity Development Plan, AWP, Covid-19 project safeguards plan of measures, Setting up Project Board, Inception Workshop, hiring personnel and technical experts, finalizing agreements with IP and key partners, securing office premises.</i>																				
<b>Output 1.1.1: Regulations and by-laws developed, consulted and adopted by relevant institutions that promote identification, monitoring and wise use of wetlands under international treaties.</b>																				
<b>Act 1.1.1.1</b> Development of legal amendments to address improved wetlands management including support to the new NBSAP																				
<b>Act 1.1.1.2</b> Stakeholders Engagement																				
<b>Act 1.1.1.3</b> Support to the revision of the Regulation governing the Stanca Costesti Dam, to include the revised minimum ecological flow accounting for climate change																				
<b>Output 1.1.2 National Ecological Fund (NEF) capacitated to prioritize financing of wetland conservation and sustainable use</b>																				
<b>Act 1.1.2.1</b> Improvements in the legal framework governing the National Ecological Fund, for increased PAs and wetlands support																				
<b>Output 1.1.3 Biodiversity compatible local development strategies in three target districts designated and under implementation</b>																				
<b>Act 1.1.3.1</b> Strengthen technical capacities for biodiversity integration into local plans and strategies																				
<b>Act 1.1.3.2</b> Develop biodiversity passports for critical species and mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into local development plans																				
<i>Component 2 Improved protection and management of Key Biodiversity Areas on wetlands</i>																				
<i>Outcome 2.1 Positive status of wetland habitats and species at targeted Key Biodiversity Areas</i>																				

<b>Output 2.1.1 Revised PA category upgraded international designation, improved zoning, mapping, management and business plans for Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve (including assistance for its integration into the trilateral Biosphere reserve with Ukraine and Romania) and for Royal Forest Nature Reserve</b>																			
<b>Act 2.1.1.1</b> Designation of Royal Forest Ramsar Site																			
<b>Act 2.1.1.2</b> Development of the Management Plan for the Royal Forest Nature Reserve/Ramsar site																			
<b>Act 2.1.1.3</b> Updating the Management Plan of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve																			
<b>Act 2.1.1.4</b> Support to the cross-border dialogue and designation of the Trilateral Biosphere Reserve Danube Delta and Lower Prut																			
<b>Act 2.1.1.5</b> Hydro-ecological and climate resilience assessment of Prut river wetlands																			
<b>Output 2.1.2 Management units and communities at targeted PAs capacitated to comply with/enforce management/buffer zone regimes, ensure proper monitoring of biodiversity and key wetland ecosystems, undertake species-focused conservation activities and PA patrolling</b>																			
<b>Act 2.1.2.1</b> Targeted support to PAs infrastructure																			
<b>Act 2.1.2.2</b> Strengthening technical capacity of Protected Areas staff																			
<b>Component 3 Demonstrating sustainable use/livelihoods at wetlands</b>																			
<b>Outcome 3.1 New sustainable income streams created for communities and small size entrepreneurs from sustainable use of resources at wetlands</b>																			
<b>Output 3.1.1 Strengthened capacities of the "Local Action Group Lower Prut" and local entrepreneurs to implement local biodiversity friendly development initiatives.</b>																			
<b>Act 3.1.1.1</b> Technical assistance to rural entrepreneurs to access EU4Cahul financing schemes.																			
<b>Act 3.1.1.2</b> Delivery of targeted trainings on green business models and enhanced environmental standards																			
<b>Output 3.1.2 Eco-tourism packages for wine/gastronomy routes adjusted to incorporate biodiversity observation in 2 communities</b>																			
<b>Act 3.1.2.1</b> Development of local tourism routes involving at least 2 local municipalities in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve																			
<b>Act 3.1.2.2</b> Development of a cross border (Moldova-Romania) tourist package																			
<b>Act 3.1.2.3</b> Innovation Challenge																			

<b>Act 3.1.2.4</b> Support to COVID safety protocols and tourism recovery																			
<b>Component 4 Knowledge Management</b>																			
<b>Outcome 4.1 Knowledge management and gender sensitive KM products developed and disseminated</b>																			
<b>Output 4.1.1 Online awareness raising campaign targeting central and local authorities and decision makers. Local and regional education seminars</b>																			
<b>Act 4.1.1.1</b> On-line awareness campaign on the importance of wetlands in the Prut River Basin																			
<b>Act 4.1.1.2</b> National and local awareness and education events																			
<b>Output 4.1.2 Innovative gender sensitive knowledge products and services from the project synthesized, packaged and disseminated</b>																			
<b>Act 4.1.2.1</b> Systematizing project experience																			
<b>Component 5 Monitoring and Evaluation</b>																			
<b>Outcome 5.1 :Project results properly monitored and evaluated</b>																			
<b>Output 5.1.1 Set of monitoring and evaluation activities implemented</b>																			
<b>Monitoring and evaluation activities as per M&amp;E Plan and Results Framework</b>																			

### Annex 5: Monitoring Plan

This Monitoring Plan and the M&E Plan and Budget in Section VI of this project document will both guide monitoring and evaluation at the project level for the duration of project implementation.

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
<b>Project objective</b> To achieve ecological integrity of key floodplain wetlands ensuring positive status of biodiversity, land and water resources, as well as ecosystem services	<b>Indicator 1</b> (GEF Core Indicator 11): # direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)	<b>Midterm target:</b> 20,000 (10,000 women)  <b>EoP (End of Project) target:</b> 40,000 (including 21,000 women)	A detailed methodology for assessment will be commissioned and verified at the project Inception stage	Annual project team analysis of the number of people directly benefiting from project activities, according to the assessment methodology developed and verified at project inception. Project internal sources such as lists of training participants and KM products distribution lists will be analyzed as data sources. Project beneficiary institutions	Annually  Reported in DO tab of the GEF PIR	Project manager IP/EPIU Project team	Number of the following key beneficiary groups analyzed: pilot PA staff and associated management authorities Users of PA tourism offer and related services Community representatives involved in project activities around KBAs Local authorities responsible with local	<b>Risks:</b> No large-scale staff turnover in participating enterprises, government institutions, and targeted PAs  <b>Assumptions:</b> Communities residing within and in the vicinity of PAs and KBAs will benefit from project outcomes

<sup>52</sup> Data collection methods should outline specific tools used to collect data and additional information as necessary to support monitoring. The PIR cannot be used as a source of verification.

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
				(including NGOs and local associations) will be approached to contribute to data collection, such as: PA staff participating in project capacity building and knowledge product development, PA management, Moldsilva Agency staff and management, Moldovan Waters Agency staff, ministries and local authorities participating in the project activities, PA policy developers, local authorities policy developers, Academia and research institutes staff,			strategy development Tourism sector businesses and individual partners  Tourism policy developers  Environment policy developers  Municipal authorities engaged in spatial planning and sectoral regulations' enforcement  Green farmers Private sector representatives: SMEs and rural entrepreneurs	

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
				media representatives and journalists, local communities representatives, local sub-basin Committee representatives, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve (Romania) representatives, Danube Parks representatives, NGOs, SMEs, rural entrepreneurs etc.				
	<p><b>Indicator 2</b> (GEF Core Indicator 1 Sub-Indicator1.2):</p> <p>Terrestrial protected areas under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (Hectares)</p>	<p><b>Midterm:</b> 20,803</p> <p><b>EoP:</b> 20,803 ha</p>	<p>This indicator is based on corresponding global-level GEF 7 indicators. This project indicator is designed to align with and feed into this global level reporting.</p> <p>The target represents the sum of the 2 targeted protected areas surface (i) the total area of Lower</p>	<p>Baseline data according to NBSAP; MAEP data.</p> <p>METT assessment.</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>Reported in DO tab of the GEF PIR</p>	<p>Project manager ; IP/ - Ministry of Environment (MOE)/EPIU</p> <p>Project manager</p> <p>UNDP Country office</p>	<p>Project technical reports, METT scorecards validated by the project final evaluation.</p>	<p><b>Risks:</b> Project team fails to secure official approval of PAs Management Plans and legal status of PAs not clarified; shifting government priorities due to Covid-19.</p> <p><b>Assumptions:</b> Interest from the</p>

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
			Prut Biosphere reserve ( 14,771 ha) and the area of the Royal Forest Nature Reserve (6,032 ha) without the additional area proposed to be included under Ramsar designation in order to avoid double counting, as the proposed Ramsar area outside the current Royal Forest Reserve largely overlaps with the restored Camenca floodplain counted under Indicator 3.			M&E consultant		central government, private sectors and farmers in biodiversity conservation; No major negative impacts (e.g. Covid-19) on the availability of the state budget for the protection and management of existing PAs.
	<b>Indicator 3</b> (GEF Core Indicator 3 Sub-Indicator 3.4 ; Sum of Indicators 9 and 10 below): Area of restored wetlands (Hectares)	<b>Midterm:</b> Technical project of the envisaged reforestation in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve completed. Feasibility study of the envisaged Camenca River restoration work completed. All	This indicator is based on corresponding global-level GEF 7 indicators. This project indicator is designed to align with and feed into this global level reporting.  The target represent the Sum of 50 ha reforested riparian forests in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve (to act as a barrier/buffer	Local authorities official records; ICAS records; Moldsilva Agency records; Moldovan Water Agency records; Project GIS expert analysis;	Annually Reported in DO tab of the GEF PIR	Project Manager, project;  IP -Ministry of Environment (MOE)/EPIU  UNDP Country office	Project technical reports, validated by the project final evaluation.	<b>Risks:</b> The project may fail to leverage the pledged co-financing for the hydrotechnical works; Reforestation works may not be 100% successful due to the deficient implementation of the technical

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
		<p>legal matters addressed.</p> <p><b>EoP:</b> 14,225 ha restored</p>	<p>against waste and agricultural lake pollution) ; 3000 ha Manta-Beleu lakes ecosystems with improved state (through reduced waste and agriculture pollution); 11,175 ha riparian floodplains restored (Camenca River floodplain) through improved flooding regime and increased groundwater level in Padurea Domneasca (Royal Forest) Nature Reserve</p>			M&E consultant		<p>project and lack of monitoring and supervisions of plantations; Local community in Balatina village is blocking hydrotechnical works; Illegal earth dam construction on Camenca River continue to operate; environment regulation not enforced.</p> <p><b>Assumptions:</b> There is interest and sufficient co-financing among project key partners; Local communities understand the importance of restoration works and supports the project activities; Project compensatory mechanism is sufficient to</p>

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
								incentivize local communities in case of any potential economic displacement.
	<b>Indicator 4 (GEF Core Indicator 6.1):</b> Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated (metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> eq)	556,806	<p>This indicator is based on corresponding global-level GEF 6 indicator. This project indicator is designed to align with and feed into this global level reporting.</p> <p>It is aimed at providing ex-ante estimates of the mitigation impact of restoration of <b>50 ha of degraded riparian forest ( In Lower Prut Biosphere reserve) and 11,175 ha of restored floodplain in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve/Ramsar area and surroundings-</b> which under business as usual would have been degraded. The estimation of C-balance is associated with the adoption of an</p>	Based on calculations from the EX-ACT tool.	EoP	Project manager	Project reports validated by final evaluation.	<p><b>Risks:</b> The project may fail to engage key partners in implementing the envisaged measures that will lead to the targeted reduction of GHG emissions.</p> <p><b>Assumptions:</b> Project does not encounter critical risks that derail implementation.</p>

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
			alternative land management option/ restoration methods, as compared to a business as usual scenario. Anticipated year of counting is 2026 during a period of 20 years. (EX-ACT Tool/FAO has been developed using primarily IPCC 2006 Guidelines for National GHG Inventories (IPCC 2006).					
<b>Project Outcome 1.1</b> Better fiduciary and financial environment for long-term resilience of wetland ecosystems	<b>Indicator 5:</b> Number of approved new/amended regulations/policies/laws directly related to improving status, management and financing regimes of wetlands	<b>Midterm:</b> Draft regulations and amendments prepared and submitted for approval  <b>EoP:</b> 10 relevant legal amendments approved	The indicator is measuring progress towards improved wetlands management and financing.  The target represents the number of <b>relevant</b> amendments to the current regulations/policies/laws that would enable a better management regimes of wetlands. The EoP target represents 10 legal amendments officially approved, as indicated/described	MOE official records	Annually Reported in DO tab of the GEF PIR	Project Manager, project;  IP -Ministry of Environment (MOE)/EPIU  UNDP Country office  M&E consultant	Project technical reports validated by the project final evaluation; official records of the approved legislation	<b>Risks:</b> The relevant authorities may not approve the policy and regulatory amendments.  <b>Assumptions:</b> The improved wetlands management and financing regime is included in the legal framework and annual allocations will be made available for wetlands

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
			under Activities 1.1.1.1 and 1.1.1.3 .					financing' the PAs capacities to develop competitive biodiversity projects will be improved. The government will remain committed to fighting wetlands decline.
	<b>Indicator 6:</b> Number of approved new/amended regulations/policies/laws related to prioritization of the financing of wetlands through the National Ecological Fund	<b>Midterm:</b> Draft regulations and amendments prepared and submitted for approval  <b>EoP:</b> <b>5</b> relevant NEF related amendments approved	The target represents the number of relevant amendments to the current regulations/policies/laws that would enable a better financing of wetlands through NEF and other instruments. The EoP target represents 5 legal amendments to the current framework related to NEF officially approved, as indicated under Activity 1.1.2.1	MOE official records  NEF Regulation  Biodiversity projects financed by NEF submitted by PAs	Annually Reported in DO tab of the GEF PIR	Project Manager, project;  IP -Ministry of Environment (MOE)  UNDP Country office  M&E consultant	Project technical reports validated by the project final evaluation; official records of the approved legislation  Successful completion of project activities for relevant project components, as verified by the TE.	<b>Risks:</b> The relevant authorities may not approve the policy and regulatory amendments.  <b>Assumptions:</b> The improved wetlands management and financing regime is included in the legal framework and annual allocations will be made available for wetlands financing' the PAs capacities to develop

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
								competitive biodiversity projects will be improved. The government will remain committed to fighting wetlands decline.
<b>Project Outcome 2.1</b> Positive status of wetland habitats and species at targeted Key Biodiversity Areas	<b>Indicator 7:</b> Increase of METT score for the targeted national PAs	<u>Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve</u> <b>Midterm:</b> 33 <b>EoP:</b> 35  <u>Royal Forest Nature Reserve</u> <b>Midterm:</b> 60 <b>EoP:</b> 63	The target values have been projected based on the analysis of the weaknesses in the METT scores for each PA, based on the analysis of the individual METT score questions for each PA. There are some areas of weakness that the project will have little or no influence on, while there are other areas where the project should reasonably improve the METT scores of the involved PAs. The METT scores should be annually re-assessed <sup>53</sup> and validated during	Moldova Agency official records Data from the targeted PAs  Project records of Output 2.1.2 activities confirming direct impact for targeted PAs	Annually Reported in DO tab of the GEF PIR	Project Manager, project;  IP/EPIU - Ministry of Environment (MOE)  UNDP Country office  M&E consultant	Field inventories; MOE and PAs database; project reports validated by GEF Terminal Evaluation (TE).	<b>Risks:</b> Expected increase in the PAs management effectiveness is not achieved due to staff turnover and decreased investments into PAs infrastructure.  <b>Assumptions:</b> Project lifetime is sufficient to allow impacts to be generated and monitored; New threats do not emerge; No major negative impact on the availability of the state

<sup>53</sup> During the project implementation, revising these METT scores at the end of the year is recommended, and assessment should be done as realistically as possible ( e.g. weakness need to be highlighted in order to sharpen the focus of the project's support). GEF evaluation will validate the METT scores.

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
			midterm and final evaluation. have been projected based on the analysis of the weaknesses in the METT scores for each PA, based on the analysis of the individual METT score questions for each PA. There are some areas of weakness that the project will have little or no influence on, while there are other areas where the project should reasonably improve the METT scores of the involved PAs. The METT scores should be annually reassessed <sup>54</sup> and validated during midterm and final evaluation.					budget for the protection and management of new and existing PAs.
	<b>Indicator 8:</b> Stable status/positive changes in the population of globally significant	<b>Midterm:</b> As indicated in the METT scorecards	These species have been selected to serve as indicators based on several considerations: (i) they will be	Mold Silva Agency official records	Annually Reported in DO tab of the GEF PIR	Project Manager, project; IP/ EPIU- Ministry of	Project reports and documentation; Successful completion of	<b>Risks:</b> Expected increase in the PAs management effectiveness is not achieved due

<sup>54</sup> During the project implementation, revising these METT scores at the end of the year is recommended, and assessment should be done as realistically as possible ( e.g. weakness need to be highlighted in order to sharpen the focus of the project's support). GEF evaluation will validate the METT scores.

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
	<p>biodiversity at the targeted PAs.</p> <p><u>Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve:</u></p> <p>Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i></p> <p>Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i></p> <p>Black-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax</i></p> <p>Eurasian Spoonbill <i>Platalea leucorodia</i></p> <p>Grey heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i></p> <p>Ferruginous Duck <i>Aythya nyroca</i></p> <p>Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i></p> <p>Red-breasted Goose <i>Branta rufficollis</i></p> <p>Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i></p> <p><u>Royal Forest Nature Reserve:</u></p> <p>Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i></p> <p>Black-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax</i></p>	<b>EoP:</b> As indicated in the METT scorecards	<p>positively affected by the project interventions; (ii) are considered keystone species so that a positive change in species population reflects a positive change in the surrounding habitat; (iii) population can be reasonably monitored over multiple years, and (iv) there are global, or national Red List or endangered species or endemic or “iconic” for the country or the region. The project is aiming at minimizing threats to the newly designed PA, and if threats are minimized, population increases among indicator species can be documented within a few years, and therefore the project target is designed to set the project ambitions at contributing to an increase in the targeted</p>	<p>Data from the targeted PAs</p> <p>Project records of Output 2.1.2 activities confirming direct impact for targeted PAs</p>		<p>Environment (MOE)</p> <p>UNDP Country office</p> <p>M&amp;E consultant</p>	<p>project activities for relevant project components, as verified by the GEF Terminal Evaluation.</p>	<p>to staff turnover and decreased investments into PAs infrastructure.</p> <p><b>Assumptions:</b> Project lifetime is sufficient to allow impacts to be generated and monitored; New threats do not emerge; No major negative impact on the availability of the state budget for the protection and management of new and existing PAs.</p>

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
	Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i> Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i> Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i> White-tailed Eagle <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>		indicator species populations					
<b>Project Outcome 2.2.</b> Viable wetland and forest ecosystem restoration options demonstrated	<b>Indicator 9:</b> Number of hectares of lakes and riparian ecosystems restored in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve	<b>Midterm:</b> 50 ha of riparian strips reforested <b>EoP:</b> 3,000 ha of lake and 50 ha of riparian ecosystems in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve restored	This indicator is based on corresponding global-level GEF 7 indicators. This project indicator is designed to align with and feed into GEF7 global Indicator 3/Sub-indicator 3.4.  Approx. <b>50 ha</b> around Manta and Beleu lakes have been selected at PPG stage in strategic locations, with the aim of not only restoring degraded land and reducing soil erosion but also acting as a barrier against domestic waste and agriculture run-offs entering <b>3,000 ha</b> of lakes ecosystems in Manta-Beleu lakes network and increasing siltation (Activity	Moldova Agency official records Data from the targeted PAs  Project records of Output 2.1.2 activities confirming direct impact for targeted PAs	Annually Reported in DO tab of the GEF PIR	IP/ EPIU - Ministry of Environment (MOE)  UNDP Country office  M&E consultant	Project reports and documentation; Successful completion of project activities for relevant project components, as verified by the GEF Terminal Evaluation.	<b>Risks:</b> Reforestation works may not be 100% successful due to the deficient implementation of the technical project and lack of monitoring and/or supervisions of plantations.  <b>Assumptions:</b> There is interest and sufficient co-financing among project key partners; Local communities understand the importance of restoration works and supports the project activities.

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
			2.2.1.1) The reforestation of these 50 ha of riparian strips will therefore improve to some extent the lakes and wetlands conditions. The baseline should be established by the project experts at the project inception and positive changes recorded at midterm and EoP.					No extreme climate change-induced events occur.
	<b>Indicator 10:</b> Number of hectares of floodplain areas restored in and around Royal Forest Nature Reserve	<b>Midterm:</b> Feasibility study for the hydrotechnical works developed Local community consulted and supports the intervention All legal matters addressed  <b>EoP:</b> 11,175 ha floodplain restored	This indicator is based on corresponding global-level GEF 7 indicators. This project indicator is designed to align with and feed into GEF7 global Indicator 3/Sub-indicator 3.4. The corresponding activity (Act. 2.2.1.2) will rehabilitate the old watercourse of the Camenca river. The feasibility study will indicate clearly the number of hectares that are expected to benefit from the proposed restoration	Moldova Agency official records Data from the targeted PAs  Project records of Output 2.1.2 activities confirming direct impact for targeted PAs	Annually Reported in DO tab of the GEF PIR	IP/EPIU - Ministry of Environment (MOE)  UNDP Country office  M&E consultant	Project reports and documentation; Successful completion of project activities for relevant project components, as verified by the GEF Terminal Evaluation.	<b>Risks:</b> The project may fail to leverage the pledged co-financing for the hydrotechnical works; Reforestation works may not be 100% successful due to the deficient implementation of the technical project and lack of monitoring and supervisions of plantations; Local community in

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
			work. At the PPG stage the pre-feasibility study estimated that approximately 11,175 ha of floodplain will be restored if the Camenca old watercourse is restored. The EoP target is therefore 11,175 ha floodplain ecosystems with improved conditions.					<p>Balatina village is blocking hydrotechnical works; Illegal earth dam construction on Camenca River. continue to operate; environment regulation not enforced.</p> <p><b>Assumptions:</b> There is interest and sufficient co-financing among project key partners; Local communities understand the importance of restoration works and supports the project activities; Project compensatory mechanism is sufficient to incentivize local communities away from illegally diverting</p>

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
								water on public lands for own use.
<b>Project Outcome 3.1</b> New sustainable income streams created for communities and small size entrepreneurs from sustainable use of resources at wetlands	<b>Indicator 11:</b> Percentage of increase in monetary income to targeted entrepreneurs derived from sustainable wetland use and facilitated tourism	<i>Baseline to be determined in the first year of project implementation.</i> <b>Midterm target:</b> Net Income men: \$X + 10% Net income women: \$X + 10% Participating rural entrepreneurs show at least 10% increase based on year 1 estimate. <b>EoP Target:</b> Net Income men: \$X + 20% Net income women: \$X + 20% Participating rural entrepreneurs show 20%	This indicator measures the successful engagement of, and support to the targeted SMEs/rural entrepreneurs (activity 3.1.1.1) in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. The project will assist at least 5 rural entrepreneurs to apply to the calls for proposals under EU 4 Cahul project; their income increase is estimated at 20% by EoP as a result.	Data from the targeted PAs. EU4Cahul Project data. Project records of Output 3.1.1 activities confirming direct impact at the targeted PAs local communities.	Annually  Reported in DO tab of the GEF PIR	IP/ EPIU- Ministry of Environment (MOE) UNDP Country office M&E consultant	Project reports and documentation; Successful completion of project activities for relevant project components, as verified by the GEF Terminal Evaluation.	

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
		increase based on year 1 estimate.						
	<b>Indicator 12</b> Percentage of increase in the annual number of visitors in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve.	<i>Baseline visitation data for Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve</i> <i>1300 tourists (2020 data)</i> <b>Midterm:</b> Eco-tourism routes involving 2 municipalities in Lower Prut Biosphere reserve developed Cross-border tourism package Moldova-Romania developed <b>EoP:</b> At least 40% increase in the number of tourists <i>compared to baseline</i>	This indicator will measure the success of the project in establishing new tourism routes and in setting up a cross-border tourism package Moldova-Romania (Act 3.1.2.1 and Act 3.1.2.2). The support to a trilateral cross border MAB UNESCO Biosphere reserve will harmonize management approaches and tourism partnerships as well (Activity 2.1.1.4). Partnerships with tourist operators and links to regional platforms (through Danube Parks and ARBDD Romania facilitation) are expected to increase the international exposure of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and bring more tourists	Data from the administration of the Lower Prut Biosphere reserve and Romanian Danube Delta Biosphere reserve.  Project records of Output 3.1.2 activities confirming direct impact for targeted PAs	Annually  Reported in DO tab of the GEF PIR	IP/ EPIU - Ministry of Environment (MOE)  UNDP Country office  M&E consultant	Project reports and documentation; Successful completion of project activities for relevant project components, as verified by the GEF Terminal Evaluation.	<b>Assumptions:</b> Negative effects of COVID 19 pandemic are managed throughout the project lifetime.

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
			to this area. The EoP target is therefore estimated at least at a 40% increase.					
<b>Project Outcome 4.1</b> Knowledge management platform and gender sensitive KM products in place	<b>Indicator 13</b> Number of knowledge products related to wetlands conservation considerations mainstreaming into policies, laws and regulations, developed and disseminated. Project knowledge products include, where feasible, an analysis of gender equity/empowerment in relation with the specific knowledge topic.	<b>Midterm:</b> Draft methodologies developed Draft analysis and studies developed  <b>EoP target: 20 gender sensitive awareness raising events and 6 KM products:</b> <b>6 Knowledge products:</b> <b>KM product 1:</b> <i>Methodology for calculation of the minimum ecological flow supporting the evidence-based amendments to the Regulation of Stanca Costesti Dam and PA legislation.</i> <b>KM product 2:</b> <i>"Biodiversity passports" concept</i>	The targets represent the awareness raising events to be organized under the Output 4.1.1. online campaign and may be associated with different forms of online events, moderated forums, targeted digital messages to relevant decision makers, key partners, online information/training materials etc and in addition 6 KM products (that are developed under different project outputs) that will inform the awareness raising campaign (i.e. background materials) and will also constitute the evidence-based for the legal/policy amendments and ecotourism related activities. All the KM products will be integrated (where	Project reports  Project knowledge products distribution lists  Project-related web resources visitors  List of participants of trainings and other KM events	Annually  Reported in DO tab of the GEF PIR	IP/ EPIU - Ministry of Environment (MOE)  UNDP Country office  M&E consultant	Project reports and documentation; Successful completion of project activities for relevant project components, as verified by the GEF Terminal Evaluation.	The project-born studies and reports are grounding fact-based policy improvements of the wetlands management and financing regime. The government is interested and committed to minimizing the current decoupling between research and policy making. The KM products are disseminated through IW:LEARN, and through bilateral and trilateral committees of the countries in Danube basin.

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
		<p><i>integrated into local development strategies.</i></p> <p><b>KM Product 3:</b> "Hydroecological and Climate resilient assessment of Prut River wetlands" supporting evidence-based wetlands/PAs related legislative amendments.</p> <p><b>KM Product 4</b> "ISO 14001 Standards" training module developed/delivered supporting the environmental regulations.</p> <p><b>KM Product 5</b> "Feasibility Study of the old watercourse of Camenca River" developed, grounding the restoration works.</p> <p><b>KM Product 6</b> "Socio-economic and Eco-tourist assessments" in pilot PAs including gender specific data and supports</p>	feasible) aspects/analysis of the differentiated ways that men and women use natural resources, and will emphasize the gender aspects (e.g. balanced participation women empowerment and equal opportunities) be made available on the dedicated website and social media.					

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
		<i>development of equal opportunities for men and women, included in the PAs management planning.</i>						
	<b>Indicator 14</b> Number of women and men getting access to the best available knowledge and practice, through project-supported knowledge products and training	Targets will be validated at project inception. <b>Midterm:</b> 2,000 <b>EoP:</b> 5,000 (2,500 women)	The targets are estimated based on the assumption that there will be at least 20 awareness raising events organized; at least 5 trainings in partnerships with ODIMM; 10 trainings of PAs; 6 trainings of local authorities, and other round table meetings and KM sharing on different platforms. The targets are estimated based on the assumption that there will be at least 20 awareness raising events organized; at least 5 trainings in partnerships with ODIMM; 10 trainings of PAs; 6 trainings of local authorities, and other round table meetings	Project reports Project knowledge products distribution lists Project-related web resources visitors List of participants of trainings and other KM events; stakeholders data base; project technical reports.	Annual	IP/EPIU Project team M&E consultant	Project-related website, KM product distribution lists	Demand for stand-alone specific knowledge products, printed or web-designed, trainings and other KM events confirmed by project stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
			and KM sharing on different platforms. Apart from these events, the project team will consider the project partners' involved in, and benefiting from, the project's activities (such as research institutes staff, volunteers, smallholders involved in the eco-tourism supported by the project, tourists involved in the project activities, tourist operators in Moldova and Romania involved in the development of the tourism products and in round table discussions, NGOs and environmental journalists, on-line media campaign's targeted decision makers, smallholders receiving compensatory non-monetary support in case of temporary					

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
			economic displacement etc.					
<b>Project Outcome 5</b> <i>Project results properly monitored and evaluated</i>	<b>Indicator 15</b> Monitoring and Evaluation reports Evaluative knowledge available to project partners	<b>Midterm:</b> Internal UNDP review based on UNDP M&E <b>EoP:</b> Final GEF evaluation report Annual PIRs	GEF/UNDP M&E requirements	UNDP CO UNDP Evaluation Resource Center	Mid term End of project Annually	IP/EPIU Project team M&E consultant	Project reports	<b>Risks:</b> The project may fail to engage relevant technical M&E expertise.  <b>Assumptions:</b> No major obstacles or regional disagreements will be impeding project activities.
<b>Cross-cutting Gender</b>	Consistency of project gender mainstreaming approach with project plans (Please refer to the Gender Action Plan and indicators)	Gender mainstreaming carried out during project implementation, as indicated by: -Project Board and local stakeholder working groups set-up by the project have gender balance and/or include a gender expert. -Policies, laws, and regulations amended with project support	Target is based on the project's planned gender mainstreaming activities	Project reports	Reported in DO tab of the GEF PIR (annually)	IP/EPIU Project manager Gender consultant M&E consultant	Monitoring via PIRs (annual project reports) validated by MTR and final evaluation.	<b>Assumptions:</b> All relevant stakeholders support or are in accordance with gender mainstreaming efforts undertaken by the project. There are no major risks to project activities.

Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets/ Comments on indicators and targets	Data source/Collection Methods <sup>52</sup>	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification	Risks/Assumptions
		<p>include gender perspectives, as relevant</p> <p>-Project events and activities (e.g. trainings) promote gender balance among invited participants, as feasible</p> <p>-Project technical training activities proactively recruit participants to achieve gender balance</p> <p>-Project education and awareness activities are developed and carried out incorporating gender</p>						

## Annex 6: UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP)

### Project Information

<b>Project Information</b>	
1. Project Title	Conservation and sustainable management of wetlands with focus on high-nature value areas in the Prut River basin
2. Project Number (i.e. Atlas project ID, PIMS+)	PIMS ID 6551 (GEF ID 10650)
3. Location (Global/Region/Country)	Moldova
4. Project stage (Design or Implementation)	Design
5. Date	11 July 2021

### Part A. Integrating Programming Principles to Strengthen Social and Environmental Sustainability

QUESTION 1: How Does the Project Integrate the Programming Principles in Order to Strengthen Social and Environmental Sustainability?
<p><b>Briefly describe in the space below how the project mainstreams the human rights-based approach</b></p> <p>In line with UNDP's human-rights based approach, the project directly empowers right holders in the persons of public authorities/ duty bearers, SMEs, smallholders, owners of production lands, and communities so that they are the principal facilitators and decision makers for the mainstreaming of wetlands, lakes and riparian zones conservation objectives in the production landscapes which they inhabit in the Prut River basin landscape. The project fully support's UNDP's commitment to a human-rights based approach, and supports the universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, but particularly in the case of this project, for the people living in the Prut River landscape. The project does this broadly by supporting the sustainable use of natural resources, including access to and use of wetlands necessary for the rural communities, including the rural poor, in the project's landscape. In addition, the project will ensure and support the human rights principles of participation, inclusion and non-discrimination.</p> <p>The project concentrates on the wetland ecosystems of Moldova, located in the Prut River Basin, bordering Romania to the west. The project's main aim is to achieve improved status of wetlands, lakes and riparian zones in the Prut River Basin, demonstrated by an integrated approach to the management of land, water and biodiversity for ecological and livelihoods benefits. The project will leverage critical partnerships with government, NGOs, local communities and private sector and will contribute to a transformational change of the approaches to sustainable development and conservation of the high value wetlands ecosystems in Moldova, by promoting effective wetlands management models within the context of supporting and securing sustainable and resilient livelihoods for local resources users, whose daily existence depend greatly on the integrity and productivity of these high value wetland ecosystems. The project's four components are closely aligned and linked to facilitate an enabling environment that provides for effective wetlands protection and management based on a landscape approach that ensures the continuity of ecosystem services sustaining livelihoods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) <u>Component 1</u> contributes to an improved regulatory framework to ensure conservation and sustainable management of wetlands biodiversity</li> <li>(ii) <u>Component 2</u> focuses on improved protection of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) through increasing management effectiveness of existing wetlands protected areas and by promoting participatory approaches and local communities' participation into the local natural resources' management.</li> <li>(iii) <u>Component 3</u> will support local communities in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve to develop and implement local initiatives, improving their livelihoods.</li> <li>(iv) <u>Component 4</u> will revolve around awareness activities at local and national levels, designed to grab attention and elevate the issues related to wetlands management and their local communities, higher on the political agenda.</li> <li>(v) <u>Component 5</u>: is all about proper monitoring and evaluation of the results, and sharing the evaluative knowledge with the national counterparts, including it in a process of learning and adaptive management.</li> </ul>

For an integrated landscape approach, an adequate policy, legal and financing framework must support multiple types of management measures. Water must be managed in a way that facilitates the necessary ecological flow to ensure the survival of wetland ecosystems located downstream. In addition, protected areas including key wetland ecosystems must be adequately planned and managed, appropriately contextualized within the river's basin landscape. Both biodiversity and livelihoods depend on land and water that are not polluted and not degraded and on vegetation that is resilient and provides fodder and critical habitats. Both livelihoods and biodiversity depend on adequate flows of water and many livelihoods depend on different components of biodiversity. As a mean of illustration, the project's Component 3 will be explicitly focused on local communities, promoting ecotourism and supporting small entrepreneurs' access to financing, in order to further develop their biodiversity friendly businesses in a MAB UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The project local approaches will follow the "Man and Biosphere" principles, will be aligned with the MAB Strategy (2015-2025) and its implementation framework, the Lima Action Plan (2016-2025), which has set out clear objectives, action areas, and indicators to inform the contribution of biosphere reserves to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); biosphere reserves are, in fact, learning sites for sustainable development, where interdisciplinary approaches are tested to understand and manage interactions between social and ecological systems, and solutions are promoted to reconcile conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use. The project aims to put all these different types of on-the-ground management practices in place: support the regulatory adjustments to increase the level of water flow, prevent pollution and improve management effectiveness of key wetland areas; contextualize wetland areas into broader landscape by introducing several best practices in the Prut River basin, demonstrating local communities' involvement in biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use, and elevating wetland conservation higher on the political agenda

***Briefly describe in the space below how the project is likely to improve gender equality and women's empowerment***

The project incorporates gender considerations in the project design to ensure that there is equal opportunity for women participation and realization of benefits under the initiative as presented. Formalized structures and measures or legal amendments developed within the project framework will explicitly reflect the role of women in all tiers of biodiversity/resource management addressing specifically existing disparities faced by women and girls in terms of access to economic participation and participation in decision making and trainings.

Within the national context, women generally share the responsibility for resources management and this is particularly visible at the household level. Owing to their active resource management roles, the project targets women participation in processes associated with the conservation, sustainable use of water and wetlands resources and the delivery of ecosystem services. There are numerous ways in which gender dimensions are reflected in the project:

- Under Component 1 the project supports district and local authorities include biodiversity conservation and monitoring into local development strategies, support public advocacy for women's rights and gender sensitive biodiversity conservation and management measures.

- Under Component 2, the project supports participatory approaches at local levels, in both protected areas, during the consultations on the Management Plan of the Royal Forest Nature Reserve and during the local consultations on the revision of the Management Plan in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, and will include women representatives to enable their participation into decision making over natural resources management, as women's input, knowledge and guidance are invaluable to any productive, sustainable efforts to avoid, reduce and restore wetlands, lakes and riparian zones.

- Under Component 3, the project's efforts are directed towards strengthening local rural entrepreneurship, offering equal participation opportunities and enabling women participation into calls for proposals and different other local projects and education/awareness activities.

- The project will ensure that there is gender balance in all project activities (e.g. seminars, community level events) including access to project financial assistance. The project will also gather gender-disaggregated data for evaluation purposes and use gender sensitive indicators to facilitate planning, implementation and monitoring.

In further consideration to the roles and priorities of both men and women, the project has granted women greater opportunities to actively participate in governance bodies that will be strengthened by the project. The project promotes partnerships and activities that close gaps resulting from gender equity issues since women in Moldova generally, but more acutely in the rural communities, are more constrained by traditional gender roles and by the lack of access to financial resources and capacity-building to improve their livelihood. In addition, all partnerships will be developed and established with gender balance and gender mainstreaming approaches in mind. The project team will ensure that gender-mainstreaming aspects are addressed and integrated throughout all aspects of the project's stakeholder engagement activities. The project will make sure to integrate a gender perspective into all legal and policy amendments and stakeholders consultations, advocating for women rights and striving to offer equal participation opportunities in deliberation processes.

The project will ensure that the activities relating to improved land and water management, such as local trainings and local decision-making mechanisms have appropriate and adequate gender representation. The project will also be working on the improvement management of protected areas and will also ensure the engagement of women in decision-

making bodies related to protected areas, such as sub-basinal committees of Camenca and Prut rivers. The expected project provision of gender-disaggregated data, specifically, the distribution of project benefits based on sex, will assist in the monitoring of the effectiveness of addressing equality gaps through project programming. The project has mainstreamed a gender responsive engagement in its strategy (*please see Annex 11 Gender Analysis and Action Plan*) and will put in place a grievance redress mechanism, as described in the Annex 9 (Stakeholders Engagement Plan) and in line with the UNDP SES requirements. The safeguards to be applied to ensure that gender considerations continue to be a part of the project delivery approach include the contribution of gender and community outreach specialists, continued targeting and engagement of women stakeholder groups through the project participation plan, and the mandatory utilization of gender assessments to guide all significant project deliverables. It is the aim of the project is to achieve the categorization of “Gender Responsive” according to UNDP’s gender results effectiveness scale (i.e., the results addressed differential needs of men or women and equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status and rights but do not address root causes of inequalities in their lives).

***Briefly describe in the space below how the project mainstreams sustainability and resilience***

The project’s interventions, backed by Government commitments and regulations, will aim to strengthen the inter-sectorial coordination and local communities’ participation during the development and revision of the protected areas management plans in the two targeted wetland areas (The Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and the Royal Forest Nature Reserve/Ramsar site), which will enhance the likelihood of environment sustainability. In the Royal Forest Nature Reserve, the local communities and local authorities in the surrounding localities will be included in the development of a landscape scale wetland management plan and will increase the sense of ownership of the local communities but also their awareness on the main threats to biodiversity coming from agriculture and illegal poaching. Furthermore, a biodiversity monitoring programme will be developed, which will involve local communities. Representatives of other sectors such as agriculture, hunting associations, mining, tourisms, fisheries etc will be involved in the development of the management plan. Similarly, in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, the revision of the management plan will be based on participatory approaches and dialogues with all the interested economic sectors, ensuring environmental sustainability. The project will work with the Local Action Group Lower Prut and local communities’ representatives in order to develop biodiversity measures and biodiversity monitoring activities with their involvement. The participatory approaches employed will result in empowered rural communities, conscientious and effective managers of natural resources, with increased capacities to manage their land, access financing and enhance their livelihoods. Environmental sustainability will be further ensured through the National Ecological Fund, capacitated to collect pollution charges and redirect funds for wetland conservation measures. The project will support regulatory amendments and will capacitate the National Ecological Fund to increase the percentage of funds redirected to wetland conservation measures, and it is expected that these regulatory amendments will provide not only environmental but also institutional and financial sustainability of results.

The project interventions will ensure the resilience of Prut and Camenca rivers resilience and will lead to 17,456 healthy KBAs/IBAs in the Prut River Basin, an improved management efficiency of 30,176 ha of wetlands and restoration of 6,050 ha of lakes and riparian forests ecosystems. The inventory of the condition of the existing 17,456 ha of KBAs/IBAs in Prut River Basin and the study of the hydro-ecological requirements for healthy wetlands, lakes and riparian areas will provide the necessary technical knowledge and information base for adequate management decisions of 30,176 ha of wetlands. The strengthening of the institutional and technical capacities of the targeted PAs administrations will result in a stabilization of key species populations and a better integration of biodiversity into the broader landscape. The ecological restoration of the targeted wetland are strategically selected in such a way as to respond to the most pressing drivers of biodiversity degradation; as such, the restoration of 50 ha of riparian strips strategically selected in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve will diminish the transport of sediments and waste into approximately 3,000 KBAs/IBAs ecosystems hosted by the main KBAs/IBAs (i.e. lakes Manta and Beleu) and it will restore riparian forest ecosystems which are hosting important nesting and feeding habitats. Similarly, the project-driven restoration of the Camenca river old course (main Prut River tributary) will bring an additional 8,3 million m3 of water flow to Camenca floodplain and wetlands ecosystems, and it will improve ground water level and moisture conditions benefiting approximately 11,175 ha of floodplain meadows and forests. The higher level of the underground water will limit the expansion of boxelder and other species that tend to replace valuable riparian galleries in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve. The cumulative effect of the governance and ecological pathways of the project are expected to improve the enabling legal/policy/financing environment and to maintain the ecological integrity of Prut River Basin wetlands and attenuate the effects of the climate change-induced water deficits.

***Briefly describe in the space below how the project strengthens accountability to stakeholders***

Through its various activities the project promotes accountability to project partners and stakeholders.

- a) The project deploys multi-stakeholders participatory mechanisms that increases accountability. Good examples of participatory mechanisms are demonstrated within the framework of Output 1.1 (Activity 1.1.1.2) through the inter-institutional coordination/stakeholders participation framework to improve the legal/policy and financing framework for Moldova's wetlands and PAs, including multi-stakeholders consultations on development and implementation of gender sensitive NBSAP. Other project activities are leveraging stakeholders' engagement for improved PA management and increase accountability of duty-bearers through capacitating the National Environmental Fund re-direct more revenues from pollution charges towards wetlands financing under Output 1.1.2 Act. 1.1.2.1. The project promotes a greater accountability of the private sector, through the promotion of green businesses and trainings on ISO14001:2015 Environmental Standard that will hopefully increase the accountability towards environment and natural resource use (Output 3.1.1/ Activity 3.1.1.2). The project will further promote stakeholders' accountability through mainstreaming biodiversity into local development strategies and further providing training of local authorities and relevant agencies on the importance of biodiversity consideration into land use planning and policies and local development strategies (Output 1.1.3/Act. 1.1.3.1) and by facilitating active local community engagement including rural poor, actively promoting participation of women, youth and disadvantaged groups. Similarly, the project-supported community-led biodiversity friendly rural businesses (Output 3.1.1) and the awareness activities destined to increase accountability of decision makers for wetlands/natural resource management, these are all major project milestones, implemented with embedded mechanisms for meaningful participation of all the stakeholders affected, particularly those at risk of being left behind.
- b) The project ensures that everyone has access to information, through transparency of all the programmatic interventions, provision of timely and accessible information regarding supported activities (primarily captured under Component 4) but also through partnerships such as with Local Action Group Lower Prut, sub-basin committees and local and national agencies, the project will strengthen its community outreach, including consultations on potential environmental and social risks and impacts and necessary management measures that will be implemented based on local consensus. Transparency and access to information and coordination with other local initiatives, will empower stakeholders to accelerate transition towards accountable decision making processes and more sustainable livelihoods.
- c) The project ensures that all the stakeholders can communicate their concerns and have access to rights-compatible complaints redress processes and mechanisms. In cases where there is a risk of economic displacement, such as the activities leading to international recognition of buffer areas (e.g. Ramsar designation in Royal Forest Nature Reserve) the Process Framework will be deployed, in an inclusive and participative manner, supported at local level by project experts and Local Basin Committees including representatives of local governing bodies, local NGOs in order to ensure inclusiveness. The project will ensure that in all interactions with stakeholders (consultations, meetings, web sites) information is available on how to access complaints processes. The Project's Stakeholder Engagement Plan will ensure the stakeholder's are engaged and informed about all activities. In addition to the UNDP Stakeholder Response Mechanism<sup>55</sup> which is embedded in all UNDP projects, this project will inform about the Grievance Redress mechanism (GRM) and will designate the Project Board as the project-GRM to ensure first of all that all the people and communities are informed of project-level grievance entry points and avoid/minimize risks of retaliation and reprisal against people who may seek information on project activities or express concerns and/or access project level grievances.
- d) The project will monitor environment and social risk management measures through effective and where possible, participatory engagement of the stakeholders.

## Part B. Identifying and Managing Social and Environmental Risks

<b>QUESTION 2: What are the Potential Social and Environmental Risks?</b>	<b>QUESTION 3: What is the level of significance of the potential social and environmental risks?</b> Note: Respond to Questions 4 and 5 below before proceeding to Question 5	<b>QUESTION 6: Describe the assessment and management measures for each risk rated Moderate, Substantial or High</b>
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<sup>55</sup> <https://www.undp.org/accountability/audit/secu-srm>

Note: Complete SESP Attachment 1 before responding to Question 2.				
Risk Description (broken down by event, cause, impact)	Impact and Likelihood (1-5)	Significance (Low, Moderate Substantial, High)	Comments (optional)	Description of assessment and management measures for risks rated as Moderate, Substantial or High
<p><b>Risk 1:</b> Vulnerable groups (smallholders with less land and capacities) including women and women entrepreneurs, might not be involved in project activities and therefore not engaged in, supportive of, or benefitting from project activities. Project-born outputs may not fully incorporate or reflect views of women and ensure equitable opportunities for their involvement and benefit.</p> <p>SES Principle 2 Human Rights P2, P3, P5</p> <p>SES Principle 3 Gender P10, P11,</p> <p>SES Principle 5 Accountability P13, P14</p>	I=3 L=3	Moderate	Women may be underrepresented, due to ingrained social and cultural norms. Most vulnerable families or groups may not be aware of project-supported opportunities and not involved in the consultations.	<p><b>The risk is managed through the project's strategy</b>, which (as explained in Part A of this SESP document) has embedded participatory approaches, balanced representations and meaningful participation of women, youth and other vulnerable groups in consultations and equal opportunities to benefit from project activities. With respect to gender, a <b>Gender Analysis</b> has been undertaken and a <b>Gender Action Plan</b> developed. The project will hire a gender expert that will supervise the implementation of the Gender Action Plan and will make sure that the project will offer equal opportunities for women to participate in and benefit from the project activities.</p> <p>The project will work closely with all stakeholders to ensure that there is adequate consultation and participation. Activities designed under Components 2 and 3 are specifically tailored to deploy participatory processes in which all voices can be heard, especially those small holders, poor households, women entrepreneurs etc. that are usually left behind. Engagement of vulnerable groups and other key community is detailed in the Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Gender Plan in line with current UNDP SES guidance.</p>

<p><b>Risk 2:</b> Local and national decision makers/authorities may not have the capacity to fulfill all aspects of their mandate, and rural resource users may not have the capacity to claim their rights, which could potentially lead to the violation of human rights.</p> <p>SES Principle 2 Human Rights, P2, P3</p>	<p>I = 3 P = 3</p>	<p><b>Moderate</b></p>	<p>Low capacities at rayonal (district) and local levels are many times resulting in little or no instructions for sustainable management of wetlands, pastures and forests and inadequate monitoring. Local communities, especially in remote villages or vulnerable groups are often unaware of opportunities to improve their livelihoods and to participate in decision making over natural resources.</p>	<p><b>The risk is managed through the project's strategy.</b> Output 1.1.3/Act. 1.1.3.1 includes concrete measures to strengthen and expand the current capabilities of the key institutions responsible for the development planning at district and local levels in three districts (Cahul, Glodeni and Falesti) to mainstream biodiversity considerations, through multi-stakeholders participatory approaches. There will be a number of 6 trainings and coaching sessions to strengthen the local authorities capacities to integrate biodiversity considerations in the local development strategies, providing an opportunity for further consultations and dialogue between decision makers and local communities. On this occasion too, the project will make sure to integrate a gender perspective into all the capacity building events and stakeholders consultations, advocating for women rights and striving to offer equal participation opportunities in trainings and awareness events and decision making processes.</p> <p>In addition, the project will be working closely with all stakeholders to support government natural resource management authorities and institutions to meet their obligations, and with resource user rights holders to claim their rights. This will be accomplished through multiple stakeholder consultation sessions during all relevant aspects of the project to ensure that all parties are aware of and understand the relevant obligations and rights.</p>
<p><b>Risk 3:</b> The envisaged legal and policy amendments developed by the project in support of long-term</p>	<p>I = 3 L = 2</p>	<p><b>Moderate</b></p>	<p>The project will develop several regulatory and policy amendments that may lead to stricter regulations over natural resources use (Output 1.1.1/ Act. 1.1.1.1 and Act. 1.1.1.3; Output 1.1.2/ Act. 1.1.2.1; Output 1.1.3/Act. 1.1.3.1)</p>	<p>The risk will be managed through the <b>SESA approach</b> (that must be applied during the development of the project-supported legal and policy amendments, influencing the said amendments, such that potential social and</p>

<p>sustainability could affect access and use of resources by local communities, including the rural poor and women.</p> <p><i>SES Principle 2 Human Rights, P5, P6</i></p> <p><i>SES Principle 3, Gender, P10</i></p> <p><i>SES Principle 3, Gender, P11</i></p> <p><i>Principle 5, Accountability, P13</i></p> <p><i>Principle 5, Accountability, P14</i></p> <p><i>Standard 5 Displacement; 5.2</i></p> <p><i>Standard 5 Displacement; 5.4</i></p>			<p>The project will conduct a review of key legislation identified in policy baseline as follows: the Land Code ( No. 828 XII of 25-12-1991) and Forestry Code (No 887 XIII of 21-06-1996); Law on Environmental protection (No 1515 XI of 16-06-1993); Law on Water and River basin Protection Zones and Riparian Strips ( No 440 pf 27-04-1995); Law on Animal Kingdom (No 439 XIII of 27-04-1995); Law on Protected Areas State Fund ( No 1538 of 25-02-1998); Law on Red Book of the Republic of Moldova (No. 325 of 15-12-2005); The law of the vegetal kingdom (No. 239-XVI of 8-11-2007); Law on the Ecological Network (No. 94 of 05-04-2007); The Law on Water (No. 272 of 23-12-2011); Law on Environmental Impact Assessment (No. 86 of 29-05-2014) and related government decisions and framework regulations as well as on-going legislation harmonization with EU framework. Under Act 1.1.13 the project will provide technical expertise and hydro-climate modelling in order to identify the appropriate minimum ecological flow that would need to be ensured for the survival of downstream wetlands and lakes. The project will also support the development of NBSAP aligned with the new post 2020 global biodiversity framework.</p> <p>The project will amend the National Ecological Fund related regulations in order to prioritize wetlands/PAs financing.</p> <p>Finally, the project will support the revisions of the local development strategies, mainstreaming biodiversity considerations (i.e. Biodiversity passports of rare/endangered species and critical habitats) and related sustainable management measures.</p> <p>When modifying existing resource use and management regimes, there is always a possibility of some modification to the enjoyment of human rights or potential economic displacement of individuals living near or otherwise using territory included in the targeted area. The Risk is preventatively rated Moderate. UNDP has extensive experience working in Moldova on similar types of interventions.</p>	<p>environmental downstream impacts arising from the development of subsequent regulations/policy/guidelines are considered as an explicit part of the amended laws, Regulation and policies (<i>please see Annex 10 ESMF</i>)</p> <p>With respect to gender, a <b>Gender Analysis</b> has been undertaken and a <b>Gender Action Plan</b> developed to address the issue of gender dimension in the policy making. The project will hire a gender expert that will supervise the implementation of the Gender Action Plan and will make sure that the project will offer equal opportunities for women to participate in and benefit from the project activities, and participate in a meaningful way in the policy related deliberations.</p> <p>This is especially important with regard to the project-supported NBSAP development. The project experts will ensure that gender issues are integrated into NBSAP, setting the framework for gender-responsive biodiversity planning and programming at national and local levels. During the government-led multi-stakeholders consultations on NBSAP, the project will seek to strengthen the understanding of the national institutions and agencies (with mandate on biodiversity conservation and wise use) on the multifaceted biodiversity related issues, in order to recognize and consistently integrate gender issues in environmental policy and law making. The project supports the Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment responsible for NBSAP implementation to take advantage of a wide network of strategic partners, including the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection as well as various women organizations and NGOs targeting women in the context of</p>
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				natural resource use, to support more effective, gender responsive NBSAP development and implementation.
<p><b>Risk 4:</b> Designation of additional areas as Ramsar sites in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve, and expansion of the total PA area, could lead to potential limitations or restrictions of the use of natural resources.</p> <p>Similarly, strengthening the management of existing PAs, such as the development of a Management Plan for the targeted PAs, improved PAs zoning, strengthening the protection regimes and stricter enforcement of the environmental regulation may further restrict access to and use of biodiversity resources by local communities, affecting livelihoods.</p> <p>SES Principle 2 Human Rights, P5 SESP Principle 2 Human Rights, P6 SES Principle 3, Gender, P10 SES Principle 3, Gender, P11</p>	I=3 L=3	<b>Moderate</b>	<p>Under <b>Output 2.1.1</b>, the project will support the Ramsar designation of the Royal Forest Nature Reserve, adding approximately 9,300 ha of adjacent floodplain surface area to the existing PA. The project will also develop a Management plan that will adequately manage the entire Ramsar area through an improved zoning, that will enforce some limitation of natural resource use especially in PA buffer areas, combining conservation measures and biodiversity friendly livelihoods.</p> <p>In the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, the project will update the existing management plan with potential improvement of current PA zoning as well. The 9 localities in the Lower Prut Biosphere reserve have already been consulted and they have approved of the current draft Management Plan. This draft will however get updated and potential modifications of the currently proposed zoning may be proposed. Additional local consultations will be organized with the local communities' representatives.</p> <p>The enhanced protection regime and a better zoning and delineation of on-the-ground of PAs core and buffer areas (although having significant environmental benefits) it may bring along potential risks of restrictions/limitations on the use of natural resources that may be at odd with the current agricultural practices of the local communities in project areas. Associated with that is the risk that not all key user groups of natural resources at project sites are consulted in project implementation and they will be affected by the restrictions on the use of natural resources.</p>	<p>The risk management measures will be addressed by the <b>Process Framework (PF)</b>, included in the Project document.</p> <p>The <b>Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Gender Action Plan</b> and <b>project level GRM</b> will complement the Process Framework ( Please see Annex 9 Stakeholder Engagement Plan – it includes a template for the Process Framework).</p> <p>The <b>Process framework</b> is embedded in the project strategy and it is part and parcel of the project's work under Component 2 (Output 2.1.1/Act 2.1.1.2 and 2.1.1.3).</p> <p>The PF will engage local population in the targeted areas. These local meetings will create awareness on the work on PAs and will address and reconcile any real or perceived economic limitations that the PA legal mandate (and/or additional international designation such as Ramsar and MAB/UNESCO) may impose.</p> <p>Evaluation of the necessity of <b>potential compensatory mechanisms</b> and eligibility criteria, describing the measures that will assist the potential affected persons to improve their livelihoods will be identified as the result of these assessments and discussions.</p> <p>The project manager will ensure that Information and guidance to local</p>

Principle Accountability, P13 Principle Accountability, P14 Standard Displacement; 5.2 Standard 5 Displacement; 5.4				<p>communities about the UNDP Conflict resolution and grievance mechanism is provided.</p> <p>The formal process of the Ramsar designation will not commence unless consensus with the local communities over the PAs border, management arrangements and monitoring measures is secured (please see Annex 9 Stakeholders Engagement Plan / Process Framework Template; and Annex 10 ESMF) .</p> <p>During the consultations, the project manager supported by the project's experts/company as well as by the MARDE with <i>Moldsilva</i> Agency and <i>Moldovan Waters</i> Agency, will ensure that any potential risk of economic displacement in the affected communities, resulting from the designation of new PAs will be mitigated through the Process Framework for both targeted PAs. Should the economic displacement risk be not avoided an <b>Livelihood Action Plan</b> will be developed and compensatory measures deployed. A template of the Livelihood Action Plan is provided under Annex 10 ESMF.</p> <p>Furthermore, the <b>Stakeholders Engagement Plan</b> contains meaningful engagement measures and stakeholders roles and responsibilities. During the project implementation, the Stakeholder Engagement Plan will be updated to fulfill the requirements of Standard 5 (or a Livelihood Action Plan will be developed if needed for SES compliance, based on the findings of the screenings etc.)</p> <p><b>Gender Action Plan</b> contains measures that will be implemented in order to ensure that women have equal opportunities to participate and benefit from the project activities. The project will hire a gender expert</p>
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				that will supervise the implementation of the Gender Action Plan.
<p><b>Risk 5.</b> The restoration of the old watercourse of the Camenca river will raise the ground water level, which may affect private arable land plots and cause flooding of house basements, negatively affecting livelihoods and may restrict the current (illegal) access to water resources of some of the local residents. The intervention sites may disturb surrounding settlements.</p> <p>SES Principle 2 Human Rights, P5          SESP Principle 2 Human Rights, P6          SES Principle 3, Gender, P10          SES Principle 3, Gender, P11          Principle 5, Accountability, P13          Principle 5, Accountability, P14          Standard 5 Displacement; 5.1;5.2          Standard 5 Displacement; 5.4</p>	I=4 L=3	<b>Substantial</b>	<p>Under Output 2.2.1 Act. 2.2.1.2 the project will support the rehabilitation of an old water course of Camenca river, the main tributary of Prut river.</p> <p>This may trigger some opposing views at local level, especially in Balatina village, due to two factors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The envisaged restoration will increase the groundwater level, which ( despite the ecological and livelihoods benefits brought to the area) can affect some private plots and may flood the basements of the houses located in the river's proximity. The groundwater level is not likely to raise in such a significant way that would cause floods simply because Camenca river is a small stream. On some plots, the groundwater may reach the surface, replenishing existing lakes and ponds and increasing soil moisture in the grasslands, as the entire floodplain ecosystems will gain water from the replenished aquifer. Water levels in the existing lakes and ponds and water wells is likely to rise. The extent of the water level increase will be rigorously assessed during the full feasibility study, during the project implementation. The PPG stage pre-feasibility study has indicated the potential of ground water level to rise with several centimeters, however in-depth modelling scenarios are needed in order to assess the extent of impact on the groundwater level rise and area covered.</li> <li>2) While this is a beneficial restoration activity that will bring approx. 8.3 mil m3 of water annually and will tremendously help with the adaptation to the predicted climate-induced water deficits, the local residents may (initially, at least) oppose to this restoration, as there is a certain locally vested interest in the status quo to remain unchanged. Currently an (apparent) illegal small earth dam constructed on the old river bed is diverting water for some of the residents own private use (e.g. poultry farming, irrigation) although the area is a public property (as indicated in excerpts from the pre-feasibility study</li> </ol>	<p>Mitigation measures will ensure consistency to SES (not adherence) because the relevant project activities are co-financed with funds that will not be administered by UNDP (i.e. will not flow through UNDP accounts).</p> <p>The risk is mitigated through two processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the <b>Process Framework (PF)</b> embedded in the project strategy, under the Act. 2.2.1.2.</li> </ul> <p>The local dialogue facilitated by the project together with the national and local authorities will first and foremost raise awareness and educate the local communities about the benefits of the restoration works and secondly will find an agreeable solution to enforce the applicable legislation/regulations concerning the illegal constructions on Camenca water course. The local dialogue will be addressing especially the concerns of people from the villages situated in the immediate proximity of the envisaged hydrological works, in particular Balatina village. Any potential economic displacements resulting from the preparatory activities and post-hydrological works will be addressed following UNDP SES guidelines and the project will develop a Livelihood Action Plan as required and compensatory (non-monetary) payments (<i>Annex 10 ESMF</i>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondly, the development of the scoped ESIA/ESMP, as part of a <b>full Feasibility Study (according to the national legislation)</b> during the project implementation will give further clarity on the likelihood</li> </ul>

<p>SES Standard 2 Climate Change and Disaster Risk, 2.3; 2.1</p> <p>Standard 3 Community Safety 3.1 3.2 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7</p> <p>SES Standard 8 Pollution Prevention and Resource Efficiency 8.2, 8.5, 8.6</p>			<p>Annex 20 Project Document). Although this construction is illegal, and located on state property, there have been no legal measures taken so far.</p>	<p>and/or scale of any potential negative impact on the local livelihoods.</p> <p>The project will make sure that the immediate impact area is correctly identified and that the Process Framework will include the most vulnerable community representatives and that in case of any economic displacement, a Livelihood Action Plan will be developed and implemented and a compensatory scheme will be deployed.</p> <p>As indicated in the Project Document strategy under Act.2.2.1.2, the GEF funds will be made available to develop a Full Feasibility Study <b>only after the following steps have been addressed namely</b> (1) National and local authorities have appropriately addressed the illegal constructions on Camenca river (consistent with the SES requirements) and local communities are supportive of this intervention (2) The project has secured the approval of the necessary legal background papers that may be necessary to clarify cadaster issues. In addition (3) the national partners commitment to <b>co-financing the full hydrotechnical works following UNDP SES requirements (and any other related costs that cannot be covered by the UNDP/GEF project) on Camenca</b> should be validated again prior to the commissioning of the full feasibility study.</p> <p>The <b>full Feasibility Study should not be commissioned if these (above mentioned) stages are not completed</b>, as there is a risk of unforeseen complications that can lead to unmanageable delays of implementing the actual hydrotechnical works on Camenca river, due to the fact that the local dialogue and the process itself may take years of negotiations,</p>
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				(legal) clarifications and enforcement of the legal provisions.
<p><b>Risk 6:</b> Wetlands riparian restoration measures intended to improve water availability, and reduce threats to critical habitats and environmentally sensitive areas could potentially end up harming them.</p> <p>Standard 1 Biodiversity and NRM 1.2; 1.3; 1.4; 1.6; 1.7; 1.8</p> <p>SES Standard 3 Community Health, Safety and Security, 3.1; 3.2; 3.3; 3.5; 3.6</p> <p>SES Standard 2 Climate Change, 2.2; 2.3</p> <p>Standard 7 Labor and Working Conditions 7.1; 7.3</p>	I=5 3L=2	<b>Moderate</b>	<p><b>Output 2.2</b> comprises a suite of measures to restore wetlands lakes and riparian zones in both targeted PAs.</p> <p>In the Lower Prut Biosphere reserve, 50 ha of riparian strips will be re-forested in strategically selected spots with the aim of not only restoring degraded land and reducing soil erosion but also acting as a barrier against domestic waste and agriculture run-offs entering 3,000 ha of lakes ecosystems in Manta-Beleu lakes network and increasing siltation.</p> <p>The likelihood of the risks from targeted project interventions is rated “moderately likely” but given that the objective of the project is to enhance the environmental and social qualities of these areas, the risk of negative and environmental impacts is considered limited in scale and manageable through applicable standard practices, use of native species and/or previously tested methods . Although the environmental risks are considered moderate, limited in scale and with the likelihood of being reasonably managed, and the sites are at sufficient distance from the protected areas, and there will be selected such that will minimize or completely reduce impact on private land, there will be nevertheless minor changes in land cover and potential damage to the vegetation type; temporary disturbance of rodent burrows or bird nests may be possible.</p>	<p><b>RIPARIAN REFORESTATION</b></p> <p>The risks will be managed through an <b>appropriately scoped ESIA</b> to identify, prevent and mitigate potential negative impacts on the critical habitats . The wetlands restoration measures are expected to ensure livelihood improvements and environmental sustainability during and beyond the project period.</p> <p>The <b>qualified project’s experts</b> ( Riparian Forest Engineer, Hydrologists, Agronomist, PA specialist) will work with the safeguards experts/company to properly identify risks and proposed management measures. The Project Manager and Experts as well as Implementing Partner/EPIU and Moldsilva Agency, ICAS, representatives and local authorities will facilitate local consultations with community representatives on the proposed restoration measures, targeted locations and necessary assessments.</p> <p>In the case of the reforestation works under Output 2.2.1/Act. 2.2.1.1, the selected reforestation areas selected are located on public property , managed by the local authorities and Moldsilva Agency. <b>ESIAs</b> will be conducted prior to the commencement of the reforestation activities (please see ESMF Annex 10). The local communities will be made aware of the monitoring requirements of the sites and the ecological benefits that these habitat restorations will bring to the lakes ecosystems. The consultations will be led by the local authorities and the project will work together with the Local Action Group Lower Prut organization to facilitate consultations.</p>

<p><b>Risk 7.</b> The project supported demonstration activities may fail to properly consider procedures for chance finds of valuable cultural heritage sites.</p> <p>SES Standard 4; 4.1; 4.2, 4.3, 4.5</p>	I=3 L=2	<b>Moderate</b>	<p>The project sites for <b>Outputs 2.2</b> have been carefully selected during the PPG based on several criteria chiefly among which is the riparian/floodplain land condition in the PAs. There is very low risk that these sites be overlapping with cultural and/or historically significant sites.</p>	<p>The risk is managed through SESP and the project will ensure that chance find procedures are included in all plans and contracts regarding project-related restoration works, construction, including excavations, demolitions, movement of earth, flooding, or other changes in the physical environment; such procedures establish how chance finds of tangible Cultural Heritage shall be managed, including notification of relevant authorities and stakeholders, avoidance of further disturbance or damage, protection, documentation and assessment of found objects by relevant experts</p>
<p><b>Risk 8:</b> The project may potentially resort to institutional collaborations with local police and gendarmerie that may risk facilitating potential altercations with local communities.</p> <p>Enforcement of PAs regime and/or buffer areas, following applicable environmental norms and legislation could pose risks of conflicts between rangers and local communities engaged in traditional livelihoods and practices. Enforcement of applicable laws and regulations in case of illegal earth dam construction on Camenca</p>	I=4 L=3	<b>Substantial</b>	<p>The risk rating “Substantial” is considered particularly in relation with the case of the illegal constructions on Camenca river, diverting water for personal use of a restricted number of residents in Balatina village. In this case, attempts to law enforcement could lead to potential hostilities among different local community members and/or between local police and community members that are illegally using natural resources.</p> <p>In addition, the project may facilitate institutional agreements with local police in order to combat illegal activities such as poaching and illegal logging in the targeted PAs. Enforcement issues of the environmental regulations may lead to conflicts between the PA rangers and the local community.</p>	<p>Risk management measures :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Firstly, the project will ensure that the <b>PAs Management Plans</b> (Act. 2.1.1.2 and 2.1.1.3) in the targeted areas will encompass measures for patrolling/ enforcing the environmental regulations and engagement with local communities with respect to human rights principles, understanding the local community’s rights and needs. PAs management plan will include human rights-based measures/actions for PAs rangers concerning patrolling and application of fines, search and arrest and interaction with local communities, aiming at promoting collaborative approaches.</li> </ol>

<p>river, may result in conflicts between the local police and local community.</p> <p>SES Principle 2 Human Rights, P2</p> <p>SES Principle 2 Human Rights, P7</p> <p>SES Standard 3 Community Health, Safety and Security, 3.8</p>				<p>2. Secondly, the <b>targeted PAs trainings</b> (Act. 2.1.2.2) on patrolling and legal enforcement will be included in the training seminars for rangers and PA staff, local police and central and local authorities with an emphasis on human rights principles (in line with the UNDP SES). Some of the trainings will target specifically community outreach related topics , and addressing illegal activities <i>"Interaction with local communities"</i>. The training will include a specific module for rangers, on Local Communities and Cultures, in order to strengthen understanding on community rights and needs; respect to human rights and empowering communities to manage and protect wildlife and critical habitats.</p> <p>3. Most importantly, the issue of illegal constructions on Camenca river and/or other economic displacement risks ( be it real or perceived) owing to the projects' work in the PAs, will be addressed by <b>regular meetings between PA managers, ranger patrol staff, local communities, environmental inspectorates and through the Process framework</b> to analyse trends in monitoring and legal compliance, aiming at addressing ongoing threats in a collaborative manner. <b>The Process framework</b> will take place in both targeted PAs and it is described under Annex 10 ESMF and embedded in the project document strategy under Output 2.1 and Output 2.2.</p>
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				<p>4. The <b>Grievance Redress Mechanisms</b> is described under the Annex 9 Stakeholder engagement plan. Grievance Redress Mechanism (in line with UNDP SES) will provide for a fair and free from influence entry point for their potential complaints and/or grievances. The Complaints Register and Grievance Redress Mechanism will provide an accessible, rapid, fair and effective response to concerned stakeholders, especially any vulnerable group who often lack access to formal legal regimes.</p> <p>In addition, the project will use the Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Plan to mitigate this risk.</p> <p>The participation of the most vulnerable members of community including Roma minority, women and women headed households, youth, veterans other vulnerable groups such as Roma etc. in the project activities is prioritized, and in some cases (for example the development of the criteria for project technical assistance of rural entrepreneurs) inclusion of such vulnerable members of community among beneficiaries represents a selection criterion.</p> <p>With respect to gender, a gender analysis has been undertaken (as required), and a Gender Action Plan developed. The project will hire a gender expert that will supervise the implementation of the Gender Action Plan.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Stakeholders Engagement Plan will be updated to fulfill the requirements of Standard 5 in the first year of implementation before the relevant activities begin management.</p>
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				<p>Ramsar designation and any changes to the natural resources regime identified as having the potential to lead to limitations and restrictions of access to resources, will not be implemented until/unless suitable, agreed management measures are in place.</p> <p>All the necessary approvals will be obtained from national and local authorities (particularly the Ministry of Environment) before the activities, and in line with the Process Framework, SESA, ESIA and Stakeholders Engagement Plan.</p>
<p><b>Risk 9:</b> The expected impacts resulting from the project-supported biodiversity conservation and restoration measures could be sensitive to changing climate conditions in the future.</p> <p><i>SES Standard 2 Climate Change Vulnerability, 2.2</i>  <i>SES Standard 2 Climate Change Vulnerability, 2.3</i></p>	I=3 L=2	<b>Moderate</b>	Adverse impacts of extreme climatic events (drought and/or seasonal floods) can affect project's interventions in the field and the livelihoods of local communities living in the target areas.	<p>The management measures will be implemented <b>through the project's strategy</b>.</p> <p>The various project's assessments will be informed by the existing climate risk profile/studies (elaborated within the framework of other projects) and through the project's own land/water and climate risk assessments.</p> <p>The project will develop a <b><i>Study of the hydro-ecological conditions for adequate wetlands management, climate resilient measures and adaptation scenarios</i></b> (under Output 2.1.1. Act 2.1.1.5) focusing on the targeted wetlands in the Prut River Basin. The assessments/study will be developed by the project experts in collaboration with NGO and academia. The Study will be conducted in coordination with the field research and hydroclimatic modeling for the establishment of the minimum ecological flow (Activity 1.1.1.3). The Study will include practical recommendations for decision makers to improve wetlands management. Based on these recommendations, the project will develop</p>

				<p>additional legal/regulatory amendments for the improvement of wetlands management framework.</p> <p>Attention to the current and potential impacts of climate change has been built-in to all aspects of the project.</p> <p>A multidisciplinary team of specialists will ensure that the partners and stakeholders will apply the best available climate change forecasts data Moldova and river Prut basin and will ensure that all project activities and plans take potential future climate impacts into consideration.</p> <p>The project will calculate the <b>minimum ecological flow</b> needed for the survival of the wetlands of Prut river taking into account the predicted climate induced water deficits. This will provide scientific based evidence for adequate policy and institutional provisions for sustainable management of maximum and minimum ecological flows to lakes, wetlands, and riparian zones in Prut river basin.</p> <p>The <b>hydroclimatic modelling</b> (under <b>Output 1.1</b>) and water use trend analysis will provide scientific evidence for the legal amendments that are expected to improve wetlands management and financing frameworks.</p> <p>The project's awareness raising activities will include information on climate risk and vulnerability of wetlands and livelihoods depending on the wetlands ecosystem services.</p> <p>The project will support species and habitat inventories and will identify potential gaps in the existing system of PAs in order to effectively conserve biodiversity, considering</p>
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				the potential for ecosystem change and ecological shifts due to climate change <b>impacts (Output 2.1)</b> . As part of the project's work on strengthening the management effectiveness of PAs it will also strengthen environmental monitoring capacities in order to better track the future effects of climate change within PAs and the targeted KBAs. The project's work to support the minimum ecological flow and increased allocation of water to lakes and wetlands KBAs/IBAs (Output 1.1.) will be grounded in the best available and most recent climate science relevant for Moldova.
<p><b>Risk 10:</b> Project activities involving local/field interventions and close engagement with local communities may inadvertently contribute to the spread of COVID-19.</p> <p>Standard 3 Community Health, Safety and Security, 3.4</p>	I=3 L=3	<b>Moderate</b>	Activities at local level are based on participatory approaches, and most of the times will include meetings and local consultations. There are a number of training workshops and awareness events, round table meetings etc.	The risk will be mitigated through <b>adequate safeguards</b> such as: (i) clear procedures in place in case of COVID19 reinstatement of restrictions, approved during project inception (ii) use of protective equipment, maintaining social distancing and using remote methods of engagement whenever possible (iii) if adequate safeguards cannot be put in place, activities that entail close local communities engagement will be put on hold if necessary, and work programme/budget will be revised as needed. Wherever possible on-line meeting platforms will be used and travel decreased. All project meetings will be organized mindful of government regulations and healthy standards and other appropriate safeguards (including those of UNDSS). Under Output 3.1.2 Act. 3.1.2.4 the project will support the development of <b>COVID-19 safe tourism protocols</b> by working with the National Tourism Authority and will apply/test these safety protocols within the tourism itineraries/packages supported by the project.
<b>Risk 11:</b> The project may inadvertently contribute	I=2 L=3	<b>Moderate</b>	The Project could potentially perpetuate discriminations against women based on gender, especially regarding participation in	The management of this risk will be done through the implementation of the <b>Gender</b>

<p>to potential perpetuation of discriminations against women. There are lingering disparities between men and women, particularly in rural areas and in the patriarchal cultures of some of the ethnic minority communities, which could be inadvertently replicated.</p> <p><i>SES Principle 3, Gender, P10, P12</i></p>			<p>design and implementation or access to opportunities. In the rural areas, women account for around 51-52% of the population. They are mainly engaged in housekeeping, teaching, and administrative support services. Many more women form part of the unpaid family labor in family farms.</p>	<p><b>Action Plan (GAP)</b> and will be monitored by the project specialized gender expert.</p> <p>The project design has consistently mainstreamed gender sensitive approaches and has created opportunities for tackling women's needs and the differentiated ways men and women use natural resources. The project will provide ample opportunities for women to learn about biodiversity-friendly business opportunities in rural areas, and participate in the business opportunities facilitated by the project.</p> <p>Though the training programs for local natural resource users and SMEs women will also be able to access the capacity building and training required to practice green businesses as well as to diversify their livelihoods in more resilient ways.</p> <p>The project will ensure gender balance in all project activities (e.g. seminars, community level events) including in the membership of different decision-making bodies ( Working groups; Project Board; Evaluation Committees) including access to project financial assistance and/or compensatory measures in case of potential economic displacement.</p> <p>The project will also gather gender-disaggregated data for evaluation purposes and use gender sensitive indicators (particularly around beneficiaries) to facilitate planning, implementation and monitoring. Complaints will be addressed and managed through the Grievance Redress Mechanism and the Project Board.</p>
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<p><b>Risk 12.</b> Supported local small businesses could involve third party subcontractors, that may inadvertently fail to comply with international labor standards including those related to child labor and/or may inadvertently fail to provide for occupational health and safety standards .</p> <p><i>SES Standard 7; 7.1</i> <i>SES Standard 7; 7.3,7.4</i></p>	<p>I=3 L=3</p>	<p><b>Moderate</b><sup>56</sup></p>	<p>The project will support small local businesses to access financing in order to implement local initiatives that will boost their livelihoods. In addition, there will be construction works related to the restoration activities under Output 2.2.</p> <p>Likelihood of non-observance of UN standards and policies of labor and working conditions especially child labor has been considered based also on some existing reports:</p> <p><a href="https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/moldova">https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/moldova</a></p>	<p>The <b>management measures will be devised on case by case basis per the procedures described in the ESMF</b>. The project will ensure that national working standards (Labor Code) are respected for all the project activities. The requirements of this Standard are to be applied in an appropriately-scaled manner based on the nature and scale of the project, its specific activities, the project's associated social and environmental risks and impacts, and the type of contractual relationships with project workers.</p> <p><b>The management procedures will be that specific requirements of the terms and conditions of the employment will be established</b>, that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Comply with minimum age requirements set out in International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions or national legislation (whichever offers the greatest protection to young people under the age of 18) and keep records of the dates of birth of all employees verified by official documentation</li> <li>- Check the activities carried out by young workers and ensure that children under 18 are not employed in hazardous work, including in contractor workforces. Hazardous work will normally be defined in national legislation and will be likely to include most tasks in construction and several in agriculture.</li> </ul>
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<sup>56</sup> Recommended for the M&E activities and assessment of this risk at project site: FAO's [Handbook for monitoring and evaluation of child labour in agriculture](#) (2015) - an important resource for designing, assessing and monitoring projects that need to address the risks of child labour in agricultural production and pastoral activities.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assess the safety risks relating to any work by children under 18 and carry out regular monitoring of their health, working conditions and hours of work</li> <li>- Ensure that any workers aged 13-15 are only doing light work outside school hours, in accordance with national legislation, or working in a government-approved training programme</li> <li>- Ensure that contractors have adequate systems in place to check workers' ages, identify workers under the age of 18 and to ensure that they are not engaged in hazardous work, and that their work is subject to appropriate risk assessment and health monitoring</li> </ul> <p>In addition, the Project will ensure that appropriate wages will be paid per assigned tasks. Security and safety standards will also be respected and enforced. In addition to the UNDP Stakeholder response mechanism, part of the Grievance Redress Mechanism will provide for a fair and free from influence entry point for their potential complaints and/or grievances. The Complaints Register and Grievance Redress Mechanism will provide an accessible, rapid, fair and effective response to concerned stakeholders, especially any vulnerable group who often lack access to formal legal regimes.</p> <p>For any sub-contractors due diligence will be conducted as necessary to ascertain that third parties who engage project workers are legitimate and reliable entities and have in place appropriate policies, processes and systems that allow them to operate in</p>
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				<p>accordance with the minimum requirements herein.</p> <p>The Project manager and UNDP CO will ensure that procedures are established and applied during implementation for managing and monitoring the performance of such third parties in relation to the minimum requirements herein, including incorporation of the minimum requirements into contractual agreements with such third parties, together with appropriate noncompliance remedies. In the case of subcontracting, third parties are required to include equivalent requirements and remedies in their contractual agreements with subcontractors.</p>
<p><b>Risk 13:</b> The project may inadvertently support legal/policy amendments that will allow oil drilling in Protected Areas.</p> <p>SES Standard 1 Biodiversity and NRM, 1.1; 1.2; 1.4; 1.7; 1.14</p> <p>SES Standard 3 Community Health, Safety and Security, 3.5; 3.6</p> <p>SES Standard 2 Climate Change, 2.4</p> <p>SES Standard 8 Pollution Prevention and Resource Efficiency 8.2, 8.6</p>	I=3 L=3	<b>Moderate</b>	The project will offer legal assistance to the Ministry of Environment and the Ministerial Committee in charge with monitoring the oil exploitation in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, in order to modify the legal provisions and regulations related to concessions of mineral resources.	The risk will be mitigated by the SESA approach. The project will also ensure that the legal amendments will adhere to the MAB UNESCO requirements for the biosphere reserve designated in the Lower Prut.
<b>Risk 14</b> The project supported Innovation	I=3 L=3	<b>Moderate</b>	The project's work under Output 3.1.2 is focusing on the organization of an Innovation Challenge in order to identify.	The risk will be mitigated through SES (screening against UNDP SES criteria). The

<p>Challenge may inadvertently promote innovative products that could pose environmental or social risks.</p> <p>SES Standard 1 Biodiversity and NRM, 1.1; 1.2; 1.4; SES Standard 2 Climate Change, 2.4</p>			<p>innovative SMART “biodiversity passport”, possibly a downloadable <i>Smart Phone App</i> that will be promoted as the preferred means to download a single ID/code which would give access to information on protected area sites and tourism facilities in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and the Royal Forest Nature Reserve and the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve in Romania.</p>	<p>Innovation Challenge will be organized according to UNDP procedures and the screening of proposals will be aligned with UNDP SES requirements (please see ESMF Annex 10)</p>
<p><b>Risk 15</b> The project supported eco-tourism routes may pose environmental or social risks.</p> <p><i>SES Principle 2 Human Rights</i> <i>P5, P7</i> <i>SES Principle 3 Gender</i> <i>P10, P12</i> <i>SES Principle Accountability and Resilience</i> <i>P13</i> <i>Standard 1 Biodiversity Conservation and NRM</i> <i>1.2,1.4</i>  <i>SES Standard 2 Climate Change, 2.4</i> <i>Standard 7 Labor and Working Condition</i></p>	<p>I=3 L=3</p>	<p><b>Moderate</b></p>	<p>Under Output 3.1.2 the project will support the development of local eco-tourism routes (Act 3.1.2.1) and a cross-border tourist package Moldova-Romania (Act 3.1.2.2), building upon the existing local tourists attractions and involving the support of the Local Action Group Lower Prut.</p> <p>The risks considered here are related to the project potential failure to consider : (i) inclusive participation of local communities in the development of the tourist itineraries, especially with respect to gender and vulnerable communities and (ii) risks related to labor conditions, (iii) risks related to the potential support to unsustainable use of natural resources etc</p>	<p>The risk will be mitigated through SES, using the UNDP social and environmental screening procedures in order to identify and avoid possible risks (Please see ESMF Annex 10).</p>

7.3,				
<b>Risks related to the project's area of influence (Aoi)</b>				
<p><b>Risk 16:</b> Oil exploitation operations in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve do not observe the minimum environmental standards, and constitute a likely source of water pollution and fire hazards, posing a risk to the natural habitats and ecosystems in the project's targeted PAs.</p> <p>Standard 1 Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Natural Resource Management 1.2; 1.4; 1.7; 1.10; 1.14</p> <p>Standard 8 Pollution Prevention and resource Efficiency; 8.1, 8.2</p>	I-4 L=4	<b>Substantial</b>	<p><b>This risk relates to the project's area of influence, and does not stem from project activities. The measures (to the right) reflect this fact.</b></p> <p>Oil exploitation in a core area of a MAB/UNESCO Biosphere reserve in Lower Prut is based on unclear legal arrangements. Oil exploitation platform is functioning on subpar environmental standards, that can (an did) ignite fire hazards, affecting critical habitats in 2020.</p> <p>The Law on Protected Areas (article 26) does stipulate that economic activities affecting natural ecosystem are forbidden in the scientific reserves but provides an exception for the exploitation of natural and mineral resources that are of national interest (such as oil and gas) with the only caveat to respect environmental norms, the latter of which are not observed by private entities. The article 56 of the same law however forbids any economic activity in a core area of a MAB UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, however the oil exploitation platform in a core area of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve is still operational. The current oil concession holder has filed for bankruptcy and its contract expired. Currently (at the time of this SESP) the Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment is seeking to reach a final resolution on the oil exploitation in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve.</p>	<p>Risk mitigation measures (indirectly mitigating the risk):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under Output 1.1. Act. 1.1.1.1 the project will develop legal amendments that when approved, will clarify any potential legal ambiguities surrounding the oil exploitation in the MAB UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and will support adherence to MAB UNESCO guidelines.</li> <li>- The project will work with the Organization for SME sector development tin Moldova (ODIMM) and will develop and deliver ISO14001:2015 training modules to promote mandatory ISO 14001 certification and development of capacities for increasing environmental standards. The trainings are primarily destined to oil companies but also for economic operators that are posing medium and high risks of polluting the water resources.</li> <li>- The project will be coordinated with the active NGOs and media communities in order to advocate for stopping the oil exploitation in core area of the targeted PA.</li> <li>- The project will support the Ministerial Committee that will be in charge to supervise the oil</li> </ul>

				<p>concessional contract and will provide technical legal advisory services as necessary, aiming at increasing technical capacity to mainstream mandatory higher environmental standards for economic activities in PAs in the current regulatory framework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project will support the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve Administration to conclude local agreements with environmental inspectorates and local police and facilitate rapid interventions in case of fire or other hazards resulting from the oil exploitation platform. Such Agreements may include scoped ESIA and/or an Emergency Management Plan as necessary.</li> </ul>
	<b>QUESTION 4: What is the overall project risk categorization?</b>			
	Low Risk	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Moderate Risk	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Substantial Risk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	High Risk	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<b>QUESTION 5: Based on the identified risks and risk categorization, what requirements of the SES are triggered? (check all that apply)</b>			
	Question only required for Moderate, Substantial and High Risk projects			
	<b>Is assessment required?</b> <b>(check if "yes")</b>	x		<b>Status? (completed, planned)</b>
	if yes, indicate overall type and status		X	Targeted assessment(s) Completed during PPG: gender analysis, stakeholder analysis

			x	SESA	Planned during implementation: to be determined based on site-specific screening
			x	ESIA	Planned during implementation: to be determined based on site-specific screening
	<b>Are management plans required? (check if "yes")</b>	<b>X</b>			
	If yes, indicate overall type		<b>X</b>	Screening and Targeted management plans (e.g. Gender Action Plan, Emergency Response Plan, others)	Completed during PPG: Gender Action Plan, Stakeholder Engagement Plan  Planned during implementation: Process Framework, Livelihood Action Plan (if needed), others as needed per site-specific screening and assessment
			x	ESMP	Planned during implementation: to be determined based on site-specific screening
			x	ESMF (Environmental and Social Management Framework)	Completed during PPG

	Based on identified <u>risks</u> , which Principles/Project-level Standards triggered?		Comments (not required)
	Overarching Principle: Leave No One Behind		
	<b>Human Rights</b>	X	
	<b>Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment</b>	X	
	<b>Accountability</b>	X	
	<b>1. Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Natural Resource Management</b>	X	
	<b>2. Climate Change and Disaster Risks</b>	X	
	<b>3. Community Health, Safety and Security</b>	X	
	<b>4. Cultural Heritage</b>	X	
	<b>5. Displacement and Resettlement</b>	X	
	<b>6. Indigenous Peoples</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<b>7. Labour and Working Conditions</b>	X	
	<b>8. Pollution Prevention and Resource Efficiency</b>	X	

#### Final Sign Off

Final Screening at the design-stage is not complete until the following signatures are included

<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
QA Assessor		UNDP staff member responsible for the project, typically a UNDP Programme Officer. Final signature confirms they have "checked" to ensure that the SESP is adequately conducted.

QA Approver		UNDP senior manager, typically the UNDP Deputy Country Director (DCD), Country Director (CD), Deputy Resident Representative (DRR), or Resident Representative (RR). The QA Approver cannot also be the QA Assessor. Final signature confirms they have “cleared” the SESP prior to submittal to the PAC.
PAC Chair		UNDP chair of the PAC. In some cases PAC Chair may also be the QA Approver. Final signature confirms that the SESP was considered as part of the project appraisal and considered in recommendations of the PAC.

## SESP Attachment 1. Social and Environmental Risk Screening Checklist

Checklist Potential Social and Environmental <u>Risks</u>		
<b>INSTRUCTIONS:</b> The risk screening checklist will assist in answering Questions 2-6 of the Screening Template. Answers to the checklist questions help to (1) identify potential risks, (2) determine the overall risk categorization of the project, and (3) determine required level of assessment and management measures. Refer to the <a href="#">SES toolkit</a> for further guidance on addressing screening questions.		
<b>Overarching Principle: Leave No One Behind</b> <b>Human Rights</b>		<b>Answer (Yes/No)</b>
P.1	Have local communities or individuals raised human rights concerns regarding the project (e.g. during the stakeholder engagement process, grievance processes, public statements)?	No
P.2	Is there a risk that duty-bearers (e.g. government agencies) do not have the capacity to meet their obligations in the project?	Yes
P.3	Is there a risk that rights-holders (e.g. project-affected persons) do not have the capacity to claim their rights?	Yes
<i>Would the project potentially involve or lead to:</i>		
P.4	adverse impacts on enjoyment of the human rights (civil, political, economic, social or cultural) of the affected population and particularly of marginalized groups?	No
P.5	inequitable or discriminatory impacts on affected populations, particularly people living in poverty or marginalized or excluded individuals or groups, including persons with disabilities? <sup>57</sup>	Yes
P.6	restrictions in availability, quality of and/or access to resources or basic services, in particular to marginalized individuals or groups, including persons with disabilities?	Yes
P.7	exacerbation of conflicts among and/or the risk of violence to project-affected communities and individuals?	Yes
<b>Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment</b>		
P.8	Have women's groups/leaders raised gender equality concerns regarding the project, (e.g. during the stakeholder engagement process, grievance processes, public statements)?	No
<i>Would the project potentially involve or lead to:</i>		

<sup>57</sup> Prohibited grounds of discrimination include race, ethnicity, sex, age, language, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, political or other opinion, national or social or geographical origin, property, birth or other status including as an indigenous person or as a member of a minority. References to "women and men" or similar is understood to include women and men, boys and girls, and other groups discriminated against based on their gender identities, such as transgender and transsexual people.

P.9	adverse impacts on gender equality and/or the situation of women and girls?	No
P.10	reproducing discriminations against women based on gender, especially regarding participation in design and implementation or access to opportunities and benefits?	Yes
P.11	limitations on women's ability to use, develop and protect natural resources, taking into account different roles and positions of women and men in accessing environmental goods and services? <i>For example, activities that could lead to natural resources degradation or depletion in communities who depend on these resources for their livelihoods and well being</i>	Yes
P.12	exacerbation of risks of gender-based violence? <i>For example, through the influx of workers to a community, changes in community and household power dynamics, increased exposure to unsafe public places and/or transport, etc.</i>	Yes
<b>Sustainability and Resilience:</b> Screening questions regarding risks associated with sustainability and resilience are encompassed by the Standard-specific questions below		
<b>Accountability</b>		
<i>Would the project potentially involve or lead to:</i>		
P.13	exclusion of any potentially affected stakeholders, in particular marginalized groups and excluded individuals (including persons with disabilities), from fully participating in decisions that may affect them?	Yes
P.14	grievances or objections from potentially affected stakeholders?	Yes
P.15	risks of retaliation or reprisals against stakeholders who express concerns or grievances, or who seek to participate in or to obtain information on the project?	No
<b>Project-Level Standards</b>		
<b>Standard 1: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Natural Resource Management</b>		
<i>Would the project potentially involve or lead to:</i>		
1.1	adverse impacts to habitats (e.g. modified, natural, and critical habitats) and/or ecosystems and ecosystem services? <i>For example, through habitat loss, conversion or degradation, fragmentation, hydrological changes</i>	Yes
1.2	activities within or adjacent to critical habitats and/or environmentally sensitive areas, including (but not limited to) legally protected areas (e.g. nature reserve, national park), areas proposed for protection, or recognized as such by authoritative sources and/or indigenous peoples or local communities?	Yes

1.3	changes to the use of lands and resources that may have adverse impacts on habitats, ecosystems, and/or livelihoods? (Note: if restrictions and/or limitations of access to lands would apply, refer to Standard 5)	Yes
1.4	risks to endangered species (e.g. reduction, encroachment on habitat)?	Yes
1.5	exacerbation of illegal wildlife trade?	No
1.6	introduction of invasive alien species?	Yes
1.7	adverse impacts on soils?	Yes
1.8	harvesting of natural forests, plantation development, or reforestation?	Yes
1.9	significant agricultural production?	No
1.10	animal husbandry or harvesting of fish populations or other aquatic species?	Yes
1.11	significant extraction, diversion or containment of surface or ground water? <i>For example, construction of dams, reservoirs, river basin developments, groundwater extraction</i>	Yes
1.12	handling or utilization of genetically modified organisms/living modified organisms? <sup>58</sup>	No
1.13	utilization of genetic resources? (e.g. collection and/or harvesting, commercial development) <sup>59</sup>	No
1.14	adverse transboundary or global environmental concerns?	Yes
<b>Standard 2: Climate Change and Disaster Risks</b>		
<i>Would the project potentially involve or lead to:</i>		
2.1	areas subject to hazards such as earthquakes, floods, landslides, severe winds, storm surges, tsunami or volcanic eruptions?	Yes
2.2	outputs and outcomes sensitive or vulnerable to potential impacts of climate change or disasters? <i>For example, through increased precipitation, drought, temperature, salinity, extreme events, earthquakes</i>	Yes
2.3	increases in vulnerability to climate change impacts or disaster risks now or in the future (also known as maladaptive or negative coping practices)? <i>For example, changes to land use planning may encourage further development of floodplains, potentially increasing the population's vulnerability to climate change, specifically flooding</i>	Yes
2.4	increases of greenhouse gas emissions, black carbon emissions or other drivers of climate change?	Yes

<sup>58</sup> See the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) and its [Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety](#).

<sup>59</sup> See the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) and its [Nagoya Protocol](#) on access and benefit sharing from use of genetic resources.

<b>Standard 3: Community Health, Safety and Security</b>	
<i>Would the project potentially involve or lead to:</i>	
3.1 construction and/or infrastructure development (e.g. roads, buildings, dams)? (Note: the GEF does not finance projects that would involve the construction or rehabilitation of large or complex dams)	Yes
3.2 air pollution, noise, vibration, traffic, injuries, physical hazards, poor surface water quality due to runoff, erosion, sanitation?	Yes
3.3 harm or losses due to failure of structural elements of the project (e.g. collapse of buildings or infrastructure)?	Yes
3.4 risks of water-borne or other vector-borne diseases (e.g. temporary breeding habitats), communicable and noncommunicable diseases, nutritional disorders, mental health?	Yes
3.5 transport, storage, and use and/or disposal of hazardous or dangerous materials (e.g. explosives, fuel and other chemicals during construction and operation)?	Yes
3.6 adverse impacts on ecosystems and ecosystem services relevant to communities' health (e.g. food, surface water purification, natural buffers from flooding)?	Yes
3.7 influx of project workers to project areas?	No
3.8 engagement of security personnel to protect facilities and property or to support project activities?	Yes
<b>Standard 4: Cultural Heritage</b>	
<i>Would the project potentially involve or lead to:</i>	
4.1 activities adjacent to or within a Cultural Heritage site?	Yes
4.2 significant excavations, demolitions, movement of earth, flooding or other environmental changes?	Yes
4.3 adverse impacts to sites, structures, or objects with historical, cultural, artistic, traditional or religious values or intangible forms of culture (e.g. knowledge, innovations, practices)? (Note: projects intended to protect and conserve Cultural Heritage may also have inadvertent adverse impacts)	Yes
4.4 alterations to landscapes and natural features with cultural significance?	No
4.5 utilization of tangible and/or intangible forms (e.g. practices, traditional knowledge) of Cultural Heritage for commercial or other purposes?	Yes
<b>Standard 5: Displacement and Resettlement</b>	

<i>Would the project potentially involve or lead to:</i>	
5.1 temporary or permanent and full or partial physical displacement (including people without legally recognizable claims to land)?	Yes
5.2 economic displacement (e.g. loss of assets or access to resources due to land acquisition or access restrictions – even in the absence of physical relocation)?	Yes
5.3 risk of forced evictions? <sup>60</sup>	No
5.4 impacts on or changes to land tenure arrangements and/or community based property rights/customary rights to land, territories and/or resources?	Yes
<b>Standard 6: Indigenous Peoples</b>	
<i>Would the project potentially involve or lead to:</i>	
6.1 areas where indigenous peoples are present (including project area of influence)?	No
6.2 activities located on lands and territories claimed by indigenous peoples?	No
6.3 impacts (positive or negative) to the human rights, lands, natural resources, territories, and traditional livelihoods of indigenous peoples (regardless of whether indigenous peoples possess the legal titles to such areas, whether the project is located within or outside of the lands and territories inhabited by the affected peoples, or whether the indigenous peoples are recognized as indigenous peoples by the country in question)?  <i>If the answer to screening question 6.3 is “yes”, then the potential risk impacts are considered significant and the project would be categorized as either Substantial Risk or High Risk</i>	No
6.4 the absence of culturally appropriate consultations carried out with the objective of achieving FPIC on matters that may affect the rights and interests, lands, resources, territories and traditional livelihoods of the indigenous peoples concerned?	No
6.5 the utilization and/or commercial development of natural resources on lands and territories claimed by indigenous peoples?	No
6.6 forced eviction or the whole or partial physical or economic displacement of indigenous peoples, including through access restrictions to lands, territories, and resources?  <i>Consider, and where appropriate ensure, consistency with the answers under Standard 5 above</i>	No

<sup>60</sup> Forced eviction is defined here as the permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection. Forced evictions constitute gross violations of a range of internationally recognized human rights.

6.7	adverse impacts on the development priorities of indigenous peoples as defined by them?	No
6.8	risks to the physical and cultural survival of indigenous peoples?	No
6.9	impacts on the Cultural Heritage of indigenous peoples, including through the commercialization or use of their traditional knowledge and practices? <i>Consider, and where appropriate ensure, consistency with the answers under Standard 4 above.</i>	No
<b>Standard 7: Labour and Working Conditions</b>		
<i>Would the project potentially involve or lead to: (note: applies to project and contractor workers)</i>		
7.1	working conditions that do not meet national labour laws and international commitments?	Yes
7.2	working conditions that may deny freedom of association and collective bargaining?	No
7.3	use of child labour?	Yes
7.4	use of forced labour?	Yes
7.5	discriminatory working conditions and/or lack of equal opportunity?	No
7.6	occupational health and safety risks due to physical, chemical, biological and psychosocial hazards (including violence and harassment) throughout the project life-cycle?	Yes
<b>Standard 8: Pollution Prevention and Resource Efficiency</b>		
<i>Would the project potentially involve or lead to:</i>		
8.1	the release of pollutants to the environment due to routine or non-routine circumstances with the potential for adverse local, regional, and/or transboundary impacts?	No
8.2	the generation of waste (both hazardous and non-hazardous)?	Yes
8.3	the manufacture, trade, release, and/or use of hazardous materials and/or chemicals?	No
8.4	the use of chemicals or materials subject to international bans or phase-outs? <i>For example, DDT, PCBs and other chemicals listed in international conventions such as the <a href="#">Montreal Protocol</a>, <a href="#">Minamata Convention</a>, <a href="#">Basel Convention</a>, <a href="#">Rotterdam Convention</a>, <a href="#">Stockholm Convention</a></i>	No
8.5	the application of pesticides that may have a negative effect on the environment or human health?	Yes
8.6	significant consumption of raw materials, energy, and/or water?	Yes

**Annex 7: UNDP Risk Register**

#	Description	Risk Category	Impact & Probability	Risk Treatment / Management Measures	Risk Owner
1	National and local government institutions responsible for the district and local development strategies do not have adequate capacity to support, maintain and enforce integrated biodiversity considerations into local strategies	Operational	I=3;L=3 Moderate	The risk is mitigated through the project's strategy. The project will strengthen and expand the current capabilities of the key institutions responsible for the development planning at district and local levels and the enforcement of environmental regulation in three districts (Cahul, Glodeni and Falesti) and will offer support in the midterm revision of the local district strategies (2020-2024) to mainstream biodiversity and key habitats' considerations into local development plans.	Project team, IP
2	Oil drilling in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve may jeopardize the project's results, and hamper project efforts to secure high value wetlands ecosystems. <i>(This is a risk related to the project Area of Influence- not under the project's control, but still needs to be monitored)</i>	Environmental	L =3 I = 5 High	The oil drilling in the PA falls under the incidence of a concessional contract between the government and a private company. Although the contract has presumably ended, the oil exploitation continued at least throughout 2020. The oil exploitation platform operates below the environmental standards, resulting in occasional oil spills in the core area of the Biosphere reserve (in the lake Beleu (KBA)) affecting key species nesting areas and posing fire hazards. In order to (indirectly) manage the risk and increase alignment with MAB/UNESCO requirements, the project will work with the Ministry of Environment and will develop legal amendments to clarify an ambiguity in the current legislation with regard to the permission for oil drilling in a core area of a MAB UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The decision to approve the legal amendments and (possibly) shut down the operations rests with the Government. The project will be working closely with a range of government stakeholders, partners, and resource users/managers, NGOs and potential investors. From a legal perspective, the project will work to identify any critical conflicts in government policies and normative acts related to the sustainable use of natural resources in the protected areas that would diminish the potential to achieve the project objective and will propose subsequent amendments (Component 1). In addition, the project will deliver	Project team, IP

				capacity building on green businesses and introductory courses on ISO 14001 Standards to increase the environmental standards of economic operators, especially important for businesses with high risk of water and wetland pollution. The project will partner with NGOs and advocate for sustainable use of wetlands in line with international designation such as Ramsar and MAB/UNESCO.	
3	The project's impact on the status of biodiversity and wetlands ecological integrity could be sensitive to changing climatic conditions in the future.	Environmental	I=3 L=3 Moderate	The project will put in place measures for degraded riparian land restoration in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and hydrotechnical works for restoration of natural flooding regime in Camenca floodplain in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve that is grounded by climate risk assessments, feasibility analysis and tested methodologies that will enable stakeholders to adapt sustainable natural resources management to any given context and threats. The hydrotechnical work on Camenca river for example, will be based on project-supported feasibility analysis and climate risk assessments. The PPG phase-conducted pre-feasibility analysis has highlighted that through the envisaged hydrotechnical works, an additional 8.3 million m3 water could be brought to the area, thus increasing wetland resilience even under the worst climate scenarios. Furthermore, under Component 1, the project will support amendments to the Regulation of the Stanca-Costesti dam in order to provide for adjusted minimum Environmental Flow that will take into account the climate induce water scarcity scenarios.	Project team, IP
4	The National Ecological Fund (NEF) may fail to increase financing toward sustainable wetland management .	Financial Strategic	I=3 L=3 Moderate	Due to potential limited interest from the Ministry to change funding priorities and approve project-born legal amendments and/or due to a lack of capacities for competitive biodiversity projects submitted by the PAs, there is a risk that NEF will not prioritize wetland financing. The risk is mitigated through the project's strategy. The project will work closely with the Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment and will support/advocate for targeted amendments to the Regulation of the National Ecological Fund and relevant legislative acts in order	Project team, IP, UNDP

				to create the enabling environment for an increased funding available for wetlands' restoration and sustainable management. These amendments will be assessed and discussed with the Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment and the project will advocate for expedite formal approval. At the same time, the project will implement awareness activities (targeting decision makers) to highlight the risks and threats to the wetlands, raise awareness and understanding of wetlands problems, especially in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve, where key habitats are drying out in absence of regular flooding and in general make everyone aware of the wetlands' ecosystem services fragility under climate-induced predicted water scarcity. These problems are known by politicians; however it is possible that the full consequences are not properly understood, due to (in part) of a lack of data. The project will address the data gap as well, by generating relevant knowledge and hydro-ecological assessments to back up responsible wetland-centred policy making. Targeted trainings/coaching of PAs staff in project development/coaching and helping with the project writing, is expected to address the risk of a lack of quality wetlands management projects submitted for NEF funding.	
5	Political instability and reshuffled political priorities may hamper the formal adoption of the project-born legal and regulatory amendments destined to improve wetlands management framework.	Political Strategic	I=5 L=3 High	The project will capitalize on the good relations and cooperation between UNDP and the Ministry of Environment (MoE) and will work actively to reinforce political support and maintain the wetlands issues high on the political agenda. The Project will facilitate regular high level meetings between UNDP Resident Representative the Minister/Deputy Minister, Director of the Moldsilva Agency, the GEF OFP and CBD, Ramsar and MAB/UNESCO focal points in order to assess the progress towards the desired development outcome, test ToC assumptions and address risks	Project team, IP, UNDP
6	Co-financing of the planned ecological restoration on Camenca river may not materialize.	Financial	I=5 L=3	Local dialogue facilitated by the project together with the national and local authorities will first and	Project team, IP, UNDP

			High	foremost raise awareness and educate the local communities as well as national decision makers about the benefits of the restoration works. Materialization of co-financing will be monitored by UNDP CO and the Project manager and addressed during the regular high level meetings between UNDP Resident Representative the Minister/Deputy Minister, Director of the Moldsilva Agency, the GEF OFP and CBD, Ramsar and MAB/UNESCO focal points.	
7	There is a risk that the Implementing Unit for Environmental Projects EPIU may fail to comply with UNDP NIM and GEF standards as it lacks familiarity with UNDP/GEF procedures. The project is likely to face operational difficulties and delays associated with the new execution modality	Operational	I=3 L=3 Moderate	Although the core capacities of the EPIU are sufficient, there are weaknesses in the organisational structure and staffing, accounting policies and procedures, and programme management as per the micro HACT assessment (2021)). These capacity limitations along with the lack of direct experience with UNDP NIM implementation call for targeted capacity building. The UNDP CO together with the IP will organize internal UNDP NIM trainings and UNDP CO will provide the necessary NIM guidelines for day-to-day management and it will ensure that hands-on experience and learning by doing will complement the risk mitigation measures ( <i>NIM related trainings and technical guidance will be funded by UNDP co-financing</i> ).	Project team, IP/ UNDP
8	COVID-19 related travel limitations may affect intended project's support to alternative livelihoods and PA financing through local eco-tourism	Operational	I=3 L=3 Moderate	The project will work with the Local Action Group Lower Prut and local communities' representatives as well as with Moldova's Association of Inbound Tourism (ANTRIM) and with line ministries (the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Health) to develop Safe Tourism standards, that will be applied by the project initially in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve .	Project team, IP/ UNDP
9	COVID-19 related risks to the project implementation:  Project delays due to COVID 19 reinstated restrictions	Operational	I=3 L=3 Moderate	The project will develop COVID-19 mitigation measures during Project Inception phase and agree on ways to mitigate any implementation delays that may result due to potential reinstatement of the COVID-19 related restrictions. UNDP issued corporate guidance on "Managing programmes and projects in the age of Covid-19" which will be used in devising tailored measures for this project, presented and	Project team, IP/ UNDP

				approved at the Inception Workshop along with the main health safeguards to be deployed during the implementation, in order to protect people and environment and prevent the virus spread (i.e use of masks, social distancing, remote meetings whenever possible; remote field monitoring as much as possible). The risk to the project posed by potential reinstatement of restrictions (travel; lockdown, others) will be mitigated through several steps that could include (but will be not limited to) : (i) Re-assessment of the COVID-19 restrictions on the AWP implementation (ii) Create/activate stakeholders and key project partners Telegram/Zoom group and move all the meetings online (iii) if activities will be delayed a few months but workplan will deliver on time and within budget, no formal revision is needed (iv) if activities cannot be completed on time, workplan will be revisited and budgets revised/ clearance by online Board meetings (v) if local activities and local field staff can continue activities, monitoring will be done remotely (using photos from the field) or through a virtual mechanisms (project will reach out to community leaders and key partners in the field who can ensure that activities will be aligned with the needs and take into account the constraints faced by the community. The project will ensure that adequate protective gear is handed over to local field staff and community members and that social distancing and other health safeguards are in place. UNDP TRAC unspent balance can be re-puosed to COVID-19 in case of <i>force majeure</i> .	
<b>Safeguards (UNDP SESP)</b>					
	<b>Risk 1:</b> Vulnerable groups (smallholders with less land and capacities) including women and women entrepreneurs, might not be involved in project activities and therefore not engaged in, supportive of, or benefitting from project activities. Project-born outputs may not fully incorporate or reflect views of women and ensure	Social, Environmental (SE)	I=3 L=3 Moderate	The risk is managed through the project's strategy, which (as explained in Part A of this SESP document) has embedded participatory approaches, balanced representations and meaningful participation of women, youth and other vulnerable groups in consultations and equal opportunities to benefit from project activities. With respect to gender, a Gender Analysis has been undertaken and a Gender Action	Project team, IPUNDP

	equitable opportunities for their involvement and benefit.			Plan developed. The project will hire a gender expert that will supervise the implementation of the Gender Action Plan and will make sure that the project will offer equal opportunities for women to participate in and benefit from the project activities. The project will work closely with all stakeholders to ensure that there is adequate consultation and participation. Activities designed under Components 2 and 3 are specifically tailored to deploy participatory processes in which all voices can be heard, especially those small holders, poor households, women entrepreneurs etc. that are usually left behind. Engagement of vulnerable groups and other key community is detailed in the Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Gender Plan in line with current UNDP SES guidance.	
	<b>Risk 2:</b> Local and national decision makers/authorities may not have the capacity to fulfil all aspects of their mandate, and rural resource users may not have the capacity to claim their rights, which could potentially lead to the violation of human rights.	SE	I=3 L=3 Moderate	The risk is managed through the project's strategy. Output 1.1.3/Act. 1.1.3.1 includes concrete measures to strengthen and expand the current capabilities of the key institutions responsible for the development planning at district and local levels in three districts (Cahul, Glodeni and Falesti) to mainstream biodiversity considerations, through multi-stakeholders participatory approaches. There will be a number of 6 trainings and coaching sessions to strengthen the local authorities capacities to integrate biodiversity considerations in the local development strategies, providing an opportunity for further consultations and dialogue between decision makers and local communities. On this occasion too, the project will make sure to integrate a gender perspective into all the capacity building events and stakeholders consultations, advocating for women rights and striving to offer equal participation opportunities in trainings and awareness events and decision making processes.	Project team, IP/ UNDP

	<p><b>Risk 3:</b> The envisaged legal and policy amendments developed by the project in support of long-term sustainability could affect access and use of resources by local communities, including the rural poor and women.</p>	SE	<p>I = 3 L = 2 Moderate</p>	<p>The risk will be managed through the <b>SESA approach</b> (that must be applied during the development of the project-supported legal and policy amendments, influencing the said amendments, such that potential social and environmental downstream impacts arising from the development of subsequent regulations/policy/guidelines are considered as an explicit part of the amended laws, Regulation and policies (<i>please see Annex 10 ESMF</i> )</p>	Project team, IP/ UNDP
	<p><b>Risk 4:</b> Designation of additional areas as Ramsar sites in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve, and expansion of the total PA area, could lead to potential limitations or restrictions of the use of natural resources.</p> <p>Similarly, strengthening the management of existing PAs, such as the development of a Management Plan for the targeted PAs, improved PAs zoning, strengthening the protection regimes and stricter enforcement of the environmental regulation may further restrict access to and use of biodiversity resources by local communities, affecting livelihoods.</p>	SE	<p>I=3 L=3 Moderate</p>	<p>The risk management measures will be addressed by the Process Framework (PF), included in the Project document. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Gender Action Plan and project level GRM will complement the Process Framework ( Please see Annex 9 Stakeholder Engagement Plan – it includes a template for the Process Framework).The Process framework is embedded in the project strategy and it is part and parcel of the project's work under Component 2 (Output 2.1.1/Act 2.1.1.2 and 2.1.1.3).</p>	Project team, IP/ UNDP
	<p><b>Risk 5.</b> The restoration of the old watercourse of the Camenca river will raise the ground water level, which may affect private arable land plots and cause flooding of house basements, negatively affecting livelihoods and may restrict the current (illegal) access to water resources of some of the local residents. The intervention sites may disturb surrounding settlements.</p>	SE	<p>I=4 L=3 Substantial</p>	<p>Mitigation measures will ensure consistency to SES (not adherence) because the relevant project activities are co-financed with funds that will not be administered by UNDP (i.e. will not flow through UNDP accounts).</p> <p>The risk is mitigated through two processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the Process Framework (PF) embedded in the project strategy, under the Act. 2.2.1.2.</li> </ul> <p>The local dialogue facilitated by the project together with the national and local authorities will first and foremost raise awareness and educate the local communities about the benefits of the restoration works and secondly will find an agreeable solution to</p>	Project team, IP/ UNDP

			<p>enforce the applicable legislation/regulations concerning the illegal constructions on Camenca water course. The local dialogue will be addressing especially the concerns of people from the villages situated in the immediate proximity of the envisaged hydrological works, in particular Balatina village. Any potential economic displacements resulting from the preparatory activities and post-hydrological works will be addressed.</p> <p>following UNDP SES guidelines and the project will develop a Livelihood Action Plan as required and compensatory (non-monetary) payments (<i>Annex 10 ESMF</i>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondly, the development of the scoped ESIA/ESMP, as part of a full Feasibility Study (according to the national legislation) during the project implementation will give further clarity on the likelihood and/or scale of any potential negative impact on the local livelihoods.</li> </ul> <p>The project will make sure that the immediate impact area is correctly identified and that the Process Framework will include the most vulnerable community representatives and that in case of any economic displacement, a Livelihood Action Plan will be developed and implemented and a compensatory scheme will be deployed. As indicated in the Project Document strategy under Act.2.2.1.2, the GEF funds will be made available to develop a Full Feasibility Study only after the following steps have been addressed namely (1) National and local authorities have appropriately addressed the illegal constructions on Camenca river (consistent with the SES requirements) and local communities are supportive of this intervention (2) The project has secured the approval of the necessary legal background papers that may be necessary to clarify cadaster issues. In addition (3) the national partners commitment to co-financing the full hydrotechnical works following UNDP SES requirements (and any</p>	
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				<p>other related costs that cannot be covered by the UNDP/GEF project) on Camenca should be validated again prior to the commissioning of the full feasibility study.</p> <p>The full Feasibility Study should not be commissioned if these (above mentioned) stages are not completed, as there is a risk of unforeseen complications that can lead to unmanageable delays of implementing the actual hydrotechnical works on Camenca river, due to the fact that the local dialogue and the process itself may take years of negotiations, (legal) clarifications and enforcement of the legal provisions.</p>	
	<p><b>Risk 6:</b> Wetlands riparian restoration measures intended to improve water availability, and reduce threats to critical habitats and environmentally sensitive areas could potentially end up harming them.</p>	SE	I=5 3L=2 Moderate	<p>RIPARIAN REFORESTATION</p> <p>The risks will be managed through an appropriately scoped ESIA to identify, prevent and mitigate potential negative impacts on the critical habitats. The wetlands restoration measures are expected to ensure livelihood improvements and environmental sustainability during and beyond the project period. The qualified project's experts ( Riparian Forest Engineer, Hydrologists, Agronomist, PA specialist) will work with the safeguards experts/company to properly identify risks and proposed management measures. The Project Manager and Experts as well as Implementing Partner/EPIU and Moldsilva Agency, ICAS, representatives and local authorities will facilitate local consultations with community representatives on the proposed restoration measures, targeted locations and necessary assessments. In the case of the reforestation works under Output 2.2.1/Act. 2.2.1.1, the selected reforestation areas selected are located on public property, managed by the local authorities and Moldsilva Agency. ESIA's will be conducted prior to the commencement of the reforestation activities (please see ESMF Annex 10). The local communities will be made aware of the monitoring requirements of the sites and the ecological benefits that these habitat</p>	Project team, IP/P UNDP

				restorations will bring to the lakes ecosystems. The consultations will be led by the local authorities and the project will work together with the Local Action Group Lower Prut organization to facilitate consultations.	
	<b>Risk 7.</b> The project supported demonstration activities may fail to properly consider procedures for chance finds of valuable cultural heritage sites.	SE	I=3 L=2 Moderate	The risk is managed through SESP and the project will ensure that chance find procedures are included in all plans and contracts regarding project-related restoration works, construction, including excavations, demolitions, movement of earth, flooding, or other changes in the physical environment; such procedures establish how chance finds of tangible Cultural Heritage shall be managed, including notification of relevant authorities and stakeholders, avoidance of further disturbance or damage, protection, documentation and assessment of found objects by relevant experts	Project team, IP/RP UNDP
	<b>Risk 8:</b> The project may potentially resort to institutional collaborations with local police and gendarmerie that may risk facilitating potential altercations with local communities.  Enforcement of PAs regime and/or buffer areas, following applicable environmental norms and legislation could pose risks of conflicts between rangers and local communities engaged in traditional livelihoods and practices. Enforcement of applicable laws and regulations in case of illegal earth dam construction on Camenca river, may result in conflicts between the local police and local community.	SE	I=4 L=3 Substantial	Risk management measures :  -Firstly, the project will ensure that the PAs Management Plans (Act. 2.1.1.2 and 2.1.1.3) in the targeted areas will encompass measures for patrolling/ enforcing the environmental regulations and engagement with local communities with respect to human rights principles, understanding the local community's rights and needs. PAs management plan will include human rights-based measures/actions for PAs rangers concerning patrolling and application of fines, search and arrest and interaction with local communities, aiming at promoting collaborative approaches.  -Secondly, the targeted PAs trainings (Act. 2.1.2.2) on patrolling and legal enforcement will be included in the training seminars for rangers and PA staff, local police and central and local authorities with an emphasis on human rights principles (in line with the UNDP SES). Some of the trainings will target specifically community outreach related topics , and addressing illegal activities " <i>Interaction with local communities</i> ". The training will include a specific	Project team, IP/RP UNDP

			<p>module for rangers, on Local Communities and Cultures, in order to strengthen understanding on community rights and needs; respect to human rights and empowering communities to manage and protect wildlife and critical habitats.</p> <p>-Most importantly, the issue of illegal constructions on Camenca river and/or other economic displacement risks ( be it real or perceived) owing to the projects' work in the PAs, will be addressed by regular meetings between PA managers, ranger patrol staff, local communities, environmental inspectorates and through the Process framework to analyse trends in monitoring and legal compliance, aiming at addressing ongoing threats in a collaborative manner. The Process framework will take place in both targeted PAs and it is described under Annex 10 ESMF and embedded in the project document strategy under Output 2.1 and Output 2.2.</p> <p>-The Grievance Redress Mechanisms is described under the Annex 9 Stakeholder engagement plan. Grievance Redress Mechanism (in line with UNDP SES) will provide for a fair and free from influence entry point for their potential complaints and/or grievances. The Complaints Register and Grievance Redress Mechanism will provide an accessible, rapid, fair and effective response to concerned stakeholders, especially any vulnerable group who often lack access to formal legal regimes.</p> <p>In addition, the project will use the Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Plan to mitigate this risk.</p> <p>The participation of the most vulnerable members of community including Roma minority, women and women headed households, youth, veterans other vulnerable groups such as Roma etc. in the project activities is prioritized, and in some cases (for example the development of the criteria for project technical assistance of rural entrepreneurs) inclusion of such vulnerable members of community among beneficiaries represents a selection criterion.</p>	
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				With respect to gender, a gender analysis has been undertaken (as required), and a Gender Action Plan developed. The project will hire a gender expert that will supervise the implementation of the Gender Action Plan.	
	<p><b>Risk 9:</b> The expected impacts resulting from the project-supported biodiversity conservation and restoration measures could be sensitive to changing climate conditions in the future.</p>	SE	<p>I=3 L=2 Moderate</p>	<p>The management measures will be implemented through the project's strategy.</p> <p>The various project's assessments will be informed by the existing climate risk profile/studies (elaborated within the framework of other projects) and through the project's own land/water and climate risk assessments.</p> <p>The project will develop a <i>Study of the hydro-ecological conditions for adequate wetlands management, climate resilient measures and adaptation scenarios</i> (under Output 2.1.1. Act 2.1.1.5) focusing on the targeted wetlands in the Prut River Basin. The assessments/study will be developed by the project experts in collaboration with NGO and academia. The Study will be conducted in coordination with the field research and hydroclimatic modeling for the establishment of the minimum ecological flow (Activity 1.1.1.3). The Study will include practical recommendations for decision makers to improve wetlands management. Based on these recommendations, the project will develop additional legal/regulatory amendments for the improvement of wetlands management framework. Attention to the current and potential impacts of climate change has been built-in to all aspects of the project.</p> <p>A multidisciplinary team of specialists will ensure that the partners and stakeholders will apply the best available climate change forecasts data Moldova and river Prut basin and will ensure that all project activities and plans take potential future climate impacts into consideration.</p> <p>The project will calculate the minimum ecological flow needed for the survival of the wetlands of Prut</p>	Project team, IP/RP UNDP

				<p>river taking into account the predicted climate induced water deficits. This will provide scientific based evidence for adequate policy and institutional provisions for sustainable management of maximum and minimum ecological flows to lakes, wetlands, and riparian zones in Prut river basin.</p> <p>The hydroclimatic modelling (under Output 1.1) and water use trend analysis will provide scientific evidence for the legal amendments that are expected to improve wetlands management and financing frameworks.</p> <p>The project's awareness raising activities will include information on climate risk and vulnerability of wetlands and livelihoods depending on the wetlands ecosystem services.</p> <p>The project will support species and habitat inventories and will identify potential gaps in the existing system of PAs in order to effectively conserve biodiversity, considering the potential for ecosystem change and ecological shifts due to climate change impacts (Output 2.1). As part of the project's work on strengthening the management effectiveness of PAs it will also strengthen environmental monitoring capacities in order to better track the future effects of climate change within PAs and the targeted KBAs. The project's work to support the minimum ecological flow and increased allocation of water to lakes and wetlands KBAs/IBAs (Output 1.1.) will be grounded in the best available and most recent climate science relevant for Moldova.</p>	
	<p><b>Risk 10:</b> Project activities involving local/field interventions and close engagement with local communities may inadvertently contribute to the spread of COVID-19.</p>	SE	<p>I=3 L=3 Moderate</p>	<p>The risk will be mitigated through adequate safeguards such as: (i) clear procedures in place in case of COVID19 reinstatement of restrictions, approved during project inception (ii) use of protective equipment, maintaining social distancing and using remote methods of engagement whenever possible (iii) if adequate safeguards cannot be put in place, activities that entail close local communities engagement will be put on hold if necessary, and</p>	<p>Project team, IP/RP UNDP</p>

				work programme/budget will be revised as needed. Wherever possible on-line meeting platforms will be used and travel decreased. All project meetings will be organized mindful of government regulations and healthy standards and other appropriate safeguards (including those of UNDSS). Under Output 3.1.2 Act. 3.1.2.4 the project will support the development of COVID-19 safe tourism protocols by working with the National Tourism Authority and will apply/test these safety protocols within the tourism itineraries/packages supported by the project.	
	<b>Risk 11:</b> The project may inadvertently contribute to potential perpetuation of discriminations against women. There are lingering disparities between men and women, particularly in rural areas and in the patriarchal cultures of some of the ethnic minority communities, which could be inadvertently replicated.	SE	I=2 L=3 Moderate	The management of this risk will be done through the implementation of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) and will be monitored by the project specialized gender expert.	Project team, IP/ UNDP
	<b>Risk 12.</b> Supported local small businesses could involve third party subcontractors, that may inadvertently fail to comply with international labor standards including those related to child labor and/or may inadvertently fail to provide for occupational health and safety standards .	SE	I=3 L=3 Moderate	The management measures will be devised on case by case basis per the procedures described in the ESMF. The project will ensure that national working standards (Labor Code) are respected for all the project activities. The requirements of this Standard are to be applied in an appropriately-scaled manner based on the nature and scale of the project, its specific activities, the project's associated social and environmental risks and impacts, and the type of contractual relationships with project workers.	Project team, IP/ UNDP
	<b>Risk 13:</b> The project may inadvertently support legal/policy amendments that will allow oil drilling in Protected Areas.	SE	I=3 L=3 Moderate	The risk will be mitigated by the SESA approach. The project will also ensure that the legal amendments will adhere to the MAB UNESCO requirements for the biosphere reserve designated in the Lower Prut.	Project team, IP/ UNDP
	<b>Risk 14</b> The project supported Innovation Challenge may inadvertently promote innovative	SE	I=3 L=3 Moderate	The risk will be mitigated through SES (screening against UNDP SES criteria). The Innovation Challenge will be organized according to UNDP procedures and	Project team, IP/ UNDP

	products that could pose environmental or social risks.			the screening of proposals will be aligned with UNDP SES requirements (please see ESMF Annex 10)	
	<b>Risk 15</b> The project supported eco-tourism routes may pose environmental or social risks.		I=3 L=3 Moderate	The risk will be mitigated through SES, using the UNDP social and environmental screening procedures in order to identify and avoid possible risks (Please see ESMF Annex 10).	
This risk relates to the project's area of influence, and does not stem from project activities.					
	<b>Risk 16:</b> Oil exploitation operations in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve do not observe the minimum environmental standards, and constitute a likely source of water pollution and fire hazards, posing a risk to the natural habitats and ecosystems in the project's targeted PAs.	SE	I-4 L=4 High	<p>Risk mitigation measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under Output 1.1. Act. 1.1.1.1 the project will develop legal amendments that when approved, will clarify any potential legal ambiguities surrounding the oil exploitation in the MAB UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.</li> <li>- The project will work with the Organization for SME sector development tin Moldova (ODIMM) and will develop and deliver ISO14001:2015 training modules to promote mandatory ISO 14001 certification and development of capacities for increasing environmental standards. The trainings are primarily destined to oil companies but also for economic operators that are posing medium and high risks of polluting the water resources.</li> <li>- The project will be coordinated with the active NGOS and media in order to advocate for stopping the oil exploitation in core area of the targeted PA.</li> <li>- The project will support the Ministerial Committee that will be in charge to supervise the oil concessional contract</li> </ul>	Project team, IP/ UNDP

**Annex 8: Overview of Project Staff and Technical Consultancies**

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
<b>For Project Management</b>		
<b>Local / National contracting</b>		
<i>Project Manager</i> <i>Rate: \$1,500/month</i>	<i>60 months /</i> <i>over 5 years</i>	<p>The Project Manager (PM) will be responsible for the overall management of the project, including the mobilization of all project inputs, supervision over project staff, consultants and sub-contractors.</p> <p><u>Duties and Responsibilities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the overall execution of the project.</li> <li>• Together with UNDP Country Office (CO) and the Implementing Partner, plan the activities of the project and monitor progress against the approved workplan.</li> <li>• Execute activities by managing personnel, goods and services, training and low-value grants (i.e. compensatory measures according to Low Value Grants procedures of UNDP) , including drafting terms of reference and work specifications, and overseeing all contractors' work.</li> <li>• Monitor events as determined in the project monitoring plan, and update the plan as required.</li> <li>• Provide support for completion of assessments required by UNDP, spot checks and audits.</li> <li>• Manage requests for the provision of UNDP financial resources through funding advances, direct payments or reimbursement using the FACE form (as needed).</li> <li>• Monitor financial resources and accounting to ensure the accuracy and reliability of financial reports.</li> <li>• Monitor progress, watch for plan deviations and make course corrections when needed within project board-agreed tolerances to achieve results.</li> <li>• Ensure that changes are controlled and problems addressed.</li> <li>• Perform regular progress reporting to the project board as agreed with the board, including measures to address challenges and opportunities.</li> <li>• Prepare and submit financial reports to UNDP and Implementing Partner (IP) on a quarterly basis.</li> <li>• Manage and monitor the project risks – including social and environmental risks - initially identified and submit new risks to the Project Board for consideration and decision on possible actions if required; update the status of these risks by maintaining the project risks log;</li> <li>• Capture lessons learned during project implementation.</li> <li>• Monitors the development and implementation of the ESMF and ensures the development and implementation of SESA, ESIA and ESMP.</li> <li>• Prepare revisions to the multi-year workplan, as needed, as well as annual and quarterly plans if required.</li> <li>• Prepare the inception report no later than one month after the inception workshop.</li> <li>• Ensure that the indicators included in the project results framework are monitored annually in advance of the GEF PIR submission deadline so that progress can be reported in the GEF PIR.</li> <li>• Prepare the GEF PIR and submit the GEF PIR to UNDP;</li> </ul>

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess major and minor amendments to the project within the parameters set by UNDP-GEF;</li> <li>Monitor implementation plans including the gender action plan, stakeholder engagement plan;</li> <li>Monitor and track progress against the GEF Core indicators, with the support of the M&amp;E consultant;</li> <li>Support the (internal) Midterm review and GEF Terminal Evaluation process.</li> </ul> <p><u>Technical tasks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Component 1: Oversee the legal amendments making sure that the knowledge products' results (e.g. the relevant project's studies and reports' findings) are incorporated in the project-born regulatory and legal amendments and in the draft NBSAP. Oversees the development of SESA and ensures application of UNDP SES requirements to the project's policy/legal work.</li> <li>Component 2: Provide technical inputs into the : (i) PAs management and Business Plans; (ii) Guidelines and Manual for biodiversity mainstreaming in territorial planning; Guides and supports the development of the PAs training modules, together with the project experts and specialized NGO/company. (iii) Oversees and provides technical inputs into the development of the ESIA/ESMP documents and makes sure that UNDP SES requirements are followed. (iv) Oversees and coordinates with the NGO/companies hired to implement the activities at PAs level and coordinates the process framework in the targeted PAs.</li> <li>Component 3: Technical inputs into the biodiversity specific tourist routes ; participate in the technical working groups of the National Tourism Authority and support development/update of the protocol for anti-COVID-19 measures for safe tourism. The Project manager will ensure that all the project activities are aligned with the UNDP anti-COVID measures for project implementation and encourages</li> <li>Component 4: Edit all the KM products, oversee the accuracy of technical information; write the Exit Strategy and Sustainability and Scaling up Strategy of the project.</li> </ul> <p><u>Other specifications related to COVID-19 risk mitigation:</u></p> <p>The project manager will make sure at all times that project activities involving local/field interventions and close engagement with local communities will not contribute to the spread of COVID-19 and that adequate safeguards will be put in place such as: (i) clear procedures in place in case of COVID19 reinstatement of restrictions, approved during project inception (ii) use of protective equipment, maintaining social distancing and using remote methods of engagement whenever possible (iii) if adequate safeguards cannot be put in place, activities that entail close local communities engagement will be put on hold if necessary, and work programme/budget will be revised as needed. Wherever possible on-line meeting platforms will be used and travel decreased. All project meetings will be organized mindful of government regulations and healthy standards and other appropriate safeguards (including those of UNDSS).</p> <p><u>Qualifications required</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A university degree (MSc or PhD) in a subject related to natural resource management or environmental sciences</li> </ul>

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 10 years of experience in natural resource management</li> <li>• At least 5 years of demonstrable project/programme management experience.</li> <li>• At least 5 years of experience working with ministries, national or local level institutions that are concerned with natural resource and/or environmental management.</li> </ul>
<i>Project Financial/Administrative Assistant</i> <i>Rate: \$700/month</i>	<i>60 months / over 5 years</i>	<p>Under the guidance and supervision of the Project Manager, the Project Financial and Administrative Assistant will carry out the following tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist the Project Manager in day-to-day management and oversight of project activities;</li> <li>• Assist in the preparation of progress reports;</li> <li>• Keep records of project funds and expenditures, and ensure all project-related financial documentation are well maintained and readily available when required by the Project Manager;</li> <li>• Review project expenditures and ensure that project funds are used in compliance with the Project Document and national financial rules and procedures;</li> <li>• Validate and certify FACE forms before submission to UNDP;</li> <li>• Provide necessary financial information as and when required for project management decisions;</li> <li>• Provide necessary financial information during project audit(s);</li> <li>• Review annual budgets and project expenditure reports, and notify the Project Manager if there are any discrepancies or issues;</li> <li>• Consolidate financial progress reports submitted by the responsible parties for implementation of project activities;</li> <li>• Liaise and follow up with the responsible parties for implementation of project activities in matters related to project funds and financial progress reports;</li> <li>• Assist the M&amp;E consultant in matters related to M&amp;E and knowledge resources management;</li> <li>• Assist in the preparation of progress reports;</li> <li>• Ensure all project documentation (progress reports, consulting and other technical reports, minutes of meetings, etc.) are properly maintained in hard and electronic copies in an efficient and readily accessible filing system, for when required by the Project Board, UNDP, project consultants and other PMU staff;</li> <li>• Provide PMU-related administrative and logistical assistance.</li> <li>• Assist in the preparation of progress reports;</li> </ul> <p><u>Qualifications required:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A master's degree diploma in Biology/Natural Sciences;</li> <li>• At least 10 years of relevant work in a project management setting involving multi-lateral/ international funding agency. Previous experience with UN project will be a definite asset;</li> </ul>

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proficiency in the use of computer software applications particularly MS Excel;</li> <li>Excellent language skills in English (writing, speaking and reading).</li> <li>Very good inter-personal skills;</li> <li>Proficiency in the use of computer software applications especially MS Word and MS Excel.</li> <li>Excellent language skills in English (writing, speaking and reading) and in Romanian/Russian languages.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 1</b>		
<b>Local / National experts</b>		
<i>Ecologist/Wetlands Specialist</i>  <i>Rate: \$150/day</i>	60 days / years 1-2	Tasks (Output 1.1; Output 2.2 ): Provides technical assessments of the environmental state of the targeted wetlands of the Prut river, highlighting the status of the lakes/water bodies, wetlands and riparian zones in the targeted areas; supports the estimation of minimum ecological flow needed to preserve the ecological integrity of the lakes and wetlands in the mid-and lower Prut sections, to sustain and maintain fish larvae and aquatic biomass; provides technical inputs into the analytical reports and information materials for various awareness events. Based on the inputs of the hydrologists and Hydroclimatic modelling experts and in close collaboration with the Moldovan Waters Agency the Ecologist/Wetlands Specialist will write the <i>Study of the hydro-ecological conditions for adequate wetlands management, climate resilient measures and adaptation scenarios</i> (Activity 2.1.1.5).
<i>Hydrologist/ Water management expert</i>  <i>Rate: \$150/day</i>	60 days/ years 1-2	Tasks (Output 1.1; Output 2.2 ): Provide information to support mapping of lakes and water bodies in the targeted wetlands areas of the Prut river; provide technical analysis of the river runoffs during high water and low water years, developing hydrographs and assessing water discharge, minimum and maximum flows; estimate the maximum acceptable water level fluctuation in the mid and lower sections of the Prut river's lakes; estimate the minimum annual water flow requirement for the lakes and wetland areas; estimate the necessary ecological justified and science based water allocation quota downstream Stanca Costesti Dam; assess the timing of water releases in order to harmonise with Danube river hydrological regime so that the minimum amount of water in lakes and wetlands in the targeted areas will be maintained even during low water years (dry years); provides technical inputs into analytical reports and awareness materials. Support the Ecologist/Wetlands Specialist to assemble information and analysis, and contribute/provide technical inputs into the <i>Study of the hydro-ecological conditions for adequate wetlands management, climate resilient measures and adaptation scenarios</i> (Activity 2.1.1.5).
<i>Land use policy specialist</i>  <i>Rate: \$150/day</i>	30 days/ year 3	Tasks (Output 1.3): Provide support to district and local authorities to introduce biodiversity measures (based on Biodiversity Passport approach) into local development strategies during mid term revision of the current document. Based on the inputs of the Botanist and Zoologist, writes the Manual with Guidelines for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Local Development and Territorial Planning.
<i>Conservation Biologist/Botanist</i>  <i>Rate: \$150/day</i>	60 days/ years 2-3	Tasks (Output 1.1/Activity 1.1.3.2): Conducts botanical inventories of vascular plants and vegetation assessment in the targeted regions (Glodeni, Falesti, Cahul) focusing on rare and endangered species or Red List Species and biodiversity <i>hot spot</i> areas outside the PAs (Protected Areas) ; identifies critical species (red list) and sensitive habitats and prepares Biodiversity Passports, based on which proposes conservation measures and monitoring protocols to be introduced in the local development strategies; provides technical inputs into mid term revision of the local strategies. Provides inputs into the preparation of scientific

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
		information material for PAs and Local/District authorities, in view of the development of methods for decreasing negative anthropogenic impacts on critical habitats outside the PAs. Works together with the council authorities to support amendment of the local development strategies at mid term in order to introduce Passport based biodiversity mainstreaming into the local plans and strategies. Contributes to technical inputs into the new NBSAP ( Act. 1.1.1.1) and other awareness and information materials (Output 4.1). Supports the writing of the Manual with Guidelines for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Local Development and Territorial Planning. Under the Project manager supervision and with his/her facilitation, the Botanist will coordinate his/her work with the NGO/consulting companies working in the PAs.
<i>Conservation Biologist/Zoologist</i> <i>Rate: \$150/day</i>	60 days/ years 2-3	Tasks (Output 1.1/Activity 1.1.3.2): Conducts fauna inventories (particularly critically endangered or red list species of birds and mammals) in the targeted regions (Glodeni, Falesti, Cahul), focusing on areas outside the PAs; identifies critical species (red list) and habitats and prepares Biodiversity Passports and proposes conservation measures and monitoring protocols; provides technical inputs into mid term revision of the local strategies in the targeted districts. Provides inputs into the preparation of scientific information material for PAs and Local/District authorities, in view of development of methods for decreasing negative anthropogenic impacts on critical habitats outside the PAs. Works together with the council authorities to support amendment of the local development strategies at mid term in order to introduce Passport based biodiversity mainstreaming into the local plans and strategies. Contributes to technical inputs into the new NBSAP ( Act. 1.1.1.1) and other technical inputs into awareness and information materials (Output 4.1). Supports the writing of the Manual with Guidelines for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Local Development and Territorial Planning. Under the Project manager supervision and with his/her facilitation, the Zoologist will coordinate his/her work with the NGO/consulting companies working in the PAs.
<i>Senior Biodiversity Specialist</i> <i>Rate: \$200/day</i>	50 days /years 1-2	Tasks (Output 1.1, Act. 1.1.1.1): On behalf of the proejct, supports the Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment-led development of the new NBSAP by analysn information, providing technical inputs into the technical consultations and assessments, and writing parts of the NBSAP document. The development of the new NBSAP is led by the Ministry of Environment (MOE), and the Biodiversity Specialist will support the collection and compilation, analysis of technical data and writing the NBSAP document. Specific tasks include: (i) Participates in the technical working group and support the assessments of the gender responsive review and stocktaking of products and results from previous biodiversity planning processes at the national level; (ii) Review of causes and consequences of threats to biodiversity (iii) Review of ecosystem services and in particular wetlands ecosystem services and their relation to biodiversity management; (iv) Develop national biodiversity targets in response to the post 2020 Biodiversity Framework striving to reflect stronger biodiversity outcome by a) establishing concrete bottom-up pledges; b) explicitly linking national targets to global goals and identifying measures to implement them locally; c) including provisions to conduct periodic stocktaking of achievements; d) systematically involving non-State actors and implement synergies between UNCBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC conventions d) including synergies between UNCBD and Ramsar and MAB/UNESCO highlighting measures and financing sources for wetlands conservations; (v) Develop a monitoring plan for the achievement of the new national targets and initiate the monitoring of the targets for reporting to the CBD. In addition, the Senior Biodiversity Specialist will work together with the Protected Areas Expert and will guide/and provide technical inputs into the development of the PAs training modules based on the international best practices and aligned with Ramsar and MAB/UNESCO and IUCN guidelines (Act. 2.1.2.2).

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
<i>Legal/policy expert (Environmental governance)</i> <i>Rate \$ 150/day</i>	100 days/ years 1-5	Tasks (Output 1.1 and cross-cutting): a) Under Act 1.1.1.1 Conduct legal and policy framework assessment and write/support the writing of the SESA report as per UNDP SES requirements (in coordination with the specialised safeguards NGO/Company); revise the legal amendments produced under previous GEF projects, verify their status and build on this previous work; review the key legislation identified in project policy baseline: the Land Code ( No. 828 XII of 25-12-1991) and Forestry Code (No 887 XIII of 21-06-1996); Law on Environmental protection (No 1515 XI of 16-06-1993); Law on Water and River basin Protection Zones and Riparian Strips ( No 440 pf 27-04-1995); Law on Animal Kingdom (No 439 XIII of 27-04-1995); Law on Protected Areas State Fund ( No 1538 of 25-02-1998); Law on Red Book of the Republic of Moldova (No. 325 of 15-12-2005); The law of the vegetal kingdom (No. 239-XVI of 8-11-2007); Law on the ecological network (No. 94 of 05-04-2007); The Water Law (No. 272 of 23-12-2011); Law on Environmental Impact Assessment (No. 86 of 29-05-2014) and related government decisions and framework regulations as well as on-going legislation harmonization with EU framework. Prepares amendments to bridge the gaps listed under Activity 1.1.1.1; b) Under Activity 1.1.2.1 : conduct the review of the Regulation on the Ecological Funds (Gov Ordinance No. 988/1998 and of the Law on Environmental Protection 1515 /1993. Develop legal amendments as listed under Activity 1.1.2.1; c) Under Act 1.1.1.3 Develop Gov Ordinance for operationalisation of the Regulation on Stanca Costesti Dam; d) Under Activity 2.2.1.2 provides support for the development of any necessary legal amendments or legal papers necessary for the cadaster registration and transfer of land from public local property to state property in order to implement the envisaged hydrotechnical works.
<i>Hydroclimatic modelling expert</i> <i>Rate: \$500/ day</i>	60 days/ year 1	Tasks (output 1.2.) : Works with the Ecologist/Wetland Specialist and the two Hydrologists and with the Moldovan Waters/ Ministry of Environment counterparts to provide different models and analysis of the variability of the water supply according to climate scenarios (the expert is preferably familiar with the InfoWorks ICM and/or HEC-RAS software or an adapted applicable software for which licence and expertise exists in the country). The expert will provide support to the Moldovan Waters Agency Working Group to identify the best possible option to ensure adequate water supply for lakes and wetlands downstream Stanca Costesti Dam under predicted climate induced water deficits and considering the observed decrease of Prut river and main tributaries flow; Provide training and coaching to the Moldovan Waters specialists on the software usage and data analysis. Support the information and analysis, and contribute with climate risk data into the <i>Study of the hydro-ecological conditions for adequate wetlands management, climate resilient measures and adaptation scenarios</i> (Activity 2.1.1.5).
<b>Outcome 2</b>		
<b>Local / National experts</b>		
Agroforestry expert/riparian forestry engineer  Rate \$150/day	40 days/years 1-4	Tasks (Output 2.2.1 Act 2.2.1.1): Support mapping of the selected areas and implementation of the reforestation works, supervising the technical project design. Develops full TORs/technical specifications for the reforestation/riparian restoration works. Provides technical advice on sustainable forest management in and around PAs and recommends riparian forest regeneration strategies, proposes monitoring indicators for the assessment of the forest ecosystems recovery. Supports local communities' outreach, advising on Sustainable Land Management SLM measures that should be implemented by local communities in the PAs proximity. Oversees reforestation works/afforestation works, develops TOR for the company that will execute the technical projects and the reforestation works, participates in the re-validation of the selected reforestation sites,

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
		develops performance indicators to assess reforestation success, supports local communities and local authorities by offering technical advisory services for the identification and implementation of sustainable forest management and communal forest/pasture areas (especially those managed by the local municipalities). Contributes to technical inputs into awareness and information materials (Output 4.1.1). Coordinates with the specialized safeguards NGO/company and supports the targeted site-level assessments at reforestation sites aligned with the UNDP/SES requirements and provides technical inputs into ESIA/ESMP as necessary.
Hydrologist (Water engineering) Rate \$150/day	60 days/ years 1-5	Output 2.2.1 Activity 2.2.1.2 : The expert hydrologist will develop the full TOR for the full Feasibility Study for Camenca restoration (based on pre-feasibility findings), will supervise the technical development of the full feasibility study and will ensure liaison with the Moldovan Waters Agency and the Ministry of Regional Development and Agriculture and Environment and local authorities for the implementation and monitoring of the proposed works. Provides technical advice to the PMU unit with regard to Camenca river restoration works. Monitors the development of the full feasibility study of the river Camenca watercourse. Coordinates with the specialized safeguards NGO/company and supports the development of the full feasibility study for the Camenca rehabilitation as well as the targeted site-level assessments, aligned with the UNDP/SES requirements and provides technical inputs into ESIA/ESMP as necessary.
GIS specialist Rate \$150/day	60 days/years 1-3	Tasks (Output 2.1): Works with team of experts to support the habitat and ecosystem mapping in Royal Forest Nature Reserve and support Ramsar area identification and mapping (Output 2.1.1 Activity 2.1.1.1. and 2.1.1.2) ; supports the habitat and species mapping and develops new mapping and spatial zoning of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, using/building on existing vectorial data.
Protected Areas Expert Rate \$150/day	60 days/ years 1-4	Tasks (Output 2.1.1 ): Coordinates PAs work at local level (in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and in Royal Forest Nature Reserve) and supports coordination between Moldsilva Agency, the companies/NGOs in conducting field assessments and conducting the assignments. Develops full TORs/technical specifications for the PAs work and oversees the activities of the NGO/consulting companies contracted by the project to implement activities at targeted PAs. Supports the project manager to coordinate the Process framework as per UNDP/SES requirements. The PA expert will write reports on field assessments on the risks to biodiversity posed by agricultural practices, extractive industry, tourism industry and illegal activities and recommends measures mitigate risks. Supervises the updates of the existing PAs management plans in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, development of new management plans for Royal Forest Reserve and facilitates technical discussions related to the development of the PAs integrated data base . Supports the Training Needs Assessments (TNA) development and in coordination with the Senior Biodiversity Specialist works with Moldsilva Agency and the NGO/company hired by the project to deliver PA trainings and together with the targeted PAs will develop training modules based on the international best practices and aligned with Ramsar and MAB/UNESCO and IUCN guidelines (Act. 2.1.2.2). Support the development of information materials and awareness raising materials (under Output 4.1).
<b>Outcome 3</b>		
<b>Local / National experts</b>		

<b>Consultant</b>	<b>Time Input</b>	<b>Tasks, Inputs and Outputs</b>
Economist/Technical expert on rural livelihoods Rate \$150/day	30 days/year 1-2	Tasks (Output 3.1/Act. 3.1.1.1): Works with the rural entrepreneurs in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve to support at least 5 local businesses apply under EU4Cahul calls for proposals; provides technical advice and coaching to the rural entrepreneurs to develop the application package.
Senior tourism expert/rural green tourism expert Rate \$150/day	30 days/ year 1-2	Tasks (Output 3.1.2/Act. 3.1.2; Act 3.1.2.1; Act. 3.1.2.2; Act. 3.1.1.2): Supports the development of (i) local ecotourism route with local attractions including biodiversity sensitive tourist products; works with local authorities, local communities and the Local Action Group Lower Prut and identifies the small rural entrepreneurs willing/with resources to participate in the project-supported tourist itinerary. The Senior Tourism Expert will apply/test the anti-COVID protocols at targeted sites and will introduce the COVID-19 measures in the proposed tourism packages. The expert will use the "Guide with Recommendations of Sanitary Protocols for Enterprises in the field of inbound and inbound tourism in the Republic of Moldova in the context of the epidemiological crisis caused by COVID-19 virus", recommended by the National Tourism Authority (Investment Agency) and developed by ANTRIM ( USAID project, 2020) (ii) development of a cross-border tourism route between Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve in Romania, and facilitates partnerships with Danube Tour Operators. (iii) develops and delivers 2 trainings on eco-tourism together with ODIMM in Cahul or Valeni. Works with the Local Action Group Lower Prut and the small rural tourist entrepreneurs in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve as well as with the Danube tour operators in Romania/Danube Delta and with the Administration of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve.
<b>Outcome 4: Knowledge management</b>		
<b>Local/experts</b>		
Gender Expert Rate \$150/day	50 days/years 1-5	<p><i>Cross-cutting (across Outputs):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor progress in implementation of the project Gender Action Plan ensuring that targets are fully met and the reporting requirements are fulfilled;</li> <li>• Oversee/develop/coordinate implementation of all gender-related work;</li> <li>• Review the Gender Action Plan annually, and update and revise corresponding management plans as necessary;</li> <li>• Work with the M&amp;E officer and Safeguards Officer to ensure reporting, monitoring and evaluation fully address the gender issues of the project;</li> <li>• Ensures that the KM products are gender sensitive.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 5: Monitoring and Evaluation</b>		
<b>Local/National experts</b>		
M&E, GEB and Safeguards Expert Rate \$150/day	50 days/years 1-5	<p>Tasks(Cross-cutting/across Outputs): project M&amp;E, including GEF Core Indicators updates and other activities as per the M&amp;E plan. Monitoring of environmental and social risks.</p> <p>Key Deliverables: periodic documents with Project M&amp;E results, including follow-up and updates relate to the Results framework; monitor implementation of the ESMF/ESMP, update UNDP SESP and safeguard reports.</p> <p>Duties and Responsibilities:</p>

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
		<p>Under the overall supervision and guidance of the Project Manager, the M&amp;E and Safeguards Expert will have the responsibility for project monitoring and evaluation. The M&amp;E and Safeguards Expert will work closely with the Project Manager on knowledge management aspects of the project. Specific responsibilities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor project progress and participate in the production of progress reports ensuring that they meet the necessary reporting requirements and standards;</li> <li>• Ensure project's M&amp;E meets the requirements of the Government, the UNDP Country Office, and UNDP-GEF; develop project-specific M&amp;E tools as necessary;</li> <li>• Oversee and ensure the implementation of the project's M&amp;E plan, including periodic appraisal of the Project's Theory of Change and Results Framework with reference to actual and potential project progress and results;</li> <li>• Monitoring of environmental and social risks as captured in the ESMF and ESMP.</li> <li>• Evaluate social risks that may emerge and/are triggered by project activities and provide recommendations on mitigation strategies;</li> <li>• Periodically update the UNDP SESP;</li> <li>• Prepare safeguard reports as needed;</li> <li>• Support the Project Manager in documenting and addressing environmental and social grievances;</li> <li>• Oversee/develop/coordinate the implementation of the stakeholder engagement plan;</li> <li>• Oversee and guide the design of surveys/ assessments commissioned for monitoring and evaluating project results;</li> <li>• Facilitate mid-term internal (UNDP) review and support GEF terminal evaluations of the project (as needed), including ensuring timely development and implementation of the management responses;</li> <li>• Facilitate annual reviews of the project and produce analytical reports from these annual reviews, including learning and other knowledge management products;</li> <li>• Support project site M&amp;E and learning missions;</li> <li>• Visit project sites as and when required to appraise project progress on the ground and validate written progress reports.</li> </ul> <p>The Project M&amp;E, GEB and Safeguards Expert will be recruited based on the following qualifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master's degree, preferably in the field of environmental or natural resources management;</li> <li>• At least five years of relevant work experience preferably in a project management setting involving multi-lateral/ international funding agency. Previous experience with UN project will be a definite asset;</li> <li>• Significant experience in collating, analyzing and writing up results for reporting purposes;</li> <li>• Very good knowledge of results-based management and project cycle management, particularly with regards to M&amp;E approach and methods. Formal training in biodiversity conservation will be a definite asset;</li> <li>• Knowledge and working experience of the application of gender mainstreaming in international projects;</li> </ul>

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of biodiversity conservation, and associated issues;</li> <li>• Very good inter-personal skills;</li> <li>• Proficiency in computer application and information technology;</li> <li>• Excellent language skills in English (writing, speaking and reading).</li> <li>• Inter-personal skills;</li> <li>• Proficiency in computer application and information technology.</li> </ul>
<i>GEF Terminal Evaluation National Consultant</i> Rate \$150/day	25 days/year 5	Tasks: conduct the terminal project evaluation jointly with the International M&E Expert and following UNDP and GEF guidelines. Key Deliverables: terminal project evaluation report.
<b>International experts</b>		
<i>GEF Terminal Evaluation International consultant</i> Rate: \$700/day	30 days/year 5	Tasks: conduct the terminal project evaluation jointly with the national M&E Expert and following UNDP and GEF guidelines. Key Deliverables: terminal project evaluation report; management responses document.
<b>Contractual services: Companies/NGOs/Consortium</b>		
<i>Specialized safeguards company/consortium</i> Total budget: 100,000 USD Year 1-3		<p><b>Scope of work:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Full Feasibility Study Camenca Hydrotechnical Work ( Output 2.2. Act. 2.2.1.2) – input into ESIA report</li> <li>2. Assessment of safeguards related to the reforestation works ( Output 2.2. Act. 2.2.1.1)- input into ESIA report</li> <li>3. Assessment of safeguards related to policy work (Act 1.1.1.1) – input into SESA report</li> <li>4. Write SESA report following UNDP SES requirements indicative outline of a SESA Report</li> <li>5. Write ESIA report following UNDP SES requirements and indicative outline of an ESIA Report</li> <li>6. Write ESMP report following UNDP SES requirements and indicative outline of an ESMP Report</li> <li>7. Support delivery of 1-2 introductory trainings to the management unit/team of experts related to the safeguards and SES requirements, as needed.</li> </ol> <p><b>Full Feasibility Study- Hydrotechnical Work technical specifications:</b>  <u>Evaluation of the changes of the drainage regime through the rehabilitated riverbed of Camenca district</u></p>

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Collection of topographic and land cover data</li> <li>-Collection of hydrological and meteorological data</li> <li>-Hydrologic-Hydraulic runoff modeling:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum runoff modeling</li> <li>• Medium runoff modeling</li> <li>• Maximum runoff modeling</li> </ul> </li> <li>-Collection/assessment of hydrogeological data</li> <li>-Modeling the interaction of surface water with groundwater</li> <li><u>Identification of the hydrotechnical construction for re-directing the water flow of River Camenca through the rehabilitated riverbed at Balatina village</u></li> <li>-Assessment of the Hydrotechnical construction project</li> <li>-Assessment of the Estimated expenses for the construction</li> <li><u>-Assessment of the environmental impact of the rehabilitation works of the river Camenca old riverbed</u></li> <li>-Clear definition of the impacted area (both of the Royal Forest Reserve and the adjacent area) of the rehabilitation of the old bed of the Camenca river</li> <li>-Clear definition of the impact on the following elements:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on the water regime of surface and groundwater</li> <li>• Impact on soils</li> </ul> </li> <li><u>The impact on the natural ecosystems of the Royal Forest (inside of PA)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on forests in the "Royal Forest" reservation</li> <li>• The impact on the fauna, especially of the colonies of herons, egrets and other birds nesting or feeding on the territory of the reservation</li> </ul> </li> <li><u>The impact on the natural floodplain ecosystems adjacent to the Royal Forest Reserve (outside of PA)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on flora</li> <li>• Impact on fauna</li> <li>• Impact on agricultural lands in the Prut meadow</li> <li>• Impact on households in the impact area</li> </ul> </li> <li><b><i>Socio-Economic and Environmental Safeguards technical specifications:</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Review the project safeguards screening (SESP) and ESMF. Implement the provisions of the projects' ESMF and agree to a project-specific safeguards approach, workplan and mission schedule (as needed) with the UNDP Country Office, and the Project Manager.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. <b>For Output 1.1.</b> : Work with the project policy expert and Project manager and relevant national counterparts, assess safeguards related to policy work (Component 1) and based on their technical inputs, write SESA report following UNDP SES requirements. The SESA approach will be applied to all project-born policy and legal amendments.</li> <li>c. <b>For Output 2.2/Act 2.2.1.1</b> conduct site-level specific procedures and screening at the envisaged reforestation sites (as per guidance under Baseline for reforestation Annex 19 and under ESMF Annex 10/ UNDP GEF Project Document). Develop the management plans as needed.</li> <li>d. <b>For Output 2.2./Act. 2.2.1.2</b> work closely with the hydrologist and the project experts and Project manager and based on the full feasibility study findings write ESIA and ESMP documents, as per UNDP SES requirements.</li> <li>e. Familiarize the PMU with the safeguards and UNDP SES requirements.</li> <li>f. Update Project SESP as needed.</li> <li>g. Provide inputs, advice and/or feedback to ensure alignment with and consideration of safeguards in the overall project implementation.</li> </ul>
Company/consortium to render specialized services for Reforestation/Afforestation works Total budget: 80,324 Year 1-3		<p><b>Scope of work-under Output 2.2. Act. 2.2.1.1.</b></p> <p>Based on the prefeasibility assessments at PPG stage, the company will execute the technical works and technical projects for the reforestation works, will conduct soil studies and will engage with the Moldsilva agency and local authorities. The full scope of work is described under Annex 19 UNDP-GEF Project Document. The company representatives will engage with the safeguards specialized experts in order to support site-specific screenings aligned with UNDP SES requirements.</p>
Company/NGO for the training of local authorities Total budget:9,000 USD Year 3		<p><b>Scope of work under Output 1.1.3/ Activity 1.1.3.1</b></p> <p>The company/NGO will work with the targeted districts authorities in Cahul (hosting the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve) and Glodeni and Falesti districts (hosting the Royal Forest Nature Reserve) and will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deliver 6 training sessions (two meetings for each district in the second year of the project implementation). Training topics: (i) Locality Master Plans and Environmental Provisions (ii) Legislation and permitting for natural resources use (iii) Protected areas and legal regimes (iv) Biodiversity monitoring (v) Monitoring of the use of natural resources, legal enforcement and applicable fines (vi) Wetlands ecosystem services and their importance to environment and livelihoods (vii) Integrated land use planning considering biodiversity and ecosystem approaches (viii) Sylvo-pastoral practices (pastoral forests) applied to maintain local biodiversity.</li> <li>- Provide support local authorities to conduct midterm revision of the local development strategies and introduce relevant biodiversity conservation measures in the buffer and production areas (around the PAs) and the Biodiversity Passports of rare/red list species identified in these districts outside the PAs.</li> </ul>
Company or Consortium/NGOs for the Protected Areas work		<b>Scope of work</b>

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
Total budget 110,000 Year 1-3		<p><b>Royal Forest Nature Reserve ( support implementation of Output 2.1.1./Activity 2.1.1.1; Activity 2.1.1.2;Activity 2.1.2.1, Activity 2.1.2.2):</b></p> <p>(i)Building on the previous draft Ramsar designation fiche, conducts information gaps assessments and plans the additional inventories of species and habitats, mapping and local consultations; (ii) Supports the Project manager to coordinate with the local authorities and local communities; supports the Process framework (as per UNDP SES requirements/ ESMF under Annex 10 of the Project Document); (iii) Conducts species and habitat mapping, and GIS analysis (supported by the GIS project experts); (iv)Completes <b>Ramsar dossier</b> and obtains local authorities' approvals; (v)Submits <b>Ramsar dossier</b> to the Project manager for further submission to the relevant ministry departments; (vi)Develops the Royal Forest Management and Business Plans, for the entire area proposed for Ramsar designation; (vii) Supports the local consultations/Process Framework on the proposed Management Plans in coordination with the Royal Forest Nature Reserve Management Unit/ and Moldsilva Agency; (viii) Identifies any potential economic displacement and develops Livelihood Action Plan including recommended compensation modalities (as per UNDP SES requirements/ please see ESMF Annex 10).</p> <p><b>Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve (Output 2.1.1./Activity 2.1.1.3; Activity 2.1.1.4; Activity 2.1.2.1; Activity 2.1.2.2)</b></p> <p>(i)Based on the existing Draft Management Plan, assess potential information gaps and/or need for updated inventories. Assess the existing draft Management Plan of the Ramsar sites Lakes Beleu and Manta. Compile the relevant information and update the Management Plan;(ii) Conducts additional inventories and assessments, mapping of key species and key habitats; conduct GIS analysis (supported by the GIS project expert); (iii) Update the draft Management Plan with the new information including climate risks assessments; (iv) develop the PA Business Plan (v) submit the new draft Management Plan and Business Plan for local consultations, support/facilitate the local consultations and the Process framework (please see ESMF Annex 10);(vi) obtain all the necessary local approvals and submit the draft management plan; (vii) support the development of the <b>Trilateral Biosphere Reserve MAB/UNESCO</b> dossier by compiling the technical information required, in coordination with the relevant department of the Ministry of Environment, UNDP and the respective counterparts from Romania and Ukraine.</p> <p><b>PAs training (Activity 2.1.2.2)</b></p> <p>Develop and deliver 10 training session for the targeted PAs (2 trainings per year), using the technical inputs of the Project manager, project experts and Moldsilva Agency. Training topics proposed: (i) Biodiversity conservation; (ii) Legal Framework; (iii) PAs management (iv) Patrolling and environmental inspection; (v)climate change impact. Further training topics description is listed under the Project Document Annex 23 Proposed Biodiversity and PAs training topics.</p> <p><b>PAs coaching (Act. 2.1.2.2)</b> on proposal writing and support to developing 2 project proposals for each PA that will be submitted for National Ecological Fund (NEF) financing.</p>
Company for the development of PAs integrated data base		<b>Scope of work (Output 2.1.2 Activity 2.1.2.1)</b>

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
<p>(Integrated Data base will be suitable for biotic and abiotic data exchange on Danube/Prut basin's wetlands)</p> <p>Total budget: 30,000</p> <p>Year 3</p>		<p>The company will develop an integrated monitoring data base for the targeted PAs (Lower Prut Biosphere reserve and Royal Forest Nature Reserve) in coordination with the PAs management units and Moldsilva agency. The integrated monitoring data base will be adjusted to each targeted PA characteristics, however, it should be noted that it is envisaged that the monitoring database should use the same structure and compatible monitoring parameters, and will provide clear monitoring metrics that will establish/strengthen the monitoring programme, conservation targets and protocols to measure change (e.g. clarity on what and how to measure, biotic and abiotic parameters). This will enable data exchanges.</p> <p>With the support of the Ministry of Environment specialized Directorate for Biodiversity Policy, the project will coordinate with the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration (Romania) through dedicated meetings (both in person and online), to make sure that the integrated monitoring data base in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and Royal Forest Nature Reserve will be compatible with the existing integrated monitoring data base in Danube Delta.</p> <p>It is envisaged that the Data base for the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve will be merged/linked with the existing data base of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve hosted by the server of the Authority of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve (Romania).</p> <p>The company will coordinate with the Danube Delta Biosphere Authority (Romania), UNDP and the Ministry of Environment (Moldova) to ensure harmonized compatible monitoring parameters and database structure.</p>
<p>Company/consortium/NGO</p> <p>To develop and deliver ToT trainings on ISO 14001</p> <p>Total budget: 20,000</p> <p>Year 3</p>		<p><b>Scope of work (Activity 3.1.1.2)</b></p> <p><b>3 days ToT training workshops (at least two workshops in Chisinau and Cahul)</b></p> <p>Two training modules will be developed and delivered based on ISO 14001:2015 standards</p> <p>a) "Introduction to ISO 14001 and other Environmental Management Systems (EMS) Standards and Codes"</p> <p>b) "Implementation of ISO 14001 standards and Environmental Management System EMS"</p> <p>The training will be delivered in accordance to the requirements of the International Register of Certificated Auditors (IRCA), Institute of Environmental Management &amp; Assessment (IEMA) or similar standards. At the end of the course the successful participants will be awarded an external certification by a world-wide recognized institute of other similar body related to the global environmental and waste management systems such as IEMA or IRCA.</p> <p>The course should provide participants with the knowledge, skills and understanding of: (i) Fundamental concepts of Environment, Environmental aspects and impacts of business operations; (ii) Understanding requirements of the Quality Management System Standard ISO:14001 and their application to effectively and efficiently manage the process of the organization; (iii) Practical training to establish, document, implement, maintain and continually improve Environmental Management System as per the standard; (v) In-depth knowledge and practice to plan, conduct, report and close of internal Environmental Management System audit and continuous improvement of effectiveness of the Internal Audit Process; (vi) Learning and practicing effective management of Corrective Actions and Continuous Improvement Practices; (vii) Train the trainer techniques.</p>

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
		<p>Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Company's experience should be at least 8-10 years in the field of ISO training and consultancy</li> <li>- Proof of accreditation from an acknowledge accreditation body.</li> <li>- ISO 14001:2015 Lead Auditor certificates of trainer (or equivalent)</li> </ul>
<p>Company/NGO to deliver awareness campaign</p> <p>Total budget: 20,000</p> <p>Years 2-5</p>		<p><b>Scope of work (Output 4.1.1/Activity 4.1.1.1)</b></p> <p>The awareness raising campaign will be an on-line campaign seeking to raise the public's awareness on the importance of wetlands ecosystem services and the threats to their fragile balance.</p> <p>The on-line awareness campaign strategy will identify the target audience and the communication needs of each category of stakeholders such as the national decision makers and relevant parliamentary committees, economic operators/private companies that are located in and around targeted PAs, the general public etc. and will use the most suitable communication channels to deliver the messages in Romanian and Russian languages.</p> <p>Social media, a dedicated website, online streams, blogs and moderated platforms, press releases via preferred news channels will be used as the main digital communication vectors. The main messages directed to the decision makers will revolve mainly around: wetland and water pollution, water scarcity and need for wetland financing and the need for ISO14001 certification in order to raise the environmental standard in the private sector and prevent polluting water and wetlands ecosystems.</p> <p>The messages sent through these digital channels will also emphasize the necessary regulatory measures that need to be in place to address the threats and barriers identified in the baseline. The Moldsilva Agency, Moldovan Academy of Science, the Institute of Zoology and the Botanical Garden Institute and other partners that will conduct species inventories are expected to work with the project's experts and support the on-line awareness campaign by writing easy-to-read papers on the biodiversity richness hosted by Prut basin's wetlands and threats.</p> <p>The messages will have different contents depending on the different target groups. The communication/awareness messages for the decision makers should include wetlands advocacy elements and will be tailored around : (i) enabling policies and regulations for an improved wetland management, specifically the advocacy for the management of the oil exploitation in Lake Beleu in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve i.e. either closure of the oil operations or significant improvement of the environmental standards at the oil exploitation platform) (ii) increased prominence of wetlands financing on the political agenda (iii) increased percentage of financing of PAs and wetlands sustainable management through the National Environmental Fund ; (iv) sustainable wetlands management issues given more prominence in the EU-Moldova negotiations agenda. With regard to targeting private sector and economic operators especially those in and around protected areas and wetlands, the messages should be developed around the following topics: (i) information on the quality of surface waters and the negative effect of pollution on surface and ground waters, impacting environment and public health; (ii) pollution fees and environmental taxes;</p>

Consultant	Time Input	Tasks, Inputs and Outputs
		(iii) benefits and financing sources of sustainable and biodiversity friendly businesses located at wetlands; (iv) training opportunities for greening businesses (in cooperation with ODIMM); (v) information on ISO14001 standards: benefits and requirements.

## Annex 9: Stakeholder Engagement Plan

During the project preparation stage, a stakeholder analysis was undertaken in order to identify key stakeholders, assess their interests in the project and define their roles and responsibilities in the project implementation. The stakeholder analysis identified the key stakeholders for the project based on their respective interests and power positions vis-a vis their communities, production capacities, governance structure, academic focus, public mandates, or national policy directives. Consistent with the UNDP Draft Guidance Note<sup>61</sup> stakeholders are considered as the following: Persons, groups, or institutions with an *interest* in the project or the ability to *influence* the project outcomes, either positively or negatively. Stakeholders may be directly or indirectly affected by the project. The range of potential stakeholders is diverse and may include target beneficiary groups, locally affected communities or individuals, national and local government authorities, non- governmental organizations (NGOs) (both domestic and at times international), politicians, the academic community, private sector entities, other special interest groups, UN agencies and donors.

The project recognizes that a traditional focus on the protection of natural resources within formal protected areas does not ensure full biodiversity protection nor the realization of global environmental benefits. The management of socio-ecological production landscapes is key to the maintenance of biodiversity levels and attributes and overall sustainable development. Socio-ecological production landscapes, when applied locally, provides a strong basis for sustainable societies

To facilitate the identification of project beneficiaries either in the private sector, or non-governmental organizations and community associations, the analysis gave priority to farmers, small rural entrepreneurs. These are prominent stakeholders since they are both interested and influential entities in this region, given the extent of their agricultural footprint and the importance of these products to the national economy. Further categorization of the stakeholders in the analysis, allowed for both collective and individual categorization. The stakeholder analysis subsequently provides a detailed list of both types of stakeholders - collective stakeholders as well as individual stakeholders.

Collective stakeholders	
<b>High Power / Low Interest</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agri-business associations</li> <li>• Government affiliated agencies, local branches of the line ministries</li> <li>• Economic entities, potential water polluters</li> <li>• International organizations funding initiatives in the region</li> <li>• State and International banks</li> </ul>	<b>High Power / High Interest</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small and mid-size farmers</li> <li>• Rural communities</li> <li>• Rural entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Local district administration</li> <li>• Environmental NGOs</li> <li>• Research institutes</li> </ul>
Individual stakeholders	
<b>Low Power / High Interest</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Biodiversity Policies (MOE)</li> <li>• Environmental Protection Agency</li> <li>• PAs administrations</li> <li>• Forestry Departments</li> <li>• Distinct projects active in the region</li> <li>• Research Institutions</li> </ul>	<b>High Power / High Interest</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental inspectors</li> <li>• Local police</li> <li>• Society of Hunters and Fishermen</li> <li>• Local Action Group "Lower Prut"</li> <li>• Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority</li> <li>• Danube Parks Organization</li> </ul>

<sup>61</sup>UNDP Draft Guidance Note, UNDP Social and Environmental Standards (SES) **Stakeholder Engagement**

Identified stakeholders have community roles directly associated with project objectives and are expected to either serve the project and advise project implementation, or as implementing partners directly involved in the delivery of project objectives. A third group of stakeholders represent direct beneficiaries of the project. It should be noted that some stakeholders are represented across multiple roles.

### Stakeholder Engagement Participation Approach

Stakeholder engagement will be carried out according to the following principles that have been identified as significant based on UNDP stakeholder engagement guidelines:

Principle	Stakeholder participation will:
Adding Value	Be an essential means of adding value to the project.
Inclusivity	Include all relevant stakeholders.
Accessibility and Access	Be accessible and promote access to the process.
Transparency	Be based on transparency and fair access to information.
Fairness	Ensure that all stakeholders are treated in a fair and unbiased way.
Accountability	Be based on a commitment to accountability by all stakeholders.
Constructive	Seek to manage conflict and promote the public interest.
Redressing	Seek to redress inequity and injustice.
Capacitating	Seek to develop the capacity of all stakeholders.
Needs-Based	Be based on the needs of all stakeholders.
Flexible	Be designed and implemented in a flexible manner.
Rational and Coordinated	Be rationally planned and coordinated, rather than ad hoc.
Excellence	Be subject to ongoing selection and commitment.

Information, dissemination, consultation and similar activities that took place during the PPG

Throughout the project development, close contact was maintained with stakeholders at national and local levels and most frequently through Zoom calls, bilateral interactions, and small round table meetings to discuss different aspects of the project design and level of involvement of key partners at national and local levels. Numerous consultations with key stakeholders included:

- A series of bilateral discussions with national public institutions notably the Ministry of Environment, Moldsilva Agency, “Moldovan Waters” Agency, Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure, National Institute of Standardization, Research Institutes, educational institutes, Academia, international organizations, and NGOs active in the environmental field, in order to collect information on the current project baseline, consult on proposed project interventions, explore opportunities for synergies, and confirm the commitment of project partners and secure co-financing;
- A series of consultative meeting with local district/municipalities authorities, representatives of local communities; the Local Action Group “Lower Prut”; representatives of rural entrepreneurs; local PAs administrations, NGOs implementing projects in the targeted regions; tourism operators. These local consultations aimed at assessing the feasibility of different interventions, identify limiting factors, and consultatively identify potential solutions.
- The validation workshop has discussed the proposed project strategy and approaches, and provided an opportunity for all interested parties to express views and recommendations for an effective cooperation and sustainability of project results.

## Stakeholder Engagement Plan during the Project Implementation

Objectives of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan:

- Identify/validate the roles and responsibility of all stakeholders and ensure their participation in the complete project cycle
- Take onboard the knowledge, experience, and skills of stakeholders to enhance the design and implementation of the project
- Ensure that stakeholders are engaged in the monitoring and reporting of the project.
- Establish a mechanism through which local communities, minorities and other vulnerable groups can raise issues they may face in the implementation of the project.

The project's design incorporates several features to ensure ongoing and effective stakeholder participation in the project's implementation. UNDP is committed to ensuring meaningful, effective, and informed participation of stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of UNDP Programmes and Projects. Principally UNDP requires that its projects are designed with meaningful and effective participation of all stakeholders. This foundation for sustainable development assures that local peoples and other stakeholders play a key role in advancing achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). UNDP's commitment to stakeholder engagement arises from internal policies, procedures, and strategy documents as well as key international human rights instruments, principles and numerous decisions of international bodies, particularly as they relate to the protection of citizens' rights related to freedom of expression and participation. While there is no singular prevailing policy on stakeholder engagement within the national context, stakeholder consultations are commonly associated with project development processes.

The goal of this Stakeholder Engagement Plan is to involve all stakeholders of the project, including women, youth, and NGOs, participating public and private sector entities, as early as possible in the implementation process and throughout project duration, and to facilitate a feedback mechanism which ensures that stakeholders views and concerns informs project direction and adaptive management

Beyond informing stakeholders, the Stakeholder Engagement Plan provides the basis for the establishment of effective communication channels and the building of working relationships necessary for successful project implementation. It seeks to define a technically and culturally appropriate approach to consultation and disclosure. The plan ensures that all key stakeholders are fully familiar with the components of this project and that they remain committed to and supportive of the related activities in the project. To secure their participation in related disclosure activities and knowledge dissemination, the relevant stakeholders will be contacted and engaged with using different strategies and methods that best suit their contributions and interests in the engagement program. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan will be implemented in conjunction with the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan that provide more detailed guidance on helping to ensuring gender equity in the project and responding to the stakeholders' tailored communication needs.

The mechanisms to facilitate involvement and active participation of different stakeholder in project implementation will comprise a number of different elements:

### (i) Project inception workshop to enable stakeholder awareness of the start of project implementation

The project will be launched by a multi-stakeholder workshop. This workshop represents another opportunity to provide stakeholders with the most updated information on the project and the project work plan. It will also establish a basis for further consultation as the project's implementation commences. The inception workshop will address a number of key issues including: assist all partners to fully understand and take ownership of the project; detail the roles, support services and complementary responsibilities of the Implementing Partner -Ministry of Environment, and the—“ Implementation Unit for Environmental projects EPIU” and other key stakeholders. The project will discuss the roles, functions, and responsibilities within the project structure, including reporting and communication lines, and conflict resolution mechanisms. The Workshop will also be a forum to: review the project budget; finalize the first annual work plan as well as review and agree on the indicators, targets and their means of verification, and recheck assumptions and risks; provide a detailed overview of reporting, monitoring and evaluation

(M&E) requirements; and plan and schedule project meetings for the Project Board. A COVID-19 project strategy will be developed by the Project manager and discussed with the main stakeholders in order to inform about the clear procedures in place in case of COVID-19 reinstatement of restrictions and methods of putting in place adequate safeguards.

(ii) Constitution of the Project Board to ensure representation of stakeholder interests in project

A Project Board (PB) will be constituted to ensure broad representation of all key interests throughout the project's implementation. The representation, and broad terms of reference, of the PB are further described in the Section Management Arrangements of the Project Document.

(iii) A collaborative approach to engage local communities

A participatory strategy will be developed and implemented to ensure effective participation at local level, including rural entrepreneurs and farmers' associations, and other representatives of the local community involved in the development and implementation of project activities. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan will ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the objectives of the project, the proposed activities and the possibilities for their participation in various activities. Various communication techniques and methods will be proposed that are most appropriate for local conditions. The engagement strategy will also contain a mechanism for the provision of technical assistance to selected local businesses through various methods, including through the relevant government agencies and the district/municipality/village administration and through local action groups such as the Local Action Group Lower Prut and basin committees such as Camenca Basin Committee and the Women Association for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development . To identify local measures and activities in pilot project districts, a more refined trajectory of stakeholder participation in project activities will be agreed upon at the Inception phase. The project team will advocate for women participation and representations in all the consultative bodies and committees and participation in and benefiting from the project activities.

(v) Establishment of a Project Management team to oversee stakeholder engagement processes during project

The Project Management Unit (PMU) will be set up by the MOE/EPIU – comprising a Project Manager (PM), project Administrative and Financial Assistant (AFA) supported by technical consultants/project specialists that will take direct technical and administrative responsibility for facilitating stakeholder involvement and ensuring increased local ownership of the project and its results. The PM, Project Specialists and Administrative and Financial Assistant will be located in Chisinau to ensure coordination among key stakeholder organizations at the national level during the project period, while taking several missions to the targeted PAs and project sites. A gender consultant will be hired to oversee the Gender Action Plan and support gender mainstreaming and ensuring that the project advocates for women and youth participation and promotes equal men and women opportunities to benefit from the project's activities; an M&E consultant will be hired to support the Project manager implement the M&E plan and monitoring of the project's indicators.

(vi) Project communication to facilitate awareness and participation

The project will refine, implement and maintain a communications plan, presented as part of a broader Knowledge management, to ensure that all stakeholders are informed on an ongoing basis about the project's objectives; the projects activities; overall project progress; and the opportunities for involvement in various aspects of the project's implementation. This strategy will ensure the use of communication techniques and approaches are appropriate to the local contexts such as appropriate languages and other skills that enhance communication effectiveness. The project will develop and maintain a web-based platform for sharing and disseminating information on sustainable wetlands management, and biodiversity-friendly agriculture practices around PAs/KBAs.

(vii) Stakeholder consultation and participation in project implementation

The key partners will actively participate into project activities. In addition, a comprehensive stakeholder

consultation and participation process will be developed and implemented for each of the following outputs/activities:

- **Output 1.1/Act. 1.1.1; 1.1.2; 1.1.3:** The UNDP/GEF project will deploy multi-stakeholders participatory approaches, by facilitating workshops and roundtable meetings to discuss existing legal inadequacies and the necessary amendments and guidelines addressing all needs identified. The process of development and adoption of the legal amendments will include close cooperation primarily with the institutions responsible for the PAs and watershed management: i.e. the Ministry of Environment; Moldovan Waters Agency; Moldsilva Agency; Moldovan Parliament (relevant committees); the Environment Agency, the Environmental Reference Laboratory, Local Government Authorities, Local ecological inspectorates. The project will further partner with a Coalition of Environmental NGOs for advocacy activities e.g. Eco Contact, National Council of Environmental NGOs and Association of Environment and Eco-tourism Journalists in Moldova to raise awareness on, and advocate for, an adequate legal, policy and financing framework for sustainable wetlands management (Output 4.1.1). In addition, the project will facilitate cross-border dialogue with Romanian counterparts on the scientific data underpinning the adjusted minimum ecological flow and the negotiations on the amendments to the Regulation of the Stanca Costesti Dam and the meetings will be chaired by the Moldovan government representatives (under Activity 1.1.1.3). Formal and informal partnerships will be developed and established with gender balance and gender mainstreaming approaches in mind. The project team will ensure that gender-mainstreaming aspects are addressed and integrated throughout all aspects of the project's stakeholder engagement activities. The project will make sure to integrate a gender perspective into all legal and policy amendments and stakeholders consultations, advocating for women rights and striving to offer equal participation opportunities in deliberation processes.
- **Output 1.1.2/Act. 1.1.2.1:** The project will work with the Ministry of Environment in order to elevate wetlands funding higher on the Ministry agenda, and therefore mainstream this issue among funding priorities put forward on annual basis for the Ministry of Finance approval. The project will further support stakeholders' consultations and approval of these amendments (in coordination with Activity 1.1.1.2 and the Awareness raising activities under Component 4).
- **Output 1.1.3/Act 1.1.3.1** The project will support mapping of key wetlands habitats in the targeted protected areas (under Output 2.1.) and will work with the district authorities to integrate the main biodiversity consideration and provisions for natural resource management and biodiversity monitoring in a) midterm revision of the current strategies and b) into their new local development strategies. In addition, the project's experts will work with the local districts' authorities in Cahul (hosting the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve) and Glodeni and Falesti districts (hosting the Royal Forest Reserve) and organize 6 training and coaching sessions (two meetings for each district in the second year of the project implementation) to strengthen support the biodiversity mainstreaming into local development planning and the revisions of the local development strategies at midterm. The beneficiaries of these meetings and coaching sessions will be staff from the targeted district councils, and the local councils and municipalities of targeted localities, local branches of the Ministry of Environment, Agency for Land Relations and Cadaster, Moldsilva Agency, PAs administrations, and State Ecological Inspectorate.
- **Output 1.1.3/Act. 1.1.3.2:** The project will work with the Botanical Garden Institute and Institute of Zoology experts in order to conduct flora and fauna inventories and development of Biodiversity Passports; and will further work closely with the Ministry of Environment and local and district level authorities and State Ecological Inspectorate, for the mainstreaming of Biodiversity Passports concept as well as clear measures for the conservation of red list/rare/endangered species outside PAs into local strategies and planning.
- **Output 2.1.1./Act 2.1.1.1 and 2.1.1.2 and Output 2.1.2/Act 2.1.2.1** The project will work with the local

key stakeholders through the Process framework (described under ESMF Annex 10). The stakeholders involved are the following: (i) for the project's work in the Royal Forest Nature Reserve area: the local communities in the affected villages will be consulted (Braniste, Avraneni, Balatina, Cuhnesti, Bisericani, Moara Domneasca, Viisoara, Calinesti, Pruteni, Drujeni villages); the local authorities; the Camenca Basin Committee; local NGOs familiar with this region such as the Association of Women for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development; Moldsilva Agency; Moldovan Waters Agency; and the Ministry of Environment; local policy and local environmental inspectors; Royal Forest Administration; (ii) for the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve area Act. 2.1.1.3 the project will engage with the following stakeholders for updating the draft Management Plan of the PA: Moldsilva Agency/ PA Administration, department of Biodiversity of MOE, Institute of Ecology and Geography, Botanical Garden Institute, Institute of Zoology, local NGOs ( EcoContact; Verde e Moldova; WWF/DYNA project; Society for Protection of Birds and Nature and others), Society of Hunters and Fishermen and will organize consultations with the local authorities of the 9 villages located within the border of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, with the support of the Local Action Group *Lower Prut*. The local authorities of Crihana Veche, Cahul, Colibasi, Vadul lui Isac, Valeni, Branza, Manta, Caslita-Prut, Colibasi, Giurgiulesti will participate into consultations and formal approval of the Management Plan Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and the consultations on the trilateral biosphere reserve (Act. 2.1.1.4).

- **Output 2.1.1/Activity 2.1.1.4 and Output 3.1.2/Act 3.1.2.2:** the project will engage with Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration for the designation of the trilateral biosphere reserve Danube Delta and Lower Prut Basin as well as for the development t of a cross border tourists package. The project will be supported and will work with Danube Parks Organization.
- **Output 2.2.1/Act 2.2.1.1** Together with Moldsilva Agency and ICAS, as well as Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve Administration, the project will conduct reforestation activities in Crihana Veche, Manta-Pascani, Vadul lui Isac, Branca; Colibasi, Valeni and will work with the local authorities in these localities during the reforestation works and later for monitoring purposes.
- **Output 2.2.1/Act 2.2.1.2** is aiming at the implementation of the hydrotechnical works for the rehabilitation of the old Camenca river watercourse. The situation in this case is complicated by the fact that some residents/household have illegally diverted water for own consumption in Balatina village. The project supported restoration works will re-direct Camenca river flow into its own old riverbed. This means that the river will no longer feed the illegally constructed water reservoir. This situation alone will likely elicit a negative response from the respective local residents. Targeted dialogues with the owner of the illegal reservoir, and other local community representatives, local authorities , local police and the representatives of the MOE, Moldovan Waters Agency and the Moldsilva Agency including the Royal Forest Nature Reserve management/staff will be organized starting with the inception phase, in order to discuss this situation, inform about the project's activities and hopefully get to an amicable resolution. The stakeholders involved are the following: the local communities in the affected villages (in particular Balatina, Cuhnesti, Tomestii Noi, Movileni villages); the local authorities; the Camenca Basin Committee; local NGOs familiar with this region such as the Association of Women for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development; Moldsilva Agency; Moldovan Waters Agency; and the Ministry of Environment; local policy and local environmental inspectors; Royal Forest Administration. The stakeholders engagement through the Process framework will be conducted in **2 stages:**
  - During the inception phase, the project will start the Process Framework's first round of consultations at local level, in the affected villages, involving the Ministry of Regional Development, Agriculture and Environment; the Moldovan Waters Agency and Moldsilva Agency with the PA Royal Forest Nature Reserve staff as well as the local environmental inspectors and local authorities namely the mayors of the villages located in the proximity of the envisaged hydrological works- especially Balatina village. The village has about 3815 people, and the discussions will aim in principle to inform about the intended works, assess

local acceptance, raise awareness on the benefits of the rehabilitation of the old watercourse and agree on the next steps, identify the households located near the proposed hydrological intervention site and assess potential impact on these households, and identify the appropriate measures to address illegal earth dam constructions on the old water course of Camenca river. Addressing the existing illegal constructions is of outmost importance.

- The second round of consultations under the Process Framework will be held after the Feasibility Study will be finalized (*please see Project Document Activity 2.2.1.2 with regard to mandatory sequencing of the project 's work i.e. all the legal matters must be addressed and local authority endorsements must be secured before commissioning the Feasibility Study*). The project will work with the existing Camenca Sub-basin Committee and hold local consultations aiming at fully engaging the local communities located in the floodplain area. There are 14 villages located in the area but only a handful of them are located more or less in the proximity of the project intervention site (Balatina, Cuhnesti and Tomestii Noi and Movileni in particular). The project will facilitate the approval of the feasibility study by the local authorities. If any economic displacement will be validated, the project will develop a Livelihood Action Plan and will deploy compensatory mechanisms as needed.
- **Output 3.1.1/ Act. 3.1.1.1.** The project will work with the Local Action Group Lower Prut and will select 5 local entrepreneurs that will be supported to apply for EU4Cahul grants. The project will advocate for women participation and will offer equal participating opportunities to women and men to all the training events.
- **Output 3.1.1./Act. 3.1.1.2** The project will work with the Organization for Small and Medium Enterprises Sector Development ( ODIMM)<sup>62</sup> to develop and deliver green business modules to local entrepreneurs and SMEs.
- **Output 3.1.2/Act 3.1.2.1** The project will work with the Local Action Group Lower Prut and participating municipalities, with the Association for Tourism Development in Moldova and local communities, for the development of tourism package/itineraries and will facilitate partnerships with local tourism operators and with the larger Danube Tour Operators, in order to link the local routes to pan-Danube cruises. The project will engage women participation through the *Local Action Group Lower Prut* and will offer equal chances to men and women to benefit from green business opportunities created with the project's support.
- **Output 3.1.2/Act 3.1.2.3:** UNDP CO will organize the Innovation Challenge or will seek a third party that will be contracted for the organization of the Innovation Challenge. The project may be supported by UNDP's Innovation Lab. The potential private sector operators that could be active and interested in matching/co-financing the Innovation product is Orange Moldova.
- **Output 4.1.1/Act. 4.1.1.1** will be supported by a specialized PR/media company and the project will engage with NGOs and environmental journalists e.g. the Association of Environmental and Ecological Tourism Journalists; the Women in Sustainable Development of Moldova (WISDOM); Regional Environmental Center (REC); Ecological Society BIOTICA; National Council of Environmental NGOs; Eco Contact; other international organizations.

A participatory approach will be adopted to facilitate the continued involvement of local stakeholders including the vulnerable and marginalized members of the community (including women and youth) in the implementation of the project activities within the targeted villages.

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<sup>62</sup> <https://www.odimm.md/en/>

(viii) Formal structures to facilitate multi- stakeholders involvement in project activities

The project will also actively seek to establish and/or work with formalized structures to ensure the ongoing participation of local and institutional stakeholders in the project activities. More specifically it will support the establishment of multi-stakeholders working groups for the support to NBSAP development and the discussions/debates on the proposed legal and regulatory amendments. At local level, the project will advocate for the inclusion of women and vulnerable groups representatives in the midterm review of the district (rayonal) local development strategies. Furthermore, the project the project will work with the Local Action Group Lower Prut in order to facilitate multi-stakeholders mechanisms for the discussions and agreement on the proposed protected areas management and international designation proposed for the targeted PA. The project will organize the Process framework for the project's work on PAs (as per UNDP SES requirements please see SES Annex 6).

(ix) Awareness and Capacity building

Significant GEF resources are directed at building awareness and capacities of *inter alia*: local resource users and agricultural producers, rural tourism entrepreneurs, local branches of line ministries, local environmental inspectorates and police; Protected Areas staff; local authorities and their planning and environmental law enforcement staff. Wherever possible, the project will also seek to build the capacity of local communities (e.g. local community groups and vulnerable and marginalized segments) to enable them to actively participate in project activities. The project will, wherever possible, use the services and facilities of existing local training and skills development institutions, such as the Organization for Small and Medium Enterprises Sector Development (ODIMM). In addition, the project will partner with NGOs and environmental journalists e.g. the Association of Environmental and Ecological Tourism Journalists; the Women in Sustainable Development of Moldova (WISDOM); Regional Environmental Center (REC); Ecological Society BIOTICA; National Council of Environmental NGOs; Eco Contact; other international organizations to raise decision makers and the public awareness on the need to increase sustainable wetlands financing and management and promote green businesses that do not pollute/deplete water and biodiversity resources.

**Dispute Resolution and Grievance Redress**

UNDP adopts the use of a Stakeholder Response Mechanism (SRM) that ensures individuals, peoples, and communities affected by projects have access to appropriate grievance resolution procedures for hearing and addressing project-related complaints and disputes.<sup>63</sup> In compliance with the SRM, this project will also ensure that the processes and associated policies and procedures are implemented with high standards and that the communities in the targeted regions simultaneously benefit from the activities and have a voice in their implementation. It is necessary to note that this project is categorized as a medium risk project (see UNDP SES) and as such the SRM is meant to ameliorate the potential for any conflicts and ensure that there are opportunities to immediately resolve issues so that they do not escalate. An SRM is developed to reduce any loss of trust and a halt to the project activities.

Apart from directly addressing conflicts especially associated with moderate and high-risk projects, the SRM also has the added value that can:

- Improve environmental and social outcomes for local communities and other stakeholders affected by UNDP projects.
- Enhance UNDP's ability to manage risks related to its Social and Environmental Standards, in order to avoid or mitigate social and environmental impacts.
- Ensure that UNDP responds to the concerns of project stakeholders (particularly vulnerable groups that

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<sup>63</sup>See UNDP Draft Guidance Note, UNDP Social and Environmental Standards (SES) **Stakeholder Engagement**, p. 17. The Stakeholder Response Mechanism helps project-affected stakeholders, UNDP's partners (governments, NGOs, businesses) and others jointly address grievances or disputes related to the social and/or environmental impacts of UNDP-supported projects.

are central to UNDP's programmatic work) with regard to social and environmental risks and impact.

- Ensure feedback and operational learning from the SRM, by integrating SRM requests, responses and <sup>64</sup>results into UNDP's results-based management, quality assurance processes; and
- Reflect and advance best practices among development institutions, whose stakeholders (including governments, civil society, indigenous peoples, and international partner agencies) increasingly expect social and environmental grievance resolution processes to be a regular, integrated part of project management.

Although the implementation of an SRM is not anticipated, the grievance mechanism (see below) is intended for use by all individuals, groups, communities, or agencies who may inadvertently be affected by the implementation of this Project. Priority beneficiaries and users of the grievance mechanism are: farm owners, non-government organizations, academia, and private individuals in the LADAB landscape who are considered to have had adverse experiences caused by or exacerbated by the project.

### **Conflict and Grievance Mechanism**

The process to settle conflicts and grievances will be presented in several of the consultations with stakeholders and as part of the ongoing commitment to information sharing processes that will be instituted in the project cycle. Stakeholders will be informed that the implementation of a project specific mechanism will not incur any costs and that the same mechanism remains in place for the duration of the project. Stakeholders will be informed of the following process as outlined below. During the project implementation, they will provide feedback and endorsement for the project specific conflict resolution mechanism. Should grievances and conflicts arise, they should be submitted to UNDP Uzbekistan. Registered grievances will be reviewed and managed by the Project Board. To do so, the project will at inception:

- Identify appropriate staff who will aid with responses to conflicts and grievance that may arise from stakeholder.
- Develop and install specific guidelines for use by staff and other personnel who will be assigned to enact various roles for the resolution of any conflict or grievance; and
- Provide formal training to staff and other personnel who have assigned roles to perform in the implementation of the conflict and grievance mechanism.

A grievance mechanism will be additionally incorporated within the on-granting process established within Component 3 (Output 3.2.3) with responsibility to monitor for early detection of grievances. Standard Operating Procedures for recording and addressing community and other stakeholder grievances at the grantee project level will be established.

### **Operationalizing the Project Approach to Conflict and Grievance in the NIM Context**

- *The Concern or Grievance* – Where a grievance or concern is experienced or identified as resulting from the project interventions, it is expected that this matter will be immediately conveyed to a representative from the National Implementation (or NIM) Partner. The format in which a matter is raised can be in writing, verbally or via text. At this level, the aim of this first step is to bring awareness to the issue before and to prevent any further escalation of the issue.
- *Immediate attention to the concern or grievance* – The matter raised will be acknowledged and addressed by the project manager or a designate to prevent any adverse effects on individuals engaged in the project, a specific region or on the pace of project interventions.
- *Resolution of the concern or grievance* – The project official who receives this information will inform the project manager and the project specific oversight mechanism will be enacted.<sup>65</sup> It is expected, however, that such concerns and grievances can be appropriately and effectively settled through the use

<sup>64</sup>UNDP, Stakeholder Response Mechanism: Overview and Guidance, p.5

<sup>65</sup> During project implementation a specific approach outlining specific roles and responsibilities consistent with the policies and procedures of the NIM partner will be developed and presented to the stakeholders. They will also use this opportunity to provide additional information and feedback to strengthen the project specific response mechanism.

of discussion, correspondence, meetings and management decisions. This approach will likely not require formal logging or tracking.

- *The conclusion of the grievance or concern* – At its conclusion, the decision to conclude the grievance will be documented to the complainant in written form.

### Monitoring

Overall, despite that the project has a medium-risk assessment based on its SES, stakeholders will remain engaged in monitoring during project implementation. Updated and revised measures will be presented at project board meetings and at the broader stakeholder group meetings. Outputs and indicators from the Project Results Framework will serve to assess stakeholder engagement and intervention effectiveness. These indicators will be disaggregated further by stakeholder type, gender, etc., as needed and appropriate.

**The table below describes the major categories of stakeholders identified and the proposed involvement in the project**

Stakeholders	Legislative mandates and Responsibility and role in the project
Ministry of Environment (MOE)	<p>The Ministry is responsible for the development of legislation, action plans, norms and standards in environment, agriculture and regional development. The Directorate of policies in the area of biodiversity of MOE has the basic mission of developing and promoting the state policy in the sphere of reasonable use of natural resources, conservation of biodiversity, state protected natural areas, forest stock, hunting stock and biological security, within the limits of its competence and conditions provided by the environment legislation in force, by the Regulations of the Ministry and Regulations of the Directorate</p> <p>In the field of environment, the Ministry is responsible for the development of legal and regulatory framework in the field of environmental protection, sustainable use of natural resources, including management of air, waste, water resources, water supply and sewerage system, ensuring compatibility of legal framework with Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA). In the process of developing environmental policies and legislation, MOE closely cooperates with the specialized research institutions (Botanical Garden (Institute), Zoology Institute, Institute of Ecology and Geography, with the civil society (NGO community) and other structures.</p> <p>Likewise, with the adherence to the <i>Convention on Access to Information, Justice and Public Participation in Decision Making in the sphere of environment (Aarhus Convention)</i>, the right of public participation and access to justice is ensured. At the same time, the <i>Law on transparency in decision making (No. 239/2008)</i> obliges MOE to ensure transparency in the process of developing the legislation, thus giving incentives for the participation of the citizens and other stakeholders in the decision-making process.</p> <p>Wetlands are used for economic purposes, for irrigation, fishing, grazing, hunting or recreation, they are transformed or completely destroyed, which causes a major impact on the environment. The lands from the wetlands of international importance are managed by various holders, including by the “Moldova Waters” Agency, „Moldsilva” Agency.</p> <p>Some of the Ministry’s functions and competences for water, air and waste are implemented by specialized bodies under its mandate, with which the project will</p>

	<p>coordinate : State Hydrometeorological Service (<b>SHS</b>), Agency “<b>Apele Moldovei (Moldovan Waters)</b>”, Agency for Geology and Mineral Resources (<b>AGMR</b>) and State Ecological Inspection (<b>SEI</b>).</p> <p>The National Ecological Fund operates under the Ministry, managed by an Administrative Council, chaired by the minister.</p> <p>The Ministry will review and draft policy and legislation relevant to protected areas, pollution charges and amendments to the National Ecological Fund’s Regulation. The Ministry will provide leadership to the project management team especially regarding liaison with government authorities from different sectors. Ministry will ensure coordination with other relevant projects and initiatives.</p>
Agency” Moldsilva”	<p>Moldsilva Agency, by mutual agreement with the central authority for environment protection, organizes the strict observance of the regulations on reserves and other protected areas (art. 12 of the <i>Forestry Code</i> No. 887/1996). Similarly, in accordance with the <i>Regulations on the organization and operation of „Moldsilva” Agency, structure and staff of its central office</i> (GD No. 150/2010), Moldsilva develops and organizes the application of measures on the conservation, ecologic reconstruction of the forests in the state protected natural areas managed by it; develops and presents proposals on the construction of state protected natural areas in the conditions established by the legislation, ensures the observance of the regime of management of the inventory of natural areas, conservation and protection of the objects of the vegetal and animal kingdoms from such areas.</p> <p>Through the territorial subordinated entities, it manages approximately 50 % of the total surface of the state protected natural areas.</p> <p>Moldsilva will be an important partner for the implementation of reforestation activities on degraded lands, as well as for their related duties in the protected areas management. The agency will provide, through its state forestry units, technical assistance, co-financing and support in implementing project components. Also, Moldsilva will help build cooperation with local communities where it operates.</p>
ICAS- Forest Research and Management Institute	<p>ICAS mission is to substantiate on a scientific basis the management and development of the forestry sector by producing and disseminating scientific and technical information, providing specialized advice, recommending and implementing new and modernized technologies, developing innovative products that contribute to increase competitiveness of the forestry sector.</p> <p>ICAS will be a key partner especially in implementing the reforestation work in the Lower Prut Biosphere reserve. The main responsibilities: Support in facilitation of stakeholders engagement tin the restoration work ;Re-validation of the demonstration areas that were selected at PPG stage; support to screening and targeted assessments of the reforestation areas (as per UNDP SES requirements), facilitation of engagement with local authorities; technical assistance; support to monitoring of results.</p>

Agency “Moldovan Waters”	<p>The Moldovan Waters Agency is the administrative authority subordinated to MOE, which is responsible for the implementation of the state policy in the area of water resources management; it manages the lands of the water inventory, surface water bodies and hydrotechnical constructions in the public property of the state, on the basis of the Nistru and Danube-Prut and Black Sea hydrotechnical basins located on the territory of the Republic of Moldova; (<i>Regulations on the organization and operation of the „Moldova Waters” Agency, its structure and number of staff</i>, GD No. 882/2014). The state control and supervision, prevention and fighting the infringements in the sphere of protection of flora, fauna and protected natural areas in order to ensure a high level of supervision and protection of the environment, public interests, ecological security of the state are performed by the Inspectorate for Environment Protection subordinated to MOE. (<i>GD No. 548/2018 on the organization and operation of the Inspectorate for Environment Protection</i>).</p> <p>“Moldovan Waters” Agency will be the main counterpart under Component 1 (Output 1.1.1), and will facilitate coordination with the Romanian counterparts, regarding the hydro-ecological models and revisions to the existing Regulation of the Stanca-Costesti Dam, in order to increase the ecological flows to wetlands downstream.</p>
Environment Agency	<p>The Environment Agency, subordinated to MOE, performs the monitoring of the quality of state protected natural areas, monitoring of the state and use of the water and soil resources, monitoring of the vegetal and animal kingdom, monitoring of the state of the underground, monitoring of air pollution, geological monitoring, monitoring of environment pollution for the purpose of providing to natural and legal person information on the quality of environment, developing the statistical indicators in the sphere of environment protection (<i>GD No. 549/2018 on the creation, organization and operation of the Environment Agency</i>).</p>
Environmental Reference Laboratory	<p>Environmental Reference Laboratory (ERL) from the Environment Agency is responsible for the supervision of the quality of environment components (surface waters, wastewaters, air, soil, water alluvia, atmospheric precipitations, level of the debit of gamma radiation in the environment, etc.), on the basis of a large monitoring network located on the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova. On 18 March 2021, ERL received the Accreditation Certificate for the ISO/IEC 17025 Standard from the National Accreditation Centre of the Republic of Moldova MOLDAC.</p>
Local Public Authorities (LPAs) at the district and village/community levels	<p>The authorities of the local public administration (ALPA) organize the management of the protected areas the landholders of which they are; implement protection measures ensuring the protection regime corresponding to the instituted management category (art. 15, Law 1538/1998). In accordance with the environmental legislation, ALPA has the role of being responsible for the organization of implementation, at a local level, of the policy on environmental protection and reasonable use of natural resources.</p> <p>District and village/community public administrations have a significant role to play in components 2, 3 and 4 of the projects. Their responsibilities are to promote cooperation among all land users and owners, to implement biodiversity-friendly practices, to support agri-businesses, to participate in conflict resolution, and promote awareness activities. The district authorities will be responsible for local</p>

	development policies and mainstreaming of biodiversity measures, with technical support provided by the project.
Local Action Group “Lower Prut” and clusters of small tourism entrepreneurs	<i>The Local Action Group Lower Prut</i> (LAGLP) was set up under EU LEADER programme and it includes all the 9 villages located in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. The LAGLP will mobilise local communities’ participation in biodiversity monitoring measures and ecotourism initiatives and will support the organization of the awareness seminars. The LAGLP will support/facilitate the technical assistance seminars and selection of rural entrepreneurs to participate into different calls for proposals under the EU4Moldova programme.
Private sector: Farmers associations; fishermen; concessionary companies (fisheries); tourism companies; oil extraction/mining (Valiexchim SRL)	Rural population, farmers and fishermen, small vegetable farming entrepreneurs concessionary holders, small tourism entrepreneurs and oil extraction company “Valiexchim SRL” (currently the latter’s contract expired and the company filed for bankruptcy) are the most important stakeholders under Component 2 and Component 3 and will be closely involved in restoration activities, consultation meetings during the development of management plans and biodiversity monitoring measures, as well as the development of different regulatory amendments with regard to permitting system in protected areas.
Women Association for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development	This NGO will be involved in the local consultations regarding the Royal Forest Nature Reserve Management Plan and the consultations on the full Feasibility Study of the envisage hydrotechnical works on Camenca river.
Association for Tourism Development in Moldova	The project will work with the Association for Tourism Development in Moldova for the support to the development of COVID-19 protocols in tourism industry.
NGOs: Association of Environmental and Ecological Tourism Journalists; the Women in Sustainable Development of Moldova (WISDOM); Regional Environmental Center (REC); Ecological Society BIOTICA; National Council of Environmental NGOs; Eco Contact; other international organizations.	All NGOs will participate in stakeholder consultation during the protected areas management plans development and revision in targeted areas, and in the awareness raising seminars as relevant. Joint activities will be explored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- joint awareness and education activities in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, with the NGOs implementing activities in the targeted PAs such as Eco Contact, Verde e Moldova and WWF/DYNA Projects.</li> <li>- avifauna inventories in both targeted areas engaging the Society for Birds and Nature Protection</li> <li>- awareness raising seminars engaging the Association for Environmental and Ecological Tourism Journalists.</li> <li>- with the Coalition of Environmental NGOs for advocacy activities e.g. Eco Contact, National Council of Environmental NGOs and Association of Environment and Eco-tourism Journalists in Moldova, the project will partner in order to raise awareness on, and advocate for, an adequate legal, policy and financing framework for sustainable wetlands management.</li> </ul>
Organization for Small and Medium Enterprises Sector Development (ODIMM)	ODIMM is a business support organization in Moldova, focused on Moldovan migrants, women entrepreneurs, business support programmes and organization of targeted training seminars.  UNDP/GEF project will work together with the Organization for Small and Medium Enterprises Sector Development ( ODIMM) <sup>66</sup> to develop and deliver green business modules to local entrepreneurs and SMEs. The project will complement the series of SMEs green business trainings implemented by ODIMM.

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.odimm.md/en/>

## Minutes of the Zoom meeting with Danube Parks and Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve representatives

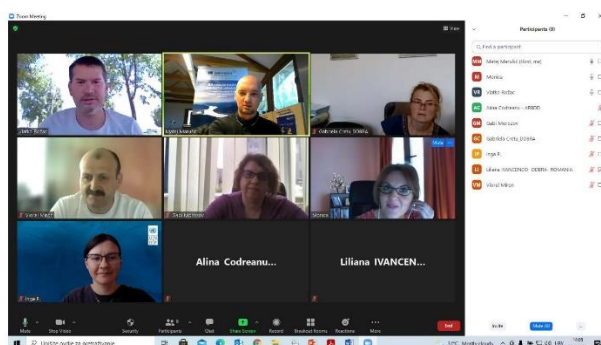


### TRANSDANUBE TRAVEL STORIES

#### PRODUCT CLUB MEETING: DANUBE DELTA

#### Minutes of Meeting

Online, Monday, 28th July 2021



#### List of participants (9):

1. Alina Codreanu (DDBRA)
2. Gabriela Cretu (DDBRA)
3. Gabriela Morozov (DDBRA)
4. Inga Podoroghin (UNDP Moldova)
5. Liliana Ivancenco (DDBRA)
6. Matej Marušić (DANUBE PARKS)
7. Monica Moldovan (international consultant)
8. Viorel Miron (Association of Tourism Development in Moldova)
9. Vlatko Rožac (DANUBE PARKS president)

Transdanube Travel Stories co-funded by the European Union (ERDF, IPA, ENI) and DANUBE PARKS.

## Minutes:

- **Meeting Welcome:** Mr. Vlatko Rožac welcomed all participants and stressed the importance of the DANUBEPARKS Network in maintaining strong international relationships between Protected Areas.

- **Presentation of projects:** After a brief presentation of Transdanube.Travel.Stories project and potential Product Club activities (Mr. Matej Marušić), Ms. Monica Moldovan presented the UNDP/GEF Conservation and sustainable management of wetlands with focus on high-nature value areas in the Prut River Basin (please find presentations attached).

- At the end of the presentation Mr. Viorel Miron stressed the importance of transnational cooperation because of the importance of the natural and cultural heritage of this region for Moldovan tourism in general.

- **Discussion:** After congratulations on the initiative for an ambitious project on the Prut River, Ms. Gabriela Cretu started the discussion with uncertainties about the following activities within the Transdanube.Travel.Stories project and Product Club (PC)

- After discussing and clarifying which part of the activity belongs to the UNDP Moldova project, and which to the PC initiative, the conclusions are as follows:

1. This meeting is the first step in the process of development of a cross-border integrated tourist package Moldova-Romania aiming to establish a new cross-border tourist product (tourist route).
2. The next activities will continue only after the start of the new UNDP Moldova project (spring 2022) when other stakeholders/new PC members such as local tour operators and local travel agencies will be involved in the process.
3. It is planned to organize a minimum of 2 more mutual meetings: 1 meeting in Moldova (during the UNDP/GEF project inception phase by UNDP Moldova and 1 meeting in Romania (by DDBRA - with the financial support of DANUBEPARKS).
4. In the framework of PC activities aiming to develop a new cross-border route, it is possible to spend the funding on the development of new promotional tools (leaflets, brochures, etc.), organization of meetings, and integration of information about new route into existing information services (apps, websites, etc.).
5. Representatives of all 3 partners expressed a desire to participate in future activities, emphasizing the need to harmonize expectations and concretize activities.

- At the end of the meeting, in his capacity as Director of the Association of Tourism Development in Moldova, Mr. Miron inquired about any existing guidelines to establish a Product Club, in view of exploring the feasibility of using such an approach in Moldova. It was agreed that Mr. Marušić will share the requested information together with the contact of the project's work package coordinator from Danube Competence Center (Serbia).

## Minutes of the online validation workshop

*UNDP/GEF Project*  
*Conservation and sustainable management of wetlands with focus on high-nature value areas*  
*in the Prut River basin Project*  
**Chisinau, Moldova**

**Date and time:** August 9, 2021, 10:30-12:30

**Link to Zoom workshop:** <https://lcmagency-eu.zoom.us/j/88655613877?pwd=R2NZZFZORm1xNFYxN2NhLzEzWkpZUT09>

The agenda and the list of participants of the project document validation workshop are annexed to this document.

**Workshop objective:** To present and discuss Conservation and sustainable management of wetlands with focus on high-nature value areas in the Prut River basin Project that supports Project document proposed by UNDP for GEF financing. To solicit feedback from key national stakeholders and partners and obtain their comments to finalize the project document and confirm their agreement to submit the document to UNDP headquarters and to GEF Secretariat for consideration.

Moderator: **Ms. Inga Podoroghin**, Programme Specialist, Cluster Lead Energy and Environment, UNDP Moldova

### **Course of the meeting:**

**Ms. Inga Podoroghin**, UNDP Programme Specialist on Energy and Environment in Moldova, welcomed the workshop participants and emphasized the traditional partnership between UNDP and the Government of the Republic of Moldova on protected areas and biodiversity conservation. Mrs. Podoroghin also touched upon other successful initiatives of UNDP and UN assistance to the Government of Moldova, starting with 1990s in promoting the environment and ecosystems restoration. She spoke about the post 2020 global and national policies in the area, including the National Strategy on Biodiversity Conservation and its subsequent Action Plan as well as the National Development Strategy which touches upon the sustainable development and nature protection. In this context, she also noted the UNDP intention to support an initiative which is aimed at solving key issues from the Low Prut area, playing a transformational role on the relationship between nature and human society. Thus, the project on Conservation and sustainable management of wetlands with focus on high-nature value areas in the Prut River basin was designed based on the current needs of the country related to wetlands management, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. The project proposal was consulted with the central authorities, local authorities and with certain target groups. She has expressed confidence that the project will be supported by all stakeholders, especially by the Ministry of Environment in its capacity of Implementing Partner and wished to the participants a successful workshop.

**Ms. Ala Rotaru**, Biodiversity Policy Department, Ministry of Environment, welcomed the participants and stressed that this is an important event for the Republic of Moldova, but also at regional and global level considering that it aims at sustainable management of the most representative biodiversity habitats and species. Ms. Rotaru emphasized that the state policy continues to promote the sustainable management of natural ecosystems and biodiversity conservation in line with the international standards such as the International Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, the EU Directives in the field and other international treaties. She expressed gratitude to UNDP and Global Environment Fund for supporting the 'Conservation and sustainable management of wetlands with focus on high-nature value areas in the Prut River basin' Project. She also underlined that the particularities related to wetland areas and the extension of state conservation areas are also reflected in the Decision 1435 of the Convention on Biological Diversity which adopted a preparatory process for the development of the global framework on biodiversity 2020-2030 as well as the biodiversity vision by 2050. She also reflected on the idea that the project addresses the key concerns related to Prut River basin but it will also improve the efficiency of key species conservation in the Prut river basin and the 'Padurea Domneasca' Scientific Reserve.

She expressed hope that the project will facilitate an international tri-partite (Moldova, Romania and Ukraine) Reservation for the Low-Prut Reservation and Danube Delta. In this regard, Ms. Rotaru emphasized the Ministry's engagement to continue efforts in improving the relevant regulatory framework and touched upon the project's role in developing the public policies related to the biosphere reserve's conservation and management. She also acknowledged the importance of the public awareness component reflected in the project and the overall positive impact that the project is expected to play in preserving the natural ecosystems, expressing sincere hope for productive cooperation in the sustainable management of the most important river connecting the Republic of Moldova with the European Union.

**Ms. Monica Moldovan**, GEF PPG Team Leader, presented the proposed project components, activities and results as well as the UNDP and GEF M&E requirements. The presentation covered: the process of preparing the project document, the scope of the project, the expected results of the project under 5 Components, synergy with other initiatives, the organizational structure of the project, possible risks in its implementation, gender aspects, environmental and social safeguards, and the next steps subsequent to this workshop.

After the presentation on the goals, objectives and expected results of the project, **Ms. Inga Podoroghin**, Programme Specialist, Cluster Lead Energy and Environment, UNDP Moldova, invited the participants to proceed to discussions in order to assess the presented project document and generate relevant recommendations and proposals. It was noted that the final version of the project document will be prepared taking into account the views and proposals of all stakeholders who took part in the workshop discussion.

Questions, opinions, comments	Answers	Comment reflected in the project document
<p><b>Gabriel Margineanu</b>, executive director Ecological Society BIOTICA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the percentage rate between the 'soft' and 'hard' activities financed under the respective project?</li> <li>2. What is the place and role of the Administrations of the Biosphere Reservation and Scientific Reservation?</li> <li>3. How does the project reflect the connection between the activities of biodiversity restoration and the restoration and consolidation of the National Ecological Network?</li> <li>4. What do you mean through 'Elaboration of a business plan for the protected area'?</li> <li>5. The number of project beneficiaries should be extended in order to match the proposed indicators, considering that the territory to be restored covers a larger number of citizens living in the project area (comment).</li> <li>6. The project is much needed, useful, and worthy, targeting the previously disregarded wetlands, reason for which the Ecological Society BIOTICA strongly supports the complex approach proposed by the project and is ready to participate in</li> </ol>	<p><b>Ms. Monica Moldovan</b>, Project Team leader</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There's no percentage rate between 'soft' and 'hard' project components but overall, out of the project budget of over 830k USD, more than 100k are planned for the feasibility study on the rehabilitation of the river Camenca (the other 200k will be co-financed by the Ministry of Environment) and about 85k for afforestation activities, which could be interpreted as 'hard' components. The rest of the budget will be allocated for species inventory, public awareness, on the ground activities and capacity building of the two protected areas, Moldsilva, 'Apele Moldovei' Agency and the Ministry of Environment.</li> <li>2. The administrations of the Biosphere Reservation and Scientific Reservation are main beneficiaries of the project and potential members of the Project Board</li> <li>3. The project is fully aligned with the national priorities. The connection between the activities of biodiversity restoration and the restoration and consolidation of the National Ecological Network is ensured by the Ministry of Environment. It is expected that this connection will be reflected within the new Biodiversity Strategy, to which the project will contribute.</li> </ol>	<p>Project document Outcome 2</p>

<p>the implementation phase with co-financing activities inclusively.</p> <p>7. The Invest Moldova Agency should be the key stakeholder on tourism-related aspects touched by the project</p> <p>8. Does the project plan the construction of a floodgate/sluiice</p>	<p>4. Additional to the management plan, the business plans will help the PAs make use of the existent budget in an efficient way, it will train the staff on budget administration, and will enlist the economic opportunities from both protected areas that could bring extra incomes to the administrations of the protected areas and the local authorities, a special focus will be paid to the tourism industry. Thus, there will be specific studies on the economic opportunities. The Smart solution presented earlier will serve as a tool (either an app for smartphones or a crowdfunding platform) which will promote the values of the 2 protected areas and it is expected to increase the number of tourists and subsequently, generate incomes for the PA and local communities.</p> <p>5. The project estimated a number of about 40 000 beneficiaries, which is the approximate number of inhabitants of the two National Reserves some will be more intensely affected by the project activities than others.</p> <p><b><u>Ala Rotaru</u></b>, Ministry of Environment:</p> <p>3. With reference to the National Ecological Network, to note that both protected areas targeted by the project are included in the ecological network and the Emerald network</p> <p><b><u>Gherman Bejenaru</u></b>, Project technical expert:</p> <p>8. The engineers will analyze and recommend solutions for this hydrotechnical restoration works on Camenca river, within the study to be developed under the project</p>	
<p><b><u>Ecaterina Melnicenco</u></b>, EcoContact:</p> <p>1. EcoContact does implement a project in the Lower Prut basin with the financial support of the Austrian Development Agency and there's need for synergy between projects on the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One of the project components is to implement pilot projects in localities. For Manta village it was decided to develop under the respective project a feasibility study aimed to boost the potential of the Manta lake. It could serve as basis for further development of the respective zone.</li> <li>- There are also envisaged afforestation works beyond Lower Prut basin, especially for the lake Frumoasa (Crihana),</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Ms. Monica Moldovan</u></b>, Project Team leader</p> <p>1. During the preparation of the project document, the possibilities of synergy of activities were studied, the importance of partnerships in the implementation of project activities, including with ADA project, was taken into account. We look forward to working together, we have specifically highlighted the cooperation opportunity in the project document. The UNDP project will make use of the ADA-developed vulnerability assessments to climate change to update the management plan of the Biosphere Reserve. The adaptation measures mentioned above may serve as grounds for further discussions on synergy between projects. Concerning initiatives at Manta Lake, the potential for cooperation is there, a common denominator would be the afforestation works and the tourist</p>	<p>Project document Outcome 1/Output 1.3 and Outcome 4/Output 4.1.1</p>

<p>respectively there's need for coordination between projects and Moldsilva.</p> <p>- Under ADA project, an institutional capacity analysis exercise of Moldsilva and local authorities has been commenced. To note that the business plans development requested by certain project stakeholders go beyond the project's scope and resources.</p> <p>- Another potential area of cooperation between the two projects relates to the website proposed for development. To date, the Lower Prut Reserve website is currently under development with the support of the ADA project. It may serve as basis for further development and integration of the modules proposed under the PPG Prut river Project.</p> <p>2. As Monica mentioned in her presentation, the UNDP project document provides mainstreaming of biodiversity in local strategies. At what level of authority will the project mainstream this aspect? To note that ADA project already works on an analysis of vulnerabilities to climate change in all target localities and will integrate adaptation measures in the local action plans.</p>	<p>trails that will be developed by UNDP/GEF project, as Manta is included in the main touristic itineraries to be developed under the project.</p> <p>2. Under this project, experts on key habitats will work in the protected areas and beyond to identify the endangered species for updating the management plan in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and developing one for the Royal Forest Nature Reserve. With regard to including the biodiversity considerations within local strategies, one way that the UNDP/GEF project will explore is based on a former GEF funded initiative, and will be based on the development of the so-called "biodiversity passports" for key species and appropriate conservation and habitat management measures will be proposed for mainstreaming at district-level strategies during the mid-term review of the current policy documents. If the "biodiversity passports" will not be ready in due time for mid-term review, then mainstreaming will be ensured during the next strategic planning exercise, due in 2024. At local level, the project will intervene based on the needs identified during the discussions with local beneficiaries, being targeted in the two Natural Reserves.</p> <p>The organizations working in the area will be key partners of the project such as to maximize the impact at local level.</p> <p><b><u>Diana Celac</u></b>, Programme Manager for Water and Environment, ADA:</p> <p>1. ADA is financing a similar project in the Lower Prut basin which will last one more year, with the possibility of extension. Thanks for contacting EcoContact (implementing partner of ADA Project) as to ensure synergy and coordination between projects. Cooperation between various stakeholders is also encouraged.</p> <p>2. ADA is also financing another important project in the wetland 'Nistrul de Jos' aimed to diversify the biosphere.</p> <p>3. Expressed hope for further fruitful cooperation with all stakeholders, especially the newly created Ministry of Environment.</p>	
<p><b><u>Ala Rotaru</u></b>, Ministry of Environment (comments):</p> <p>1. To organize an additional meeting with delegates of other similar projects to discuss complementarities and synergies and avoid overlapping of efforts and resources.</p>	<p><b><u>Andrei Isac</u></b>, EU4Environment Project:</p> <p>1. Congratulations to UNDP Moldova, Ministry and all experts for the development of this project. To note that recently the World Bank has started the implementation of the Result 4 on Protected Areas and Ecosystem services and currently are elaborating the country level Action Plan for the next 4 years. Fully supports the idea of organizing</p>	<p>Round table meetings with NGOs and similar initiatives are supported under different</p>

<p>2. Related to the comments addressed by EcoContact representative, the management plan of Lower Prut Reserve was developed with the support of ADA project and now the Regulation is in the review/approval phase. The field situation should be however reviewed, especially the species and the plan should be adjusted in line with the model agreed at central level. There is a Management Plan of wetlands, yet it also should be adjusted to the national requirements. Concerning the Action Plan of `Padurea Domneasca` Scientific Reservation, it should be also reviewed to be more concise.</p> <p>3. Related to the wetlands, to note that the Ecological Fund Regulation provides little on the afforestation issues, thus a special focus should be paid on forestation, ecologic reconstruction of forests, and forest buffer strips to protect the rivers and water basins.</p> <p>4. It is strongly encouraged to work collaboratively with the scientific institutions, such as the Botanical Garden, Ecological Institute, ICAS in order to get their support in validating the scientific data to be collected and processed by the project.</p>	<p>a separate meeting to discuss in more details synergies between various projects, especially that the above-mentioned Action Plan provides for Emerald Network, bilateral cooperation, Management Plans and wetlands, such as to have a bolder impact on this matter.</p>	<p>project components</p>
<p><b><u>Mihai Ojog</u></b>, Project Coordinator FAO: Thank you for presentation, this is a necessary project. I'd like to touch upon 2 points:</p> <p>1. <i>Land rehabilitation</i>. It is well known that after the 1990s, a series of legislative amendments enforced the change of some water courses, including the river Camenca. One of the issues is that, probably by mistake, certain wetland areas have been included in the agricultural circuit, for instance the irrigation system from Lower Prut basin, namely Zirnesti, or the drainage system in Cahul. Unfortunately, we can't benefit of those wetlands in their classical form of protected areas, nor the farmers can fully benefit from land farming. In this context, is it feasible to extend the project by adding a study on including the respective wetlands back in the biodiversity circuit?</p>	<p><b><u>Ms. Monica Moldovan</u></b>, Project Team leader:</p> <p>1. The project team of experts would take into consideration the prioritization of the development of such a study indeed. From a budget availability perspective such a study and respective cadaster analysis may not be possible to be commissioned from GEF funds and could go beyond the purpose of this project, however the project team/experts could consider including this issue under different local or policy documents, be it local development strategy, PA management plans and/or under the new NBSAP and National Ecologic Fund priorities.</p> <p>2. This is a risk that was taken into consideration during the project proposal writing. An evidence-based answer to this question will be possible only after the completion of the feasibility study. Preliminarily it is estimated that this additional volume of water (about 8.3 mln. m<sup>3</sup> per year) will not flood the farmlands, especially because the old riverbed is mainly located on state property or</p>	<p>Included under Component 1 (Output 1.1.1) Risks will be addresses as per UNDP SES requirements (Project Document Annex 6 SESP and Annex 10 ESMF).</p>

<p>2. How will the agri-producers be affected by the relocation of the river Camenca in its old riverbed?</p>	<p>are on local authorities' administration and only about 8% is on private property.</p> <p><b>Mr. Gherman Bejenaru</b>, Project technical expert: The farming lands are mainly located on the upper areas of the old riverbanks. Preliminary it can be stated that the pluvial water will not even get to the old riverbanks and the main purpose of the project is to extend the wetland areas and additionally to increase the level of phreatic waters at least at the level of 30-40 years ago, which will affect positively both the biodiversity and farmers (more water will be made available for irrigation purposes). Related to this subject, few more considerations should be emphasized: (1) During the last 50 years, this territory wasn't alimented from natural water sources, thus a certain volume of water (about 10 mln m<sup>3</sup> annually) has been lost by the ecosystem. Thus, the project intends to rehabilitate the natural course of the river; (2) It will be difficult to convince the farmers to give up on their lands, and (3) as Monica already mentioned, only a small area of the old riverbed is on private proprietorship. To conclude, there shouldn't be bottlenecks in rehabilitating the river.</p>	
<p><b>Mr. Valeriu Tarigradschi</b>, 'Padurea Domneasca' Scientific Reserve: 1. Public awareness is crucial to succeed and have the population by our side. With reference to potential floods to be caused by river embedding in its old riverbed, it's good to know that floods have positive impact on land fertilization, however they can also threaten existing constructions. 2. The Administration is ready to provide comprehensive support in the implementation of the project, especially in developing the Technical Specifications for the works related to the rehabilitation of the river Camenca. 3. 'Padurea Domneasca' Administration is also open to participate in the elaboration and review of the Ecological Fund Regulation and in public awareness on the Fund use for environment purposes.</p>	<p><b>Ms. Monica Moldovan</b>, Project Team leader 1. Thank you for continuous support during project proposal writing. The experts who were on the ground identified an illegal construction on the riverbed which will be likely affected (in that the small (illegal) reservoir constructed on the riverbed will be cut off from the river). Before any feasibility or construction assignment, the project will deploy a stakeholder consultation mechanism and will include the Ministry of Environment and Moldovan Water Agency senior decision makers, as well as local communities, local environment inspectors, local administrations, local police, etc. such as to identify risk, agree on amicable solutions, minimize the risks, and to put in place a mechanism to compensate the households who might be affected by the river rehabilitation; 2. Concerning the Ecological Fund, the project will closely collaborate with the Ministry to review the above-mentioned Regulation such as to prioritize sustainable management and financing of wetlands (including river banks reforestation and other necessary rehabilitation works for the sustainable wetlands management). The project</p>	<p>Project Document Annex 6 SESP and Annex 10 ESMF (Process framework)</p>

	will also support the PAs authorities develop competitive and eligible proposals on wetland/PA management that can and should be financed through the Environmental Fund.	
<p><b>Mr. Dumitru Galupa</b>, Director of the Forest Research and Management Institute (ICAS Chisinau)</p> <p>1. It is advisable to develop a legal and then an operational model for wetlands use which should address both biodiversity conservation and social issues. In this regard, it's important to estimate how much will grow the incomes of local population, how many new jobs will be generated etc.</p> <p>2. The two National Reserves have been well selected, Padurea Dmneasca being in a more advanced development phase while the Lower Prut Reserve has potential to be part of a future tri-partite Reserve. At the same time, there's a huge potential for the Prut river basin to extend the wetland areas, <i>i.e.</i> Cantemir, Lebada-Alba, Sirma up to Sarata-Razes where the lands are mostly on private ownership but currently covered with reed and unused. Creating Associations of landowners in the wetland areas and the elaboration of an economic-financial mechanism aimed to stimulate the inclusion of these wetlands back in natural circuit.</p> <p>3. It's needed to review the frozen the economical projects on Prut river and reconsider their potential</p> <p>4. Prut river should become again a navigable river and therefore include it in various projects, including economic ones.</p> <p>5. It is necessary to identify the risks during the project writing phase in order to work with all stakeholders.</p>	<p><b>Ms. Monica Moldovan</b>, Project Team leader:</p> <p>1. Very good insights, the proposed legal and operational models shall be included in the project workplan</p> <p>2. Well noted is also the proposal on creating Associations of landowners in the wetland areas</p> <p>3. Agree that the frozen economic projects on Prut river should be reconsidered.</p> <p>5. The risks have been identified during the project writing indeed, and these will be again discussed with all stakeholders during the Inception workshop and via various project led rounds of consultations aligned with UNDP Social and Environmental Safeguards requirements.</p>	<p>Project Document Component 1 (Output 1.1.1.)</p> <p>Project Document Annex 6 SESP and Annex 10 ESMF.</p>
<p><b>Mr. Valeriu Caisin</b>, Verde e Moldova:</p> <p>1. The presented map of the Low Prut Biosphere Reservation contains some errors that should be addressed</p> <p>2. It's very important for the management plan to provide for sustainability especially for the Reserve Lower Prut. How will be ensured the sustainable use of the site resources: agriculture, reed harvesting, fishing and hunting. There is a database containing preliminary indicators on water quality, species etc.</p>	<p><b>Ms. Monica Moldovan</b>, Project Team leader:</p> <p>1. The GIS map will be additionally consulted to address the inconsistencies from the presentation</p> <p>2. The local authorities and communities' representatives will be consulted during the updating of the Management Plan, to ensure a consensus over the measures related to sustainable use of resources. The data base will be strengthened and harmonized with the Romanian Danube Delta data base.</p> <p>3. Not all the envisaged co-financing is coming from Moldsilva. The Co-financing is encompassing</p>	<p>Project Document Annex 3</p> <p>Project document Component 2 (Output 2.1.1)</p>

<p>3. Moldsilva is requested to substantially co-finance the project. In this respect, there might be needed expenses related to monitoring and implementation of co-financing. Is there a monitoring scheme of the co-financing contribution either from project resources or on the account of the co-financing share of Moldsilva?</p>	<p>an in-kind contribution about 200k USD(time allotted by staff to project implementation, conference halls made available for project events, utilities etc.), cash cofinancing of aprox.2 mln USD- the budget allotted by Moldsilva to protected areas and further 2 mln. USD for afforestation works planned by Moldsilva for the next 5 years. The co-financing will be monitored by the project manager and UNDP CO. At the same time, the project will hire a M&amp;E Officer in charge with monitoring the overall project activities, including the Co-financing contribution.</p> <p><b>Gabriel Margineanu</b>, executive director Ecological Society BIOTICA:</p> <p>2. Consultations should be conducted not only with the LPAs, but especially with the agri-producers and the landowners who are renting out their lands.</p>	
<p><b>Ms. Galina Busmachiu</b>, PhD, Head of Entomology Laboratory, Institute of Zoology:</p> <p>1. Related to biodiversity, which are the groups of animals to be studied under this project? Will the project use only outdated information from the literature?</p> <p>2. What species of trees will be planted? Please pay attention not to plant invasive species, such as locust tree</p>	<p><b>Ms. Monica Moldovan</b>, Project Team leader:</p> <p>1. and 2. The project will rely on data collected in the field, not only on previous studies. Reforestation activities will be based on well tested methodologies.</p> <p><b>Ion Talmaci</b>:</p> <p>2. There are about 30 species of trees and shrubs envisaged for afforestation, depending on the local conditions. Locust trees will not be planted. Focus will be on species as oak, poplar and willow, depending on the site particularities.</p>	<p>Project Document Component 2, Output 2.2.1.</p>
<p><b>Mr. Placinta Iurie</b>, Lower Prut Nature Reserve</p> <p>The presentation mentioned that the village Tarateaza is included in the list of localities to be forested (13.66 ha), which is an errored information</p>	<p><b>Mr. Ion Talmaci</b></p> <p>Afforestation is envisaged for 6 (six) localities from Cahul district: Crihana Veche (7,1 ha), Manta (10,9 ha), Colibasi (21,6 ha), Vadul lui Isac (2,7 ha), Branza (4,9 ha), Valeni (2,8 ha) and about 100 ha for Glodeni district.</p>	<p>Project Document Component 2, Output 2.2.1.</p>
<p><b>Ms. Ala Rotaru</b>, Ministry of Environment:</p> <p>Do you happen to know if there's political will from Romanian and Ukrainian authorities to create the Tripartite Biosphere Reservation?</p>	<p><b>Ms. Monica Moldovan</b>, Project Team Leader</p> <p>According to our PIF and PPG conducted discussions, there is an explicit interest from the Romanian side as well.</p>	<p>Project Document Output 2.1.1</p>
<p><b>Ms. Lilia Curchi</b>, Executive Director of the Association of Environmental and Tourism Journalists:</p> <p>1. Glad that this project will address the long-lasting issue with the deviation of the river Camenca. We are well-experienced and ready to support the project especially on public awareness component? Such campaigns are very important for good results and scaling up of projects.</p>	<p><b>Ms. Monica Moldovan</b>, Project Team Leader:</p> <p>1. Indeed, your organization and other environmental NGOs and environment journalists are pivotal to awareness raising on wetlands importance. Within the limited project budget, there is a planned on-line awareness campaign targeting particularly the decision-makers and addressing especially the project's targeted issues i.e., the regulatory and financing framework of wetlands, sustainable management of the</p>	<p>Project Document Component 4, Output 4.1.1</p>

<p>2. What's the project's strategy in relation with the petroleum extraction activities in the Low Prut basin area? We think the decision-makers should be pressed to stop those extractions considering the pollution factors they have on the environment.</p>	<p>wetlands, understanding the wetland ecosystem services. To this end, the project will work with environment journalists and will carry-out public awareness activities and we hope to have opportunities to cooperate with all NGOs including those with experience in the targeted project sites. Concerning the Women Association for Sustainable Development, this organization is one of the key partners for the implementation of local hydrotechnical works on Camenca river and strengthening the Camenca sub-basin Committee.</p> <p>2. Indeed, this is a stringent issue that the project will address if only indirectly. For example, the project will draft legal and regulatory amendments to remove legal loopholes and this, we hope, will add clarity to the way forward on the issue of the on-going oil drilling in Lower Prut MAB UNESCO core area. The environment NGOs opinions are very relevant to this end. At the same time, stopping the oil exploitation in the PA goes beyond the project's scope and capability and this is a decision that rests with the Government. If the final decision will be to continue with the oil drilling, then what the project can do is to offer capacity building seminars on environmental standards and certifications such as ISO 14001, while at the same time supporting the Ministerial Committee and relevant supervisory bodies on improving environmental monitoring and instating higher mandatory environmental accountability for such private companies/economic operators.</p>	
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Links to relevant sites provided by Mr. Gabriel Margineanu:

<https://lower-dniester.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/nistruldejos>

<http://www.bioticamoldova.org/library/ADA/Publicatia%20Servicii%20ecosistemice.pdf>

<http://www.bioticamoldova.org/library/ADA/Tourism%20guide%20Lower%20Dniester.pdf>

[http://www.bioticamoldova.org/library/ADA/Album\\_Lower%20Dniester.pdf](http://www.bioticamoldova.org/library/ADA/Album_Lower%20Dniester.pdf)

<http://www.bioticamoldova.org/library/Bros%20fermieri%2011%2007%202017.pdf>

#### Wrap up:

**Ms. Inga Podoroghin**, UNDP Programme Specialist on Energy and Environment in Moldova, thanked all workshop participants for their active participation and expressed hope for further fruitful cooperation with all national partners under this project and other joint initiatives. She highlighted that UNDP started the process, but there's need for active implication from all to reach the expected results, noting that there's a visible interest for this project. All proposals will be considered and, if possible, integrated into the project document.

**Ms. Ala Rotaru, Policy in Biodiversity Department, Ministry of Environment:** The Ministry of Environment fully supports the project's activities and is ready to cooperate with all project partners. All comments and proposals

expressed during the discussions will be taken into account during finalization of the project document. On behalf of the Ministry, I express gratitude for the active participation and constructive discussion during the workshop and hope for the earliest approval of the project by GEF.

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#### Online validation workshop

UNDP/GEF Project

*“Conservation and sustainable management of wetlands with focus on high-nature value areas in the Prut River basin” Project*

**August 9, 2021**

**Time: 10:30-12:30**

#### **Moderator:**

*Focal Point of the United Nations Convention for Biological Diversity of MARDE*

UNDP CO

<b>10:30 - 10:40</b>	<b>Registration</b>
<b>10:40 - 11:00</b>	<b>Welcome remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Environment</li> <li>• UNDP Moldova CO</li> </ul>
<b>11:00 - 11:50</b>	<b>Presentation of the UNDP/GEF Project</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monica Moldovan, Project Development Specialist</li> </ul>
<b>11:50 – 12:20</b>	<b>Q&amp;A Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderator: Focal Point of the United Nations Convention for Biological Diversity of MARDE/ UNDP CO</li> </ul>
<b>12:20-12:30</b>	<b>Conclusions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MARDE</li> <li>• UNDP Moldova CO</li> </ul>

**Annex 10: Environmental Social Management Framework (ESMF)**

(please see separate attachment)

## **Annex 11: Gender Analysis and Gender Action Plan**

### **Introduction**

The gender assessment provides an overview of the gender situation in Moldova and identifies gender issues that are relevant to the project, looking at potential gender mainstreaming opportunities. The assessment is based upon available data from studies conducted by the Government of Moldova, the National Bureau of Statistics, other donor agencies, development banks and other sources; and includes:

1. A desktop review and aligning approaches in this proposal with the national priorities of Moldova.
2. Incorporating information and lessons learned from past studies and assessments on gender issues in Moldova.
3. Conducting stakeholder consultations and engaging women/men/youth affected by the project and incorporating all points raised.
4. Integrating gender considerations in the project indicators, targets and activities, identifying women as leaders and decision-makers.

### **Gender inequality and social inclusion in the Republic of Moldova**

Moldova ranks 23rd of 153 countries in the 2020 World Economic Forum (WEF)'s Global Gender Gap Report, illustrating important gains in terms of gender equality in recent years. Moldova has signed and ratified all relevant international legal frameworks pertaining to gender equality and the empowerment of women. National legislative frameworks in support of ensuring gender equality and advancing women's empowerment is relatively strong. Moldova is consistently preoccupied with fulfilling its commitments under the international human rights treaties, and has embedded the equality principle in the domestic legislation. With adoption of the National Gender Equality Strategy in 2017, the country has demonstrated commitment and openness to foster a gender equality approach nation-wide and across sectors and at all levels. The Strategy is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 3 which sets specific gender targets covering such areas as poverty, climate change, infrastructure, food security, management of natural resources and others. In addition, Moldova made positive steps to address gender inequality, including:

- Ratification of The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), in 1994 and in 1998 and Optional Protocol in 2006;
- Adoption of the Law on Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (Law no. 5XVI, 2006);
- Adoption of the Law on Preventing and Combating Family Violence (2008);
- Development and implementation of The National Programme on Gender Equality (NSGE) and associated National Action Plan (NAP) for 2010-2015 and
- Adoption of Law on Ensuring Equality of Chances (2012).

The project is contributing to the National Strategy for ensuring the gender equality between men and women in the Republic of Moldova for years 2017 – 2021. The overall objective of the Strategy is to empower women and achieve the real (de facto) equality between women and men in the Republic of Moldova. The intervention area 2.6 of this Strategy refers to climate change. One of the consequences of climate change is raising inequalities and discrimination between men and women. To improve that, the Strategy calls for integration of gender aspects into the climate change related policies, which will be done at the local level in the framework of this project.

At the same time, an important step in ensuring gender equality is represented by the legal amendments and addenda preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women, and trafficking in human beings in order to adjust the regulatory framework to the international standards through the adopted Law No 71/2016,

Law No 196/2016 and Law No 32/2018. Important strategic policy documents were adopted and are under implementation such as the above-mentioned National Gender Equality Strategy 2017-2021; the National Strategy on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence 2018-2023; the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2018-2023; the National Action Plan on Implementation of the provisions of the UNSCR 1325 Women in Peace and Security 2018-2022, as well as other sectorial strategies (health, employment, social protection, security, child protection, etc.) A structured institutional state mechanism in the area of gender equality was established, consisting of the Government Commission on Gender Equality, Division for Gender Equality Policies/MHLSP1, Gender Units/Gender Coordinating Groups within line ministries and other central public authorities, Gender Units within local public authorities. This represents positive developments in achieving gender equality and women empowerment. In addition, it should be noted the adoption of the National Program for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities for 2017-2022 and the Action Plan on its implementation, focused on development of accessible and inclusive services that meet the real needs of people with different types of disability.

Despite of this progress, challenges remain in the area of education, women's economic empowerment, women's access to justice, women's political participation, and women's unpaid, unsupported care work in the home. The prevalence of domestic violence/gender-based violence (GBV) continues to be a pervasive challenge in the country. The full realization of gender equality in Moldova is hindered by several challenges such gender norms – and subsequent gender stereotypes which are pervasive in Moldova. For women living with disabilities, women trying to overcome GBV, women from minorities, rural women, older women and women living with HIV, the LGBTI community, the negative impact of a broad range of social norms – including gender – are immense. We note that COVID-19 pandemic affected significantly women's situation in all sectors. However, despite these positive changes, the analysis of the situation in the Republic of Moldova on the issue of gender equality and promotion of women indicates that the most of the lingering challenges rest with empowering women in the political, economic, and social areas; work and family life reconciliation; domestic violence; and the specific situation of certain groups of disadvantaged women such as Roma women, women from rural areas, women living with HIV, women in detention, migrant women. Women in rural areas are four times more exposed and prone to absolute poverty and more vulnerable to climate change than women in urban areas.

Moldova HDI value for 2019 is 0.750— which puts the country in the high human development category—positioning it at 90 out of 189 countries and territories. Between 1990 and 2019, Moldova HDI value increased from 0.690 to 0.750, an increase of 8.7 percent. Between 1990 and 2019, Moldova life expectancy at birth increased by 4.3 years, mean years of schooling increased by 3.7 years and expected years of schooling decreased by 0.4 years. Moldova GNI per capita decreased by about 3.6 percent between 1990 and 2019. Moldova 2019 HDI of 0.750 is below the average of 0.753 for countries in the high human development group and below the average of 0.791 for countries in Europe and Central Asia. From Europe and Central Asia, Moldova is compared with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, which have HDIs ranked 111 and 106, respectively.

Through the years, several indices have developed to quantify the concept of gender inequality. The United Nations Development Programme uses the Gender Inequality Index (GII) and Gender Development Index (GDI).<sup>67</sup> GII is a composite measure that shows inequality in achievement between women and men in reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market while with a measured achievement in human development in three areas: health, education, and command over economic resources. The GDI considers the gender gaps on human development between men and women.

The GDI is calculated for 167 countries. The 2019 female HDI value for Moldova is 0.754 in contrast with 0.744 for males, resulting in a GDI value of 1.014, placing it into Group 1.<sup>2</sup> In comparison, the GDI value for Uzbekistan is 0.939.

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<sup>67</sup> United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index>.

**Table 1. Moldova GDI for 2019 (F= Female; M=Male)**

	F-M ratio	HDI values		Life expectancy at birth		Expected years of schooling		Mean years of schooling		GNI per capita	
	GDI value	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
<b>Moldova (Republic of)</b>	1.014	0.754	0.744	76.2	67.6	11.8	11.3	11.8	11.6	11,994	15,477
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	0.939	0.695	0.740	73.8	69.6	11.9	12.2	11.6	12.0	5,064	9,230
<b>Europe and Central Asia</b>	0.953	0.768	0.806	77.7	71.1	14.5	14.8	9.9	10.7	12,373	23,801
<b>High HDI</b>	0.961	0.736	0.766	78.0	72.8	14.1	13.9	8.2	8.7	10,529	17,912

**Gender Inequality Index (GII)**

The 2010 Human Development Report introduced the GII, which reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions – reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity. Reproductive health is measured by maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates; empowerment is measured by the share of parliamentary seats held by women and attainment in secondary and higher education by each gender; and economic activity is measured by the labour market participation rate for women and men. The GII can be interpreted as the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in the three GII dimensions.

Moldova (Republic of) has a GII value of 0.204, ranking it 46 out of 162 countries in the 2019 index. In Moldova (Republic of), 25.7 percent of parliamentary seats are held by women, and 96.6 percent of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 98.1 percent of their male counterparts. For every 100,000 live births, 19.0 women die from pregnancy related causes; and the adolescent birth rate is 22.4 births per 1,000 women of ages 15-19. Female participation in the labour market is 40.5 percent compared to 46.0 for men. In comparison, Uzbekistan is ranked at 62 on this index.

**Table 2 Moldova GII for 2019 relative to selected countries and groups**

	GII value	GII Rank	Maternal mortality ratio	Adolescent birth rate	Female seats in parliament(%)	Population with at least some secondary education (%)		Labor force participation rate(%)	
						F	M	F	M
<b>Moldova (Republic of)</b>	0.204	46	19.0	22.4	25.7	96.6	98.1	40.5	46.0
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	0.288	62	29.0	23.8	16.4	99.9	100.0	52.4	78.1
<b>Europe and Central Asia</b>	0.256	—	19.9	27.8	23.1	79.9	88.1	45.0	70.0
<b>High HDI</b>	0.340	—	62.3	33.6	24.5	69.8	75.1	54.2	75.4

Maternal mortality ratio is expressed in number of deaths per 100,000 live births and adolescent birth rate is expressed in number of births per 1,000 women ages 15-19.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) developed the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), a composite index that scores countries (i.e., 0 to 1) on 14 indicators grouped into five sub-indices: discriminatory family code, restricted physical integrity, son bias, restricted resources and assets, and restricted civil liberties to measure the discrimination against women in social institutions across 160 countries. In Moldova (Republic of) the Social Institutions and Gender Index 2019<sup>68</sup> was 21.4, suggesting that discrimination against women is low; Discrimination in the family – 23; Restricted physical integrity – 12.7; Restricted access to productive and financial resources – 36.7; Restricted civil liberties – 11.

**Poverty:** Due to social and economic policies implemented in the Republic of Moldova, the percentage of the population with incomes below US\$5.50 per day (adjusted to purchasing power parity) fell from 29% in 2010 to 13.3% in 2018. The absolute poverty rate, estimated in the population with ordinary residence, has had a relative downward trend, from 29.5% in 2014 to 23.0% in 2018. Rate of male poverty decreased slowly: from 30.4% (2014) to 23.3% (2018); rate of female poverty also decreased: from 28.7 (2014) to 22.6% (2018). The real income (adjusted to inflation) of the poorest 20 per cent of households increased by 38 per cent between 2010 and 2018.<sup>69</sup>

It should be noted a specific feature of poverty in Moldova – a large proportion of poor households are households with older people. Given the rising trends in aging population, especially among women, this model of poverty reduction will be quite difficult to maintain. Thus, new strategies to empowering women headed households are needed in order to reduce vulnerability to poverty and increase resilience to natural and socio-economic shocks, for example as COVID-19. Potentially inequalities, including based on gender, will increase, both in terms of incomes as well as non-incomes and opportunities. As a result of COVID-19 the reduction of remittances have significantly affected women and men, generally the family business planning. The UN Impact Assessment Report<sup>70</sup> mentions women as one of the most affected groups experiencing a stronger impact of COVID-19 pandemic. The health crises has disproportionately affected women due to the overlapping of several factors specific to the impact of COVID-19 on both the economy and public life. One such factor is the complete or partial closure of kindergartens and schools, with women taking on the main task of caring for their children. Under these circumstances, many women have had to reduce their working hours or leave the labor market to cope with the increased burden of childcare. In this regard, they called on the Government of Moldova to develop programs that will provide support to families with children.

**Health:** According to official data, Moldova has made progress in the areas of child and maternal health, the fight against HIV and AIDs. Nonetheless, it is necessary to ensure that women and girls belonging to disadvantaged groups have access to adequate and accessible health services, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, and health insurance, in particular in rural areas<sup>71</sup>. Despite of some progress in combating cervical cancer and breast cancer, Moldova is among the countries with the highest incidence rate of cervical cancer, at 30.4 per 100,000 women, compared to an average of 16.0 per 100,000 for Eastern Europe.<sup>72</sup>

However, inequalities and problems still exist in access to health services. These are mainly caused by informal payments, for the population, vulnerable groups and the rural population. There are significant gender inequalities in mortality for various types of illness and disease. For some diseases, the mortality rate of men aged 35-59 is 9 times higher (in the case of self-inflicted injuries) or 6 times higher (in the case of accidents, pneumonia and acute infarction) than for women in the same age group. Although the proportion of the population with health insurance has increased, out-of-pocket payments are still significant, and in 2017 they accounted for about 43.6 per cent of

<sup>68</sup> <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=SIGI2019>

<sup>69</sup> REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA Voluntary National Review Progress Report 2020. Government of The Republic of Moldova, p. 40, 8.

<sup>70</sup> UNDP, UNFPA, GOV of the Republic of Moldova. Impact Assessment Report. Social and Economic Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable groups and economic sectors in the Republic of Moldova. November 2020

<sup>71</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of the Republic of Moldova. CEDAW/C/MDA/CO/6, March, 2020

<sup>72</sup> ECIS - European Cancer Information System <https://ecis.jrc.ec.europa.eu/explorer.ph>

total health expenditure).<sup>73</sup> COVID-19 pandemic is placing ever-increasing pressure on healthcare and social protection systems and causing major disruptions of economic processes and limitations to social life.

**Education:** According to official data, access to education for children and adolescents has improved. Gross enrolment rates in primary and secondary education remained above 100. Enrolment rates in secondary and tertiary education improved between 2014 and 2018, from 66 to 76 per cent for secondary education, and from 51 to 55 per cent for tertiary education.<sup>74</sup> In addition, access for children from vulnerable groups improved. However, educational inequalities between students are still significant. A significant number of young people do not have access to post-secondary education.<sup>75</sup> About 21 per cent of young people aged 18-24 with an elementary (low) level of education do not pursue any form of training.<sup>76</sup> This share is unchanged from 2010. Although the proportion of students with special educational needs and disabilities enrolled in general education institutions increased from 83.3 per cent in 2014 to 93.1 per cent in 2018,<sup>77</sup> most educational institutions are not adapted to meet inclusive education standards. Despite of significant investment in education sector, many schools do not have well-equipped sanitary blocks, while toilets are usually located outside the building and do not have necessary safe or gender-sensitive conditions (in the villages). We note that COVID-19 amplified existing problems: students with no access to technology, as well as children and adolescents with disabilities are most at risk of falling behind, especially when classes are conducted online.

**Political participation:** In Moldova, Women's political leadership has followed the global trends. From 8.9% in 1998-2000 to 22.8% in 2019 (in Parliament), these statistics show a gradual acceptance of the important role women can play in political life. Nonetheless, despite of adoption of 40% gender quota, this does not apply in relation to the Government. Unfortunately, at the Cabinet Minister level, the positive dynamics over the years are unstable and uneven: from 9% (1999-2001) to 5% (2009-2011) to 55% (2019'07) to 25% (2020'07). In Moldova, a 2019 study found that "one of the main barriers to women's participation in politics is violence, especially in elections". Throughout 2019, discrimination of women in elections remained a systemic issue, with an institutionalized and party-related character, especially with regard to independent candidates and those from marginalized groups. In 2019, serious cases of sexual harassment of women candidates were reported in the national and local electoral campaigns.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, 60.3% of persons thinking that men make better political leaders than women do, or women do not have the same rights as men; 58.8% of persons thinking that men should have more right to a job than women, or men make better business executive than women do.<sup>79</sup> These survey results confirm persistence of challenges that women face in Moldova – on the one hand, the increase in the recognition and promotion of women in leadership positions, on the other hand, the entrenched beliefs about men's leadership more appropriate.

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<sup>73</sup> REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA Voluntary National Review Progress Report 2020. Government of The Republic of Moldova, p. 8

<sup>74</sup> REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA Voluntary National Review Progress Report 2020. Government of The Republic of Moldova, p. 31

<sup>75</sup> <https://genderpulse.md/en/education/enrollment-in-education/enrollment-rate-in-primary-and-lower-secondary-education>

<sup>76</sup> The NEET group (young people who are not in employment, education or training) contains a higher proportion of women (22.8 %) than men (16.5%) aged 15-24 (<https://anofm.md/files/elfinder/Raportul%20analitic%202019final%2811%29.pdf>) partly because men of this age are employed (even informally) or intend to migrate to a much greater extent. Girls tend to drop out of school due to family duties and lack of money while boys do so because of a "desire to work", but also much lower desire to learn and learning difficulties. This trend can be explained by pressure of social norms, including gender norms, when girls are guided to family responsibility, and boys prefer to enter the labor market due to the traditional role of breadwinner but also to the image of "real men" – with money in the pocket.

<sup>77</sup> REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA Voluntary National Review Progress Report 2020. Government of The Republic of Moldova, p. 9

<sup>78</sup> Preliminary report on Violence against Women in the General Local Elections 2019, Author Olga Bîtcă, see the report here: <https://egalitatedegen.md/biblioteca/participarea-femeilor-in-politica/>

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/aproximativ-90--de-brbai-i-femei-sunt-prtinitori-fa-de-femei-po.html>

**Participation in the decision-making process:** At the local level, women's leadership role increased gradually. Dynamics of % of elected Women Mayors was from 10.9% (1999) to 15.4% (2003) to 18.0% (2011) to 22% (2019)<sup>80</sup>. Seats in local government held by women also increased gradually from 17.4% (2011) to 27% (2019) (II level) and from 28.6% (2011) to 36.0% (2019) (I level). Nonetheless, only a woman of the 32 is governor / Head of rayons or 3.12% (2019). These data confirm the pyramid of power: at the base being more women, with the hierarchical increase, their number decreases. In the private sector, Moldova is in line and/or exceeding the Europe and Central Asia regional averages on women's leadership, but nonetheless, women's participation as business owners and managers remains limited. According to recent national survey, in Moldova, compared to 2009, the share of women involved in business has increased (6.4 pp more than in 2009) and was 33.9% in 2018<sup>81</sup>. Despite of small progress, women are 2 times less among entrepreneurs compared to men (66.1%). As obstacles to the women's involvement in decision making, especially in business, are: gender stereotypes, the lack of childcare services, the excessively high burden of women in the family etc.

**Access to labor market:** Despite of the progress, gender inequality in the labor market remains significant. Overall LFPR: 42.3%, with 38.2% female and 47% male participation (ages 15+) (2019)<sup>82</sup>. When looking marital status, the 54.2% of married men compared to 45.8% married women are economically active. At the same time, in case of divorce the situation is reversed: the 50.6% of divorced women and 45.1% of divorced men are economically active. The employment rate of women aged 25-49 with at least one preschool child is 20 per cent lower than that of women in the same age group but with no preschool children.<sup>83</sup> Youth between the ages of 15-24 made up 21.2% of the LFPR (18.2% young women and 24.1% young men) for 2019.<sup>84</sup> The gender gap in activity rates for women and men was 15.9% for the 25-34 age group (47.6% female and 63.5% male) (2019). Services is the main economic sector of employment, with women engagement at 56.4 % and men engagement at 47.8%. The second largest sector is agriculture with women's engagement at 33.0% and men's engagement at 39.3%<sup>85</sup>. The share of women employed in the ICT sector was about 31% in 2017, with an increase by 2 % during 2014-2017<sup>86</sup>.

Unfortunately, the labor market in the Republic of Moldova faces multiple challenges, including low labor productivity and wages, poor quality of employment, informal employment and international labor migration, especially among young people. Women's unemployment rate was higher than men's rate in age group 25-34; while in the other age groups there is a higher rate of unemployment men. The share of unemployed persons with disabilities in 2018 was 1.9 %, including 1.4% of men and 2.4% of women with disabilities.<sup>87</sup> Female migrants in Moldova was reported at 59.09 % in 2019, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators<sup>88</sup>. As huge challenge remains internal migration from rural areas to urban areas, that affects significantly the demographic and socio-economic processes of rural communities. Women's leadership roles are hindered by the challenges they face in accessing support for their unpaid care work in the home. In Moldova, according to survey, women spent more time on unpaid domestic chores and care work (20.1%) than men (11.3%)<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> [https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/effective\\_governance/infograficele-egalitatea-de-gen-in-procesele-electorale-din-rep/](https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/effective_governance/infograficele-egalitatea-de-gen-in-procesele-electorale-din-rep/)

<sup>81</sup> The main results of the research "Business Environment Development" in terms of gender dimension. Analytical note. National Bureau of Statistics, 2020.

<sup>82</sup> NBS Data Bank, link [here](#)

<sup>83</sup> REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA Voluntary National Review Progress Report 2020. Government of The Republic of Moldova, p. 9

<sup>84</sup> NBS Data Bank, link [here](#)

<sup>85</sup> BNS, Gender Pulse: <https://genderpulse.md/en/economic-empowerment/labor-force-employment/structure-of-employed-population-by-economic-sectors>

<sup>86</sup> Study "Women and men in ICT", page 46 [https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20moldova/attachments/publications/2019/studiu\\_analitic\\_femei\\_barbati\\_tic.pdf?la=ro&vs=2042](https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20moldova/attachments/publications/2019/studiu_analitic_femei_barbati_tic.pdf?la=ro&vs=2042)

<sup>87</sup> ILOSTAT [https://www.ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer11/?lang=en&segment=indicator&id=SDG\\_0861\\_SEX\\_RT\\_A](https://www.ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer11/?lang=en&segment=indicator&id=SDG_0861_SEX_RT_A)

<sup>88</sup> <https://tradingeconomics.com/moldova/female-migrants-percent-of-international-migrant-stock-wb-data.html>

<sup>89</sup> UN Women (2019). Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals – The Gender Snapshot 2019. New York, New York: UN Women Headquarters

**Access to natural resources:** Based on OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index 2019, Moldova received 21.4 points; but with 36.7 regarding restricted access to productive and financial resources (medium level of discrimination).<sup>90</sup>

Despite the large numbers of women living in rural area (nearly 30% of the total population of the country), working in agriculture formally and informally, data indicate that about 36% of agricultural holdings (farms) are headed by women and 64% – by men. The women administer an area of farmlands much smaller than men, which constitutes only 19% of the total. Also, in over 88% of agricultural holdings (farms) run by women, the agricultural production is intended only for personal consumption, compared to 83.9% of those headed by men<sup>91</sup>; thus, the potential for women to obtain adequate income from agricultural holdings (farms) they run is reduced. It should be noted that, mostly rural women are employed in agricultural activities along with men, in addition to the activities and occupations they have as homemakers. Despite of strong legal framework governing equal property and equal inheritance rights to both women and men (The Constitution, the Family Code, the Civil Code), the challenge is in practice, where women rarely exercised these rights. Particularly, the situation can be explained by historical practice during soviet period and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the subsequent land privatization process in the late 1990s, when land was divided among households, with ownership awarded to “heads of the household” – de facto to the men as breadwinner and head of the family. Thus, formally, it should be noted gender blind policy, but in practice with discriminatory impact on women. However, based on working practice with rural women, we conclude the limited knowledge about their rights to own land. At the same time, as results of different awareness campaigns, we note that the young women are more informed on this.

**Gender-based Violence:** In Moldova, 25% of ever partnered women and girls (18-74 years old) subjected to IPV (physical, sexual or psychological), in the 12 months’ prior the survey (2018) and 73% of ever partnered women and girls (18-74 years old) subjected to IPV (physical, sexual or psychological), since the age of 15 (2018)<sup>92</sup>. The proportion of women who reported being survivors of gender-based violence is estimated to be at least 40 per cent, unchanged over the last decade.<sup>93</sup> Due to the strong legal framework and multi-sectorial measures<sup>94</sup>, 666 protection orders and 3877 emergency restraining order were applied by police to protect victims of DV (2019).<sup>95</sup> Despite of the progress, there are many challenges in the field. Among barriers to reporting the DV/IPV: shame, financial reasons, lack of information on services available, mistrust of services, fear, lack of recognition of what counts as violence.<sup>96</sup> OSCE-led survey (2019) findings found that 55% of respondents agreed that domestic violence is private matter and should be handled within family; 45% agreed that violence against women is often provoked by victims and others.<sup>97</sup>

### **Mechanisms to address gender inequality in Moldova - legal and administrative framework**

<sup>90</sup> OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index measures discrimination against women in social institutions in 180 countries, taking into account social laws, rules and practices. A low score in this index means a low level of discrimination and inequality. SIGI 2019 Classification: SIGI<20% - very low level of discrimination, 20%<SIGI<30% - low level of discrimination, 30%<SIGI<40% - medium level of discrimination, 40%<SIGI<50% - high level of discrimination, SIGI>50% - very high level of discrimination.  
<https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=SIGI2019>

[https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/sigi-2019-global-report\\_bc56d212-en#page37](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/sigi-2019-global-report_bc56d212-en#page37)

<sup>91</sup> Recensămîntul General Agricol 2011 în Republica Moldova - Principalele rezultate. BNS, P. 18

[https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii\\_electronice/Recensamint\\_agricol/RGA\\_principalele\\_rezultate.pdf](https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Recensamint_agricol/RGA_principalele_rezultate.pdf)

<sup>92</sup> OSCE-led survey on violence against women “Well-Being and safety of women”: Moldova (2019)

<sup>93</sup> REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA Voluntary National Review Progress Report 2020. Government of The Republic of Moldova, p. 9

<sup>94</sup> Law No. 45-XVI on preventing and combating violence within family, 2007; National Strategy on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Violence in the Family for 2018–2023

<sup>95</sup> NOTĂ INFORMATIVĂ privind starea infracționalității în domeniul infracțiunilor ce atentează la viața și sănătatea persoanei, precum și celor comise în sfera relațiilor familiale pe parcursul a 3 luni ale anului 2020, MAI

[http://www.politia.md/sites/default/files/ni\\_violenta\\_in\\_familie\\_3\\_luni\\_2020\\_pentru\\_pagina\\_web-konvertitovan.pdf](http://www.politia.md/sites/default/files/ni_violenta_in_familie_3_luni_2020_pentru_pagina_web-konvertitovan.pdf)

<sup>96</sup> Sixth periodic report submitted by the Republic of Moldova under article 18 of the CEDAW, due in 2017\* (2020)

<sup>97</sup> OSCE-led survey on violence against women “Well-Being and safety of women”: Moldova (2019)

According to the Law No5-XVI of 9 February 2006 on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men the strong Institutional Framework for equality assurance of chance between women and men was established, including a) Parliament, b) Government; c) Governmental Commission for Equality between Women and Men; d) Ministry of Health and Social Protection (specialized body); e) ministries and other central administrative authorities (gender units); f) local public administration authorities (gender units). During 2006-2018 based on new provisions Institutional Framework was extended, including together with the Governmental Commission on Equality between Women and Men such structures as Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, Gender coordination group, ombudsmen and other.<sup>98</sup> The central public authority empowered to elaborate and promote policies in the field of equality between women and men is the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection (MHLSP), that contains a specialized subdivision - Department of policies to ensure equality between women and men. Despite of the strong provisions, there are many gaps.<sup>99</sup> However, with the Law receiving very little in terms of national budgetary allocations, and insufficient political will, the mechanisms tasked with implementing the Law have a limited capacity; low functionality of the local gender focal points. CEDAW CO to Moldova (2020) is concerned about: the suspension of the Governmental Committee for Equality between Women and Men; lack of mandate to sanction gender-based discrimination of the National Council on the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality. It is recognized that the gaps in the national machinery also adversely affect the effective implementation of national legislation on gender equality and the Strategy.<sup>100</sup>

In the context of current project, the development of good practices on gender-friendly policy and regulatory amendments, participation in the decision-making bodies and project's activities can contribute to gender mainstreaming in policy, in strategic on-the-ground actions and show-case good practices on gender mainstreaming. Involvement of women in the project activities will contribute to their socio-economic empowerment. Strengthening stakeholders' capacities in mainstreaming gender in documents and actions will lead to efficient policy.

### **Gender and social inclusion in the context of the UNDP/GEF project**

In Moldova, a number of statistical indicators reveal the demographic and socio-economic differences between rural and urban population. Specifically rural women face reduced access to facilities, poor quality of services, lack of employment opportunities, others<sup>101</sup>. Due to the ageing continuous rising trend (Coefficient 20.6 - rural women, 2017) and labor migration, in villages there is a significant share of single older women, who are merely "surviving" only, given the reduced opportunities to generate income needed for subsistence (low pensions, heavy land/farm works). One of the main challenges remains the phenomenon of labor migration; among women involved in labour migration the share of those from rural areas is about 70%.<sup>102</sup>

At the same time, the poverty rate is 7.5 times higher in rural areas than in large cities. Since a significant part of the rural population is engaged in subsistence agricultural activities, the risk of falling below the poverty line is high in years of climate-related extreme events. Rural population is increasingly vulnerable to climate change impacts<sup>103</sup>, especially women and women-led households, who are not able to provide resources and services needed to ensure

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<sup>98</sup> [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=107179&lang=ro#](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=107179&lang=ro#)

<sup>99</sup> Despite the progress made, many challenges should be mentioned such as: low level of implementing legal provisions of national machinery on gender equality, lack of functionality and sustainability of the national machinery's activities etc. // Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in the Republic of Moldova. Submitted by the Platform for Gender Equality from Moldova, December, 2019 [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared Documents/MDA/INT\\_CEDAW\\_CSS\\_MDA\\_41047\\_E.docx](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/MDA/INT_CEDAW_CSS_MDA_41047_E.docx)

<sup>100</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of the Republic of Moldova. CEDAW/C/MDA/CO/6. 2 March 2020.

<sup>101</sup> Profile of Women from Rural Areas. NBS, UNDP, UNWomen, UNECE, Chisinau, 2016, P. 6

<sup>102</sup> NBS, LFS 2014. Population of 15 years old and over, employed or seeking a job, abroad, by destination country, educational level, on age groups, sexes and areas, 2006-2014

<sup>103</sup> 3rd National Communication under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

water, food and energy supply for their families<sup>104</sup>. The primary challenge facing smallholder farmers in Moldova is access to water, specifically a lack of access to irrigation water. Moreover, rural poor have limited knowledge regarding the sustainable and environment-friendly agricultural and forestry practices that would increase adaptation and resilience capacities of communities and ecosystems. It should be noted poor awareness of sub-basin committees, local authorities, specialists and the rural population in general regarding climate change and its consequences for local water resources, including flooding and drought. Increasing women's leadership and participation in decision-making at all levels, ending violence against women, enhancing women's economic empowerment and making gender equality central to national development, planning and budgeting is one of the priorities of UN Country Team in Moldova. The United Nations in Moldova addresses these areas through targeted programs and joint initiatives, in some cases led by specialized UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), but also as integral part of any other project and programme irrespective of the area addressed. UNDP Moldova has adopted a Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan (2018-2022) to ensure that gender equality is fully integrated in all aspects of its work, concurrently with its objective to make positive and meaningful contribution to the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. The Action Plan is underpinned by the overarching UNDP's Gender Equality Strategy for 2018-2021 overseeing the gender equality results and by the UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-2022) which recognizes that reducing gender inequality is an important means to accelerate sustainable development.

UNDP is consistently developing the capacity of its own staff with mandatory training courses on gender equality to ensure that programme and project developers are sensitized and capacitated to include gender equality issues and results in all stages of programming and implementation as well as to mainstream gender equality throughout UNDP's operations. In addition, to foster gender-responsive planning and budgeting and ensure accountability for gender equality results UNDP applies two specific tools: the "Environmental and Social Screening Procedure for UNDP projects" of which gender equality forms an integral part, as well as the "Gender Marker". The Screening Procedure provides Project Developers/Managers with a set of tools and guidance to be able to strategically design and implement quality projects that support the achievement, equitability and sustainability of development results. The Gender Marker is UNDP's tool integrated in its online Project Management system to effectively and accurately manage, monitor and report on gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. Gender expertise is also available in the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub which will be consulted extensively and made available during project implementation.

The key gender mainstreaming elements of the project strategy could be summarized as follows:

- (i) Balanced representation and meaningful participation of women and men in key project activities, including those related to capacity building and management planning for protected areas;
- (ii) Engagement and mobilization of individuals, local women groups, women NGOs to participate in project implementation and benefit from business opportunities that are created under different project components
- (iii) Better access for women entrepreneurs and women's businesses – sustainable tourism, "green" farming etc. to the opportunities provided by the project, to the technical assistance that they may need in order to apply under different calls for proposals launched by EU4Cahul project, coaching, participation into trainings and awareness seminars;
- (iv) Integration of gender dimension into all the project-supported legal and policy work under Component 1 through a SESA approach. Gender considerations will be fully mainstreamed into project implementation and will inform rayonal (district level) and local development planning as well as community level project activities through creating a platform for participation in decision making at local level.

Under Component 1 the project will support district and local authorities to include biodiversity conservation and monitoring into local development strategies and will support public advocacy for women's rights and gender

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<sup>104</sup> Strategy for ensuring equality between women and men in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2017-2021

sensitive biodiversity conservation and management measures. Under Component 2, the project will support participatory approaches at local levels, in both protected areas, during the consultations on the Management Plan of the Royal Forest Nature Reserve and during the local consultations on the revision of the draft Management Plan of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, and will include women NGOs and local community representatives to enable their participation into decision making over natural resources management, as women's input, knowledge and guidance are invaluable to any productive, sustainable efforts to restore wetlands, lakes and riparian zones. Under Component 3, the project's efforts will be directed towards strengthening local women entrepreneurship, enabling women participation into calls for proposals and different other local projects and education/awareness activities. The project will ensure that there is gender balance in all project activities (e.g., seminars, community level events) including access to project financial assistance. Following the UNDP-GEF Gender Mainstreaming Guide<sup>105</sup>, the Gender Assessment has identified key considerations that can advance gender integration and which overall, can enhance the outcomes associated with each of the related components in the project. The project will report on direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender, as a co-benefit of the GEF investment (Indicators 1,10,12 and 13). During the project implementation, the Gender Action Plan (GAP) proposed actions will be detailed and embedded in the Project Annual Workplans. A detailed gender work planning, target setting and reporting takes place in the project inception and implementation phase. The implementation of GAP will be tracked as one of the key project M&E elements. supported by the Project manager and the Gender expert.

### Proposed Gender Action Plan

Component/Activities	Indicators	Target	Responsible entity	Period of Implementation
<b>Component 1- Enhanced regulatory and financing environment.</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocate for women rights to be recognized as key wetlands landscape stakeholders;</li> <li>- Include women groups in the process of drafting the legal and regulatory amendments including the NBSAP (Act. 1.1.1.1 and Act 1.1.1.3, Act. 1.1.2.1; Act 1.1.3.2)</li> <li>- Promote the equal participation of men, women, youth and other marginalized groups in the development of and consultations on the legal and regulatory framework for PA/wetlands management (Act. 1.1.1.2 and Act 1.1.2.1, Act 1.1.3.1)</li> <li>- Include women and youth from the targeted rayons in the amendments to the existing local regional development strategies in view of including biodiversity considerations and conservation measures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Percentage of women on different decision-making and working groups supported by the project</li> <li>- Percentage of women participants in the trainings, seminars, round table meetings</li> <li>- Participation of the representatives of grassroots rural women who are engaged formally and informally in water/wetlands' resources management in the project activities</li> <li>- Gender focused assessment chapters included in the overall watershed data collection and water use assessments envisaged under the preparatory project work within</li> </ul>	To be defined during Project Inception Phase	UNDP CO  Project manager  Gender expert M&E consultant	Over 5 years period

<sup>105</sup> UNDP -GEF (2016) Guide to Gender Mainstreaming in UNDP supported GEF Financed Project.

<p>of valuable habitats (Act. 1.1.3.2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Include women among the participants in the capacity building events (Act. 1.1.3.1)</li> <li>- Include gender related topics (e.g., strategy, conceptual frameworks, practical tools for implementing the focus on gender) in the trainings and education seminars of the staff of the MOE/EPIU and key stakeholders</li> <li>- Include gender aspects in the Prut watershed assessments supporting Act 1.1.1.3 (e.g., refer to differentiated ways that women and men access, use, control water, land in the Prut River watershed; assess challenges women may face in accessing and benefiting from wetlands ecosystem services)</li> </ul>	<p>Component 1 and Component 2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No of gender sensitive biodiversity conservation and sustainable management measures included in the new NBSAP</li> <li>- No of gender sensitive measures included in the regulatory and legal amendments</li> <li>- No of gender sensitive priority actions included under the National Ecological Fund funding priorities</li> </ul>			
<b>Component 2- Improved protection and management of Key Biodiversity Areas on wetlands</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocate for women rights to be recognized as key wetlands landscape stakeholders</li> <li>- Ensure that the representatives of grassroots rural women who are involved formally or informally in natural resource management in the PAs buffer and economic areas, are included in the project activities (relevant for Act. 2.1.1.1; Act. 2.1.1.2; Act. 2.1.1.3; Act. 2.1.1.4; Act. 2.2.1.1 Act. 2.2.1.2)</li> <li>- Include gender aspects in the Prut watershed assessments (supporting Act 1.1.1.3) (e.g., refer to differentiated ways that women and men access, use, control water, land in the Prut River watershed; assess challenges women may face in accessing and benefiting from wetlands</li> </ul>	<p>Increased women leadership in protected areas management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Percentage of women participating in the consultations regarding the PAs management plans in both targeted PAs Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and the Royal Forest Nature Reserve</li> <li>- Percentage of women/women headed households included in the consultations regarding the hydrotechnical works on Camenca River and potential compensation measures.</li> <li>- No of gender sensitive measures included in the PAs management plans</li> </ul>	To be defined during Project Inception	<p>UNDP/ IP</p> <p>Project manager</p> <p>PMU staff</p> <p>Gender expert</p> <p>M&amp;E consultant</p>	Over 5 years period

<p>ecosystem services i.e., Act. 2.1.1.5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Enable full and effective consultation and participation of women and men in all stages of natural resources management planning and implementation (Output 2.1.1 and Output 2.1.2) and the wetland restoration activities (Output 2.2.1 and Output 2.2.2).</li><li>- Provide women and men with equal access to information regarding all aspects of projects</li><li>- Involve women in all Monitoring and Evaluation (M&amp;E) activities, and provide the necessary tools and knowledge needed for women to engage meaningfully.</li><li>- Include gender differentiated aspects in the socio-economic assessments that are part of the PAs management planning under Component 2; highlight challenges faced by women, youth and other marginalized groups to benefit from project interventions.</li></ul>				
<b>Component 3 Demonstrating sustainable use/livelihoods at wetlands</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Promote equal participation of men, women in the capacity building/technical assistance activities (Act. 3.1.1.1)</li><li>- Percentage of women participants in the training/capacity building events including ToT events (Act. 3.1.1.2)</li><li>- Enable full and effective consultation and participation of women and men in all stages of the development of different tourists' attraction features of the new tourism itineraries in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve (Act.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Percentage of women participating in the community outreach events, round table meetings, workshops and trainings</li><li>- Percentage of women entrepreneurs/women agricultural producers benefiting from the project activities (training and coaching) applying under the EU4Cahul calls for proposals (Act 3.1.1.1)</li><li>- No of women and/or women headed households benefiting from the new tourists' itineraries</li></ul>	To be defined during Project Inception	UNDP/ IP  Project manager  PMU staff  Gender expert M&E consultant	Over 5 years period

<p>3.1.2.1) and cross-border routes between Moldova and Romania (Act 3.1.2.2.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure meaningful women and women entrepreneurs' participation in the Innovation Challenge (Act. 3.1.2.3);</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Percentage of women participating in the green business trainings and ToT trainings.</li> <li>- No of women in the Innovation Challenge Assessment Panel</li> <li>- Gender sensitive innovative solutions promoted through the Innovation Challenge</li> </ul>			
<b>Component 4 Knowledge management</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design awareness raising campaigns using gender sensitive knowledge products, and ensure that the content of information materials is explicitly addressing the differentiated ways in which women and men have access to and use wetlands resources</li> <li>- Conduct a full gender proofing of the Knowledge Management Plan annexed to this Project Document (Annex 22)</li> <li>- Develop and disseminate communication materials that incorporate gender perspectives which informs the wider public about the Prut wetlands ecosystem services</li> <li>- Ensure that women have the option to participate in all types of training and education, in order to increase their technical capacity to engage in project activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Percentage of women and men and women youth participating in the awareness and training events</li> <li>- Sex disaggregated data of the on-line awareness campaign beneficiaries (as feasible).</li> <li>- Number of knowledge products produced by the project that are mainstreaming gender dynamics within Prut River Basin landscape</li> <li>- Number of awareness and communication events reflecting gender perspectives on wetlands conservation and sustainable use.</li> </ul>		<p>UNDP/ IP</p> <p>Project manager</p> <p>PMU staff</p> <p>Gender expert</p> <p>M&amp;E consultant</p>	<p>Over 5 years period</p>

**Annex 12: Procurement Plan (first year)**

Procurement/HR	Output	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Estimated available budget/ full contract (USD)
Project management						
Project Manager	All	x				90,000
Technical, Financial and Administrative Assistant	All	x				42,000
Component 1						
Ecologist (Wetland Specialist)	Output 1.1/Output 2.2	x				9,000
Hydrologist (Water Management expert)	Output 1.1/Output 2.2	x				9,000
Senior Biodiversity Specialist ( for NBSAP)	Output 1.1		x			10,000
Legal/policy expert	Output 1.1	x				15,000
Hydroclimatic modelling expert	Output 1.2				x	30,000
Component 2						
Agroforestry expert	Output 2.2		x			6,000
Hydrologist (Water engineering)	Output 2.2		x			9,000
GIS Specialist	Output 2.1			x		9,000
Protected areas expert	Output 2.1		x			9,000
Specialised safeguards company	Output 2.2		x			100,000
Specialised company for reforestation works	Output 2.2			x		80,324
Company /Consortium specialised in Protected areas work	Output 2.1.1		x			110,000
Component 3						
Economist/Technical expert on rural livelihoods	Output 3.1.1	x				4,500
Senior tourism expert/rural green tourism expert	Output 3.1.2					4,500
Component 4						
Gender expert	Across outputs		x			8,000
Component 5						
M&E, GEB and Safeguards monitoring Expert	Across outputs			x		7,500

**Annex 13: GEF focal area specific annexes (METT)**  
(please see separate attachments)

**Annex 14: Co-financing letters**

(please see separate attachment)

## Annex 15: GEF Core indicators

Core Indicator 1	Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use					(Hectares)	
				Hectares (1.1+1.2)			
				Expected		Achieved	
				PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
				30,178	20,803		
Indicator 1.1	Terrestrial protected areas newly created						
Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN category	Hectares				
			Expected		Achieved		
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
Community-conservation Areas		VI PA with sustainable use of natural resources					
		Sum					
Indicator 1.2	Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness						
Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN category	Hectares	METT Score			
				Baseline		Achieved	
					Endorsement	MTR	TE
Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve		VI	14,771		31		
Royal Forest Nature Reserve		IV	6,032 (This value represents only the existing 6,032 ha of nature reserve without the additional area that will be proposed for Ramsar designation)		57		
Core Indicator 2	Marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use						(Hectares)
				Hectares (2.1+2.2)			
				Expected		Achieved	
				PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 2.1	Marine protected areas newly created						
Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN category	Hectares				
			Expected		Achieved		
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	

		(select)				
		(select)				
		Sum				
Indicator 2.2	Marine protected areas under improved management effectiveness					
Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN category	Hectares	METT Score		
				Baseline		Achieved
				PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR TE
		(select)				
		(select)				
		Sum				
Core Indicator 3	Area of land restored					(Hectares)
				Hectares (3.1+3.2+3.3+3.4)		
				Expected		Achieved
				PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR TE
				6,050	14,225	
Indicator 3.1	Area of degraded agricultural land restored					
				Hectares		
				Expected		Achieved
				PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR TE
Indicator 3.2	Area of forest and forest land restored					
				Hectares		
				Expected		Achieved
				PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR TE
HCVF						
Indicator 3.3	Area of natural grass and shrublands restored					
				Hectares		
				Expected		Achieved
				PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR TE
Indicator 3.4	Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) restored					
				Hectares		
				Expected		Achieved
				PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR TE
				6,050 (to be confirmed at PPG stage)	14,225	
Core Indicator 4	Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)					(Hectares)

		Hectares (4.1+4.2+4.3+4.4)			
		Expected		Expected	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 4.1	Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity				
		Hectares			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 4.2	Area of landscapes that meet national or international third-party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations				
Third party certification(s):		Hectares			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 4.3	Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems				
		Hectares			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 4.4	Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided				
		Hectares			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
<b>Core Indicator 5</b>	<b>Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity</b>				<b>(Hectares)</b>
Indicator 5.1	Number of fisheries that meet national or international third-party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations				
Third party certification(s):		Number			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 5.2	Number of large marine ecosystems (LMEs) with reduced pollution and hypoxial				
		Number			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

Indicator 5.3	Amount of Marine Litter Avoided					
			Metric Tons			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Core Indicator 6	Greenhouse gas emission mitigated					(Metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e )
			Expected metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e (6.1+6.2)			
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		Expected CO <sub>2</sub> e (direct)	527,869			
		Expected CO <sub>2</sub> e (indirect)	NA			
Indicator 6.1	Carbon sequestered or emissions avoided in the AFOLU sector					
			Expected metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e			
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		Expected CO <sub>2</sub> e (direct)	527,869	556,806		
		Expected CO <sub>2</sub> e (indirect)	NA	N/A		
		Anticipated start year of accounting	2021	2026		
		Duration of accounting	20	20		
Indicator 6.2	Emissions avoided Outside AFOLU					
			Expected metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		Expected CO <sub>2</sub> e (direct)				
		Expected CO <sub>2</sub> e (indirect)				
		Anticipated start year of accounting				
		Duration of accounting				
Indicator 6.3	Energy saved					
			MJ			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 6.4	Increase in installed renewable energy capacity per technology					
		Technology	Capacity (MW)			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		(select)				
		(select)				
Core Indicator 7	Number of shared water ecosystems (fresh or marine) under new or improved cooperative management					(Number)
Indicator 7.1	Level of Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Program (TDA/SAP) formulation and implementation					

		Shared water ecosystem	Rating (scale 1-4)			
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 7.2	Level of Regional Legal Agreements and Regional Management Institutions to support its implementation					
		Shared water ecosystem	Rating (scale 1-4)			
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 7.3	Level of National/Local reforms and active participation of Inter-Ministerial Committees					
		Shared water ecosystem	Rating (scale 1-4)			
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 7.4	Level of engagement in IWLEARN through participation and delivery of key products					
		Shared water ecosystem	Rating (scale 1-4)			
			Rating		Rating	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Core Indicator 8	Globally over-exploited fisheries Moved to more sustainable levels					(Metric Tons)
Fishery Details			Metric Tons			
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Core Indicator 9	Reduction, disposal/destruction, phase out, elimination and avoidance of chemicals of global concern and their waste in the environment and in processes, materials and products					(Metric Tons)
			Metric Tons (9.1+9.2+9.3)			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	PIF stage	MTR	TE
Indicator 9.1	Solid and liquid Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) removed or disposed (POPs type)					
POPs type			Metric Tons			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
(select)	(select)	(select)				
(select)	(select)	(select)				
(select)	(select)	(select)				
Indicator 9.2	Quantity of mercury reduced					
			Metric Tons			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

Indicator 9.3	Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) Reduced/Phased out					
		Metric Tons				
		Expected			Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
Indicator 9.4	Number of countries with legislation and policy implemented to control chemicals and waste					
			Number of Countries			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 9.5	Number of low-chemical/non-chemical systems implemented particularly in food production, manufacturing and cities					
		Technology	Number			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 9.6	Quantity of POPs/Mercury containing materials and products directly avoided					
			Metric Tons			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	PIF stage	Endorsement
Core Indicator 10	Reduction, avoidance of emissions of POPs to air from point and non-point sources					(grams of toxic equivalent gTEQ)
Indicator 10.1	Number of countries with legislation and policy implemented to control emissions of POPs to air					
			Number of Countries			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 10.2	Number of emission control technologies/practices implemented					
			Number			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Core Indicator 11	Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment					(Number)
			Number			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

		Female	21,000	21,000		
		Male	19,000	19,000		
		Total	40,000	40,000		

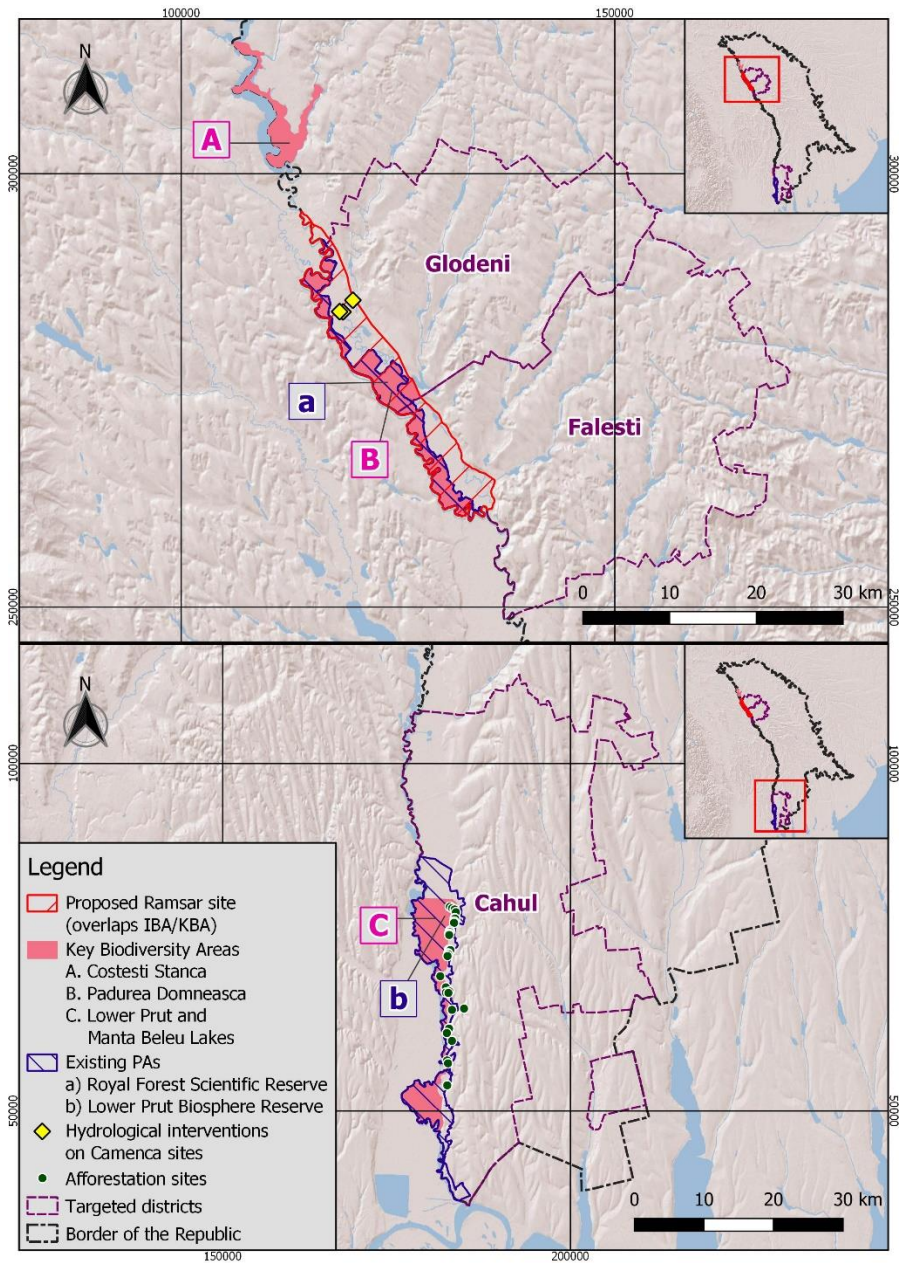
**Annex 16: GEF 7 Taxonomy**

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Influencing models			
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transform policy and regulatory environments		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate innovative approaches		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders			
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Sector		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Individuals/Entrepreneurs	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Beneficiaries		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Communities		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Civil Society		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Governmental Organization	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Academia	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Type of Engagement		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Dissemination	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partnership	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consultation	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Participation	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communications		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Awareness Raising	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Capacity, Knowledge and Research			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Enabling Activities		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Capacity Development		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Knowledge Generation and Exchange		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Learning		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theory of Change	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Management	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indicators to Measure Change	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Innovation		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Knowledge and Learning		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Innovation	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Capacity Development	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stakeholder Engagement Plan		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender Equality			
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender Mainstreaming		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sex-disaggregated indicators	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender-sensitive indicators	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender results areas		

		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Access to benefits and services	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Capacity development	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Awareness raising	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Knowledge generation	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protected Areas and Landscapes	
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Terrestrial Protected Areas
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Productive Landscapes
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mainstreaming	
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Extractive Industries (oil, gas, mining)
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Species	
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Threatened Species
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biomes	
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wetlands
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rivers
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lakes
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Land Degradation		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Land Management	
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restoration and Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands
<b>Rio Marker Adaptation: 1</b> <b>Rio Marker Mitigation:: 1.</b>			

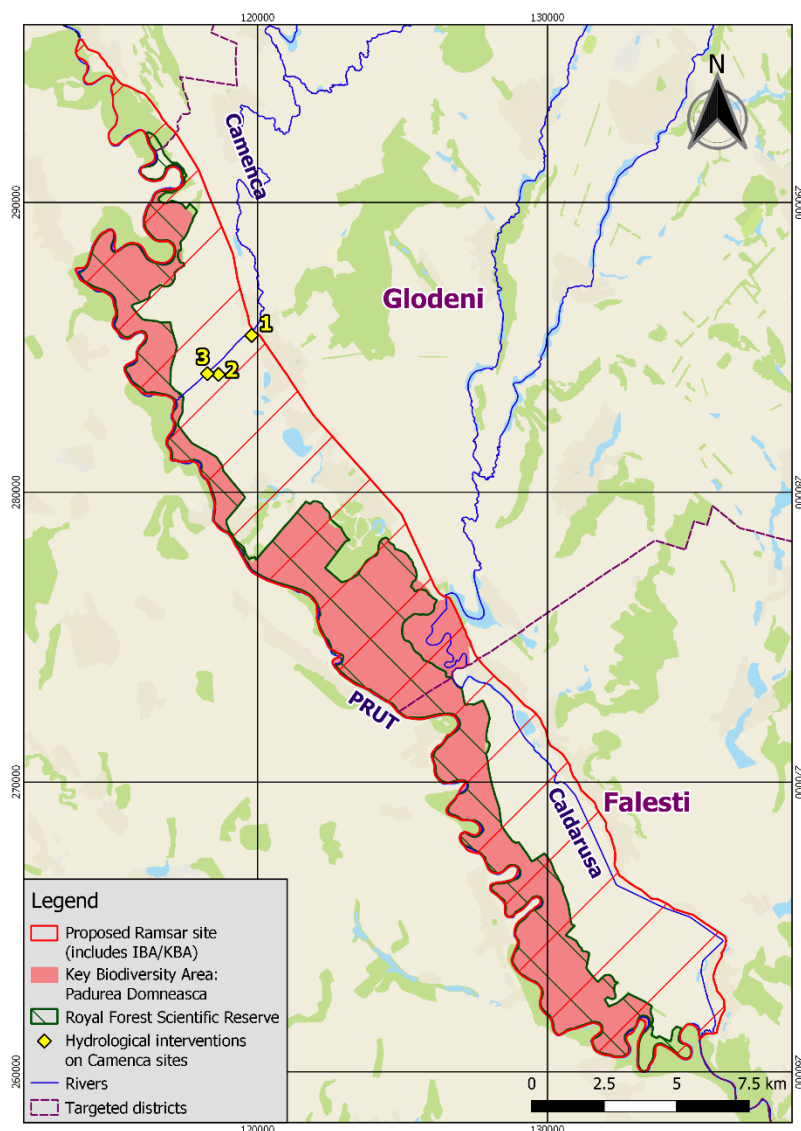
Annex 17: Target Landscape Profile

The project targets wetlands of national and international importance on the Moldovan side of the Prut river basin (which forms the border between Moldova and Romania) and will demonstrate effective and sustainable wetlands management measures in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve (14,771 ha) situated at the confluence of Prut and Danube river and in the Royal Forest Nature (Scientific) Reserve located in the mid-section of Prut river basin, between river Prut and its main tributary river Camenca.



**Padurea Domneasca (Princely Forest or Royal Forest) Nature Reserve** (Annex A Fig 2) was officially designated as a scientific reserve in 1993 (Law 409/1993). It includes a strictly protected core area of 261 ha and a buffer zone of 5771 ha. The area is “*de facto*” managed as a nature reserve, due to a legislative ambiguity (which will be addressed by the project). The area is situated in the middle section of the Prut River Basin, between Prut River and its tributary Camenca River. Of the total area (6032 ha), approximately 4,830 ha are forests, among the oldest European floodplain woodlands, largely at risk of drying out due to past river engineering. A larger area, extending over 15,407 ha, is proposed (by scientists) to be covered by the international Ramsar designation (Fig.1). This includes a core area of 5,736 ha (which is represented largely by the existing scientific reserve IBA/KBA) and an additional buffer zone of 9,671 ha.

Beyond that area, in the surrounding transition zone, there are hayfields, pastures and 10 villages that belong to two districts (Glodeni and Falesti) with a total population of 19,000 people.



The area proposed for Ramsar designation is building on the 2008 assessments of the NGOs and Academia, re-the limits re-assessed at PPG stage as follows a) to the N-E up to the road that reaches the river prut, passes through Braniste and Avramesti villages through Pruteni; b) to the South, from the confluence of the Caldarusa and Prut rivers, along the outer part of the watercourse towards Pruteni-Valea Rusului road; c) to the West, it forms the border of the Republic of Moldova. The resulting surface has been validated at PPG stage and it covers 15,468 ha. The entire area (i.e. the current Royal Forest Nature Reserve and the additional area proposed to be included in the Ramsar dossier) shelters 46 species of mammals (of which 6 species in the Red Book) 159 species of birds (of which 19 species included in the Red Book) 7 species of reptiles (2 species included in the Red Book) and 8 species of amphibians (2 species included in the Red Book) and a number of 575 vascular plant of which 12 are included in the Red Book of Moldova.

The site includes a variety of habitats, which are typical for the continental biogeographical region such as eutrophic waterbodies with

rooted floating pond mats made of *Potamogeton sp.* and *Hydrocharis morsus ranae*, water courses with the common water crowfoot *Ranunculus aquatilis*; grasslands and alluvial riparian meadows with *Cnidion dubii* vegetation; mixed forests with oak *Quercus robur*, elms *Ulmus laevis* and *Ulmus minor*, common ash tree *Fraxinus excelsior*, willow *Salix alba* and silver poplar *Populus alba* galleries. The area is listed in the IBA database with 100-120 breeding pairs of Grey-faced woodpecker (*Picus canus*) as trigger species (2014 data). Other IUCN Red List waterfowl species include Eurasian spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*), little egret (*Egretta garzetta*) and Black-crowned night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) among others. Some preliminary surveys (2008) indicated that the site could be considered a site of international importance as it encompasses complex wetland habitats encompassing old, forested floodplains, meadows, marshes, relict lakes and smaller river channels, hosting favorable conditions for nesting, breeding, feeding of large numbers of migratory birds some of them vulnerable. Out of 159 bird species identified in the area, approximately 95 species are migratory water birds. The main endangered habitat is represented by 4,957 ha, riparian mixed forest with hosting over 1,000 pairs of herons (this particular area is locally called "The Land of Herons/ Tara Bitlanilor") and presumably some of the largest populations of storks, wild ducks, swans and cormorants in this continental bioregion<sup>106</sup> and about a third of vascular plants in the country. The National Forest Authority "Moldsilva" manages the area through the state company "Royal Forest/Padurea Domneasca Enterprise".

<sup>106</sup> Experts may have referred to the WWF Subcontinental ecoregion encompassing Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Ukraine

Camenca river used to meander forming larger wetlands, connected to various habitats that created a mosaic ecosystem. Half a century ago, Camenca river was redirected by local human communities and its floodplain has changed, and with the lowered groundwater and increased salinity, the meadow vegetation that used to depend on seasonal flooding has been replaced by xerophytic species. Due to subsequent changes in river's hydrology, the habitat architecture is in decline. Many parts of the Camenca where river was dammed, natural biota has completely been changed. Today, the old meandering riverbed is nearly dried out and in places forms small ponds or remaining horseshoe-shaped small lakes.

Recent floristic biodiversity investigations, conducted by research institutions (Botanical Garden Institute) and specialists from Padurea Domneasca Nature Reserve in 2018, have identified 42 new geographic records – new species for the country's flora. Several species were already proposed to be included in the National Red Book (when this will be updated), such as yarrow plant (*Achillea distans*), and cow wheat (*Melampyrum bihariense*) and water speedwell plant (*Veronica catenata*) documented for the first time in the country from the very area. Of more than 660 species of vascular plant found in the area, at least 31 species are protected (circa 5% of all plant species), but further exploration in the area may bring new findings. The area is rich in floristic associations and it has high conservation potential (see Table 1 below). Excessive humidity, especially during floods or rainy seasons (but not often during the last decades), is still a determinant factor of meadows with a high biological diversity. Purely wetted areas covered occupy small patches, covered mainly with reed (*Phragmites australis*), reedmace species (*Typha angustifolia*, *Th. latifolia*), reed manna grass (*Glyceria maxima*), and marsh spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*), including typisized associations of palustric vegetation (e.g. *Typhetum angustifoliae-latifoliae*, *Scirpo-Phragmitetum* & *Glycerietum maximae*; *Caricetum acutiformis-riparia* etc.). Grazed meadows have indicator floristic species as *Agrostis stolonifera*, *Lolium perenne*, *Elytrigia repens*, and described phytocenozes belong to associations of grass species (e.g. *Agrostis stolonifera*, *Alopecuretum pratensis*, *Poetum pratensis* etc.). Non-flooded meadows are small by size and highly influenced by lack of phreatic water (and relying on rains only), 90-100% covered with grass plants, are composed of a number of species (e.g. *Poa angustifolia*, *Elytrigia repens*, *Fragaria vesca*, *Origanum vulgare*, *Salvia nemorosa* etc.).

Animal diversity counts approx. 50 species of mammals, 15 species of amphibians and reptiles, and 159 species of birds (some migratory species), including rare and endangered species (see Table 2). Besides its birds colony the "Land of Herons", the area is known for a nest of the white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) – an IUCN Red Listed species (Least Concern) was recently recorded as nesting in the middle and lower Prut river. It seems to have reappeared after 30 years, and due to international conservation efforts, it returned to Moldova (Ajder et al., 2014). The species reminded local management authorities on the need to revise forest and agricultural practices (by letting big trees to stay and avoid chemicals) and undertake landscape approach to water (basin) protection. PDNR is the only place in the country known for ex-situ conservation of the European bison or wisent (*Bison bonasus*) – an IUCN Red Listed as near threatened species, (re)introduced in 2005 from Poland. There are only 7 individuals now, but the fenced area inside the reserve can host up to 18 individuals, all part of a global genetic conservation program. The bison became now a tourist attraction, so many people come visit the forest and picnic in the lawn nearby (against a fee).

Animal biodiversity in Moldova is dominated by invertebrates in terms of both species' richness and biomass, so from more than 17,500 faunal species in the country only 474 are vertebrate species while the rest are invertebrates, predominantly insects (Toderas et al., 2007). However, in both PA involved in the project, biodiversity of invertebrates is largely neglected and not estimated at all, compared with how invertebrates are regarded as bioindicator for conservation or bioregulators in EU countries. Nature Annals of both PAs do not bear data on invertebrates (aquatic and terrestrial), which is a gap than needs to be filled urgently. Both threatened species requiring conservation and dangerous species subject to control or country's biosecurity should be included in biodiversity monitoring activities. In Padurea Domneasca (Royal Forest) Nature Reserve and surrounding sites there were recorded several species of insects that are protected in the country and elsewhere, but these species were neither listed in official data records nor monitored. For example, the European stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), still found in stable populations in the oak-forest habitats, is the largest beetle species in Europe listed as Near Threatened by the IUCN Red List, also included in the 2015 Red Book of Moldova. Several butterfly species, such as the Old-World swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*) and the clouded Apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*) or the scarce copper (*Lycaena virgaureae*) are protected by Moldova's legislation too, and still inhabiting meadows and woodland with plenty of flowering plants, especially in the area of the future Padurea Domneasca Ramsar site.

## List of rare and endangered species of plants in the „Padurea Domneasca’ site

Nr	Species (scientific name)	IUCN category	Moldova (2015)	Red Book
1	<i>Adonis vernalis</i> L	III		
2	<i>Asparagus officinalis</i> L	II	+	
3	<i>Cephalanthera damasonium</i>	II	+	
4	<i>Crambe tatria</i> Sebeok	II	+	
5	<i>Diantus carthusianorum</i> L	IV		
6	<i>Digitalis lanata</i> Eheb	I	+	
7	<i>Doronicum hungaricum</i> Reincheb.	VIII	+	
8	<i>Dryopteris carthusiana</i> (Vill)	III	+	
9	<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i> (L.) Schott	IV		
10	<i>Epipactis atrorubens</i> (Hoffm.) Bess	VIII		
11	<i>Epipactis helleborine</i> (L.) Crantz	VIII		
12	<i>Epipactis purpurata</i> Smith	IV	+	
13	<i>Helichrysum arenarium</i> (L.) Moench	II		
14	<i>Iris pumila</i> L	VIII		
15	<i>Luzula campestris</i> (L.) DC.	IV		
16	<i>Neottia nidus-avis</i> (L.) Rich	VIII		
17	<i>Nymphaea peltata</i> (S:G:Gmel) O. Kuntze	II		
18	<i>Ophioglossum vulgatum</i> L	I	+	
19	<i>Paris quadrifolia</i> L	II		
20	<i>Platanthera bifolia</i> L. Rich	II		
21	<i>Schivereckia podolica</i> Andr. ex DC.	II	+	
22	<i>Scorzonera purpurea</i> L	VIII		
23	<i>Staphylea pinnata</i> L.	IV		
24	<i>Stipa Pulcherrima</i> C. Koch	VIII		
25	<i>Stipa ucrainica</i> P. Smirn	VIII		
26	<i>Stipa lessingiana</i> Trin et Rupr	VIII		
27	<i>Stipa ucrainica</i> P. Smirn	VIII		
28	<i>Teucrium montanum</i> L.	IV		
29	<i>Trifolium pannonicum</i> Jacq	IV	+	
30	<i>Tulipa biebersteiniana</i> Schult et Schult fil.	IV		
31	<i>Vitis sylvestris</i> C. C. Gmel	II-III	+	

Rare and endangered species of animals<sup>107</sup>, including trends, in Padurea Domneasca site

Nr	Species (scientific name)	Protection category	Population status
<b>Mammals</b>			
1	<i>Crocedura leucodon</i>	Red Book	Low number
2	<i>Felix silvestris</i>	Red Book	Rather numbered, increasing
3	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Red Book	Reduced number

<sup>107</sup> Invertebrates are not included, but no doubt further investigations of only insects may reveal many interesting data, including internationally protected taxa.

4	<i>Martes martes</i>	V (IUCN)	Reduced, not increasing
5	<i>Mustela erminea</i>	V (IUCN)	Reduced number
6	<i>Mustela lutreola</i>	Red Book	Sporadic (only traces observed)
7	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	Red Book	Stable, in forests
<b>Reptiles</b>			
8	<i>Coluber jugularis</i>	Red Book	Rather numbered
9	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>	Red Book	Present, stable
10	<i>Vipera berus</i>	Red Book	Reduced number
<b>Birds</b>			
11	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Red Book	Part of colony, rare
12	<i>Egretta garzeta</i>	Rare	Part of colony
13	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Red Book	Reduced number
14	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	Red Book	Only 2 pairs observed
15	<i>Grus grus</i>	V (IUCN)	Sporadic, rare
16	<i>Aythya nygra</i>	Red Book	Rare (several individuals)
17	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	V (IUCN)	Rare (autumn, spring)
18	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	Rare	Numbered
19	<i>Platalea leucordia</i>	Red Book	Rare (several individuals)
20	<i>Phalacrocorax pygmaeus</i>	Rare	Rare
21	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Red Book	Rare (sporadic)



The National Forest Authority “Moldsilva” manages the area through the Prut River Biosphere Reserve Management Authority. Although formally established and internationally recognized, it has an administration but the formal approval of the Regulation of the MAB/UNESCO Reserve is yet to be received. As such the MAB/UNESCO regime is not yet operationalized. The current PAs administration is in charge of the management and conservation of Lake Beleu and the surrounding which form the limits of the old Scientific Reserve Lower Prut, based on which, the current MAB/UNESCO Biosphere Reserve has been founded.

Besides the targeted wetlands/KBAs, the third KBA in the Prut basin is represented by approximate 2950 ha cross border protected area with IBA status at **Stanca Costesti reservoir**.

The project included in the project’s researched conditions of wetlands in Prut river basin.

The overall Stanca Costesti dam was operationalized in 1976 through a cross-border cooperation management between Moldova and Romania. The lake was provided by a dam with a height of 47 m and a length of 740 m, retaining a gross volume of 1285 million m<sup>3</sup> and usable volume of 450 million m<sup>3</sup> (of which 225 million m<sup>3</sup> for the Romanian side) with an area of 59 km<sup>2</sup> and a maximum depth of 41.5 m. It was built to regulate the Prut river flow and prevent/reduce/avoid the risk of downstream floods and generate electricity. The Stanca Costesti Lake provides conditions for navigation, fishing.

The two targeted wetlands on Moldovan side namely the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and the Royal Forest Nature Reserve are falling within the limits of administrative territorial jurisdiction of 3 districts: Cahul (hosting the Lower Prut Biosphere reserve), Glodeni and Falesti (hosting Royal Forest Nature Reserve).

#### **Cahul district**

Cahul is an administrative territorial unit composed of 55 settlements, including: Cahul city, 53 settlements from the composition of villages (communes) with an area of 1,545 sq.km and a population of appr. 124.6 thousand inhabitants, which represents 3.5 % of the total population of the country. Approximately 28.8% of the district population is involved in production activities, preponderantly in agriculture (13.5%) and industry (15.3%), the rest 71.2 % is involved in service rendered and administration. The population density in Cahul district is of 81 pers/km<sup>2</sup>, at that the average density in the republic is of 117 pers/km<sup>2</sup>. Cahul city is the largest city of the southern region of the country and the 6<sup>th</sup> city of the Republic of Moldova. The largest village of the district - Colibaş (6,009 inhabitants) is located in the Lower Prut area. Cahul city is located on Frumoasa river, at a distance of 175 km from Chisinau city and at 60 km from Galaţi city, Romania. Through the portion of 1,200 meters on Danube shore the access is ensured to the Black Sea and to the water basin of the Central and Eastern Europe. The connection with the European Union through Romania is ensured through 2 customs points: Cahul–Oancea and Giurgiuleşti–Galaţi. To the east, the district has connection with Ukraine through 2 customs points: Palanca–Maiaki Udobnoe, including a railway one – Giurgiuleşti–Reni. The strategic advantage of the district from the point of view of its territorial location is the access to the Black Sea through Giurgiuleşti International Free Port (GIFP), the only port of the Republic of Moldova accessible for sea boats from Danube.

Cahul district is part of the “Lower Danube” Euroregion, together with the counties of Tulcea, Galaţi, Brăila (Romania), Cantemir district (Republic of Moldova) and Odessa region (Ukraine). Cahul district is also part of the “Black Sea” Euroregion, which contributes to inciting cross-border cooperation in the region adjacent to the Black Sea.

The economy of Cahul district is dominated by agriculture. More than 23.6 thousand economic entities are operating in Cahul district, most of them in agriculture (80.5%, preponderantly farming households), commercial and service rendering sphere (9.8%). Agriculture continues to be a very important sector, playing a vital role in the social-economic development of the district. During the transition period, agriculture has passed through a difficult period characterized by the breakup of economic relations, simplification of technologies and passing to the subsistence agriculture system. The total area of lands of agriculture destination in Cahul district is of 99.0 thousand hectares. The basic share is represented by the arable land with the area of 80.3 thousand hectares (81% of the area of agricultural lands), the multiannual plantations cover 16.3 thousand hectares (16.5 %, including: vine plantations of 13.6 thousand ha), and more than 2.2 thousand hectares are fallow land. The agricultural lands are managed by more than 100 agricultural enterprises in the associated sector and 20.4 thousand of farming households in the individual sector. Approximately 47% of agricultural lands are managed by farming households and natural persons, with an overwhelming dominance of the farms with the area less than 5 ha, which does not offer many opportunities for the development of sustainable agriculture. The

excessive fragmentation and onset of some small plots of land, as a result of the privatization reform caused a sudden lowering of agricultural productivity, the use of simplified technologies based on manual work, the failure of crop cultivation and rotation, soil degradation and other negative effects on the agricultural sector, and it led to a negative impact on the rural population.

At the same time, Cahul district enjoys favorable pedo-climatic conditions for a good development of the vine and viticulture. Grape producers produce annually 45 – 65 thousand tons of grapes, of which 35 -50 thousand tons of technical sorts. 7 wine-making enterprises operate in the district for the processing of grapes of technical sorts: SRL „Podgoriile Dunării” in Cahul city; SRL „Vinia Traian” Găvănoasa commune; SRL „Vierul Vin” in Burlacu commune; SA „Vismos” in Moscovei commune; ÎM „Grappe Valley” in Borceag commune; SRL „Agrosud Resurse” in Brânza village; SA „Slobozia Mare” in Slobozia Mare village, each of them having the annual processing capacity of 8 – 10 thousand tons.

Small-scale production on individual farms is predominant in the zootechnical sector, with usual practice of extensive production technologies, which led to the decrease of productivity of this sector and to the intensification of pollution in rural settlements. The zootechnical sector has had a slow growth during the last years, currently it has a headcount of 3943 bovines, 17406 porcine species, appr. 75 thousand of ovine and caprine species, 1400 equines and more than 520 thousand birds, 4760 bee families. The zootechnical sector faces constraints relating to internal resources (limited fodder) as well as severe pressures caused by the importation of cheaper products. The supply of autochthonal fodder is limited due to the low availability of high-quality pastures which, in its turn, is determined by unfavorable meteorological conditions and insufficient irrigation capacities.

The local tourist agencies report an organized flow of tourists for Cahul district, annually approximately 10-12 thousand tourists are served, especially those who come for spa treatment, as well as those travelling on the internal routes. This flow represents approximately 32.9% of the internal tourists organized through tourist agencies. Each 20<sup>th</sup> tourist accommodated in the area is a foreigner. In the pre-Danube area, the highest number of tourists (67%) were accommodated in „White Water Lily” Spa Resort of Cahul (12 thousand people). The general occupancy rate for the accommodation capacities in the Danube area is of approximately 16% due to the high share of the summer accommodation structures. Generally, tourists stay longer in Cahul municipality (11–13 days in the average) due to the long periods for spa treatments. In this important regional and spa center, the average occupancy rate is of approximately 38.3%. Cahul district is attractive by a series of exceptional natural reserves, such as the Lower Prut area.

### **Glodeni district**

The district covers an area of 754.18 km<sup>2</sup> (2.23% of the total area of the country) and is located in the North-Western part of the Republic of Moldova, 168 km from Chisinau capital city. The district is located to the West on Prut river, which forms the border with Botoșani county (Romania), it neighbors Râșcani district to the North, to the East – Balti municipality and to the South - Fălești district.

Glodeni district has 35 settlements in its composition, of which 1 city and 35 villages divided, in their turn, into 19 administrative territorial units, with the district administrative center located in Glodeni city. The relief of Glodeni district is represented by a hilly plain, fragmented by valleys and ravines, more elevated in the eastern part, with a slight slope towards the west, accompanied by fluvial terraces that merge with Prut plain.

Glodeni district is characterized by a rich hydrographic network of streams and small rivers belonging to Camenca hydrographic subbasin of Prut basin. The hydrographic network is composed of: Camenca river with its main left tributaries – Camencuța, Căldărușa, Glodeanca, Șovățul Mare and Mic, the waters of which are totally collected by Prut cross-border river, which borders the district to the west on a length of approximately 36 km and is a very important source of water supply. The water resources are formed of surface waters, which represent a rich network of lakes and ponds with an area of approximately 1598.45 ha. Surface waters are used for fish farming and irrigation.

The soils of the district are suitable for cultivating various cereal crops, vegetables and greens, for orchard and vine plantations, forests and natural pastures. The most expanded soils are leigated clay-sand chernozems, they occupy approximately 70% of the agricultural lands and approximately 55% of the total area of the district. The average crop yield score of the district soils is of 72 points.

From the point of view of land use, Glodeni is a preponderantly agricultural district. The lands of agricultural destination occupy an area of 40,980.86 ha, or the equivalent of 54.3% of the total area, including: arable lands (38,031.47 ha, 92.8%), orchards (1,642.22 ha), vines (157.27 ha), pastures (10,058.1 ha), etc. At the same time, 316.61 ha (0.8%) of the lands are fallow lands. Forest plantations cover an area of 10,598.2 ha (14% of the territory of Glodeni district), at that the lands covered with forests represent 7,634.37 ha, with 0.14 ha afforested per capita. Most lands covered with forests (84.6%) are in the public property of the state, 3,679.31 ha are managed by Glodeni State Forestry Enterprise, and 2778 ha – by „Royal Forest” Natural Reserve. The forests managed by local authorities (1,177.06 ha) are included in the category of forests for the protection of lands and soils, as well as for protection against climatic factors. In the past 5 years, the sectors with the largest average share of the amount of sales are: Trade – 42.6%, Agriculture, forestry and fish farming – 32% and Industry – 13%. On the other side, the lowest average share was registered by the sectors: Constructions – 3.5%, HoReCa – 0.85%, Transports and communications – 0.7%.

Small and medium enterprises represent 88.2% of the total businesses in the district. A positive evolution was registered in 2019 with 48 small and medium enterprises created; the number of limited liability companies (SRL) is of 434 units. 35.8% of the average annual number of employees were involved in the sector of retail trade in all the settlements of the district, and 27.6% worked in the sector of extracting and processing industry. Agriculture of Glodeni district enjoys a favorable climate and fertile soil. The agricultural area of the district is of 40,980.86 ha: 92.8% of arable area, 5.1% multiannual plantations (orchards, vines, fructiferous shrubs), 0.08% pastures. More than 88.5% of the total area of lands with agricultural destination (36,272.2068 ha) are in the property of the agricultural producers.

Glodeni district has a natural tourist heritage of a unique value from Middle Prut area, natural monuments included in various categories of state protected natural areas, with a high valorization potential. In this context, „Royal Forest” Reserve may be mentioned, the most valuable natural monument of the region. „Royal Forest” Natural Reserve was created on July 2, 1993 according to the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, for the purpose of maintaining the most representative natural forest complex of plain and wetlands located in the middle sector of Prut river, conserving and regenerating the rare species of plants and animals, ecological recovery and restoration of biodiversity of plain ecosystems. „Royal Forest” includes several exceptional tourist sights: „Hundred of Knolls” Landscape Reserve, „Butești Quay” Canyon, „Cobani” Coral Reef, „Large Cliff” Reef, „Heron Country” Heron Colony, Secular Oaks, Royal Buffalo Garden.

### **Făleşti district**

The district is located in the north-western part of the Republic of Moldova, it neighbors the districts of Glodeni, Ungheni, Sîngerei, Bălți municipality, counties of Botoșani and Iași (Romania). Făleşti district has a total of 76 settlements, including a city – Făleşti, 32 communes and 43 villages. Făleşti city is located at a distance of 125 km from Chisinau municipality and 58 km from Iași. The total population of the district is of appr. 90 thousand inhabitants, appr. 74.7 thousand live in the rural area and appr. 15.2 thousand live in the city.

The area of the district is of 1027 km<sup>2</sup>. The total surface of the land inventory in Făleşti is of 2642 ha, of which the intra-urban territory occupies 516 ha. The largest share is held by the lands of agricultural destination – 1189 ha or 44% of the total. This indicator corresponds to average urban settlements with a relatively high level of urbanization. The most frequent are the typical and common chernozems, they occupy 63% of all arable lands. The economic activity is characterized by the main domains of activities: agriculture, industry, trade, service rendering, transport, constructions, pharmaceuticals, etc. Besides the industry branch for the processing of agricultural raw material, a significant share is held by the heavy industry, light industry, processing industry of the agri-food sector.

Currently, there are appr. 60 enterprises with primary or secondary industrial activity, with appr. 2 thousand employees. The industrial sector in Făleşti district is represented, at an extent of 47%, by private enterprises with local capital, other 53% are represented by companies with foreign investments, preponderantly active in the sphere of clothing manufacture, wire assembling and plastic toy manufacture. The processing industrial sector is preponderantly represented by the production of sugar and wine.

At the same time, the manufacture of toys holds 21% of the industrial production, the manufacture of various metal products (mostly sets of parts used in vehicles, blocks and bricks for constructions) represents 15% of the industrial production.

Agriculture of Făleşti district, as it is located in the north of the Republic of Moldova, has climatic conditions and soil structure more favorable to the development of agriculture, as compared to the districts located in the South of the Republic, but less favorable comparing to those of the northern climatic and soil conditions in the area. The climate is characterized by a moderate degree of exposition to drought, and the soils are preponderantly formed of common chernozems, characterized by a good fertility. At the same time, the soil erosion processes, which take place including as a result of the excessive parcellation of agricultural lands and often due to the non-observance of crop rotation, have increased the degree of exposition of the agricultural crops to unfavorable climatic conditions, approximately 29.7% of the district area is represented by erosional lands, ravines and surfaces affected by landslides. Despite the existence of favorable climatic conditions, of the relatively large territorial area and population distributions, the area of the land inventory meant for agriculture is very small, approximately 51 %, in the preponderantly rural area (81.8%). Of the total agricultural lands, 10.9% represent lands of the settlements and those meant for industry, transport and communications; 11% are occupied by forests, 4% - by rivers and lakes. Most agricultural lands are in private property. There are app. 10 thousand farming households, appr. 50 limited liability companies, 10 agricultural production cooperatives, 1 joint-stock company and 3 other types of organizations in the district. At a district level, 3 associations of producers of cereals, sunflower and sugar beet were created. The main traditional cultures in the district, which benefit from favorable pedoclimatic conditions for their development, are corn, sunflower and autumn wheat, which represents more than three thirds of the area of cultivated lands.

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## **Annex 18: Legislative and institutional context**

The main baseline policies, laws and regulations related to the use of natural resources are the following:

### **Codes**

The Land Code (No. 828-XII of 25-12-1991) is inclusive of land destined for nature protection, recreative activity, lands of historical-cultural value, lands of the underground areas and green areas. The act protects the equal right of various forms of property on lands, it established the way of land use, protects the soils from the holders that damage the lands and do not repair such damages. The law stipulates penalties for a negatively impacting soil quality, it regulates the rights and obligations of landholders, including those on the territory of which heritage objects are located. The document established the way of collecting payments for land use.

The Forestry Code (No. 887-XIII of 21-06-1996) regulates the sustainable management of the forest stock by means of reasonable usage, regeneration, guarding and protecting the forests, maintaining, conserving and improving the forest biological diversity, providing forest resources to satisfy the current and future needs of the society based on their multifunctionality. The act establishes the competences of the Government, Central Forest Authority, Central authority for the protection of environment, and Environment Agency in the sphere of reserves and other protected areas on the lands of the forest stock. One of the tasks established by the Code for the line institutions is ensuring the biological diversity and reasonable use of the genetic and biological resources, protection of environment. The Code stipulates that the rent of lands from the forest stock inside the protected natural areas is forbidden. The act establishes the rights and obligations of the holders of forest lands, other forest beneficiaries, the norms of using the forest products and the forest. The legislative act also stipulates payments for forest usages, measures of economic incentives for the reasonable use, regeneration, guarding and protecting the forests. The liability measures for the infringement of the forest legislation are also specified. Moreover – the amount of compensation for the damage caused by forest contraventions is established according to certain tariffs.

### **Policies/Programs**

Government Decision on the approval of the National Program on the creation of the national ecological network for 2011-2018 (GD No. 593 of 01-08-2011). The program represented an objective for the fulfilment of the undertakings of the Republic of Moldova, as a country – party to the Convention on biological diversity (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), by creating opportunities for stopping the loss of biodiversity, by creating state protected objects and complexes.

Government Decision on the approval of the Environmental Strategy for 2014-2023 and Action Plan for its implementation (GD No. 301 of 24-04-2014). The Environmental Strategy is a long term strategic planning document and it proposes a total reform of the environment protection sector, so as to have an operating institutional, administrative and environmental management system adjusted to the requirements of the European Union, which would ensure environmental sustainability and the increase of the quality of environmental factors. The Action Plan includes the specific objective 6.4. providing for the extension of the surface of protected areas from 5.6 % to 8%.

Government Decision on the approval of the Strategy of the Republic of Moldova on adaptation to climate change until 2020 and Action Plan for its implementation (GD No. 1009 of 10-12-2014) is a document that had to ensure that the social and economic development of the Republic of Moldova becomes resilient to the impact of future climate changes. Besides, the Strategy supports the fulfilment of the global goals established in the Framework Convention of the United Nations on climate change (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) to which Moldova is Party. Government Decision on the approval of the Strategy on biological diversity of the Republic of Moldova for 2015-2020 and Action Plan for its implementation (No. 274 of 18-05-2015). The development of this Strategy was conditioned by the need to transpose the provisions of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for 2011-2020 and of the Aichi objectives for Biodiversity established at COP CBD in Nagoya (Japan, 2010). The Strategy evaluates the causes underlying biodiversity degrading and provides for specific measures to decrease the risks of losing its components. Both the environmental strategy and the one regarding the biological diversity of Moldova provide for the extension of the surface of protected areas.

Government Decision on the approval of the Program for promoting “green” economy in the Republic of Moldova for 2018-2020 and Action Plan for its implementation (GD No. 160 of 21-02-2018). The development of the Program was conditioned by the lack of a medium-term planning policy document at a national level in the sphere of promoting “green” economy in the sectors of social-economic development of the country: energy efficiency and use of renewable sources, greening small and medium enterprises, ecologic agriculture, sustainable transport industry (cleaner production and sustainable consumption), sustainable public procurements, construction, education for sustainable development.

### **Legislative acts**

Law on Environment Protection (Nr. 1515-XI din 16-06-1993) represents the basic legal framework for the development of special normative acts and instructions in separate problems in the sphere of environment for the purpose of: i) ensuring the right of each and every individual to a healthy and esthetically pleasant environment; ii) fulfilling the supreme responsibility of each generation for the protection of environment in front of the future generations; iii) obtaining an extent as large as possible of using natural resources without exceeding the admissible limits, avoiding their depletion and degradation, the risk for human health and other unwanted and unforeseeable consequences; iv) protecting the soil and underground, waters and air from chemical, physical and biological pollution, from other activities deregulating the ecological balance; v) conserving the biodiversity and genetic stock, integrity of natural systems, historical and cultural national values; vi) restoration of ecosystems and their components affected by the anthropic activity or by natural calamities. The law also established the competencies of the Parliament, President, Government and local self-administration bodies in the sphere of environment protection. This law corresponds to the provisions of the EU Directives in the sphere of environment protection and stipulated in the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union, as well as to all the strategies at a national level generating the general framework for this document.

Law on the Areas and Buffer Strips for the Protection of Rivers and Water Basins (No. 440 of 27-04-1995) provides the creation of protection areas and buffer river strips for the protection of water basins, it determines the regimes of usages and activities for their protection, the law stipulates that in the water protection areas certain types of economic activities are limited, and within the limits of the buffer river strips for water protection, contrarily, only certain economic activities are allowed, such as the hydrotechnical constructions for protection and consolidation, and such interventions as cutting.

Law on Animal Kingdom (No. 439-XIII of 27-04-1995) regulates the relations in the sphere of protection and use of wild animals (mammals, birds, amphibia, fish, insect, shellfish, mollusks, etc.), naturally living on the mainland, in the water, in the atmosphere or in the soil, and permanently or temporarily populating the territory of the republic. Among the measures to ensure the protection of the animal kingdom, the law stipulates the creation of the state protected natural areas. The law also comprises: i) Regulations of the hunting stock; ii) List of fauna species included in the Red Data Book of the Republic of Moldova and the fees to be collected for the damages caused by natural and legal persons by illegal hunting, fishing, acquiring, collecting, trading, possession and export or by annihilation; iii) List of relatively rare fauna species and systematic groups (nature monuments) protected by the state and the fees to be collected for the damages caused by natural and legal persons by illegal hunting, fishing, acquiring, collecting, trading, possession and export or by annihilation; iv) Fees to be collected for the damages caused by natural and legal persons by illegal hunting, fishing, acquiring, collecting, trading, possession and export or by annihilation of the hunting animals in the republic. The law is partially harmonized with the Directive 2009/147/CE on the conservation of wild birds (by means of Law No. 237 of 17.11. 2017).

Law on the Inventory of State Protected Natural Areas (No. 1538-XIII of 25-02-1998) establishes the legal basis for the creation and operation of the inventory of state protected natural areas, its principles and way of conservation, as well as the duties of the central and local public authorities, nongovernmental organizations and citizens in this domain. The law offers the legal framework for 12 different categories of protected areas in the Republic of Moldova: 7 different types (scientific reserve, national park, nature monument, natural reserve, landscape reserve, resource reserve, multifunctional management area) are delimited in accordance with the classification of the International Union for Nature Conservation, while 3 types are applied at a local level (dendrological garden, zoological garden, and landscape architecture monuments). Moreover, 2 types are established through other international regulations – biosphere reserve (UNESCO Program) and wetland of international importance (Ramsar Convention).

Law on the Red Data Book of the Republic of Moldova (No. 325 of 15-12-2005) regulates the social relations in the sphere of protection, use and restoration of the species of plants and animals which are disappeared, critically threatened, threatened, vulnerable, rare and undetermined, included in the Red Data Book of the Republic of Moldova, for the purpose of preventing the extinction and ensuring the conservation of their genetic inventory, and establishes the legal basis for keeping the Red Data Book, duties of the public authorities of all levels and of the scientific institutions in this domain. The law provides for ensuring the protection and restoration of the objects in the Red Data Book by priority creation of objects and complexes from the inventory of state protected natural areas, as well as creation of the ecological network on the territories where the objects of the Red Data Book are located (grow) and on the migration ways of the species of animals included in the Red Data Book. Likewise, the law provides that the cross-border problems relating to the protection and restoration of the objects from the Red Data Book are solved by means of concluding and fulfilling bilateral and multilateral agreements, by creating biosphere reserves, natural reserves, national parks and other cross-country objects that shall be included in the inventory of state protected natural areas.

Law on Plant Kingdom (No. 239-XVI of 8-11-2007) establishes the legal framework in the sphere of conservation, protection, restoration and use of the objects of the plant kingdom, as well as the competences of the public authorities of all levels and of the scientific institutions in this domain. The law establishes the way of usage of the plant kingdom objects in protected areas, as well as the economic mechanisms to give incentives for the reasonable use of the plant kingdom objects and the liability for infringing the legislation in this regard. The law brings the national legislation into conformity with the provisions of the Regulations of the Council of Europe no. 338/97/CE of 9 December 1996 on the protection of the species from the wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein and with the Directive of the Council of Europe no. 92/43/CE of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of the natural habitats and species of wild flora and fauna for the purpose of conserving and protecting the plant kingdom, with the Directive 92/43/CEE of the council on the conservation of natural habitats and of species of wild fauna and flora.

Law on the Ecological Network (No. 94 of 05-04-2007). The object of this law is the creation of a legal framework for the constitution and development of the national ecological network as an integrant part of the Pan-European ecological network and local ecological networks in order to establish a regime of management and protection of the national ecological network and local ecological networks, as well as the competences and obligations of the public administration authorities in this domain. The design and building of the national ecological network shall be done taking into consideration the state protected natural areas, existing or planned, as well as other elements of nature. The legal provisions regarding the creation of the national ecological network laid the basis for the National Program on the creation of the national ecological network for 2011–2018.

Law on Water (No. 272 of 23-12-2011) creates the legal framework necessary for the management, protection and usage of waters, it is meant to ensure the creation of a legal framework for the management, protection and efficient use of surface waters and underground waters, establishing the rights of water use and promoting investments in the sphere of waters, establishing mechanisms for the protection of the state of waters, preventing any subsequent degradation of waters, protection and restoration of the water environment, prevention of subsequent deteriorations, conservation and improvement of the state of water ecosystems and, regarding their needs for water, terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands directly depending on the water ecosystems, ensuring a sufficient supply with good quality surface water and underground water. The law is partially harmonized with the directives of the Council: no. 91/271/CEE of 21 May 1991 on the treatment of urban wastewater and no. 91/676 CEE of 12 December 1991 on the protection of waters against the pollution with nitrates coming from agricultural sources, with the directives of the European Parliament and Council: no. 2000/60/CE of 23 October 2000 on establishing a community policy framework in the sphere of water resources; no. 2006/7/CE of 15 February 2006 on the management of water quality for bathing; no. 2007/60/CE of 23 October 2007 on the evaluation and management of flood risks; no. 2008/105/CE of 16 December 2008 on the environmental quality standards in the sphere of water, it creates the necessary legal framework for the management, protection and usage of waters.

Law on Environmental Impact Assessment (No. 86 of 29-05-2014) establishes the procedures and ways applied in the process of environmental impact assessment for some public and private projects or some types of

planned activity that may have a significant impact on the environment of the Republic of Moldova or other states. The selection criteria are established for the determination of the need to perform the environmental impact assessment. These also include the influence of planned activity on the protected areas, including wetlands, and on the protected species, their habitats and biomes.

#### **Normative acts**

Government Decision on the approval of the Regulations of the Cadaster of objects and complexes from the inventory of state protected natural areas (GD No. 414 of 02-05-2000). The Regulations are developed in accordance with the provisions of the Law on the inventory of state protected natural areas no. 1538/1998 and establishes the destination, way of keeping the Cadaster, as well as the way of organization of the records of the objects and complexes from the inventory of protected natural areas.

Government Decision on the approval of the framework regulations of the national parks, nature monuments, resource reserves and biosphere reserves (GD No. 782 of 03-08-2000). The Regulations establish the general normative principles of operations of these 4 categories of protected areas and serve as a basis for the development of regulations for each newly created park, monument or reserve, in which the objectives and tasks of the new protected areas shall be established, as well as the responsibilities of the landholders and of the local public authorities.

Government Decision on the approval of the Framework Regulations on the multifunctional management areas, Framework Regulations on natural reserves, Framework Regulations on landscape reserves and Framework Regulations on the landscape architecture monuments (GD No. 784 of 03-08-2000). The Regulations establish the general normative principles of operation of the mentioned categories of protected areas and serve as a basis for the development, in case of need, of specific regulations for these categories of protected areas.

Government Decision on the approval of the Framework Regulations on botanical gardens, Framework Regulations on dendrological gardens, Framework Regulations on zoological gardens, Framework Regulations on scientific reserves (GD No. 785 of 03-08-2000). The Regulations establish the general normative principles of operation of the botanical gardens, dendrological and zoological gardens, as well as of the scientific reserves, and serve as a basis for the development of specific regulations for these categories of protected areas.

Government Decision on the approval of the Regulations on the procedure of instituting the regime of protected natural area (GD No. 803 of 19-06-2002) establishes the categories of protected natural areas, their goals and management regime, the way of documentation and examination of the proposals on the institution of the regime of protected natural area, as well as the authorities and institutions responsible for their presentation and analysis.

Government Decision on the approval of the Framework Regulations on wetlands of international importance (GD No. 665 of 14-06-2007) establishes the way of organization and operation of the wetlands of international importance and serve as a basis for the development, in case of need, of specific regulations of some Ramsar areas that shall be approved by the central authority for environment.

Government Decision on the Regulations of the State Cadaster of Water (GD No. 763 of 23-09-2013) The Regulations establish the structure and content of the State Cadaster of waters. The goal of the cadaster is the management, protection and efficient use of surface waters and underground waters on the basis of the state records of cadastral data and provision of cadastral information to the central public authorities, authorities of the local public administration, interested natural and legal persons. The cadaster represents a state informational system containing records of data regarding the hydrographic network, water resources, intakes and returns of water, hydrotechnical heritage, including the identification, delimitation, classification and state of the water bodies, protecting areas and buffer strips and protected areas located in such zones.

Government Decision on the approval of the Regulations on the regulation of the number of wild animals in the state protected natural areas from the state forest stock (GD No. 239 of 05-04-2014) provides the measures and methods of regulating the number of some species of animals on the entire surface of state protected natural areas from the state forest stock, for the purpose of protecting the health of the population, protecting animals

and plants and preventing the damages that may be caused to the national economy, wild fauna and their habitats in case of increasing the number of some species of animals and/or burst of epizooties.

Government Decision on the approval of the Management Plan of the Danube-Prut and Black Sea hydrographic basin district (GD No. 955 of 03-10-2018) is developed in accordance with the provisions of art. 19 para. (2) of the Law on waters no. 272/2011, on the evaluation of the quality and quantity of water resources; evaluation of the risk of water deficit, draught, floods, pollution and failure of the dams from within the hydrographic basin district; identification of the zones from within the hydrographic basin district in which there is risk of pollution from diffuse sources; analysis of the existing protected areas and established protected areas; priorities of special usage of water. The management plan contains a program of measures for the identified risks and problems, which include the progressive decrease of pollution from punctiform and diffuse sources, recovery of costs for water consumption, sustainable use of water resources.

Government Decision on the approval of the Concept of the automated informational system „State Cadaster of Waters” (GD No. 491 of 23-10-2019). The Government Decision establishes the destination, goal of creation and tasks of the Automated Informational System “State Cadaster of Waters” (AIS SCW). According to the Concept, AIS SCW represents a totality of organizational, technical, software and staff means used for the collection, processing, transmission and keeping the information for the performance of data records on the water resources and opportunity of providing to the interested parties data on their state and protection on the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova. AIS SCW forms the State Cadaster of Waters representing a totality of systematized data on the following objects: hydrographic network, water bodies, hydrotechnical constructions, protection areas and buffer strips, wetlands of international importance, water intakes and discharges, etc.

### **Gender**

According to the Law No5-XVI of 9 February 2006 on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men the strong Institutional Framework for equality assurance of chance between women and men was established, including a) Parliament, b) Government; c) Governmental Commission for Equality between Women and Men; d) Ministry of Health and Social Protection (specialized body); e) ministries and other central administrative authorities (gender units); f) local public administration authorities (gender units). During 2006-2018 based on new provisions, the Institutional Framework was extended, including together with the Governmental Commission on Equality between Women and Men such structures as Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, Gender coordination group, ombudsmen and other.<sup>108</sup>

The central public authority empowered to elaborate and promote policies in the field of equality between women and men is the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection (MHLSP), that contains a specialized subdivision - Department of policies to ensure equality between women and men. Despite of the strong provisions, there are many gaps.<sup>109</sup> However, with the Law receiving very little attention in terms of national budgetary allocations, and insufficient political will, the mechanisms tasked with implementing the Law have a limited capacity; low functionality of the local gender focal points. It is acknowledged that the gaps in the national systems also adversely affect the effective implementation of national legislation on gender equality and the Strategy.<sup>110</sup>

### **International Conventions**

The Republic of Moldova (Moldova) is a Member State of the Council of Europe (COE) and of the United Nations (UN), and has human rights obligations at the regional and universal levels.

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<sup>108</sup> [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=107179&lang=ro#](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=107179&lang=ro#)

<sup>109</sup> Despite the progress made, many challenges should be mentioned such as: low level of implementing legal provisions of national machinery on gender equality, lack of functionality and sustainability of the national machinery's activities etc. // Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in the Republic of Moldova. Submitted by the Platform for Gender Equality from Moldova, December, 2019 [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared Documents/MDA/INT\\_CEDAW\\_CSS\\_MDA\\_41047\\_E.docx](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/MDA/INT_CEDAW_CSS_MDA_41047_E.docx)

<sup>110</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of the Republic of Moldova. CEDAW/C/MDA/CO/6. 2 March 2020.

### Regional: European System

As a Member of the COE, Moldova has ratified the European Convention on Human Rights and is subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. Moldova has ratified the Revised European Social Charter, but has not authorized the European Committee of Social Rights to decide collective complaints against it. Its human rights policies and practices are also monitored by the COE Commissioner for Human Rights, who identifies gaps in human rights protection, conducts country visits, engages in dialogue with States, and prepares thematic reports and advice on human rights obligations. Individuals and groups have submitted complaints of human rights violations committed by Moldova to the European Court of Human Rights. For example, the Court found that Moldova violated its obligation to prevent inhuman or degrading punishment, as well as the right to liberty and personal security, in the case of an individual who was detained and deprived of necessary medical treatment while in prison. See ECtHR, *Paladi v. Moldova*, no. 39806/05, ECHR 2009 Judgment of 10 March 2009. Additionally, the Court may grant interim measures to protect people in urgent situations of risk in Moldova. As a State party to the Revised European Social Charter, Moldova must submit yearly reports to the European Committee of Social Rights on its implementation of the Charter's provisions.

Moldova is a party to the following regional human rights treaties:

- European Convention on Human Rights and several of its [protocols](#)
- Revised European Social Charter
- COE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
- European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

### United Nations System

As a UN Member State, Moldova is subject to the oversight of various UN human rights bodies, including the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review and thematic special procedures. As a party to specific universal human rights treaties, Moldova's policies and practices are monitored by UN treaty bodies. It has accepted the complaints procedure of four treaty bodies.

Moldova has ratified the following UN human rights treaties:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

Moldova has also ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aimed at abolishing the death penalty, and optional protocols to the CRC addressing children in armed conflict and the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography. Moldova has a duty to submit State reports to the UN treaty body associated with each UN human rights treaty Moldova has ratified. These reports must be submitted on a periodic basis and describe the steps taken to implement the treaty provisions. Moldova has also ratified optional protocols and made appropriate declarations allowing individuals to submit complaints against the State alleging violations of the ICCPR, CEDAW, CAT, and CERD. Additionally, certain UN treaties contain inquiry procedures, which allow the UN treaty body to consider allegations of grave or systematic human rights violations. Moldova has accepted the inquiry procedures of the CAT and CEDAW. On June 2, 2010, Moldova extended a standing invitation to UN special procedures, which means that any such mandate holders are welcome to conduct visits in Moldova. For example, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights went on a mission to Moldova in September 2013 and published a report in June 2014 on poverty and human rights there.

### Institutional Framework

Table: Institutional framework and legislative mandates

Stakeholders	Legislative mandates and Responsibility and role in the project
Ministry of Environment (MOE)	<p>The Ministry is responsible for the development of legislation, action plans, norms and standards in environment, agriculture and regional development. The Directorate of policies in the area of biodiversity of MOE has the basic mission of developing and promoting the state policy in the sphere of reasonable use of natural resources, conservation of biodiversity, state protected natural areas, forest stock, hunting stock and biological security, within the limits of its competence and conditions provided by the environment legislation in force, by the Regulations of the Ministry and Regulations of the Directorate</p> <p>In the field of environment, the Ministry is responsible for the development of legal and regulatory framework in the field of environmental protection, sustainable use of natural resources, including management of air, waste, water resources, water supply and sewerage system, ensuring compatibility of legal framework with Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA). In the process of developing environmental policies and legislation, MOE closely cooperates with the specialized research institutions (Botanical Garden (Institute), Zoology Institute, Institute of Ecology and Geography, with the civil society (NGO community) and other structures.</p> <p>Likewise, with the adherence to the Convention on Access to Information, Justice and Public Participation in Decision Making in the sphere of environment (Aarhus Convention), the right of public participation and access to justice is ensured. At the same time, the Law on transparency in decision making (No. 239/2008) obliges MOE to ensure transparency in the process of developing the legislation, thus giving incentives for the participation of the citizens and other stakeholders in the decision-making process.</p> <p>Wetlands are used for economic purposes, for irrigation, fishing, grazing, hunting or recreation, they are transformed or completely destroyed, which causes a major impact on the environment. The lands from the wetlands of international importance are managed by various holders, including by the “Moldova Waters” Agency, „Moldsilva” Agency.</p> <p>Some of the Ministry’s functions and competences for water, air and waste are implemented by specialized bodies under its mandate, with which the project will coordinate : State Hydrometeorological Service (SHS), Agency “Apele Moldovei (Moldovan Waters) ”, Agency for Geology and Mineral Resources (AGMR) and State Ecological Inspection (SEI).</p> <p>The National Ecological Fund operates under the Ministry, managed by an Administrative Council, chaired by the minister.</p> <p>The Ministry will review and draft policy and legislation relevant to protected areas, pollution charges and amendments to the National Ecological Fund’s Regulation. The Ministry will provide leadership to the project management team especially regarding liaison with government authorities from different sectors. Ministry will ensure coordination with other relevant projects and initiatives.</p>
Agency” Moldsilva”	<p>Moldsilva Agency, by mutual agreement with the central authority for environment protection, organizes the strict observance of the regulations on reserves and other protected areas (art. 12 of the Forestry Code No. 887/1996). Similarly, in accordance with the Regulations on the organization and operation of „Moldsilva” Agency, structure and staff of its central office (GD No. 150/2010), Moldsilva develops and organizes the application of measures on the conservation, ecologic reconstruction of the forests in the state protected natural areas managed by it;</p>

	<p>develops and presents proposals on the construction of state protected natural areas in the conditions established by the legislation, ensures the observance of the regime of management of the inventory of natural areas, conservation and protection of the objects of the vegetal and animal kingdoms from such areas. Through the territorial subordinated entities, it manages approximately 50 % of the total surface of the state protected natural areas.</p> <p>Moldsilva will be an important partner for the implementation of reforestation activities on degraded lands, as well as for their related duties in the protected areas management. The agency will provide, through its state forestry units, technical assistance, co-financing and support in implementing project components. Also, Moldsilva will help build cooperation with local communities where it operates.</p>
Agency "Moldovan Waters"	<p>The Moldovan Waters Agency is the administrative authority subordinated to MOE, which is responsible for the implementation of the state policy in the area of water resources management; it manages the lands of the water inventory, surface water bodies and hydrotechnical constructions in the public property of the state, on the basis of the Nistru and Danube-Prut and Black Sea hydrotechnical basins located on the territory of the Republic of Moldova; (Regulations on the organization and operation of the „Moldova Waters” Agency, its structure and number of staff, GD No. 882/2014). The state control and supervision, prevention and fighting the infringements in the sphere of protection of flora, fauna and protected natural areas in order to ensure a high level of supervision and protection of the environment, public interests, ecological security of the state are performed by the Inspectorate for Environment Protection subordinated to MOE. (GD No. 548/2018 on the organization and operation of the Inspectorate for Environment Protection).</p> <p>“Moldovan Waters” Agency will be the main counterpart under Component 1 (Output 1.1.1), and will facilitate coordination with the Romanian counterparts, regarding the hydro-ecological models and revisions to the existing Regulation of the Stanca-Costesti Dam, in order to increase the ecological flows to wetlands downstream.</p>
Environment Agency	<p>The Environment Agency, subordinated to MOE, performs the monitoring of the quality of state protected natural areas, monitoring of the state and use of the water and soil resources, monitoring of the vegetal and animal kingdom, monitoring of the state of the underground, monitoring of air pollution, geological monitoring, monitoring of environment pollution for the purpose of providing to natural and legal person information on the quality of environment, developing the statistical indicators in the sphere of environment protection (GD No. 549/2018 on the creation, organization and operation of the Environment Agency).</p>
Environmental Reference Laboratory	<p>Environmental Reference Laboratory (ERL) from the Environment Agency is responsible for the supervision of the quality of environment components (surface waters, wastewaters, air, soil, water alluvia, atmospheric precipitations, level of the debit of gamma radiation in the environment, etc.), on the basis of a large monitoring network located on the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova. On 18 March 2021, ERL received the Accreditation Certificate for the ISO/IEC 17025 Standard from the National Accreditation Centre of the Republic of Moldova MOLDAC.</p>

Local Public Authorities (LPAs) at the district and village/community levels	<p>The authorities of the local public administration (ALPA) organize the management of the protected areas the landholders of which they are; implement protection measures ensuring the protection regime corresponding to the instituted management category (art. 15, Law 1538/1998). In accordance with the environmental legislation, ALPA has the role of being responsible for the organization of implementation, at a local level, of the policy on environmental protection and reasonable use of natural resources.</p> <p>District and village/community public administrations have a significant role to play in components 2, 3 and 4 of the projects. Their responsibilities are to promote cooperation among all land users and owners, to implement biodiversity-friendly practices, to support agri-businesses, to participate in conflict resolution, and promote awareness activities. The district authorities will be responsible for local development policies and mainstreaming of biodiversity measures, with technical support provided by the project.</p>
NGOs: Ecological Movement of Moldova (EMM); BIOTICA Ecological Society; NGO “ECO-Contact” Regional Environmental Center (REC) Moldova; BIOS; NGO “Verde e Moldova”;	All NGOs will participate in stakeholder consultation during the protected areas management plans development and revision in targeted areas, and in the awareness raising seminars as relevant. Joint activities will be explored.
Local Action Group “Lower Prut” and clusters of small tourism entrepreneurs	The Local Action Group Lower Prut (LAGLP) was set up under EU LEADER programme and it includes all the 9 villages located in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. The LAGLP will mobilise local communities’ participation in biodiversity monitoring measures and ecotourism initiatives and will support the organisation of the awareness seminars. The LAGLP will participate into different calls for proposals under the EU4Moldova programme.
Private sector: Farmers associations; fishermen; concessionary companies (fisheries); tourism companies; oil extraction/mining	Rural population, farmers and fishermen, small vegetable farming entrepreneurs ( SRL “Matinal” and SRL “Faguras” ), concessionary holders ( S.A Pepiniera Piscicola Cahul) small tourism entrepreneurs and oil extraction company are the most important stakeholders under Component 2 and Component 3 and will be closely involved in restoration activities, consultation meetings during the development of management plans and biodiversity monitoring measures, as well as the development of different regulatory amendments with regard to permitting system in protected areas.

### Annex 19: Reforestation works: feasibility of proposed interventions

According to the (draft) Management Plan, the territory of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve (LPBR) is assigned to 9 municipalities of Cahul district, which manage in total 52.8 thousand ha of lands (Table 2.4). Approximately 21% (11.2 thousand ha) of such lands are directly managed by the Local authorities.

Municipalitys	ATU area, ha		ATU meadows, ha			ATU forest vegetation, ha					Ravines and landslides (ATU), ha
	Total	including property of ATU	hayfields	pastures	Total	Forest lands		Windbreaks	Other forest vegetation	Total	
						total	including covered with forests				
Crihana Veche	8,532.9	1,132.0	0.0	161.4	161.4	111.6	11.0	37.3	2.0	150.9	9.0
Manta	5,866.1	3,034.4	0.0	168.1	168.1	493.9	158.0	30.0	0.0	523.9	16.0
Vadul lui Isac	4,329.2	1,038.7	0.0	90.8	90.8	64.4	0.0	33.0	38.0	135.5	8.0
Colibași	6,903.1	1,450.0	0.0	463.8	46+3.8	324.7	146.3	86.5	1.9	413.1	41.0
Brânza	3,164.5	514.4	0.0	155.5	155.5	12.5	0.0	35.0	35.0	82.5	27.9
Văleni	4,936.0	865.3	0.0	292.1	292.1	12.9	0.0	69.0	0.0	81.9	6.0
Slobozia Mare	10,907.0	1,804.8	0.0	749.6	749.6	29.8	8.0	108.0	56.0	193.8	0.0
Câșlița Prut	3,416.0	645.0	0.0	352.3	352.3	0.0	0.0	32.0	0.0	32.0	0.0
Giurgiulești	4,726.2	698.0	0.0	311.7	311.7	0.0	0.0	98.6	2.0	100.6	0.0
TOTAL	52,781.0	11,182.4	0.0	2,745.3	2,745.3	1,049.8	323.3	529.5	134.9	1,714.2	107.9
Share, %	100.0	21.2	0.0	5.2	5.2	2.0	0.6	1.0	0.3	3.2	0.2

The forest and meadow resources within the areas managed by the local authorities in the Lower Prut Biosphere reserve (LPBR) are quite important, they represent 4.5 thousand ha (2.8 thousand ha of meadows; 1.7 thousand ha of lands with forest vegetation). The measures meant to improve the state of forested riparian strips around KBAs/IBAs within Lower Prut Biosphere reserve will cover approximately 50 ha meant to decrease soil erosion, waste transport into lakes and to maintain the level of underground waters in the adjacent areas.

The selection of lands for afforestation in the LPBR area has followed the following aspects:

- decrease of the soil erosion, sediments, and maintaining the level of underground waters in the adjacent area, as well as of other ecosystem functions of the existing and newly created woods;
- improvement of the habitats for flora and fauna species by sheltering, migration, feeding and satisfaction of other vital needs;
- Strengthening the carbon sequestration capacity of the woods, as well as of other types of forest vegetations.

As such, 33 plots have been selected in total, with the cumulative total area of 50.02 ha. The process of selection of lands for afforestation within LPBR has included three basic stages:

- office – delimitation according to the available mapping and cadastral documents, consulting within the expert team;
- site – expedite examination and consultation with the representatives of the concerned municipality and Silva-Sud Cahul state-owned enterprise, determination of peculiarities and main risks, primary selection of the range of species, etc.;
- completion – finishing the delimitation process after the visit on site and consultation within the expert team.

One of the important obstacle to be overcome in the process of afforestation is the presence of salinized lands, which is characteristic for most river plains in the Republic of Moldova. The afforestation of saline areas although possible, represents one of the most difficult problems of the forestry technique. The forest vegetation tolerates the excess of soluble salts and the increased alkalinity of the soil with difficulty. For this reason, the number of species that could be used for the afforestation of salinized riparian strips is relatively small. The choice of species for the afforestation of salted lands is recommended to be done according to E. Migunov ("Technical guidelines on the afforestation of degraded lands", IFRA, 2015). Besides, an important part of the lands are seriously affected by erosion, which further complicated the afforestation process and technologies.

In this context, the range of trees and shrubs for afforestation in the LPBR area is selected to correspond to the following requirement:

- capacity of strengthening the riparian strips;
- decrease of surface leakages and infiltration of water in the soil;
- resistance to floods;
- protection of water basins from excessive transpiration in the hot period of the year;
- decrease of the degree of siltation of water basins by clogging the surface leakages;
- capacity of stabilization and consolidation of the forms of relief;
- soil improvement and restoration;
- long-lasting species, able to ensure a good natural regeneration;
- creation of conditions for fauna reproduction and development, including avifauna and hunting fauna;
- diversification of the landscape with multifunctional woody vegetation;
- capacity of survival on salted soils.

When choosing the range of trees and shrubs for the afforestation of the land sectors in the LPBR area, priority shall be given to the native species with a high productivity and stability shall have priority, as well as to a short-list of naturalized exotic species (black pine, Turkestan elm, sophora, etc.), which have shown adaptability and good results in difficult pedo-morphological conditions (salted lands, soils with high mineral content, severe erosions, ravines, trenches etc.).

For the shores of water basins with excess humidity (floodplains), the following species are recommended as basic species: poplars (white, black), willow. In higher places, the oak and the ash may be used as basic species. Secondary species and shrubs are used for the improvement of the conditions of development of the basic species and for increasing the protection functions of the formed stands. The following may be used as secondary species: Norway maple, daffodil, fluttering elm, manna ash, Tartar maple, mahaleb cherry, etc. For the consolidation of riparian strips, goat willow is recommended, and for the higher portion – xerophyte species (clove currant, dogwood, fustic, etc.). The afforestation formulas should be created taking also into consideration the peculiarities of growth of the ligneous species on lands in process of degradation.

Thus, on such lands an additional target is soil improvement through the foliage of the installed forest vegetation. In such case, species with a denser crown and relatively rich foliage shall be used, even in the conditions of lands with advanced erosion (black pine, ash, Tartar maple, silver berry, sea-buckthorn, lilac etc.). For the consolidation of lands, sometimes it is necessary to use species strongly and richly ingrained; from this point of view the following species are recommended: ash, lilac, wild privet, dogwood, black pine, sophora etc.

The selection of species for afforestation was made in accordance with the provisions of the technical recommendations and guidelines in force (Technical recommendations on the regeneration and afforestation of the lands belonging to the state forest fund, CACS, 1996; Technical guidelines for the afforestation of degraded lands, IFRA, 2015), focused on the phytogeographic zoning of the Republic of Moldova, as well as on the specific pedogeological conditions of each sector. Such selection process also included an assessment of the risk of introducing invasive species, mentioning that the selected exotic species are acclimatized in the Republic of Moldova for a period of more than 50-70 years. Such species are already introduced in forest crops from the southern area

of Moldova, and they make viable stands with other species on degraded lands, in unfavorable pedogeological conditions. They are not aggressive towards the indigenous forest species and do not determine the modification of the quantitative and/or qualitative structure of the natural biocenosis in the existing forest crops.

The full range of species recommended by specific sectors and conditions of growth within the selected within LPBR is shown in the table and figures below. In total, the use of 30 species of trees and shrubs is provided for the afforestation of the 33 sectors with the cumulative area of 50.02 ha.

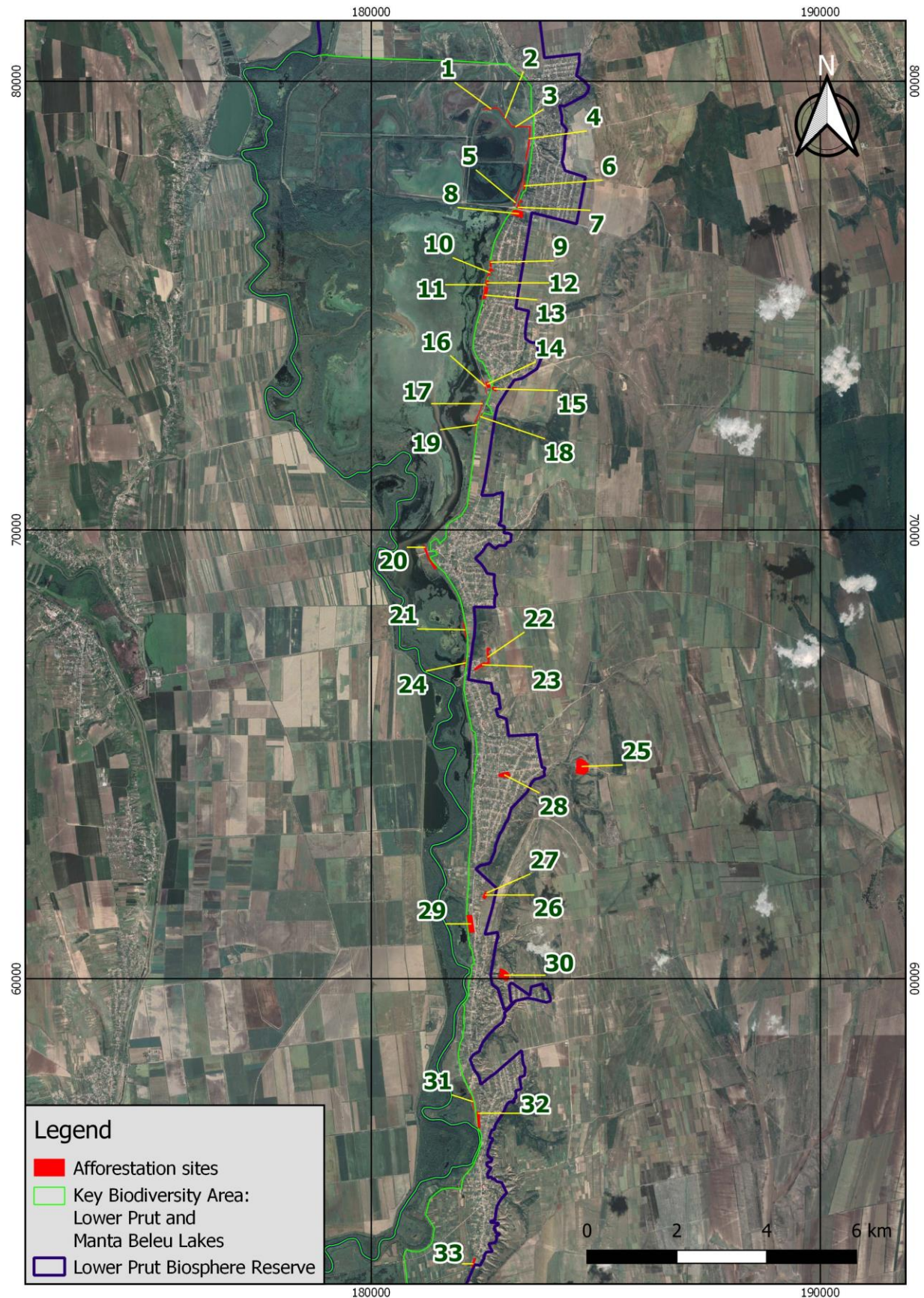
List of selected plots and corresponding representation on the map

No.	Municipality/ settlement	Sector code	Sector area, ha	Category of relief	Category of plantation	Species of trees and shrubs recommended for planting*	Costs, MDL/ha	Total costs, USD
1	Crihana Veche	CV1	0.72	Floodplain	PFP	SA, SAC, PLA, PLN, Tamarisk	21000	840
2	Crihana Veche	CV2	0.71	Floodplain	PFP	SA, SAC, PLA, PLN, Tamarisk	21000	828
3	Crihana Veche	CV3	0.88	Floodplain	PFP	SA, SAC, PLA, PLN, Tamarisk	21000	1027
4	Crihana Veche	CV4	1.78	Floodplain	PFP	SA, SAC, PLA, PLN, Tamarisk	21000	2077
5	Crihana Veche	CV5	1.27	Floodplain	PFP	SA, SAC, PLA, PLN, Tamarisk	21000	1482
6	Crihana Veche	CV6	0.69	Plain	PP	ST, FR, PLA, PLN, SAC, ART, PAC, ULV, JU, VIT, PR, Tamarisk, Common hazel, Elder, Guelder rose	38385	1471
7	Crihana Veche	CV7	1.06	Plain	PP	ST, FR, PLA, PLN, ART, PAC, ULV, JU, VIT, PR, Tamarisk, Common hazel, Elder, Guelder rose	38385	2260
8	Pașcani	PA1	3.31	Lower slope	PP	ST, FR, PLN, ART, PAC, ULV, JU, VIT, PR, Tamarisk, Common hazel, Elder, Guelder rose, Clove currant, Hawthorn	38385	7059
9	Pașcani	PA2	0.64	Plain	PP	ST, FR, PLA, PLN, ART, PAC, ULV, JU, VIT, Tamarisk, Common hazel, Elder, Guelder rose	38385	1365
10	Pașcani	PA3	1.04	Lower slope	PP	ST, FR, PLN, ART, PAC, ULC, JU, VIT, Tamarisk, Common hazel, Elder, Guelder rose	38385	2218
11	Pașcani	PA4	0.21	Floodplain	PFP	SA, SAC, PLA, PLN, Tamarisk	21000	245
12	Pașcani	PA5	0.59	Lower slope	PP	ST, FR, PLN, ART, PAC, ULC, JU, VIT, Tamarisk, Common hazel, Elder, Guelder rose	38385	1258
13	Manta	MA1	1.99	Lower slope	PP	ST, FR, ART, PAC, ULC, JU, VIT, Clove currant, Tamarisk, Fustic	38385	4244
14	Manta	MA2	0.99	Lower slope	PP	ST, FR, ART, PAC, ULC, JU, VIT, Clove currant, Tamarisk, Fustic	38385	2111
15	Manta	MA3	0.74	Slope	PP	ST, MJ, ART, PAC, ULC, JU, VIT, CD, Clove currant, Fustic	38385	1578
16	Manta	MA4	0.39	Floodplain	PFP	SA, SAC, PLA, PLN, Tamarisk	21000	455
17	Manta	MA5	0.81	Floodplain	PFP	SA, SAC, PLA, PLN, Tamarisk	21000	945
18	Manta	MA6	0.23	Plain	PFP	ST, FR, PLA, PLN, SAC, ART, PAC, ULV, JU, VIT, PR, Tamarisk, Common hazel, Elder, Guelder rose	38385	490
19	Vadul lui Isac	VI1	0.19	Floodplain	PFP	SA, SAC, PLA, PLN, Tamarisk	21000	222
20	Vadul lui Isac	VI2	2.46	Floodplain	PP	SA, SAC, PLA, PLN, Tamarisk	21000	2870
21	Colibași	CO1	0.76	Floodplain	PFP	SA, SAC, PLA, PLN, Tamarisk	21000	887

No.	Municipality/ settlement	Sector code	Sector area, ha	Category of relief	Category of plantation	Species of trees and shrubs recommended for planting*	Costs, MDL/ha	Total costs, USD
22	Colibași	CO2	1.83	Slope	PP	ST, STG, PIN, MJ, ART, PAC, ULC, JU, ULT, SF, VIT, CD, Rowan, Clove currant, Fustic, Dogwood, Lilac, Wild privet	38385	3902
23	Colibași	CO3	1.89	Slope	PP	ST, PIN, MJ, ART, PAC, ULC, JU, ULT, SF, VIT, CD, Rowan, Clove currant, Fustic, Dogwood, Lilac, Wild privet	38385	4030
24	Colibași	CO4	0.36	Floodplain	PFP	SA, SAC, PLA, PLN, Tamarisk	21000	420
25	Colibași	CO5	8.17	Slope	PP	PIN, STG, MJ, PAC, ULC, JU, ULT, SF, VIT, CD, Rowan, Clove currant, Fustic, Lilac	38385	17423
26	Colibași	CO6	1.07	Slope	PP	ST, STG, PIN, MJ, ART, PAC, ULC, JU, ULT, SF, VIT, CD, Rowan, Clove currant, Fustic, Dogwood, Lilac	38385	2282
27	Colibași	CO7	0.27	Slope	PP	ST, STG, PIN, MJ, ART, PAC, ULC, JU, ULT, SF, CD, Rowan, Clove currant, Fustic, Dogwood, Wild privet	38385	576
28	Colibași	CO8	2.50	Slope	PP	ST, STG, PIN, MJ, ART, PAC, ULC, JU, ULT, SF, CD, Rowan, Fustic, Dogwood, Lilac	38385	5331
29	Colibași	CO9	4.77	Slope	PP	ST, STG, PIN, MJ, ART, PAC, ULC, JU, ULT, SF, CD, Rowan, Clove currant, Fustic, Dogwood, Wild privet	38385	10172
30	Brânza	BR1	4.40	Slope	PP	STG, PIN, MJ, ART, PAC, ULC, JU, ULT, SF, VIT, CD, Rowan, Clove currant, Fustic, Dogwood, Wild privet	38385	9383
31	Brânza	BR2	0.47	Plain	PFP	ST, FR, PLA, PLN, SAC, ART, PAC, ULV, JU, VIT, PR, Tamarisk, Common hazel, Elder, Guelder rose	38385	1002
32	Văleni	VA1	1.98	Slope	PP	STG, PIN, MJ, ART, PAC, ULC, JU, ULT, SF, VIT, CD, Rowan, Clove currant, Fustic, Spirea, Dogwood	38385	4222
33	Văleni	VA2	0.85	Plain	PP	ST, FR, PLA, PLN, SAC, ART, PAC, ULV, JU, VIT, PR, Tamarisk, Common hazel, Elder, Guelder rose	38385	1813
TOTAL			50.02	-	-	-	32063	96488

Notes: The abbreviations with names of trees and shrubs have the following meanings: SA – white willow, SAC – goat willow, PLA – white poplar, PLN – black poplar, ST – pedunculate oak, STG –Strandzha oak , FR – common ash, PIN – black pine, MJ – manna ash, ART – Tartar maple, PAC – Norway maple, JU – daffodil, ULC – field elm, ULV – fluttering elm, ULT – Turkestan elm, SF – sophora, VIT – mahaleb cherry, PR – European wild pear, CD – cherry plum; Other abbreviations: PP – protective plantations, PFP – windbreaks.

#### **Proposed afforestation/reforestation areas around KBAs/IBAs in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve**



Estimated costs of the afforestation works in the LPBR area *(to be refined at project implementations according to the available budget)*

Municipalities	Area meant for afforestation, ha	Costs, USD			Contribution of the project, USD	Contribution of NEF, USD (to be explored)	Contribution of local authorities (in-kind)	
		Design works	Planting and nursing of forest crops	Total			USD	MDL
Brânza	4.87	884	10385	11269	9408	1465	396	7130
Colibași	21.62	2131	45023	47154	39366	6130	1657	29834
Crihana Veche	7.11	1065	9985	11051	9226	1437	388	6992
Manta	10.94	1065	21968	23033	19229	2994	810	14573
Vadul lui Isac	2.65	884	3092	3975	3319	517	140	2515
Văleni	2.83	884	6035	6919	5776	899	243	4377
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>6913</b>	<b>96488</b>	<b>103401</b>	<b>86324</b>	<b>13442</b>	<b>3635</b>	<b>65421</b>
<i>Share, %</i>	-	-	-	<i>100.0</i>	<i>83.5</i>	<i>13.0</i>	<i>3.5</i>	-

At the project implementation stage, the design works shall include some specifications and adjustments with some consequences on the configurations of the sectors meant for afforestation, related costs, sources of funding, etc. At the designing stage, the portions of forest crops that have to be fenced to ensure their integrity against grazing shall be also established. An important element for the success of forest crops is ensuring their fire safety. To decrease the danger of fire in forest crops it is necessary, first of all, to decrease the quantity of flammable materials, creation of discrepancies in the forest plantations.

#### Recommended species

No.	Variety of species	According to phytogeographic areas					In all areas			
		Northern forest steppe	Northern steppe	Central forest steppe	Southern forest steppe	Southern steppe	River plains	Landslides	Rocky and very rocky soils	Erosional soils, steep slopes, ravine shores
1.	Common hazel	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	-
2.	Desert false indigo									+
3.	Silver maple	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	-
4.	Tartar maple	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	+	+
5.	Chokeberry	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+
6.	Cotoneaster	+	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	-
7.	Biota	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	+
8.	Apricot tree	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+
9.	Caragana	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	+
10.	Hornbeam	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-

No.	Variety of species	According to phytogeographic areas					In all areas			
		Northern forest steppe	Northern steppe	Central forest steppe	Southern forest steppe	Southern steppe	River plains	Landslides	Rocky and very rocky soils	Erosional soils, steep slopes, ravine shores
11.	Tatarian honeysuckle	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	+
12.	Guelder rose	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
13.	Sea-buckthorn	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	+
14.	Tamarisk	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	+
15.	Celtis	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-
16.	Savin juniper	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	+
17.	Cherry	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+
18.	Dogwood	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-
19.	Golden currant	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	+
20.	Black currant	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	-
21.	Cherry plum	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+
22.	Pokeweed	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	+
23.	Germander meadowsweet	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	+
24.	Common barberry	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+
25.	Wayfarer	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-
26.	Mulberry	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-
27.	Ash	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
28.	White ash	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+
29.	Honey locust	-	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	-
30.	Sessile oak	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	-
31.	Japanese quince	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	+
32.	Amelanchier	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
33.	Daffodil	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+
34.	Lilac	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	-
35.	Wild privet	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-
36.	Dogrose	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
37.	Hackberry	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	+
38.	European crab apple	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+
39.	Black walnut	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
40.	Sycamore maple	+	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	-
41.	Norway maple	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
42.	European pear	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
43.	Hawthorn	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
44.	Black pine	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+
45.	Austria pine	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	+
46.	Crimea pine	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	+
47.	White poplar	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-

No.	Variety of species	According to phytogeographic areas					In all areas			
		Northern forest steppe	Northern steppe	Central forest steppe	Southern forest steppe	Southern steppe	River plains	Landslides	Rocky and very rocky soils	Erosional soils, steep slopes, ravine shores
48.	Black poplar	-	+	-	-	-	+	+	-	-
49.	Common aspen	+	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	-
50.	Blackthorn	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	+
51.	Acacia	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-
52.	<i>Euonymus verrucosa</i>	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+
53.	<i>Euonymus latifolius</i>	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+
54.	Silver berry	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
55.	Goat willow	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-
56.	Brittle willow	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-
57.	White willow	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-
58.	Rowan	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	+
59.	Fustic	-	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+
60.	Red elder	-	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	-
61.	Black elder	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
62.	Sophora	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+
63.	Strandzha oak	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
64.	Red oak	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	-
65.	Downy oak	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	-
66.	Pedunculate oak	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
67.	Large-lived linden	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
68.	Small-leaved linden	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
69.	Silver linden	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
70.	Elm	-	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+
71.	Mahaleb cherry	-	+	-	+	+	-	-	+	+
72.	Raspberry	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+

### Proposed sequence of key activities

Project implementation years	Main activities	Responsible persons
I	Issuance of local councils decisions on the allocation of lands for afforestation	Municipalities, Project staff
	Organization of the contest for the appointment of the executor of works of forest crops design	Project staff, UNDP
	Signing the contracts for the performance of design works	Project staff, UNDP

Project implementation years	Main activities	Responsible persons
	Performance of works of forest crops design (land-surveying; pedological studies; establishing the range of species, planting schemes, etc.)	Forest design institution, municipalities, Project staff
	Coordination of the execution designs of forest crops located in the water fund with „Moldova Waters” Agency	Forest design institution, municipalities, Project staff
	Performance of organizational works preliminary to the afforestation process (change of destination, evacuation of sheepfolds, etc.)	Municipalities, Project staff, „Moldova Waters” Agency
	Organization of the tender for the appointment of the executor of afforestation works	Project staff, UNDP
	Signing the contracts on the performance of afforestation works	Project staff, UNDP, municipalities, „Moldova Waters” Agency
	Starting the activities of preparation of the soil in the lands meant for afforestation	Executor of afforestation works municipalities
II	Completing the activities of soil preparation on the lands meant for afforestation	Executor of afforestation works municipalities
	Performance of nursing/maintenance works for forest crops (soil aeration, weed destruction, etc.)	Executor of afforestation works local authorities
	Performance of the technical acceptance of the works of forest crop planting	Project staff, executor of afforestation works, municipalities, „Moldova Waters” Agency
	Performance of autumn stock-taking of the state of forest crops	Project staff, executor of afforestation works, municipalities, „Moldova Waters” Agency
	Performance of author supervision of the process of implementation of the execution designs of forest crops	Forest design institution
	Examining, during the meetings of local councils of the municipalities, the state of planted forest crops, conflicts/problems arisen in the process of implementation	Municipalities, Project staff, executor of afforestation works
III	Performance of completion/repair works (estimated at 20%) for partially successful forest crops (if needed)	Executor of afforestation works local authorities
	Performance of nursing/maintenance works for forest crops (soil aeration, weed destruction, etc.)	Executor of afforestation works local authorities
	Performance of autumn stock-taking of the state of forest crops	Project staff, executor of afforestation works, municipalities, „Moldova Waters” Agency
	Examining, during the meetings of local councils of the municipalities, the state of planted forest crops, conflicts/problems arisen in the process of implementation	local authorities Project staff, executor of afforestation works
IV	Performance of the completion/repair works (estimated at 20%) for partially successful forest crops (if needed)	Executor of afforestation works local authorities
	Performance of nursing/maintenance works for forest crops (soil aeration, weed destruction, etc.)	Executor of afforestation works local authorities

Project implementation years	Main activities	Responsible persons
	Performance of autumn stock-taking of the state of forest crops	Project staff, executor of afforestation works, local authorities „Moldova Waters” Agency
	Examining, during the meetings of local councils of the municipalities, the state of planted forest crops, conflicts/problems arisen in the process of implementation	local authorities Project staff, executor of afforestation works
V	Performance of the completion/repair works (estimated at 20%) for partially successful forest crops (if needed)	Executor of afforestation works local authorities
	Performance of nursing/maintenance works for forest crops (soil aeration, weed destruction, etc.)	Executor of afforestation works local authorities
	Performance of autumn stock-taking of the state of forest crops	executor of afforestation works, local authorities „Moldova Waters” Agency
	Moving the forest crops that have attained the state of forest stand into the category of “woods”	executor of afforestation works, local authorities „Moldova Waters” Agency
	Overtaking of the forest crops and woods planted within the project by the beneficiary municipality and by „Moldova Waters” Agency into full administration	Project manager, UNDP/Moldsilva, executor of afforestation works, local authorities „Moldova Waters” Agency
	Examining, during the meetings of local councils of the municipalities, the state of planted forest crops, conflicts/problems arisen in the process of implementation, organization of their maintenance and further management	local authorities, executor of afforestation works

## Annex 20: Hydrological restoration works: Pre-feasibility of proposed interventions

(excerpt from the pre-feasibility study conducted at PPG stage)

**1. Water resources** Currently there are no hydrological observation posts in Camenca river basin. However, not so long ago two posts were operating here, the data of which served for the development of the model for the transition from the climatic drain to the natural zonal drain. Therefore, the methodology used is sufficiently accurate to evaluate the restored flow of Camenca river old water course after the envisaged project-supported restoration. The last evaluation of the contemporary climatic flow was conducted by the author of the pre-feasibility study during 1991-2020 and presented in fig. 1.

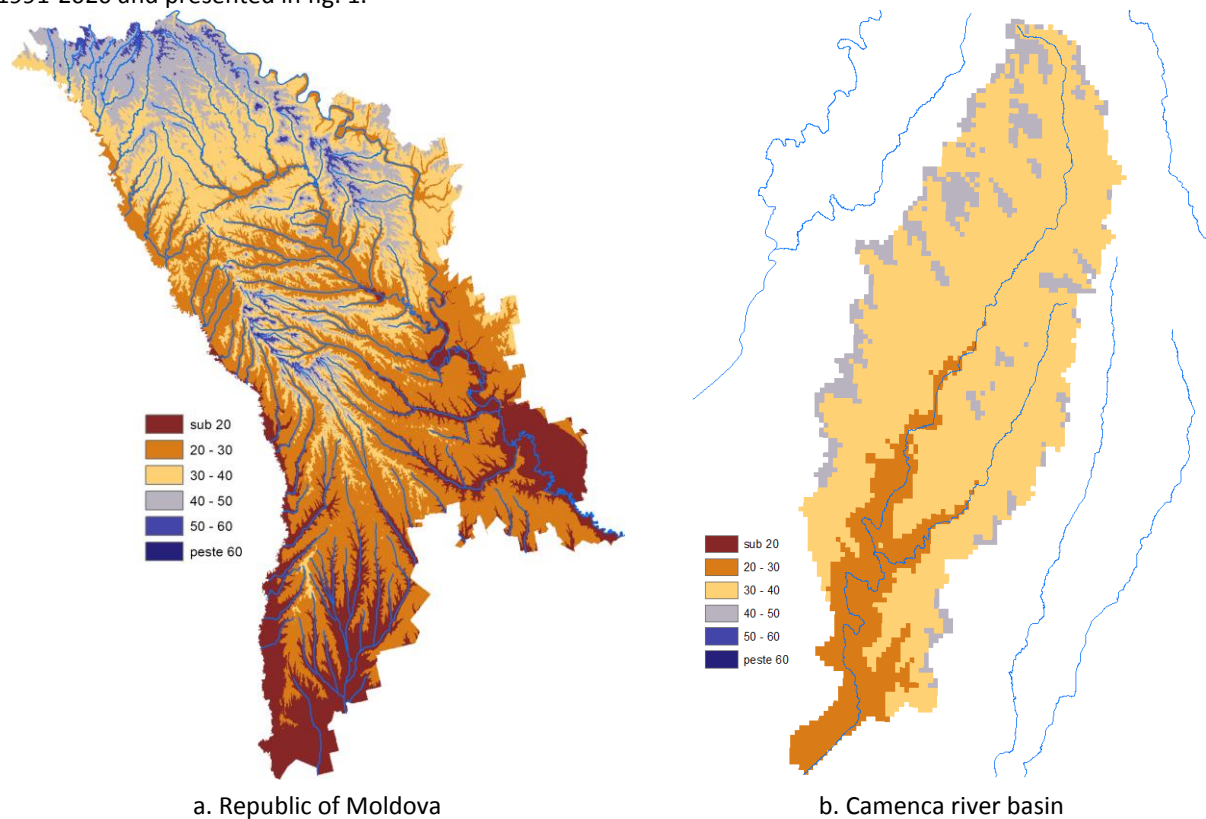


Fig. 1. Contemporary climatic river flow (1991-2020)

The layer of climatic drain (flow) from Camenca river basin is of 34.8 mm. The layer of the average annual natural zonal drain (after recalculation) will be of 25.4 mm, which is a very modest value for this region. The contemporary area of Camenca river basin is of 327.3 km<sup>2</sup>. Expressed in flow units:

Average annual debit – 0.26 m<sup>3</sup>/s

Volume of annual drain– 8,313,420 m<sup>3</sup> or 8.31 million m<sup>3</sup>.

Specific debit (drain module) – 8.3 l/s\*km<sup>2</sup>.

This would mean that Prut floodplain shall receive 8.3 million m<sup>3</sup> of water annually after Camenca's old riverbed restoration.

If this drain volume is distributed by months within the year, as the normative acts provide, we obtain the chart presented in fig. 2 and tab. 1.

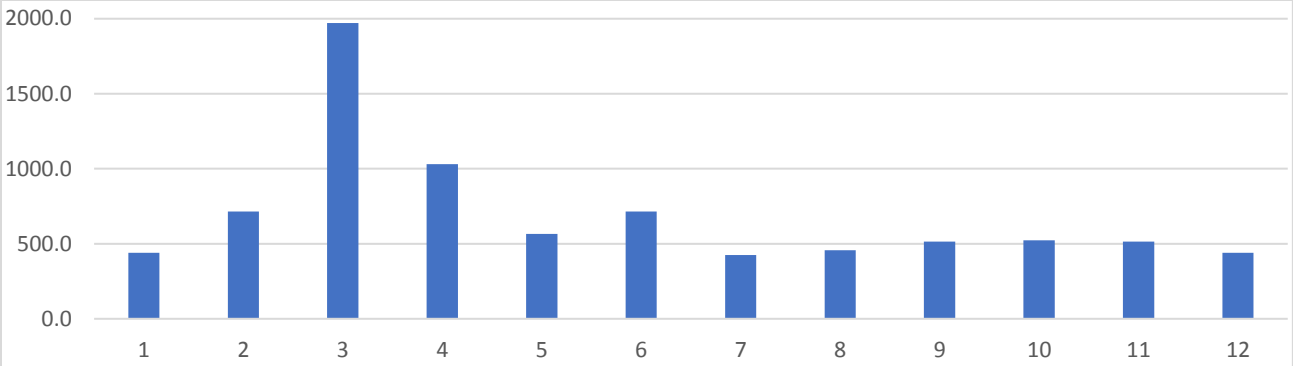


Fig. 2. Distribution of Camenca river drain during the year, thousand m³

Table 1

Average monthly debits in the lower course of Camenca river (at the debouche into Prut river)											
I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
0.16	0.30	0.74	0.40	0.21	0.28	0.16	0.17	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.16

We consider that such additional water inflow will be beneficial not only for the restored riverbed, but also for the neighboring wetlands.

This additional water volume, interacting certainly with the underground waters (especially phreatic waters) will raise their level a little. However detailed feasibility studies are necessary to model this impact.

The perspectives or forecasts of climate changes will be mandatorily reflected in the modification of water resources, namely by modifying the surface drain. The latter may be evaluated through the climatic drain later  $Y_{cl}$  and then recalculated into average zonal drain, according to the previously described procedure.

The distribution of the average climatic drain ( $Y_{cl}$ ) was calculated according to the carbon emission scenarios (RCP2.6, RCP4.5 and RCP 8.5) for the periods of the years 2040, 2060 and 2100 as compared to the reference period of 1971-2020 (fig. 3).

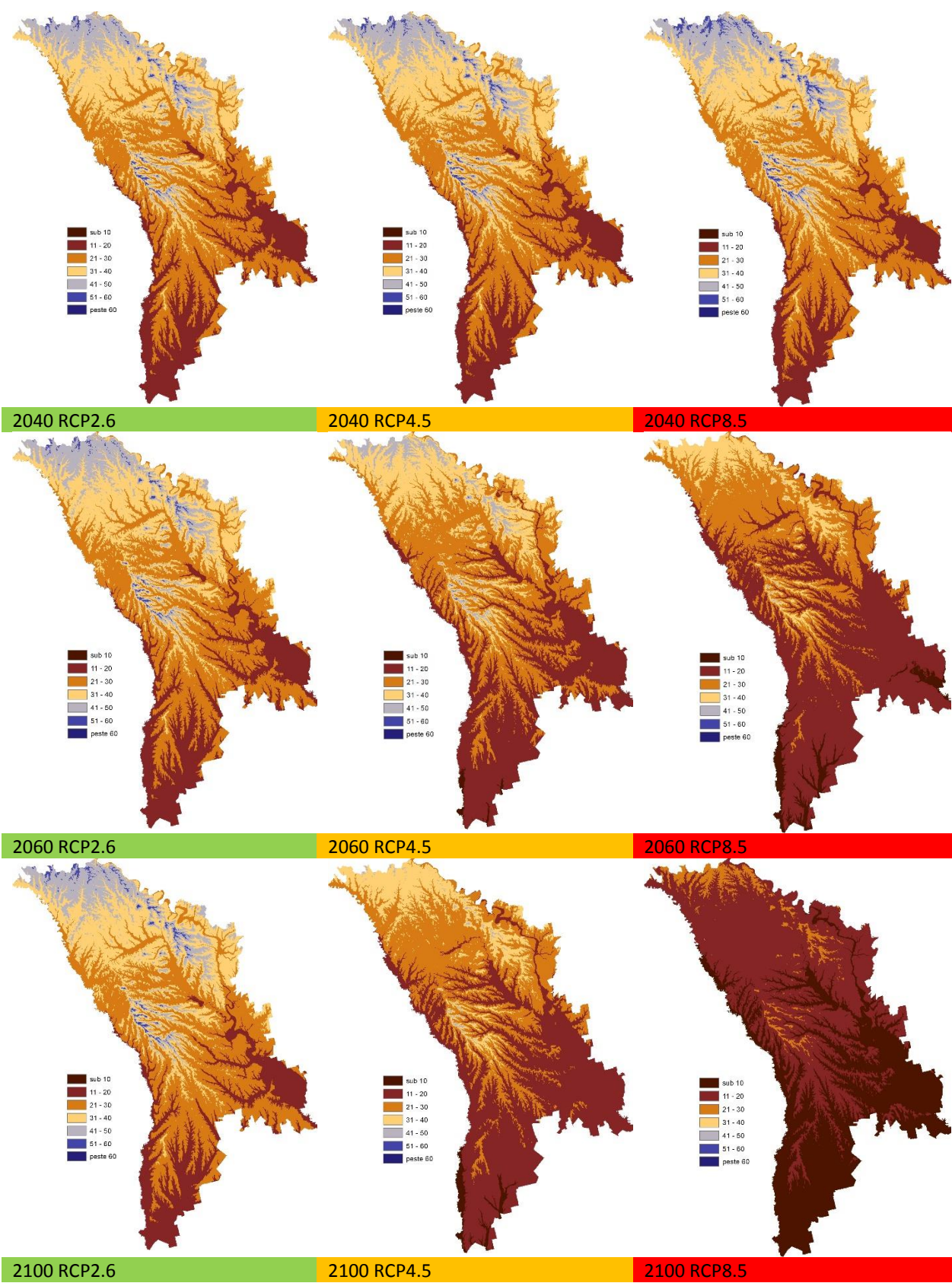


Fig. 3. Evaluation of the climatic drain in the Republic of Moldova according to the climate changes scenarios, mm

After the extraction of  $Y_{cl}$  for Camenca river basin, we obtain the results presented in table 2.

Table 2

Evaluation of the climatic drain in Camenca river basin according to the climate changes scenarios, mm

	2040	2060	2100
<b>RCP2.6</b>	33.7	34.2	35.1
<b>RCP4.5</b>	33.7	29.3	24.2
<b>RCP8.5</b>	34.4	26.0	14.4

The same values, in percentage ratio to the climatic drain of the reference period of 1971-2020 are presented in table 3.

Table 3

Variation in % of the climatic drain from Camenca river basin as compared to the reference period of 1971-2020

	2040	2060	2100
<b>RCP2.6</b>	96.9	98.4	101.0
<b>RCP4.5</b>	96.8	84.3	69.4
<b>RCP8.5</b>	98.7	74.7	41.4

These calculations give quite optimistic results:

1. All scenarios provide for the period of the years 2040 a decrease of the drain by 1-3%, which is much below the error margin limit  $\pm 10\%$ . So, we could consider that the average drain for the future 20 years will not change considerably. In other words, we can count on the additional intake of 8.31 million  $m^3$  of water in Prut plain.
2. The RCP2.6 scenario, the most favorable one, optimistically dictates even a slight increase of the drain during the analyzed periods, including by 2100.
3. Even the toughest scenario (RCP8.5) shows that by 2100 we will have not less than 40% of the contemporary drain, in other words at least 4 million.  $m^3$  of water will get to Prut plain annually in the harshest conditions (i.e. worst climate change scenario).

## 2. Technical and functional data of the investments object (i.e. Ecological restoration options)

3 scenarios (fig. 4) are proposed to restore the natural riverbed of Camenca river in the region of Balatina village. All the options are based on hydrotechnical interventions.

**Scenario 1** represents the construction of a channel which would redirect the water flow to one of the "streams" of Prut plain on the western margin of Balatina village.

**Scenario 2** represents the breaking of the unauthorized reservoir which is now tapping the water from Camenca and orientation of the waterflow through the old riverbed of Camenca (paddle).

**Scenario 3** implies stopping the access of water to the unauthorized reservoir and orientation of the water flow through the old riverbed of Camenca (paddle) downstream the mentioned reservoir.



Fig. 4. Location of the hydrotechnical constructions meant for rehabilitating the natural flow of Camenca river (google maps image, 2021)

**Scenario 1** implies two basic hydrotechnical activities (fig. 5, 6).



Fig. 5. Scenario 1. The arrows show the direction of waterflow after rehabilitation

1 construction of a barrage on the channeled riverbed of Camenca river (fig. 6).

2- digging a channel with the length of approximately 500 m, which will redirect the drain of Camenca river through the old "stream" of Camenca river.

The technical parameters of the mentioned hydrotechnical constructions will be calculated during their design, namely within the feasibility study.

The barrage (1 of fig. 6) is meant to stop the water flow through the channeled riverbed directly into Prut. The construction on the edge should have the length of approximately 50 m and a width at the edge of approximately 2 m. The ratio between the wet embankment and dry embankment may be of 3:4, but this will be decided by the designers. The consolidation of the wet embankment is important (maybe even with concrete slabs), for a higher resistance to the flash flood drain, as the water will turn to the left here (in Camenca “stream”) under a large angle. Other technical parameters will be determined by the engineers.

It is clear that the dimensions of the channel (section 2 of fig. 6) envisaged for the reorientation of Camenca flow in the old riverbed should, in general, reproduce the dimensions of the natural riverbed, in other words – a width at the edge of approximately 30 m and at the bottom of approximately 10 m, with a depth of 3-4 m, and should be of trapezoidal form. But the main condition is to allow the unimpeded flow of a flash flood debut ensuring  $P=1\%$ , in other words –  $152 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$ .

The channel may be built only by excavation, without covering the banks with concrete, but with their previous consolidation, more exact technical data will be given by the engineers.



Fig. 6. Scheme of location of the hydrotechnical constructions, according to scenario 1

**Scenario 2.** This scenario implies the arrangement of 4 hydrotechnical constructions (fig. 7-9). Currently (fig. 7), an unauthorized reservoir is built here, on this segment of Camenca riverbed. The water of Camenca river, flowing through the channeled riverbed, is abusively stopped and redirected towards a reservoir built (by excavation) instead of a “paddle” in Prut plain.

The water surplus from the reservoir is discharged in the south-western part of the lake flowing under the protection dam and returns in the channeled riverbed of Camenca. The image in fig. 7 (year 2016) does not correspond to the situation of the year 2021. On the image one could clearly see the traces of fresh excavations on the perimeter of the reservoir. There is no barrage in the place where the water enters the reservoir, but such barrage can be clearly seen on the images from 2021 (fig. 8 and 9).

The return of water into the channeled riverbed of Camenca, after its discharge into the reservoir, takes place under the protection dam, then, through the old broken barrage, it flows towards Prut. It is interesting that the water, after the discharge from the reservoir, does not flow towards south-east in the direction of the paddle. Maybe there is a slight relief unevenness here with slightly higher altitudes (0.5 m is already enough) impeding the flow of water in that direction, the origin of these positive altitudes is unknown. A clear image on the exact topography of the relief will be obtained within the feasibility study.



Fig. 7. Unauthorized hydrotechnical construction (reservoir) (orthophoto 2016). The arrows show the direction of waterflow nowadays

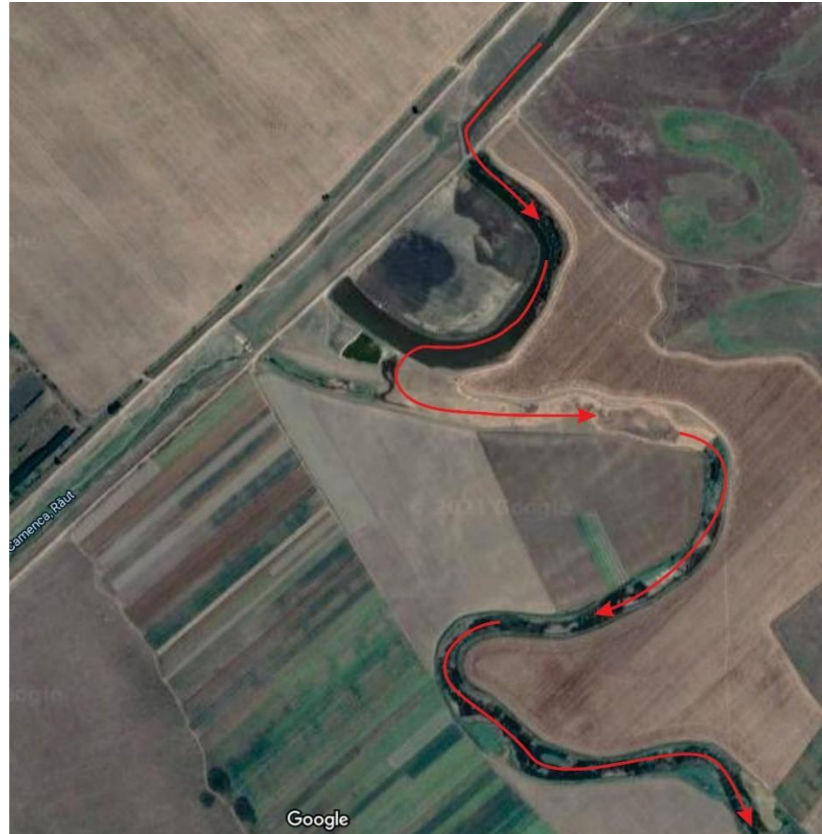


Fig. 8. Scenario 2. The arrows show the direction of waterflow after rehabilitation

The scenario may be solved only by removing the unauthorized reservoir (i.e. after a consensus with the owner and local authorities will be reached) . For this, the enlargement of the area where the water enters the reservoir is proposed, by breaking the protective dam (1 of fig. 9). This short channel will have a length of approximately 80 m, width of 30 m, depth of 4 m, and will be of trapezoidal form. The unauthorized barrage will need a reinforcement similar to the one described for the barrage from scenario 1, to ensure resistance to rainfall flooding (2).



Fig. 9. Scheme of location of the hydrotechnical constructions, according to scenario 2. The arrows show the direction of waterflow after the constructions are made

The water spillway in the reservoir should be liquidated by breaking the reservoir through a channel (3) similar to the one at the entrance in the reservoir. The water discharge hole under the protective dam should be liquidated (4) by means of its repairing and consolidation. The detailed hydrotechnical solution shall be proposed in the feasibility study.

**Scenario 3.** Hydrotechnical interventions downstream and upstream the unauthorized reservoir are envisaged within this scenario (fig. 10).



Fig. 10. Scheme of location of the hydrotechnical constructions, according to scenario 3. The arrows show the direction of waterflow after the constructions are made

Scenario 3 implies 4 activities (hydrotechnical constructions). Restoration of the protective dam in point 4, which has been unauthorizedly broken. It will be necessary to restore approximately 50 m of dam made of earth, with a height of 3-4 m, carriageway width of approximately 2 m. Here as well, the unauthorized barrage will be demolished (broken). A sector with a length of appr. 50 m, width of 2 m and depth of 3 m will be excavated.

Downstream, the ruins of the old barrage (1) will be restored, practically newly built. The construction, according to its technical parameters, is similar to the barrage from scenario 1. Finally, the dam (2) will be broken through a channel with the length of approximately 60 m, depth of 3 m and width at the edge of 50 m, width at the bottom of 20 m, which will direct the flow of water from Camenca river in the old riverbed (paddle). The channel shall be of trapezoidal form. The banks should be reinforced to increase their resistance to flood waters.

### 3. Social and environmental aspects including risk analysis

**Social aspects.** The society, including in the Republic of Moldova, has generally a conservative reaction to the changes affecting their day-to-day life and/or material interests directly. In our case, in accordance with the proposed scenarios, oppositions will be raised by the society, on the one hand – by the owner of the illegally built reservoir, on the other hand – by the population living at the plain margin of the settlements and/or holding the few agricultural lands located in the area of study. The owner of the illegally built reservoir will (certainly) oppose because of the material losses he would incur. The local inhabitants will oppose more due to the inertia and because of not understanding the ecological benefits brought by the activity of rehabilitation of Camenca river.

However, these social risk aspects are only based on the analysis of society behavior in similar projects, consultations with professionals that have implemented before projects in the sphere of environment, without any survey or sociological investigations in the area of study.

**Environmental aspects.** The positive aspect of restoring the natural riverbed of Camenca river is undeniably evident, additional flooding (more appropriately – restoration of natural/seasonal flooding of the old watercourse) of Prut plain in the lower course of the river will bring in 8.3 m3 water annually to the floodplain of the ecosystems in and outside of “Pădurea Domnească” reserve.

There is no risk of flood conditioned by the additional water flow. In case of an overflow of Prut for example, these territories will be flooded anyways, regardless of whether the project will go ahead with the restoration of Camenca river old water course or not, and independently on the supply of water from Camenca river. In case of flash-flood, this territory will again be covered with water for a short time, independently on the riverbed restoration activities.

There is a risk of increase in the level of ground waters on the territory of the households neighboring Prut floodplain, which may have negative effects manifested by possible increased moisture in their basements, or their gardens, etc. Exact answers to these topics (i.e risk assessment) will be obtained after the hydrologic, hydraulic, and hydrogeological modeling, which will be done in the feasibility study.

#### **4. Institutional and implementation aspects**

This topic is simple and complicated at the same time. From the point of view of the legal framework, the activities of rehabilitating Camenca riverbed and ensuring an additional water supply through Prut plain towards Pădurea Domnească Reserve are the competence of MOE (Ministry of Environment). MOE is the central specialized authority of the public administration that develops and promotes the state policy in the sphere of environment protection and reasonable use of natural resources, waste management, biodiversity conservation, geological researches, underground use and protection, hydro-enhancement, water resource management, water supply and sewerage, regulation of nuclear and radiological activities, state environmental control, hydro-meteorology and environment quality monitoring.

MOE operates through its line institutions – “Moldova Waters” Agency, Agency for Geology and Mineral Resources, Environmental Agency, and State Ecological Inspectorate. These institutions have all the necessary legal support, levers and tools to promote the envisaged activities. Project implementation units operate under MOE, one of which might perform all the implementation activities.

A very important role has the local police, which normally should ensure the observance of the legislation of the Republic of Moldova. Still, taking the example of the reservoir built illegally, without any approving documents, we may affirm that the situation is more difficult. Local Public Administration has a special role: as a manager of the land on which some activities of Camenca riverbed rehabilitation must be performed and by organizing activities to raise the awareness of the population on the benefits of the proposed project.

We should not forget the environmental NGOs, which have a rich experience in implementing environmental projects and especially in organizing awareness raising actions on environmental topics. The Camenca River Basin Committee is the authority that should be involved in all the described activities. It is to mention that currently, in the draft management plan of Camenca river, the activities of Camenca river rehabilitation are not analyzed. The role of the basin committee will be also appreciated in raising the awareness of the population on the benefits brought by the project.

#### **5. Envisaged results and investment costs**

The envisaged hydrotechnical constructions do not require additional maintenance investments. Some riverbed unclogging activities may be required along the way, but this problem is present for all small rivers of the Republic of Moldova, and the activity may be done even from the LPA budget with support from other funds as well.

The envisaged additional volumes of water (in the average, 8.3 million m<sup>3</sup> of water annually, at least until the years 2040, according to the climate change scenarios) feeding the old Camenca riverbed and the channel and stream systems in Prut plain, will boost the increase of the level of ground waters and the maintaining of such level higher even in periods of drought. This water supply will lead to seasonal flooding of the territory in general and will be a support for natural ecosystems of “Pădurea Domnească” reserve in particular.

It is extremely difficult to evaluate the investment costs without knowing exactly the volumes of envisaged works. Currently the designers are the most advanced in evaluating the costs and preparing cost estimates. After consulting them, we came to a conclusion on very estimative costs:

Scenario 1 – MDL 1 million 500 thousand or appr. USD 70 thousand;

Scenario 2 – MDL 1 million 500 thousand or appr. USD 70 thousand;

Scenario 3 – MDL 1 million 800 thousand or appr. USD 83 thousand.

All the costs also include the preparation of design documents for the hydrotechnical constructions.

## 6. Proposing the optimal scenario/solution from the ones identified

Knowing the social environment and the specific features of the attitude the population has towards the natural framework of the Republic of Moldova, knowing the legal framework and its observance, as a subjective proposal (we shall reiterate – the feasibility study will answer to many issues that are unclear for now) we propose to orient the project activities on **scenario 1**.

It is to mention that the environmental benefit is the same for all the three scenarios – increase of the degree of flooding of the territory, with the results mentioned along this report.

These activities perfectly fall within the activities of adaptation to climate changes by the simple supply of a (practically free) water source on a territory, on the one hand, and by its naturalization, on the other hand, by actually restoring the natural riverbed of a river – Camenca river, with all the corresponding consequences. As a result of these activities, the plain ecosystems will benefit directly, the population of the neighboring settlements will benefit indirectly, through ecosystem services. But the main beneficiary is still “Pădurea Domnească” Reserve, in which the natural conditions of flora and fauna development will improve. Their resistance to climate changes will be higher due to the additional water supply.

In our opinion (i.e. PPG hydrology experts), the most serious problem is the built reservoir, which is operating freely for years (at least 6 years) and the owner of which has not been brought to liability (for unknown reasons) for this illegal construction.

We consider that it will be extremely difficult to perform activities for the restoration of the riverbed due to this illegally built reservoir. Even if we take the legal way with the observance of the legal procedures (trials, judicial conflicts, etc...) – this process will be delaying project activities if no consensus will be reached with the owner.

Even in case of performing scenario 1, the conflict with the said owner could not be avoided, as the water supply source of the reservoir (Camenca river) will be closed, and this will result in various actions of sabotage against the project (a subjective opinion).

Scenario 1 is more convenient as it does not affect private lands directly. All the constructions will be done on the lands belonging to the central public administration and on lands belonging to Balatina municipality.

There are no risks of flooding resulting from Camenca rehabilitation, but there is a risk of over-wetting of gardens and basements of the households in Balatina village that are located near the riverbed. The risk will be minimal in the PPG experts opinion, but its detailed analysis will be done during the feasibility study.

Thus, in summary – the basic criteria in choosing the suitable scenario were the minimization of conflicts with natural and legal persons that would incur material or financial damage as a result of the project activity.

## 7. Description of proposed solutions to mitigate environmental and social risks

There are practically no environmental risks, as it has been mentioned before. The only risk that might deserve to be additionally mentioned may be the occurrence of such an extreme climate changes that goes beyond even the worst case scenario analyzed - which may lead to a much more dramatic decrease of the river flow in Camenca river than it has been analyzed before and possibly to the river dry-out.

The beneficial effect of the ecological restoration will not be sudden, it will take years. And this is important to note. The degradation/decline of the ecosystems in Prut plain after stopping the natural water supply from Camenca river has happened during tens of years, and certainly their return to (+/-) the natural state will not take place immediately and even within several years. The process will last, and it has to be permanently monitored, maybe even to make some conclusions and recommendations that may be oriented for other similar activities.

## 7. Description of the stages of implementation of the proposed solution and of the institutional arrangements

Several implementation stages are proposed:

1. Performance of the feasibility study – 6 months, 1-2 months of which will be for field works;
2. Improvement of the legal framework (it may last for 1-2 years after finishing the feasibility study);
3. Awareness raising activities for the population (1 year after the feasibility study will be enough). It is desirable that the activities comprise all seasons (for example, stages of forest planting – autumn and spring, summer draughts, snowfall and river freezing in winter, etc.).
4. Performance of works (6 months after finishing the awareness raising activities).
5. Monitoring of results – permanently, after finishing the project.

Thus, the total duration of activities in the project may be of 3 years.

## 8. Description of costs and potential sources of funding for the public investment

The cost of performing the hydrotechnical constructions (Scenario 1 – MDL 1 million 500 thousand or appr. USD 70 thousand) are evaluated very roughly. From here – a reserve towards increasing the budget is necessary to of appr. MDL 500 thousand (USD 28 thousand).

The performance of the feasibility study may amount up to MDL 2 million. (USD 112.5 thousand), as the study shall include several major expensive activities:

1. Modeling an exact topography of the area of study (ideally, a LIDAR survey of the land);
2. Modeling the surface drain (average, maximal and minimal drain);
3. Hydrogeological field investigations (probes);
4. Hydrogeological modelling (interaction of underground waters with surface waters).

The exact determination of other activities and of the cost of those works is a separate activity, which is not in the competence of the author.

Sources of funding for the proposed activities may be offered by GEF. It is very unlikely to obtain support from the LPA budget or from “Moldova Waters” Agency for the performance of works.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The restoration of Camenca riverbed is a strictly necessary activity in the conditions of climate changes;
2. The proposed project is a pioneer one in the Republic of Moldova. No similar activities have been performed till now;
3. The supply of water of appr. 8.3 mil m<sup>3</sup> annually will ensure a considerable support in flooding the territory and provide it with water the ecosystems from “Pădurea Domnească” Reserve;
4. The climate change scenarios ensures practically the same water supply until the interval of the years 2040 and only by 2060 the drain will decrease a little.
5. Raising the level of ground waters and its maintaining in the conditions when the climate becomes more arid will be one of the measures of adaptation to climate changes;
6. Hydrological and hydrogeological studies are necessary to get exact answers about the hydric regime of the area of study after finishing the works of Camenca river rehabilitation;

7. The development of recommendations will be necessary for the improvement of the legal framework regarding the reasonable management of water resources of small rivers, especially regarding the observance of the minimal ecologic debit discharged from reservoirs and ponds;
8. It will be necessary to perform a set of activities to raise the population awareness regarding the benefits of rehabilitating the natural flow of Camenca river.
9. To perform the proposed objectives and to attain the goal of activities, it is necessary to involve the state structures dealing with the management of water resources, the local public administration bodies, Camenca subbasin committee and the civil society.

*(this is an excerpt from the pre-feasibility study reflecting the opinions of the PPG hydrological engineers/experts)*

## Annex 21: Local economic opportunities in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve

(excerpt from a full report on the economic opportunities in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve conducted at PPG stage by PPG experts)

### Agri-food domain

Most local businesses in the Lower Prut settlements (villages of Brânză, Câșlița-Prut, Colibași, Crihana Veche, Giurgiulești, Manta, Slobozia Mare, Vadul lui Isac, Văleni) operate in the agri-food domain, given the traditional occupation of the local inhabitants, the soils rich in chernozem and the level of training of the employees. The most numerous businesses are registered as farming households, which rarely exceed areas larger than 10 ha. At the same time, there are fewer limited liability companies, but they cover larger areas, as a rule. Most processed agricultural lands are arable lands, and multiannual cultures cover much smaller and much more fragmented areas.

We have to remark that, in these 9 settlements, the agricultural entrepreneurs hold and process approximately 27.47 thousand ha, of which appr. 83% are arable lands, 15.5% are vineyards and less than 1 % - orchards. The largest areas of arable land are in Slobozia Mare, Crihana Veche and Giurgiulești. At the same time, Slobozia Mare, Văleni and Manta have the largest vineyards. Relatively important orchards are found only in Brânză, Câșlița Prut and Văleni. The significant fragmentation of the agricultural areas managed by entrepreneurs is obvious, as well as the need to diversify the economy using local resources.

### Structure of the agricultural land in 9 Lower Prut settlements, Cahul district, 2020

Settlement	Total agricultural lands in usage, ha	of which arable land, ha	orchards, shrubs walnut trees, ha	Vineyards, ha	% of arable land	% of orchards	% of vineyard
<b>Total 9 Lower Prut villages</b>	<b>27466.08</b>	<b>22790.30</b>	<b>245.75</b>	<b>4265.57</b>	<b>82.98%</b>	<b>0.89%</b>	<b>15.53%</b>
Brânză	2035.00	1631.40	94.10	309.55	80.17%	4.62%	15.21%
Câșlița-Prut	2148.33	1778.07	73.56	296.75	82.77%	3.42%	13.81%
Colibași	2738.15	2387.73	24.89	185.87	87.20%	0.91%	6.79%
Crihana Veche	4026.00	3703.00	0.00	298.00	91.98%	0.00%	7.40%
Giurgiulești	3261.00	2905.00	4.00	352.00	89.08%	0.12%	10.79%
Manta	2178.00	1656.00	1.00	521.00	76.03%	0.05%	23.92%
Slobozia Mare	5968.00	4592.00	8.00	1368.00	76.94%	0.13%	22.92%
Vadul lui Isac	2197.70	2051.30	2.00	144.40	93.34%	0.09%	6.57%
Văleni	2913.90	2085.80	38.20	790.00	71.58%	1.31%	27.11%

Source: Cahul Directorate of agriculture and economic development

Some municipalities (Manta, Slobozia Mare, Văleni) and groups of local economic entities have developed, within a UNDP/MiDL project, roadmaps for promoting projects for the development of the local economy. These are targeting and will seize the opportunities for several key sectors in the villages: vegetable growing, grape growing, support infrastructure in agriculture, beekeeping, zootechnics and rural tourism.

Below a summary description of the capacities of the agriculture entrepreneurs in the 9 settlements from the perimeter of the „Lower Prut” Reserve is given. At the same time, it is advisable to promote the businesses complying with the **environment friendly criteria**, including:

- (i) organic agriculture;
- (ii) natural processing of agricultural production: fruit/vegetable dryers;
- (iii) medicinal plant growing;
- (iv) beekeeping;

- (v) small dairy producers (including for the development of a sustainable management plan for the local pastures);
- (vi) small artisans producing handicrafts (straw weaving, wooden objects, embroideries, etc.)
- (vii) eco-tourism practicing.

The GEF project intervention will be oriented towards a series of **specific activities listed below in the description of each settlement** (especially Manta, Slobozia Mare and Văleni), where the needs of the economic entities that have capacities of implementing green economy projects are presented, as well as the diversification of local businesses using local resources in sensitive natural areas.

At the same time, we pay attention to the potential **risks**:

- reluctance of economic entities to be involved in ecological projects;
- excessive fragmentation of lands, practiced subsistence techniques, lack of experience in promoting some projects – are the risks limiting their access to the grant schemes for scaling up and diversifying their own activity;
- negative attitude of some important leaders consolidating lands, especially arable, towards projects meant to decrease the impact of extensive agricultural techniques with low value products;
- contradictory information on the economic activity in sensitive natural areas.

### Brânza village

The largest agricultural producer is SRL Bodoil Agro (Cervin Boris Ion, 69062751) holding 556.8 ha of arable land only, on which it grows cereals, technical crops and vegetables. The largest area of orchards (92.3 ha) is held by SRL Aluno & CO (Loghin Oleg, 69084436), which also processes 39.9 ha of arable land for annual crops. More than 100 ha of arable land are also processed by SRL Wetrade Agro (Echim Ion, 69855900) for annual crops.

The largest area of vineyards (25.1 ha) of the village is managed by Vasile Bechir farming household (FH) (69293674) with European and local technical varieties. Vine is also cultivated by SRL Matenal (Vrabie Trofim, (69116446) on an area of 16.5 ha. SRL Web Auto (Posmag Alexandru, 69289810) cultivates arable land on an area of 70.5 ha, also for annual, technical crops and vegetables. SRL Consolitera (Rotundu Dumitru, 22/240208) has an area of 43.9 ha of arable land mostly by consolidating the small areas of the villagers. Arable lands for annual crops are also held by SRL Agro Continent (Ghețuș Sergiu, 68344429) on an area of 26.6 ha.

At the same time, farming households smaller than 10 ha hold into property appr. 1062 ha, including 791.9 ha arable lands, 268 ha of vineyards and appr. 2 ha of orchards (information from the Municipality, 299/36221).

### Câșlița-Prut village

Only 4 entrepreneurs in agriculture hold lands larger than 100 ha used almost exclusively as arable land for annual crops: cereals, technical crops or vegetables. These are: SRL Reco Agro (Curjos Constantin, 69345467) with 621.68 ha of arable land and 4.79 ha of vineyards; SRL Vidra Grup (Grișco Valeriu, 79060539) with 219.06 ha of arable land and 1.33 ha of vineyards; SRL Cost Nicol (Apărece Nicolae, 69076798) with 193.97 ha of arable land; SRL Consolitera (Andrei Valentin, 79902036) with 59.36 ha of vineyards and 44.48 ha of arable land. Important areas of vineyards are also held by SA Vinăria din Vale (Dăvidescu Stela, 79600038, 79600031) which cultivates exclusively vine in the village, on 49.43 ha. CAP Agrovitiera (Dăvidescu Cristina, 60267651) holds another 33.33 ha of vineyards, to which 16.4 ha of orchards and 10.40 ha of arable land are added. Vine is also cultivated by FH Calcea Alexandru (29939002) on 10.64 ha; FH Valachi Alexandra (29939167) on 6.73 ha; FH Chirița Nicolae (78769292) with 5.32 ha of vineyards, to which 9 ha of orchards and 59 ha of arable land are added. Small vineyards for harvest are also held by FH Bratu Elena (29939221) and FH Chiper Nicolae (78798671) who hold relatively large arable lands, as well.

The largest orchard is held by FH Acciu Mihail (79220360) on an area of 19.6 ha, followed by the orchard of FH Gherman Mihail (Aculina, 29968442) of 11.94 ha. At the same time, FH smaller than 10 ha hold into property appr. 654 ha, including 512.6 ha of arable lands, 124.7 ha of vineyards and appr. 16.6 ha of orchards (information from the Municipality, 29939338).

### Colibași village

The lands of the village are very fragmented among various entrepreneurs in agriculture, 5 of which hold areas larger than 100 ha, but they are mostly arable lands used for annual crops (cereals, technical crops, rarely vegetables). These are: SRL Prutcom Agro (Coteș Nicolae, 78799261, 69620392) holding 370 ha; SRL Web Auto (Posmac Alexei, 69289810) with 275 ha; SRL Vemixan (Coteș Dumitru, 79579359) with 137.56 ha; SRL Visordan (Roman Sergiu, 79458502) with 110.92 ha and FH Bragaru Nicolae (69620392) with 101.13 ha, of which only 0.36 ha of vineyards. The largest vineyard is held by FH Sfîntu Ion (Moraru Brînduța) with 15 ha of vineyards, followed by the vineyard (12.69 ha) held by FH Balan Lidia (79479533, 29962422) and by FH Vin Nobil (Olteanu Gheorghe, 69319500) with 10 ha of vineyards, and FH Bragaru Nicolae (79680424) with 7.7 ha of vineyards. The largest orchard is held by FH Bragaru Ion Vasile (76733845) on 19.36 ha. A large group of FH are smaller than 10 ha and hold in total 1,203.5 ha of arable land and 95.9 ha of vineyards. The number of independent natural persons holding lands is also high, they hold together 197.13 ha of arable lands, 0.3 ha of orchards and 38.1 ha of vineyards (municipality, 299/62219).

### **Crihana Veche village**

This settlement located closer to Cahul town is also the most polarized from the point of view of using the resources of the territory meant for agriculture. Over ¼ of the agricultural lands in the village (1288 ha) are concentrated in the farm of SRL Nadslavit (Curjos Ion, 68133222) all of them are arable lands only for annual crops (cereals, technical crops). Other 3 companies also hold a large number of arable lands - SRL Petricei Agro (783 ha, Carpov Valerii, 79516323), SRL Reco Agro (624 ha, Curjos Constantin, 69345467) and SRL Svirol Agro (332 ha, Burlacu Veaceslav, 68022800). The other medium farmers also prefer annual agricultural crops, except for FH Dunas Nicolae (68666628) who also holds 6 ha of vineyards and FH Crăciun Gheorghe (69893916) with 2 ha of vineyards. FH smaller than 10 ha hold in total 507 ha of arable land and 290 ha of vineyards (municipality, 299/73936). Thus, the presence in the immediate neighborhood of a university center (which holds here 42 ha of arable lands), tourist spa center and a relatively large market for the sale of agricultural products have not impacted the diversification of local production, the cultivation of some niche crops or the implementation of advanced technologies in the agriculture of the settlement. Nevertheless, an opportunity of diversification is presented by SA Fish Farming Nursery (Coteș Nicolae, 78799261) holding 27 ha, including 11 ha of arable land, or by the Experimental Station, with 6 ha of agricultural land (68022800).

### **Giurgiulești village**

Appr. 1/3 of all agricultural lands are concentrated within SRL Daniub (Mocanu Dumitru, 69408198) with 1087 ha of agricultural lands and 6 ha of vineyards. SRL Cost Nicol (Apăreze Nicolae, 69076798) holds 602 ha of arable land, SRL Reco Agro (Curjos Constantin, 69345467) holds 489 ha of arable land and 72 ha of vineyards, and SRL Consolitera (Rotundu Dumitru, 22/240208) holds the largest vine plantation (78 ha) of the village and 122 ha of arable lands. FH Bechir Vasile (69293674) holds 8 ha of vineyards and 7 ha of arable land, and FH Mihail Gherman (29968442) holds other 7 ha of vineyards and 11 ha of arable areas. The numerous FH smaller than 10 ha hold jointly 545 ha of arable lands, 181 ha of vineyards and the only orchard of 4 ha in the village (municipality, 299/68298). The presence of Giurgiulești International Port and the proximity of Galați Port (RO) have not impacted much the agricultural techniques and the diversity of local products either.

### **Manta village**

450 farming households (FH) are registered in the settlement, holding preponderantly areas of 1-2 ha and approximately 5 %, up to 5 ha of agricultural lands. Only 2 FH („Macovei Ecaterina” and „Turculeț Ion”) holds areas above 50 ha. The agricultural households act separately, practicing subsistence, low performance agriculture for self-consumption. Traditional agricultural products are cereal crops, vine, fruits (apples, pears) and vegetables. No associations of FH are registered. Plant breeding is represented in Manta village by 5 large producers that dominate the sector: SRL „Vemixan” processes 120 ha, SRL „Visordan” - 38 ha, I.I. „Gâscă Aurel” - 50 ha, COP „RodBen” - 120 ha, SRL „Izodromgaz” - 92 ha. The other agricultural producers are small size (municipality, 29977417). Zootechnics is represented by breeding ovine and caprine species. Approximately 2,500 sheep and goats are in the settlement in total. The holders of sheep and goats are not legally registered, the production is sold to intermediaries. Bee keeping is practiced by 12 persons holding in total more than 700 beehives. Beekeepers do not collaborate among them; they sell their production individually to intermediaries.

The handicraft workshop of embroidered national blouses and woven rugs is managed by Mrs. Valentina Grigoriță, folk artisan intending to develop a business in this domain.

#### List of persons interested in participating into the UNDP GEF and EU4Cahul projects

Economic entity	Specialization	Project ideas
SRL „Famir - Com ”	Wine-making industry	Envisages to open a sorting and packing line for grapes and vegetables, which will give the opportunity to export the correspondingly packed production and to collaborate with networks of shops from Romania, Ukraine, Poland.
FH „Vadim Caminschi”	Vegetable growing	Modernization of greenhouses meant for vegetable growing
SRL „Lazar -Agrotur”	Rural tourism	Opening an agricultural inn and an event room
„RodBen” Cooperative	Agriculture	Diversification of agricultural crops and purchase of agricultural equipment
Mihai Andrei – natural person	Rural tourism	Owner of 240 ha (the land is situated near Prut river), he intends to open a resort.
Cojocaru Dumitru - natural person	Rural tourism	Owner of 2.2 ha (the land is located on the national R34 motorway), he intends to open a tourist center
FH „Arseni Gheorghe”	Rural tourism	He envisages to open a resort near the pond on the R34 motorway
Eremia Anatol – natural person	Rural tourism	He envisages to open a tourist agricultural inn (with the construction of a sauna and gazebos)

Source: Manta municipality, Tel: 299/77417

#### Slobozia Mare village

711 farming households (FH) are registered in the settlement, holding preponderantly areas of 1-3 ha and approximately 10%, up to 10 ha of agricultural lands. Only 3 FH hold areas above 50 ha.

The Farming Households holding the most significant areas of land are: FH Cazangiu Stefan, FH Nastas Leonid, FH Creciun Andrei. The agricultural households act separately, practicing subsistence, low performance agriculture for self-consumption. Traditional agricultural products are cereal crops, vine, fruits (apples) and vegetables. No associations of FH are registered. According to the organizational legal form, 1426 enterprises with rights of natural persons (97% FH) and 12 legal persons are registered in the settlement, of which 8 enterprises in the sphere of agriculture, forestry, hunting, fishing.

Plant growing in Slobozia Mare village is represented by 11 large producers dominating the sectors:

- SRL „Slobmar-TOT”, cultivates 894 ha – cereals and 90 ha – vineyards (Carastan Tudor, 69149795);
- SRL REKO Agro cultivates 524 ha of arable land and 61 ha of vineyards (Curjos Constantin, 69345467);
- SRL Agrovitiera cultivates 146 ha of arable land, vineyards – 271 ha (Valeriu Râjalov, 60818661);
- SRL Vancor Agro cultivates 350 ha
- SRL Cunibad Agro cultivates 345ha of arable land (Culeva Vasile, 79125217);
- SRL Alizeea Bress cultivates 258 ha
- FHNastas Leonid cultivates 119 ha;
- SRL Vidra Group cultivates 90 ha (Grișcă Sergiu, 78758451);
- S.A. Fabrica de Vinuri Slobozia Mare cultivates 85 ha of vineyards (Cojoc Dorel, 69130652). It employs approximately 200 people of the village and neighboring settlements.
- G.T. Cazangiu Stefan holds 36 ha of arable land, and orchard - 8 ha (79961290);
- G.T. Creciun Andrei (69031431) cultivates 20 ha of arable land;

The other agricultural producers are small-sized. FH smaller than 10 ha hold 1559 ha of arable land and 638 ha of vineyards. Zootechnics is represented by breeding ovine and caprine species. There are above 5000 sheep and 2000 goats in the village. The holders of sheep and goats are not registered legally, the production is sold to intermediaries.

Beekeeping is practiced by 20 people holding in total more than 1,500 beehives. Beekeepers do not collaborate among themselves, they sell their production individually to intermediaries.

There is a workshop for artistic processing of leather in the village, managed by a young person, active in the sphere of projects and intending to expand the business.

#### List of persons interested in projects for EU4Cahul

Economic entity	Specialization	Initiatives
S.A. "Fabrica de vinuri " Slobozia Mare	Wine-making industry	Envisages to be included in the tourist circuit of the country by building a tourist inn, with wine-tasting
S.R.L Slobmar-TOT	Viticulture	Construction of the refrigerating warehouse to store the grapes
Il "Papuc Olga", GT Brovcenco Valeriu	Animal breeding	Construction of a slaughterhouse

Source: Slobozia Mare municipality, tel: 068116316

#### Vadul lui Isac village

Only 2 agricultural entrepreneurs in the village have plots of land larger than 100 ha, for the rest, small agriculture is predominant. Thus, SRL Prut Com Agro (Coteș Nicolae, 78799261) holds 218 ha of arable land and 8 ha of vineyards, and SRL Consolitera (Rotundu Dumitru, 022/240 208) holds 187 ha of arable land. The largest vine plantation (23 ha) is held by FH Coteș Vasile (79145816) to which a vineyard of 16 ha belonging to SRL Amv Grape (Bezman Viorel, 76009898) is added. Only FH Mocanu Vasile holds 2 ha of orchard. For the rest, most middle-sized agriculturists (SRL Visordan, FH Coteș Maria, FH Ajder Maria, SRL Biotehcom (Agrosudresurse), SRL Matinal, etc.) and small-sized agriculturists with areas up to 10 ha grow almost exclusively cereals, technical crops and vegetables on arable lands. It is true that the small-sized farmers also have in their possession a total of 97.4 ha of vineyards. Consequently, there is a high need for diversification of the local agricultural production with a higher added value in the settlement.

#### Văleni village

110 farming households (FH) are registered in the settlement, which hold preponderantly areas of 1-3 ha and approximately 10% - up to 10 ha of agricultural lands. Only 3 FH hold areas above 20 ha.

The Farming Households holding the most significant areas of land are: GT Leahu Constantin (79883473), GT Secaș Nicolae (69136647), GT Vasilachi Gheorghe (79583000), FH Balmuș Stepan (79664566). The agricultural households act separately, practicing subsistence, low performance agriculture for self-consumption. Traditional agricultural products are cereal crops, vine and vegetables. No associations of FH are registered.

Plant growing in is represented in Văleni village by 11 large producers dominating the sector:

- SRL "AGROTerra" cultivates cereals on 815 ha;
- SRL Voltera (Secaș Nicolae, 69136647) cultivates 116 ha, of which 15 ha of walnut plantations;
- FH Balmuș Stepan cultivates 36 ha, of which 12 ha of walnut plantations;
- FH Leahu Constantin (79883473) - 11 ha of vineyards and 5 ha of arable land;
- FHVasilachi Gheorghe (79583000) cultivates 14 ha of which 5 ha of vineyards and 2 ha of orchards;
- FH Caraivan Petru (79947649), cultivates 10 ha of which 5 ha of vineyards;
- FH Camenschi Ivan, cultivates cereals on 320 ha;
- FH Carabeș Constantin – 11 ha of land of which 5 ha of vineyards
- CÂ StruguriFrigExport – refrigerating warehouse for grapes with the capacity of 600 tons.

The other agricultural producers are small-sized and hold in total 1,123.8 ha of arable land and more than 522 ha of vineyards (municipality, 299/63317). There are more than 2000 sheep and 500 goats in the village, there is a wool processing machine. Beekeeping is practiced by 10 persons holding in total more than 1000 beehives. Beekeepers do not collaborate among themselves; they sell their production individually to intermediaries.

The industry is represented by SRL Valiexchimp employing approximately 50 people from the village and from the neighboring settlements and exploiting the oil deposit according to the Concession Agreement for 25 years. The company filed for bankruptcy and its concessional contract is on hold or terminated.

**List of persons interested in projects for EU4Cahul**

<b>Economic entity</b>	<b>Specialization</b>	<b>Project ideas</b>
SRL Vancor-Agro	agriculture	Plans to be included in the development of the settlement by diversifying the agricultural products and creating new jobs
SRL Terra Sud Văleni	agriculture	Development of the local market of agricultural production
FH Leahu Constantin; FH Inje Vadim;	viticulture	Development of the local market of table grapes
Camenschi Vera "Bread Museum, Traditions and customs"	tourism	Developing the tourism in the settlement
Îl Știrbeț Ilie, Agricultural inn "Longing House"	tourism	Development of local tourism

Source: Văleni municipality, tel. 299/63317

**Rural and ecologic tourism**

In 2016, the **Agricultural Tourism Cluster „Lower Prut Plain”** was created within a project supported by PolishAid, in which many local entrepreneurs from the 9 villages located in the project area and Cahul city participate, including: **Bread Museum of Văleni** opened its doors to visitors in 2007, the specific feature of the museum is an exhibition of the range of traditional bread from the area, presentation of bread-related rites. They organize here workshops on bread-making. Approximately 50 exhibits are presented to visitors.

**„Văleni” Ethno-Cultural Complex** and **„Longing House” Traditional Countryside Yard** largely open their gates way down the picturesque hills. Here one may visit the museum house arranged in the style used in 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the three specific rooms: guestroom, kitchen, living room. In „Longing House” they organize masterclasses on weaving frame, spinning wheel, several spindles, mat weaving or preparing local dishes in the boiling pot on a den. The museum is open to visitors since 2013. Contact data: *Silvia Știrbeț*, director, Văleni village, Cahul district, GSM: +37379017151.

**„Gheorghe Vodă” Museum of Văleni village** was opened in 2012. The collection of the museum gathers approximately 200 exhibits representing documents on the life and activity of the poet, writer and scriptwriter Gheorghe Vodă, native of Văleni village. The most attractive exhibits of the museum are: (i) complete works of the poet; (ii) personal belongings; (iii) writing machine on which Gheorghe Vodă worked.

**The History and Ethnography Museum** and **Slobozia Mare Village-Hall** are partners in the cluster, with participation on jointly developed routes through the “Lower Prut” area. Such collaboration involves the servicing of groups of visitors, organization of excursions with the presentation of museum collections, which allows to know many aspects of the past and present times of the villages and of the entire area. The museum, founded in 1988, has six rooms with a total area of 199 square meters, each room hosts a certain topic. The museum is located in one of the buildings of the secondary school built around 1941-1942. If requested, the municipality organizes artistic programs presented by the “Hora Home” folk band from the village. Contact data: *Gheorghe Plăcintă*, director of the museum, Slobozia Mare village, Cahul district, tel.: +373 (299) 60 4 76.

**„Lower Prut” Biosphere Reserve**, is one of the 5 large natural scientific reserves of Moldova . It is subordinated to „Moldsilva” State Agency. The priority objectives of the Reserve are environment protection, performance of scientific research, ecologic education and training of the population, organization of eco-tourism. The cluster, together with its other members, plans to continue receiving guests on the eco-tourist routes, to contribute to informing, awareness raising and forming a careful attitude towards nature. Contact data: *Valentin Dimitriadă*, director of “Lower Prut” Natural Reserve, Slobozia Mare village, Cahul district, tel. 0 (299) 6-01-59.

**AO „Regional Center for Socioeconomic Development”**, Cahul city, director *Aliona Machidon*, tel. +373 (299)9-28-37.

**Cahul Community Fund for Sustainable Development** is a non-commercial, independent, non-political organization pursuing public benefit in its activity, the mission of the fund is to contribute to improving the quality of life of the people from Cahul city and from the region by supporting citizens’ initiatives now and for future generations.

The Fund has several relevant projects in its agenda, among which: „ Interpretative Trails on the Ground, as activities included in the support given to the Management of Protected Natural Areas in the Black Sea Region (InterTrails)”, with the implementation period 2011-2013. The project was funded by EU/POC in Black Sea Basin. 20 interpretative trails in the protected areas of the region were created within the project. The names of the trails are suggesting to the visitors their significance for the nature, representing routes comprising specific and unique natural elements; „Trajan’s Walls – cultural resources for development and sustainable cross-border collaboration”, funded by EU through CHOICE – Cultural Heritage: Opportunity for Improving Civic Engagement program, 2016-2017. The general objective of the project is to contribute to strengthening the cross-border partnership between Moldova and Ukraine by developing an innovative framework of conservation of the cultural heritage as a factor for sustainable development and cross-border cooperation.

Contact data: *Anatolie Nebunu*, director, Cahul city, tel. 0 (299) 2-14-13.

**„White Water Lily” Spa Resort** of Cahul city hosts annually one thousand patients coming for treatment and rehabilitation. As a member of the cluster, the spa resort is an important source of visitors and trippers on the routes developed jointly with the other cluster members. While being at the spa resort, besides the received treatment, the accommodated persons need also a possibility to benefit from the spare time and form the opportunities to know the surroundings and the interested places in the region.

Contact data: *Elena Balanaru*, director, 1 Nucilor str., Cahul city, tel. +373 (299) 2-34-40, GSM: +373 68400099, +373 79217669, e-mail: nufarul\_alb@mail.ru, web: www.nufarul.md

Also in 2017, the **„Lower Prut” Local Action Group (LAG)** was created, which has among its members several entrepreneurs opened for rural tourism, including:

1. **Lazăr Lidia** (076008350, <https://casabunicului.com/>; facebook – grandfather’s house inn - <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064622026696> ) created the „Grandfather’s House” inn located in Manda commune, Pașcani village. She managed to attract several projects (ODIMM, USAID, UKAid) since 2018. Main products and services: accommodation (6-room house), meals (mini-restaurant), events (2 gazebos), catering, small cellar in process of arrangement, parking. Main challenges in extending the business, for which she would invest and attract grants: children’s playground, babysitting, sauna with herbal baths, finishing the bathrooms, solar panels, local well to save water, drying facilities for fruits and local plants.
2. **Silvia Șterbeț** (79017151, <https://www.facebook.com/complexvaleni/>) holds the „Longing House” or „Eco-Village” inn located in Văleni. She implemented several projects of tourist arrangement of local trails (including integration of SMART City solutions in the local tourist trail by integrating the SMART digital sensors (telling about the legends of the place) along the local tourist route „Petru Rares Trail” and installing a system of sensors and/or LED lamps to control the energy consumption for the lighting system of Valeni village) and agricultural inn. She is interested in extending the business and re-technologizing (solar panels, solutions to save water and energy eco-processing of products served to tourists, etc.);
3. **Ernu Zinaida** (060605047) promotes local tourism services;
4. **Minciună Nicolae** (079903409) has a mini wine cellar;
5. **Munteanu Svetlana** (060300538) created a startup for a bakery and cake shop with local features. She needs support with equipment, furniture for the café, solar panels, solutions to save water and other resources, natural beekeeping, including from own contribution;
6. **Dumitru Zaporojan** (060120612, <https://www.facebook.com/zaporojan.dima> ) opened his own business in 2011 and valorizes the folk handicraft of producing and manufacturing sheep leather items using ornaments specific to the microregion. Main challenges in extending the business: disposal and treatment of the leather cleaning substances, the need to reuse the treated waters in a closed circuit. In this regard, he would invest and attract grants for: greening the business, purchasing filters, epuration basins, ecologic paint, leather dyeing equipment, felt production equipment, a boiler to heat water, solar panel, as well as business development training;
7. **„Sweet House” sweetshop** is a small France of Colibași. Ana Cucu, the owner of this shop, makes awesome sweets and southern type rusks.
8. **„Lower Prut” Natural Reserve** (tel./fax: 0 299 60159; 067433886; 067433882, e-mail: rezervatie@gmail.com, Slobozia Mare village, Cahul district). It is interested in developing and marking the eco-tourist trails in the reserve, developing an Information Center for visitors, as well as expanding the range of services offered to

visitors (for ex.: nature's trails, arranged locations to observe nature, eco-tourist entertainment areas, camping, phenological museum and experimental spaces, etc.)

9. **Bratu Marcela** (060145004, Slobozia Mare, Miorita str., Cahul, <https://www.facebook.com/marcela.bratu.969>) is, since 2012, a producer of cavarma – a local dish of lamb, very appreciated by tourists. She works on the local brand - Cavarma de Slobozia Mare. She also produces sheep cheese, curd, ricotta. The main challenges in expanding the business are: lack of labor force, mechanization of the milk collection process, there is no salespoint for wool and leather. She is available to invest or attract grants for: milking devices, agricultural equipment, solar panel, diversification and modernization of agricultural activities. She requests thematic training and assistance in promotion on the market.
10. **Căpățână Domnica** (068332470, <https://www.facebook.com/natural.produs>) offers southern type sheep cheese in Slobozia Mare village, Cahul. Basic activity – ovine breeding, production of sheep cheese, ricotta, lamb. She has good experience in promoting certain projects in local economic development (for ex: ODIMM/ „Women in Business” Program; Leader project through LAG (for a grant of MDL 71,250 and own contribution of MDL 60,000). Main challenges in expanding the business: grazing and location of the sheepfold, she does not have an official agency contract with the municipality, the construction belongs to a different entity, the lands are rented to leaders and the access to pastures is difficult. She would invest or attract grants for: tractor, compactor for fodder ballots, creating a mini-processing line, she would fund the purchase of equipment for the cheese house (refrigerating chamber, cheese pressing machine), solar panel. She needs consultancy in business, promotion and grant project writing.

**Other companies** relevant for tourism in the Lower Prut area are:

1. **SRL „Texiteh”** manufactures wooden souvenirs in Manta village, Cahul district;
2. **Cojan Constantin and Cojan Elena** manufacture traditional artisan leather items. They became meanwhile the most known manufacturers of local vests and traditional southern-style fur caps;
3. **SA „Slobozia Mare”** – local wine-making factory of Slobozia Mare village.
4. **SRL „Nicu Tudor”** (069715615) of Crihana Veche village, president of the National Federation of the Ovine and Caprine Breeders of the Republic of Moldova (Grigore Baltag 079552451 executive director). Since 1992 he grew the sheepfold up to more than 470 ovine species, main products are: sheep cheese, meat and lamb cavarma, pork meat and poultry, a shop in Cahul for food products. Main challenges in expanding the business: the small sales market, although it is a sector with several products (milk, lambs, meat, wool, which may be used by the carpet factories of the Republic of Moldova from Ceadâr-Lunga, Ungheni), export restrictions, few people are dedicated to this handicraft, only those coming into the sector by inheritance, there are not many people willing to launch businesses in this domain. He is available to invest or attract grants for: primary processing of milk, product storage/freezing, creation of a production cooperative, pasture improvement, organic fertilizers for pastures, solar panels, construction of a platform for the collection of animal dejections, certification in using animal dejections and subsequent usage as organic fertilizers. Thematic trainings and assistance with promotion (web, social media, etc.) are also necessary.

The activities of the new GEF project would be aligned the recommendations provided in the **Roadmap for dynamizing local economic development in Cahul key region**, a document developed by the Local Economic Team (local representatives of the private sector in partnership with the local public authorities and Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Cahul district), with the support of the “EU4Moldova: Key regions” Program funded by EU and implemented by UNDP and UNICEF in the period 2021-2025.

The interventions of the key stakeholders target **4 value chains** (table grapes, tourism, wine-making and sheep farming), selected for piloting and support from the **EU4Cahul** project on the basis of an analysis of relevance, convenience and possible impact:

1. **Table grapes:** as it is one of the most representative regions producing table grapes in Europe, ensuring more than 20% of the total grape harvest of the Republic of Moldova – which is the third country in the world according to the volume of exports per capita, Cahul has several thousands of farmers mostly depending on the incomes generated by the trade in grapes. The sector faces major challenges relating to exports and economic survival of the small and medium producers, which significantly undermines the short- and medium-term

development perspectives. The presence on the Eastern market decreased dramatically and the penetration on new markets (first of all of the European Union) faces serious organizational, quality and marketing barriers.

2. **Tourism:** Cahul tourist destination has a high tourist potential, as here one can find curative mineral waters, the largest natural lakes in the country (Manta and Beleu), 4 natural forest reserves and one medicinal plant reserve, the “Lower Prut” reserve. There are more than 2000 accommodation places. There are more than 10 inns and rural houses launched only in the latest period. The sector has a positive dynamics. Nevertheless, the growth rhythms are still slow, and a mobilization of all the involved public and private partners is necessary.
3. **Wine-making:** Cahul is one of the main wine-making regions of the country. The vineyards cover currently an area of approximately 3 thousand hectares, ensuring an annual global harvest of approximately 50 thousand tons of technical grapes. At the same time, with some exception, the sector is declining. The 7 wine-making factories hardly manage to maintain themselves on the market, as they are strongly affected by the process of export reorientation from East to West. A mobilization of efforts of the local stakeholders is necessary to dynamize the sector, including to support the penetration on new markets (especially of the European Union, China and North America).
4. **Sheep farming:** Cahul is considered to be the “cradle” of sheep farming in the Republic of Moldova, providing currently approximately 10% of the entire livestock in the Republic of Moldova (60 thousand heads). The branch is having now a very difficult period, with major risks of disappearing. As it is represented especially by natural persons, small and fragmented (*more than 150 farms*), the sector does not manage to efficiently integrate into the new economic realities. Thus, the production of cheese becomes more and more limited due to the incapacity of self-organization to penetrate the organized trade (supermarkets). The related wool production (more than 200 tons per year) and leather started to be destroyed by burning in proportion of up to 98%. In this context, it is necessary to mention that the local carper manufacturers started to seek imported wool to the detriment of the local wool. The analyses show that energetic interventions are necessary to correct this situation.

New opportunities of synergy between UNDP/GEF and EU4Cahul projects shall be promoted, including by helping the local entrepreneurs to have access to funding for the local biodiversity friendly small enterprises. In this regard, an action plan is necessary to synchronize the activities relating to encouraging environmentally friendly entrepreneurship for the 4 identified value chains, through technical assistance to develop applications to the grant program for rural entrepreneurs conducted with the EU4Cahul program (UNDP).

### Recommended steps for development of eco-tourism products

The activities of the GEF project shall target obtaining certain specific results in eco-tourism development in the area of the “Lower Prut” Biosphere Reserve by encouraging some marked routes, services packages including the local tradition, hospitality and cuisine, interconnection with the tourist circuits through the major reserves of the region (Moldova, Romania, Ukraine), as well as intelligent solutions with minimal anthropic impact on natural components. During several cross-border and transnational projects, several tourist routes through the Lower Prut area were developed and marked, both of a local importance (for ex., Petru Rareș Trail, developed by Văleni village hall), national importance (ex: Wine Road in the Trajan’s Wall wine-making area, development by the Tourism Agency), and bilateral between Moldova and Romania (for ex: Lower Prut-Danube Delta, in attachment, developed by the Tourism Development Association of Moldova within a transnational project – TransDanube <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/transdanube-pearls/partners>). Most routes include in various combination the same natural sights (reserves, forests, rivers, lakes), civilization sights (archeological sites, museums, churches, medieval historical houses, monuments of culture, representative handicraft shops), traditional facilities for meals and accommodation (inns, small hotels). At the request of the tourists, short performances of an ethno-folk nature are included, as well as local dishes of fish and local wines. Appr. 20 persons are involved in servicing visitors on these routes (mostly the owners of tourist businesses or the holders of the visited sights), but without having a coordination center (the tourist information centers of Cahul, Galați, Măcin, Tulcea cooperate sporadically, only on the basis of some requests from groups organized by certain tourist operators/NGOs from outside the area).

Some of these routes were marked with improvised signs which do not comply with the Traffic Regulations (regarding the template for tourist signs), and in the meantime they deteriorated or have been vandalized.

1. The description of a **joint route „Lower Prut (MD) – Danube Delta (RO)”** is made below and was conceived only on the basis of a methodology common to several countries of the Danube basin ([http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved\\_project\\_output/0001/12/9a8c6d8bda2f8ea38c80291aa6d0b2cd36de612f.pdf](http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/12/9a8c6d8bda2f8ea38c80291aa6d0b2cd36de612f.pdf)). Several variants of this tourist program are possible, depending on the time allocated for the trip, preferences for some places, categories of interests and ages.
2. The second route is recommended to be meant to **combine the natural sights of the Lower Prut area with the tradition of the local cuisine**, the specific features of which are emphasized here by several meals of fish, vegetables and lamb combines with local wines from the “Trajan’s Wall” wine-making area. The principle applied by most settlements in the “Lower Prut” LAG is to promote some individual local routes for each village, presenting the sights, craftsmanship, specific traditional clothes, as well as the dishes offered by the housewives from the village. Văleni village is an example, they have their own route developed – “Petru Rareș Trail” also called “Fish Road”, which includes 10 important tourist sights (inclusively: Golden Hills natural monument, old village house, Belevu lake, Manilescu Brook to Prut, 3 local handicrafts, etc.), and meals are served in one of the 2 inns located here „Longing House/ Văleni EcoVillage” and „At the mouth of the kiln”, where a collection of various specialties of traditional bread from the south of Bessarabia is also presented.

The key settlements in this area are:

**„Văleni” Ethno-Cultural Complex** and **„Longing House” Traditional Countryside Yard**. Here one may visit the museum house arranged in the style used in 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the three specific rooms: guestroom, kitchen, living room. In „Longing House” they organize masterclasses on weaving frame, spinning wheel, several spindles, mat weaving or preparing local dishes in the boiling pot on a den. The museum is open to visitors since 2013. Silvia Șterbeț (79017151, <https://www.facebook.com/complexvaleni/>) has implemented several projects of tourist arrangements of local routes (including integration of SMART City solutions in the local tourist trail by integrating the SMART digital sensors (telling about the legends of the place) along the local tourist route „Petru Rareș Trail” and installing a system of sensors and/or LED lamps to control the energy consumption for the lighting system of Valeni village) and agricultural inn. She is interested in extending the business and re-technologizing (solar panels, solutions to save water and energy eco-processing of products served to tourists, etc.);

**„Grandfather’s House” Agricultural Inn**, Lazăr Lidia (076008350, <https://casabunicului.com/>; facebook – grandfather’s house inn - <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064622026696> ) of Manta commune, Pașcani village. She managed to attract several projects (ODIMM, USAID, UKAid) since 2018. Main products and services: accommodation (6-room house), meals (mini-restaurant), events (2 gazebos), catering, small cellar in process of arrangement, parking. Main challenges in extending the business, for which she would invest and attract grants: children’s playground, babysitting, sauna with herbal baths, finishing the bathrooms, solar panels, local well to save water, drying facilities for fruits and local plants.

**The History and Ethnography Museum** and **Slobozia Mare Village-Hall** are partners in the cluster, with participation on jointly developed routes through the “Lower Prut” area. Such collaboration involves the servicing of groups of visitors, organization of excursions with the presentation of museum collections, which allows to know many aspects of the past and present times of the villages and of the entire area. The museum, founded in 1988, has six rooms with a total area of 199 square meters, each room hosts a certain topic. The museum is located in one of the buildings of the secondary school built around 1941-1942. If requested, the village hall organizes artistic programs presented by the “Hora Home” folk band from the village. Contact data: *Gheorghe Plăcintă*, director of the museum, Slobozia Mare village, Cahul district, tel.: +373 (299) 60 4 76.

**„Lower Prut” Natural Reserve** of Slobozia Mare is one of the 5 large natural scientific reserves of Moldova. It is subordinated to „Moldsilva” State Agency. The priority objectives of the Reserve are environment protection, performance of scientific researches, ecologic education and training of the population, organization of eco-tourism. The cluster, together with its other members, plans to continue receiving guests on the eco-tourist routes, to contribute to informing, awareness raising and forming a careful attitude towards nature. Contact data: “Lower Prut” Natural Reserve, Slobozia Mare village, Cahul district, tel. 0 (299) 6-01-59.

### Proposed Itinerary of the Republic of Moldova – Romania cross-border tourist route

The itinerary starts in the settlements of the Lower Prut (Republic of Moldova), continues through the counties of Galați and Tulcea (Romania) towards the major sights located here, and ends with Danube Delta. A short review is given below:

**Cahul city.** A very long time ago, alongside Frumoasa river – a tributary of Prut, Șcheia settlement arose. The first mention about this little village is contained in a charter signed by Steven the Great on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 1502. Growing larger, the settlements located close to Șcheia village have formed a larger settlement that took the name of the river alongside which they were located. Documents from 18<sup>th</sup> century attest the presence of Formoza (Frumoasa) village in this place. Namely here, not far from Cahul river, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 1770 the glorious victory of the Russian army managed by the field marshal Piotr Rumeanțev over the Turk army was obtained. In honor of that battle, in 1835, by a decree of the Russian Tsar Nikolai I, Formoza village was awarded the status of city and the name of Cahul.

**Cahul Region Museum** was founded on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 1958, but it started its activity on the 01<sup>st</sup> of August 1958.



The museum had a mixed profile – history natural sciences and art. Till 1960 the museum operated in the headquarters located on 10 Lev Tolstoi street. In autumn 1960 the museum was transferred to its current headquarters, located on 4 Lev Tolstoi street. The new headquarters are a building of brick built in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Before the earthquake of 1940 it had two floors. The building of the museum is of historical value. In 1858 Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu worked here as a judge. Subsequently in 1913 it was the headquarters of the Boy's High



School „Ioan Vodă”, and in the interwar period it was, successively, Region Tribunal and Cahul City Hall.

In the first year, the activity of the museum was oriented towards the creation of heritage. Due to the activity of the collaborators of the museum Gheorghe Antohi, Alexei Vasilenko, Antonina Dudina under the guidance of the first director, Alexei Pecerschi, the first museum exhibition had its vernissage on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 1959, with the nature and history sections. Gradually, the museum collections became richer as a result of purchases and donations, and today it counts more than 37,000 objects. The collections held by the museum are diverse: archeology, nature, numismatics, philately, ethnography, photography, documents, etc. Cahul Region Museum has in its heritage an important collection of coins and banknotes of a priceless value. The numismatics collection comprises more than 1450 cultural assets represented a very diversified range of monetary types from different historical periods and issued in different states, coming from donations and purchases.

The two cannons at the entrance in the museum are of a real historical value. These are sailing ship cannons, made of cast iron, and weighing 1850 kg, manufactured in the United Kingdom during the reign of George III, for Russia, and used for conquering Ismail fortress on 11-22 December 1790 by the armies of the Russian field marshal Alexander Suvorov.

The collection of weapons and military uniforms of the museum comprises more than 850 cultural assets belonging to the modern and contemporary historical ages: cold weapons (hitting, cutting and stabbing) and fire weapons (hunting, battle and civil) from the Occident and Orient, military effects and uniforms (jackets, trousers, light attire). The weapons from 18<sup>th</sup> century contain inscriptions, markings of workshops, cities or other elements making them not only artistically valuable, but historically-documentarily valuable as well.

Several church registers from the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century are also kept in the heritage of the museum: registers of expenses, annual reports of activity, registers of religious marriages, registers of nominal conscription of parishioners; objects found by the director of the Bolgrad museum and transmitted to Cahul Museum in 1999. These objects are an important documentary source for studying the history of the „Saints Michael and Gabriel” Cathedral of Cahul.

The scientific and technical collection contains objects that are specific for the evolution of science and technology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most representative objects are: record players, pick-up radios, tape recorders with reel,

cassette players, typing machines, photo cameras, black and white TV sets, etc. The historical and memorial value of these objects allow outlining a lifestyle that was specific to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The museum heritage comprises valuable pieces represented by collections of birds, mammals, herbariums, minerals and fossils. In two rooms within the museum, approximately 150 objects are exhibited, which are specific for the three ecosystems of the south of the Republic of Moldova: Hungarian oak forest, forest steppe and pond. A world shown in a varied palette of forms, colors and sizes invites to admiration, recreation and, not least, respect towards the nature to which we belong.

The completion of the museum heritage allowed opening, in 1967 and 1970, the Military Glory Museum, „Nichita



Lebedenco” Museum House; History Section of Vulcănești and Art Gallery.

In the period 1963–1965 the museum worked as a branch of the State Museum of History and Study of the Motherland of MSSR, and by order of the Ministry of Culture no. 187 f the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1965 it becomes an inter-district level institution covering the districts of Cahul, Comrat, Vulcănești and Ceadăr-Lunga

### **Ethnographic complex of Cahul Region Museum**

A replica of the traditional house within Cahul Region Museum was built in 1969 in natural sizes, observing the traditional style, using as raw materials the wood, clay, water, straws, and covered with reed using the old technique.



This house is an open-air museum which restores form the ethnographic point of view the type of housing specific to the area and presents aspects of the village life in the south of Moldova. The countryside household inaugurated in 1979, is formed of a house with a porch in the middle, a barn and a smithy. It represents the type of house specific to 19<sup>th</sup> century – beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The interior of the „Guest House” is finished with a valuable collection of traditional towels, bedsheets, pillowcases, weaved of cotton, raw silk or hemp, woolen carpets remarkable by their live chromatics with a varied range of motifs, among which the phytomorphic ones with the “tree of life” are distinguish, but also the anthropomorphic, astral, geometric motifs of a certain ethnographic value. They represent a real heritage value, both by the way in which they were made, and because of their age, taking into consideration that many of the objects are from 19<sup>th</sup> century or beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the living room one can find a lot of traditional objects necessary to process wool, hemp and raw silk, which illustrate the entire technological process, from carding, scutching and to a weaved carpet. All these objects equally talk about the traditional customs of the family cycle and about the mastery and skill of the housewives.

Inside the barn one can find heritage objects which honor our area from an ethnographic point of view. The objects remind of the basic occupations in a village, used for wine processing, land cultivation, animal breeding, fishing (winepresses, ploughs, rotary cultivators, winnowing machine, seeders, creels, etc.).

In fact, Cahul Region Museum is the classic version of a museum comprising values of the potential of the material and natural culture of this region.





### **„Saints Michael and Gabriel”, Cathedral**

Architectural monument of a national category. The house of worship was built in 1844-1850 instead of the old wooden church erected in 1785. The building was erected at the initiative and insistence of the Governor of Bessarabia Pavel Ivan Fiodorov, owner of Cahul city. The Cathedral has an original architecture with a belfry in two levels.

“Saints Michael and Gabriel” Cathedral was closed in the soviet period, and in 1970-1977, at the insistence of the first director of the museum, Alexei Pecerschi, the church was transformed in an Arts Gallery, a branch of the museum.

### **Old Rite Church „Protection of Our Most Holy Lady”. Architectural monument of a national**

category, it was built at the insistence of the Archbishops of Moscow, Antonie and Savatie, in the period 1882-1892 by the Lipovans from Cahul, in the center of the sector also called Lipovanca. The building is made of red brick, it has a length of 32 m and is 13 m high, with stained-glass windows and hooped doors, a cell, and a library with old church books from 19<sup>th</sup> century. The building was erected with the financial support of the Russian Church Synod and bears the stylistic imprints of eclecticism. As it was made of brick, the building was “witness” to many events in the history of the city. After being built during 12 years from donations of the Lipovans, it resisted to the war, Communist period, several attempts of demolishment, and to a period when it was used as a warehouse for chemical substances... In the soviet period, after the attempt of destroying the church using tanks failed (the cracks in the walls are a proof of that), it was transformed in a military warehouse. The house of worship has also an impressive collection of icons painted on wood from 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. After the proclamation of independence in Moldova, the church was reopened. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of July 1989, a group of approximately 100 Lipovans convened the meeting of Lipovanca citizens. During the meeting they condemned the activities of the government that has closed the church. Those present submitted a petition requesting to restore the church in Lipovanca and to assign to it the status of an architecture monument. The local inhabitants obtained the consent to restore the church only in 1992 and the process of putting into operation lasted for 7 years – till 1999. Nowadays, divine service for the Old Rite Orthodox is held in the church.



### **Republican Musical-Dramatic Theater „B.P.Hasdeu” of Cahul.**

This theater was founded by a team of graduates of the University of Arts of Chisinau in 1987. Along the years many performances were staged here. From now on, the theater has its own headquarters and delights the spectators with new performances. It is the only theater in Romanian language in the south of Moldova. Founded by order of the Ministry of Culture of MSSR of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 1987, the „Southern National” presented its inauguration performance after seven months, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 1987. Today the theater became known at an international level due to the participation in various theater festivals where it got many awards: International Theater Festivals of Botoșani, Galați, Constanța; editions of 1992 and 1994 of the National Theater Festival “Gh.Asachi”; UNITEM Awards Galas starting with 2002, including 2009; first National Theater Festival “Nenea Iancu” and others. It became of complex of theaters: puppets, for children and adolescents, for youth and for adults; a traditional theater complying with the options of the audience from its area of activity, a comedy theater, a drama theater, and a miniature theater.

*„The Theater of Cahul ... contributes to the improvement of the spoken language, forms a taste for art in some categories of genuine audience. But, moreover, it supports the idea of nationality and national culture – which deserve the highest appreciation.” (Valentin Silvestru)*



Cahul city hosts the **State University of Cahul**, opened in 1999 and named after the classic Romanian writer „Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu”. “B.P. Hasdeu” University has three departments: Department of Philology and History; Department of Law and Public Administration, and Department of Economics, Informatics and Mathematics. This university center of Moldova cooperates with the “Lower Danube” University of Galați. The didactic staff of Galați and other European cities have lectures for the students enrolled in various departments of the university.



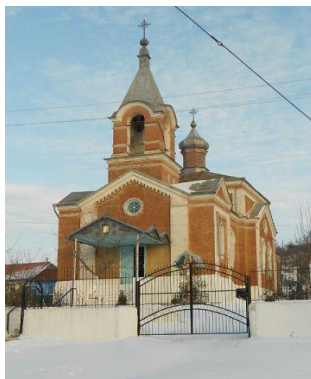
Cahul is also a **spa destination** and **health improvement station**. There are many springs with mineral waters rich in



bromine and iodine in the city and surrounding areas. The „White Water Lily” Spa Resort consists of a curative unit, hotel, restaurant and entertainment elements. The „White Water Lily” Resort was built on the basis of the mineral waters of Cahul. These waters, discovered in 1956, after geological explorations, proved to be very valuable, as they have a unique chemical composition and energy. The resort capacity is of 502 places. Cahul water is used for the treatment of the muscular-skeletal and cardiovascular systems, central and peripheral nervous system, hepatic and renal diseases, metabolism disorders, gastrointestinal, as well as gynecologic and

dermatologic diseases. The spa resort receives patients from Romania, Ukraine, Russian Federation, Belarus, Israel, Turkey, Poland, Hungary and other countries, Cahul waters deserve a special mention. These several underground springs with a unique composition of metal are beneficial for many systems of the body. The quality of Cahul mineral water is well-known by the „Essentuki -17” trademark of Russia.

**Brânza Village.** Around 1630, on the bank of Prut river, a small village of Romanian shepherds arose. The village arose after some shepherds left Muntenia in the period of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Those herdsmen went down from the



mountains looking for pastures, but not all the sheep accompanying the shepherds belonged to them. The owners of the sheep had to come to take their portion of cheese in turn and often, coming for cheese they decided not to return, they stayed here. This is where the name of the village comes from – the most ubiquitous product made by shepherds – cheese. The Muntenians brought with them the windmills, mortars, grinders of round stone used for making flour at home.

At first Brânza village was not large, it had only several hovels covered with reed. Gradually Brânza village enlarged, the young generation started to build houses upside Prut plain, upside the hill on the bank of the ravines. The first shepherds coming and forming Brânza village brought with them the Ancient Romanian religion, customs and traditions. Once the village used to have 7 churches, some reminiscences of them could be seen today, the first one was from 1700 and has

been built of wood. The icons for the church were brought from Transilvania and Muntenia. In 1805, when V.Vulpe was the priest, a brick church was built in Brânza village.

The church had a significant influence on the social and spiritual life of the village.

**Văleni Village.** For the first time Văleni was located near Belev lake, it was mentioned in documents in 1430 with the name of Balintinești. Starting with 1543, the village was mentioned as Văleni. But the legend says that the first inhabitants of the village were fishermen coming here around the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century attracted by the large quantities of fish found in the waters of the untouched pools of Prut. Later they have brought their families here, In the 19<sup>th</sup> century they became known on the markets of Bolgrad, Reni, Galați, and attracted other fishermen to these places. The newly coming had to settle in the uphill part, near other pool from other turn of Prut, a much smaller one. Those living uphill were called – deleni (*deal = hill in Romanian*), and they were calling those living in the valley – văleni (*vale = valley in Romanian*). There was a saying among the buyers: “If somebody from Văleni comes we’ll have fish for one year”.



At the entrance in the settlements, way down the Golden Hills, the “**People’s Hearth**” **Traditional Countryside Yard** largely opens its gates, one can visit here the museum House arranged in the style of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the three specific rooms: guest room, kitchen and living room. Here you can sit at the loom, take the spinning wheel and spin several spindles, you can weave several rows at a mat or mix with the wooden spoon in the boiling pot on the den. The museum is opened to visitors since 2013. From long ago, the most useful room in a paysan’s house is the **kitchen**, where all the necessary objects are gathered: the shelf with tableware, traditional for the south of Moldova – a three-legged table, larger and smaller troughs, jugs, grinding mortar, etc.



**The loom** is the main tool on which the housewives were passing their nights weaving the “dowry” for their daughters: woolen floor and wall carpets, rugs, hemp cloth, etc. In this „workshop” one can follow the shuttle sliding through the threads, how fast are the spindle and spinning wheel in the hands of a housewife, how the wool is carded, but one can also listen to the legends and fairytales told at a long winter night. In Guest Room one will be greeted by the grandfather and grandmother wearing traditional suits. The grandfather wearing a sheepskin coat and traditional laced moccasins is twisting his moustache, and the grandmother warmly greets the guests. The lambskin cam and the shirtfront of cloth are indispensable pieces of a paysan’s wardrobe.

All the objects prepared for the wedding day, on which the women in the household worked, were kept in the Guest Room. The Dowry from the Guest Room was the pride of the girls and housewives: blankets, pillowcases, floor and wall carpets, embroideries and decorative seams – a distinct world of folk craftsmanship. The women from Moldova’s villages knew from childhood various house works that they were doing to decorate their traditional festive suits, including the embroidered ones (women’s and men’s shirts, peasant’s skirts, waistbands, apron and bandana for the wedding, bride’s towel, mother-in-law’s shirt, tablecloth and kerchiefs, wall shirt, towels for the wedding, handkerchiefs for the bride’s friend and groomsman, towel for the icon used at the religious wedding, etc.).

All the objects from girl’s dowry were prepared beforehand, with the participation of all the women of the family. The young girls and boys were going to the dance for the first time in a traditional suit weaved and embroidered manually (shirt or traditional shirt, traditional skirt cover with a white skirt with embroidery and crocheted in the lower part, narrow women’s waistband, with an embroidered kerchief on it, the boys were wearing a shirt and wide men’s waistbands). Geometric elements, floral compositions, stylizations inspired from various domestic animals and birds can be noticed in the traditional embroideries.

**„At the Mouth of the Kiln” Inn** has 4 rooms with 10 places for accommodation, a living room and separate bathrooms. The exhibition room with 50 places, in which the **„Bread Museum”** is located, is the place where the tourists are served with herbal tea with honey, sponge cake and traditional brioches baked on the hearth here, at the inn. Here the visitors have the opportunity to participate in the traditional dance of the mother-in-law accompanied by the “grandmother with the drum roll”, together with the grandfather and grandson – they have an artistic program related to the wedding customs. Also here, at request, an workshop about the process of bread production is organized, or an artistic program presented by „Crăițele” Folk Band. The drum roll is done by the famous Lidia Bejenaru of Valeni.



The **„Bread Museum”** was created in 2007; it presents 18 types of traditional bread from the settlement, as well as bread related rites. They organize workshops in the museum for dough kneading and bread baking, they roleplay the traditional wedding dance with the bread in the form of ring for the mother-in-law, and other rites.

**Slobozia Mare village.** The first attestation of the village in documents was in 1436. Here, on the bank of Beleu lake, paysans loving freedom settled, after having ran from the Turks. From here is the name of the village, of course Slobozia – a settlement of “slobozi”, free people, as different from the inhabitants of other villages, which were serfs. Entire families were running from oppression from everywhere and founding here the “sheds” left by the Turks, accommodated in them. In this way, the lower part of the village got the name of Sărăieni (*sărai* = *shed*). Later the village becomes the possession of the logothete Toader Bubuioag, who donated it to Humor monastery. Since then, a part of the village is called Bubuieci.



The building hosting today the **History and Ethnography Museum** was built for the needs of the village hall more than one century ago, it suffered many architectural modifications and was witness to many historical events of the village.



After the reconstruction, the building recovered its tower and the architectural aspect it has had initially. The strong element of the Museum is the diorama representing Beleu lake in the past and present by a succession of images, the goal of which is to raise emotions so that the visitors understand the drama of the situation and the need for urgent beneficial human interventions.

**The Countryside House** is rebuilt using object specific to those times – wooden bed covered with a bulrush mat and bedspread weaved by the hardworking hands of the paysans; child’s cradle hanging from the ceiling; embroideries and applique, as well as other handicraft objects and tools – a clear proof of the fact that the owners were good and very skilled housemen.

The sediments of the last age of the history of Earth – Neozoic age (the new life age) were conserved very well on the territory of Slobozia Mare. They contain rich varied and interesting reminiscences (full skeletons, reminiscences of various skeletal parts, maxillaries, etc.) of petrified animals and plants – incontestable proofs of the life from the past.

**Haprovian Fauna Complex** (3-1.6 mln. years ago) is represented by an exhibition of reminiscences of Gromov elephant (ivory), one of the oldest fossil elephants known on these territories, molars and member bones of gigantic camel and rhinoceros, reminiscences of a bison (ancient buffalo), fragments of deer antler. Phalanges of mastodonts, rhinoceros, camels and deer, molars of tigers with fangs in form of a sword were also found.

„Lower Prut” Biosphere Reserve operates on the basis of the Law on the inventory of state protected natural areas no. 1538 of 25.02.1998 for the conservation of a representative natural water and plain complex located alongside Prut riverbed at the confluence with Danube. The old Lower Prut Scientific Reserve was designated MAB/UNESCO Biosphere Reserve stretching over 14,771 ha.

**Beleu Lake** occupies 628 ha, or 1/3 of the area of the „Lower Prut” Reserve. This is a relic of Danube, and it is 5–6 thousand years old. Its depth varies between 0.5 and 2 m, the length is of 5 km, and width – 2 km. The lake is a key habitat for many water and pond migrating birds. One can find in Beleu more than 20 species of fish, including *Danube carp bream*, *pumpkinseed*, *European mudminnow*, *carp*, *zander*, *ide* and others. The water of Beleu lake is permanently communicating with Prut river through the three reservoir streams: *Manoilescu*, *Popovca* and *Bugaiov*, other two evacuation streams, *Rotaru* and *Năvodului* are located in the South-East part of the lake.

The lake fauna is represented by approximately 198 species of animals and 140 species of birds. Among the rare species of mammals found here, it is worth mentioning the otter, European mink, etc. Here the local people spend their time fishing and enjoying the wonderful landscape. Beleu natural lake, around which the former “Lower Prut” Scientific Reserve was organized, is surrounded completely by an aquatic vegetation. Tenthhs or maybe hundreds of small floating islands are moving on its waters, and these are harboring rich biodiversity and sheltering migratory birds nests.



**Giurgiulești Village**, located at the mouth of Danube, has an interesting history. The scientists suppose that the first attestation of Giurgiulești settlement was in 1484, when the Ottoman army led by Baiazid II crossed Danube at the Prut Ford to conquer Chilia and Cetatea Albă. Even in present times one of the most important fords in the Lower Prut area is located in Giurgiulești – Boului Ford. Later, in 1593 Giurgiulești was offered as a present by Aron Voivode of Moldova to the monastery from Sinai mountain, and in 1610 another ruler, Constantin Movilă, donated Giurgiulești to Sucevița Monastery of Bucovina, and the cereals and pastures of the village – to Probota Monastery. Along the years, passing through various domination periods, Giurgiulești represented a strategic node, as it is positioned in a passage area. In 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the Tatars were often making their raids, the battles between the Ottoman Empire and Russian Empire took place here, at the mouth of Danube. The Russian-Turk War of 1806–1812 led to difficult consequences for the local population.



**Nature Museum of Giurgiulești village.** The current building of the village Museum was built in 1936 in Neo-Roman style, on a free area in the center of the village, near the church. The building, meant for the school, was high, with light and large rooms. The school was built in a relatively short time, likewise other schools in other villages of Bessarabia: Cișmichioi, Frecăței, Reni.

Since the school opening in 1936 and till 1980 tenths of generation of children studied here, since 1970 the biology teacher Vasile Hioară started to lay the basis for the Young Naturalist Station, which became his pride as well as the pride of Giurgiulești village – a nature museum which was well-known in the entire country at those times. Here they gathered exhibits from the entire Soviet Union. All the animas were stuffed by Vasile Hioară assisted by his pupils, members of the Young Naturalists Club, who learned the “profession” so well that sometimes they managed to do it without their teacher. Some of them still remember the interesting and unforgettable classes within the club. But only a part of the original collection of the museum is kept till present.



**Giurgiulești International Free Port**, the only port of the Republic of Moldova accessible to sea ships is located in the south of Moldova, at km 133.8 (72.2 sea miles) of Danube river, and neighbors with Romania (European Union) and Ukraine. It expands on a territory of 120 ha. The Free Industrial Zone from FIPG, with an excellent location, offers to the national and international investors an opportunity for investment and business development at the border of the European Union, in a low cost environment, with three-type transport infrastructure and with a unique tax and customs framework.



**Archeological discoveries in Giurgiulești.** The researches done near Giurgiulești village identified a series of archeological monuments – open settlements, fortresses, tumular and plane necropolis, dating from the Eneolithic Age (millennium IV BC) and till Middle Age. In 1960, in the south-eastern part of the village, a settlement belonging to Gumelnița culture (middle of millennium IV BC) was discovered, they have found here painted ceramic, clay statuettes, etc. Among the most important archeological monuments, we mention **Giurgiulești fortress**. This fortress, made of earth and wood, could be part of the fortification system erected by Steven the Great at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century to prevent Ottoman invasion, as it was also a guard object. This fortification, strengthened with ditches, wooden palisades and earthen walls, protected the passage across Prut river, at Boului Ford. The southern area is very rich in archeological monuments. **The Large Knoll from Giurgiulești** is one of the most important historical monuments of this type. Most of these knolls are from the period when the famous Egypt Pyramids have been built. There are approximately 30 such *knolls* in Giurgiulești, arranged alongside the Large Road towards Cășlița Prut settlement. The largest is eight meters high, the others are 1-2 meters high.



**County and city of Galați.** Galați county is located at the confluence of three water courses, Danube, Siret and Prut, as well as at the crossing of old commercial roads. The county is located in the south of Moldova and borders with the Republic of Moldova.

For a long time, the commercial and social life was closely related to the Danube and to the port on Danube, as it was the only port-city of Moldova. Currently the economy of the city is still developing around Danube, it has the naval site, river port and ore port.

Among standing waters here, the most important is Brateș Lake, which had an initial area of 7,420 ha, but after a series of agrotechnical works done in 1948, its area was decreased to 2,111 ha.

We can consider that along the centuries, due to its geographic position, this territory was a commercial and social node. This is represented by the multitude of ethnicities that have settled in the city: Greeks, Jews, Armenians, Turks, Russians, Italians. It is to remember that in 1930 there were 30 consulates in the city.

The historical assembly of old buildings on Domnească street represents another tourist sightseeing place; here we have the Administrative Palace, the current headquarters of Galați Prefecture, built in 1905 and designed by the architect Ion Mincu, or the Lambrinidi house, „Fani Tardini” Drama Theater, or the first statue in Romania of the poet Mihai Eminescu, made by the sculptor Frederic Storck – an old work made 105 ago, located in the „Mihai Eminescu” Municipal Park.

The first documentary mention about Galați city (a marketplace at those time) was in 1445 (in a document signed by the ruler Steven II). The importance of Galați increase after the Turks conquered the fortresses of Chilia and Cetatea Albă, in July-August 1484, as the city remained the only port of Moldova with an important role. Speaking about Galați city we have to mention that since 1484 it is the only Romanian port with free access to Danube, and from the 19<sup>th</sup> century the area has shown an economic and demographic growth. This was also due to the fact that it was given the Porto-Franco status in 1837. With the giving of this status, the city started to develop thanks to the trade on Danube. In 1856 the Danube European Commission started its activity in Galați; this organization operated till 1938. Its role was to regulate navigation on maritime Danube.

Currently the economic life of the city keeps its connection with Danube (naval site, river port, ore port) but not only, as there is a steel mill in the municipality.

### **„Paul Păltănea” History Museum**



The first Galați Museum was inaugurated on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 1939 with the name of „Cuza Vodă” Museum, but it is to remind that in 1890 V.A. Urechea tried to create a museum in Galați, having donated to the city an important collection of archeological, numismatic and ethnographic objects. A part of the museum exhibits were lost or destroyed during World War II, when they were transported to Caracal. The museum collections are diverse, and they were enriched thanks to donations and purchases, but also as a result of archeological researches performed in the area of the Roman castrum at Tirighina-Bărboși or in Danube district. Currently the museum has a large range of exhibits, with various collections:

archeology, numismatics, medals, ethnography, decorative art, documents and scripts from modern and contemporary ages, memorial cultural assets, old book collections, collections of weapons and military uniforms, collections of science and technology, collection of the Danube European Commission, which is mostly composed of decorative art objects. The Makşay Collection is named after important persons in the art of photography of Galați, George and Jean Makşay. The two of them immortalized in their photos important moments of the local and national history. This collection includes memorial objects such as photo cameras, glass and celluloid cliches, photos. The sections of the history museum are:

- „Cuza Vodă House” Museum;
- „House of Collections” Museum;
- „Costache Negri” Memorial House of Costache Negri commune;
- „Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu” House of Ivești commune;
- „Ioan Avram Dunăreanu” Rural House of Suhurlui commune.

**„Cuza Vodă House” Museum** of Galați municipality is a section of „Paul Păltănea” History Museum, located in a building erected in the first decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century belonging to the ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza. In 1937 „Cuza Vodă Villa” Association bought the building to restore it and transform the old house in a museum in honor of the first ruler of modern Romania. Thus, the first museum of Galați was created with the name of „Cuza Vodă House” Museum. It operated as a mix museum till 1956. Currently one can find in the memorial house rooms arranged according to the specific features of fashionable lounges of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Galați, furniture specific to the styles of those times, and decorative objects. Among such objects we mentioned the furniture set in the style of Louis XVI, donated by the ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza to Anghel Duca, library of Mihail Kogălniceanu, statuettes made of biscuit de Sevres – a special order of the Danube European Commission. The other floor of the building is dedicated to the exhibits of Alexandru Ioan Cuza: objects of decorative art, surcoats and clothing accessories, documents relating to the reform policy of the ruler.



### **„Răsvan Angheluță” Natural Science Museum Complex**



The complex was created in 1990 having as a nucleus the Galați Natural Science Museum, but it has in its composition the Botanical Garden, Aquarium, Astronomic Observatory, Planetarium and Zoological Garden of Gârboavele Forest.

Galati Natural Science Museum comprises valuable pieces, such as insects, collections of birds, mammals, reptiles, mollusks, minerals, fossils. Temporary exhibitions, thematic educational programs are organized in the museum.

The aquarium is located at the basement of the building and comprises a various range of fish species from the hydrographic basin of the lower flow of Danube, from the Mediterranean Sea, but

also freshwater fish.

The planetarium is formed of a projection room in which the planets of the Solar System may be viewed, but not only that. Also here we find the “Solar System” permanent exhibition and the “Short incursion in the Universe” photo exhibition.

The astronomic observatory is the largest and most modern in Romania, as it was the first one in the country equipped with a telescope for solar observations with H-alpha filter accessible for the large public, but also the first public observatory of the country with a towable roof.

The Botanical Garden is a place for promenades among the varied range of flowers and trees; it is divided in sectors, each one with a different theme. Thus, the „Flora and Vegetation Sector” presents the steppe vegetation till Alpine Terrain (*Golul Alpin*). In its composition we find peregrina peony, blackthorn, linden, alder, beech, spruce, fir, etc. The „Flora of the Globe” Sector presents the flora of Asia, Extreme Orient, North America. Also here the Japanese Garden is included, with an artificial lake, cascade, and a lampion. The „Useful Flora” Sector comprises more than 100 species of medicinal, comestible, aromatic plants, but also industrial and melliferous plants. The „Ornamental Flora” Sector comprises mostly flowers, decorative plants such as Begonia, roses, etc. Also here we find temporary exhibitions, depending on the season, such as “Queen of Autumn, the Chrysanthemum”, „Fruits and Seeds” etc.

The Zoological Garden is located in Gârboavele Forest, where one can admire Siberian tigers, lions, deer, brown bears, wolves, but also peacocks, pheasants.

## County of Tulcea

**Măcinului Mountains National Park.** Măcinului Mountains are located in the south-east of Romania, north-west of Dobrogea, accordingly, in Tulcea county, between Danube Valley, Luncaviței Valley and Cerna-Horia saddle, between 28°07' and 28°27' long. E, accordingly 45°01' and 45°21' lat. N. Măcinului Mountains National Park has an area of 11,151.82 hectares, and is divided into two zones: Pricopanului Peak and Măcinului Mountains. Măcinului Mountains are of a special importance among the mountains of the country, as they are the oldest mountains in Romania, and the interest of the researchers is oriented, due to numerous historical vestiges, towards archeological diggings, but equally to the scientific research of the large natural treasure existing here – geologic, botanic, zoologic. Its current natural potential makes the Măcinului Mountains National Park accessible to a large variety of tourists interested in hiking in nature, landscapes, flora, fauna characteristic to the park, studies and documentary work. On the various levels of vegetation, between 7 and 467 m – Țuțuiatu peak, we find unique steppe landscapes at the base of the slopes, followed by forests with sessile oak, manna ash and oriental hornbeam, pubescent oak, and we reach the shrubs on the peaks and rocky places, then steppe meadows with Alpine terrain aspect. The characteristic aspects of Măcinului Mountains are similar to the forest ones in the south of Europe, due to the presence of Sub-Mediterranean and Balkan forests, as well as to the Eurasian steppes, defined by rock vegetation expanded in this area on the largest surface in Dobrogea and Romania. On the territory of the park, one of the oldest, most interesting



and known reserves of our country is located – *Beech Valley Nature Reserve*. It is remarkable by the unique and vigorous presence of the Crimean beech presenting intermediary features between the autochthonous beech and the Oriental beech, as well as the undergrowth flora which is unique in Dobrogea and similar to the beech forests in Crimea.

*Natura 2000 SCI Măcinului Mountains Site* (ROSCI0123) with the area of 18,546 hectares, represents a specially designated area to conserve and protect priority habitats and habitats of European importance, as well as the populations of many rare, vulnerable and threatened species of plants, insects, amphibia, reptiles and mammals founded in the annexes of the Habitat Directive, a specific law for the protection of the habitats and species of conservation interests applicable at the level of the entire European Community.

*Natura 2000 SPA Măcin – Niculișel Site* (ROSPA0073) with the area of 67,361.1 hectares, presents a specially designated area to conserve and protect the populations of many species of birds found in the lists of the Birds Directive, a specific law for the protection of rare, vulnerable and threatened bird species applicable at the level of the entire European Community.

**13 tourist routes** are established and marked on the territory of the National Park.

**Historical-Cultural Landscape** around MMNP is represented by numerous archeological sites, released out of anonymity as a result of many archeological diggings and researches performed along the years by various Societies or Institutions dealing with archeological researches, Institute of Eco Museum Researches of Tulcea, that have proven the existence of human settlements starting with the stone age, some of them located exactly on the territory of the park.

The archeological researches emphasized the existence of objects from the Eneolithic age – Gumelnița culture, and the development during the Neolithic of Hamangia culture (especially known due to the statuette called the „Thinker of Hamangia”), vestiges of this culture have been discovered in Luncavița, in the point called “At the small fortress” and close to the settlement of Văcăreni. Traces of Gumelnița culture – rests of pots – are also present in Garvăn. Also in Garvăn a Geto-Dacic settlement existed and the ruins of the Roman-Byzantine fortress of Dinogetia are found (portions of wall, defense towers, main gate – IV century), and of an early feudal settlement (ceramic with Daco-Roman traditions, agricultural tools and weapons, monetary treasury, adornments, food deposits). The fortress was first mentioned by Ptolemeu in the 1<sup>st</sup> century in his work Geographia. It was built during the reign of the emperor Dioclețian (284-305), for the purpose of strengthening the Danube border of the Roman Empire, as a defense from migratory populations. The archeological material in this area proves that there was intense economic life both in the fortress and in the early feudal settlement, based on internal production and exchange of products with the neighboring areas, as well as on the relations with the Byzantine Empire (due to the byzantine coins found here). Here also the stone ruins of a small church were discovered, with the walls painted in fresco, representing the oldest feudal Byzantine monument known in Romania.

Other vestiges of the Neolithic culture of Gumelnița were also discovered in Jijila, Văcăreni, Garvăn. On the bank of Jijila lake, the diggings also discovered signs of life dating from the Iron Age.

In Văcăreni, a monetary treasure was discovered, containing ducats issued in the times of Mircea the Old, supposed to be buried here in 1436 after the battle of Nicopole, in which, together with the crusaders, Mircea the Old, Ruler of Tara Romanesca, participated.

In Măcin, the Arrubium Roman Castrum is found, attested in documents around the year 100 AD, the ruins of which may be seen even today close to the city, towards the north-western part. At a distance of 5 km from Măcin, tiles from a Roman aqueduct were discovered. The Roman fortress of Troesmis was one of the main fortresses of the Gets, mentioned by historical sources in relation to the military conflicts between Lysimach and Dromichete (beginning of III century BC), and the poet Ovidiu took care to specify that Troesmis is an ancient fortress (Vetus arx) conquered by Pomponius Flaccus from the Gets and given to the King Rhescuporis of the Tracs (year 12 AD). Other proofs of the history and culture in Măcin are the Old Inn, erected 300-400 years ago and Geamia, an architectonic monument built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Tulcea National Center of Tourist Information and Promotion** is an entity belonging to the County Council of Tulcea. It operates to promote Tulcea as a tourist destination, informs the visitors and those who access their website <http://www.cnipittulcea.ro/> about the tourist offers existing in Tulcea county.

**„Gavrilă Simion” Eco-Tourist Museum Center from Danube Delta** in Tulcea was officially inaugurated on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2009, and opened to visitors on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2009.



The center comprises a permanent exhibition presenting mainly elements characteristic to the natural heritage existing in the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, a public aquarium and various temporary exhibitions. In a decoration reliably presenting the habitats specific to Danube Delta and to the Razim-Sinoie Laguna Complex, as well as to other protected areas of national importance from Dobrogea Highland, such as Măcinului

Mountains National Park, the permanent exhibition allow discovering the high biological diversity of the two geographic units by exhibiting 46 species of plants, 3 species of reptiles, 44 species of birds and 12 species of mammals presented in various positions and ecologic relations. Here one has also the possibility to know the birds declared monuments of nature, rare species of animals protected at a national and European level, species that have disappeared from the Delta and Dobrogea area, species that have newly penetrated the fauna of the Delta, as well as aspects of their life through the films presented along the visiting trail.

**The aquarium** is provided with modern installations and has a water storage capacity of 150 tons. It presents a collection formed of 24 species of indigenous fish found in the Danube Delta and Black Sea, 23 species of reef fish, eight species of marine non-vertebrates and six species of corals brought from Indonesia. The aquariums with species of fish and non-vertebrates found in the coral reefs represent a novelty for Tulcea, and even for the aquariums in Romania that are arranged in a public area. Through a system of two concentrically placed cylindrical aquariums one has the possibility to experiment, being for several minutes in the middle of a reef, surrounded by fish and corals of impressing forms and colors delighting one's eyes. One can have the same sensations passing through the tunnel relating to the largest basin in the aquarium, accompanied by sturgeons, considered to be among the most primitive fish living today on the globe, and by eels, known for the peculiarities of their biological reproduction.



**Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve.** At the end of a path exceeding 2,860 km collecting the waters of an impressive hydrographic basin the area of which covers more than 8 % of the surface of Europe, Danube, the second largest river on the old continent, builds at its meeting with the Black Sea, for more than 10 thousand years, one of the most beautiful deltas in Europe and even in the world, known as one of the large wetlands of the planet. The widths of water and land formed here offer good conditions of life to a large number of species of plants and animals. Among them, the reed forms one of the largest compact areas in the world, and the forests of Letea and Caraorman represent the northern limit for two rare species of oak in our country, frequently found in the southern areas of the Balkan and Italic peninsula. Together with the large number of aquatic and terrestrial plants, there are also colonies of pelicans and cormorants here, which are so specific to Danube Delta, as well as a large number of aquatic birds living here or coming here for settling the nests or for the winter. The large number of species of fish of a high ecological and economic value is also remarkable.



One can say that by the impressing diversity of the habitats and forms of life hosted in a relatively restrained area, Danube Delta represents a real museum of the biodiversity, a natural bank of genes of an inestimable value for the universal natural heritage. Many vegetal or animal species represented, at the same time, important natural resources exploited economically that attracted people to these places from the oldest times. The created human settlements were mainly based on the use of natural resources and thus traditional economic relations and characteristic social relations were developed. Subsequently, the overexploitation trend was manifested regarding

some natural resources. This trend is still manifested in present by means of an increased pressure on those resources, especially on the fish and pastures, as well as the trend of developing economic activities not suitable for the Delta system, such as the situation with the investment for the exploration of sands in Caraorman, the consequence of which was the deregulation of the existing natural balance by means of the extinction of some areas of natural reproduction of fish or other species, by means of clogging some channels or by means of the onset of the phenomenon of eutrophication of the lake and pond waters, etc. The negative effects generated by human activity inside the delta are cumulated with those generated by such activity, much more actively, outside the delta, and there is a risk that the conjugated effects would continue to affect the balance of natural ecosystems and worsen if measures are not taken to decrease the negative phenomena, to restore some affected areas, and to protect the existing ones, the value of which is not affected, as well as to ensure the local or regional cooperation in all these activities.

These characteristics represented the arguments leading to the fact that the **Government of Romania, in 1990, declared the Danube Delta a biosphere reserve**, which decision was subsequently confirmed by the Parliament of Romania, by Law no. 82/1993. The universal value of the reserve was recognized by its inclusion in the international network of biosphere reserves (1990), within the “Man and Biosphere” Program (MAB), launched by UNESCO in 1970, because the Danube Delta corresponds to the main characteristics of a biosphere reserve:

- a) it conserves examples of characteristic ecosystems and contains strictly protected areas, zones of traditional use of resources, such as fish or reed resources, and buffer zones to decrease the impact of human activity;
- b) it is a coast/marine territory or zone in which people represent an integrant component and which is managed for objectives starting with full protection and till intensive but sustainable production;
- c) it is a regional center for monitoring, research, education and training on natural and managed ecosystems;
- d) it is a place where the governmental decision makers, scientists, other decision makers and the local population cooperate in developing a model program for the management of the territory and water, to solve the human needs together with the conservation of the natural processes and biological resources;
- e) it serves as a symbol of voluntary cooperation for the conservation and use of resources for the good of the people from everywhere.

Since September 1990, **Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve** was recognized as a **wetland of international importance**, especially as a habitat for water birds, and is included among the more than 600 such areas, but it is one of largest among them. The value of natural universal heritage of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve was recognized in **December 1990** by the inclusion of more than half of its area in the **List of World Cultural and Natural Heritage**. This activity, developed by the Committee for World Heritage on the basis of the Convention for the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage approved by UNESCO Member States in 1972, has the role of protecting from human activities with destructive effects the areas, the value of which is important both for each country and to the entire humankind.

**Letea Forest** (2825 ha) is located in the northern area of the Delta, to the east of C.A.Rosetti commune. The strictly protected area comprises only a part of the total area of the forest, the part which was taken under protection yet in 1930 and became a nature reserve starting with 1938.

The forest developed in form of wide strips („hasmaki”) in the spaces between sand dunes, and is formed of plain oak, pedunculate oak, white poplar, narrow-leaved ash, silver linden. One characteristic feature of the forest is the abundance of climbing plants: five-leaved ivy, hop, man’s beard and not least the Greek liana, the one that gives a Mediterranean aspect to the forest. At the same time, more than 2,000 species of insects were identified here, as well as the sand viper, white-tailed eagle – that makes nests here, three species of hawk, raven, etc.

All these species of plants and animals, some of them very rare or with special characteristics, made this forest need a special attention for the conservation and maintenance of its natural values.



## Annex 22: Knowledge Management Plan

The project's approach on Knowledge Management targets two levels of activities, strategies and products. First, at local and national levels, the project will actively contribute towards the development of understanding and awareness about wetlands ecosystem services in the Prut River Basin. The communication and capacity building activities will focus on the importance of sustainable water management, wetland ecosystem services and biodiversity friendly production practices around protected areas, climate change and resilient livelihoods and how they translate into global environmental benefits while sustaining local livelihoods.

The second level is the regional/cross-border level, where the project will act as an active contributor to supporting negotiations on sustainable regional water management by providing technical expertise for the amendments to the current Regulation under with the cross-border Stanca Costesti Dam operates on Prut River; it will leverage the knowledge generated within the project, by actively supporting mainstreaming mitigation measures against the climate change predicted water deficits and more importantly, it will provide the technical arguments and study for the mainstreaming of provisions related to a guaranteed ecological flow to the Prut River wetlands. Furthermore, by supporting a cross-border innovative, safe and sustainable tourism as well as supporting the unification of three protected areas namely 1. Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve (Moldova), 2. Danube Delta Biosphere reserve-Romania and 3. Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve- Ukraine, the project will also tap into and will contribute to the vast Danube Basin countries' knowledge repository.

The project knowledge management strategy builds on three key elements that foster learning and knowledge sharing, placed at the heart of the project's adaptive management and upscaling efforts at local, national and regional levels:

1. Learning from existing lessons and best practices,
2. Assessing and documenting results,
3. Knowledge sharing and communication.

### 1. Learning from existing lessons and best practices

The project design is building on the review of several approaches and good practices in the PA management and biodiversity conservation, in and around PAs, that have been implemented during the past years in Moldova, with the participation of the local stakeholders. The remaining barriers are expressed by an inadequate financing framework for PAs and in particular for wetland management and restoration. Insufficient technical capacities for PAs management. Insufficient awareness on, and understanding of, the importance of the wetlands ecosystem services. Similarly, the necessary knowledge base for in-depth comprehension of the causes of wetland habitat decline, especially induced by past engineering works and climate change impact is largely missing. Although a variety of promising good practices for biodiversity conservation have been implemented recently, a broader uptake of PAs management best practices is hampered by insufficient enabling conditions.

The project has drawn from best practices and lessons learned generated under the EU funded project *"Consolidation of the nature protected areas network for biodiversity protection and sustainable development in the Danube Delta and Lower Prut Region-PAN Nature"* funded from the Joint Operation Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova 2007-2013, which has supported the creation of the Lower Prut MAB UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in Moldova, as a prerequisite to the final trilateral unification into a cross border MAB UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Danube Delta and Lower Prut, generating valuable knowledge that has been considered in the design of Output 1.1.1, Output 3.1.1 and Output 4.1.1 (involving cross-border cooperation). In addition, the resulting common management plan of the Danube Delta and Lower Prut Region includes valuable assessments and identifies cross-border conservation and eco-tourism priorities and local livelihoods opportunities that have been taken into account under Output 3.1.1. and 3.1.2.

The project has further reviewed the good practices generated under the designation of Moldova's first national park within the framework of the GEF funded project *"Improving coverage and management effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Moldova"* (GEF ID 3675). The documented lessons learned, the conclusions of the project's assessments as well as recommendations of the project's GEF Terminal evaluation have been taken into consideration by this GEF project's strategy, e.g. the recommended actions in terms of sustainability and institutionalization of the technical capacity building generated training materials; the insights from the engagement of local stakeholders and the importance of working with local communities and of an bottom up approach in the designation of new PAs etc that were used in the design of different activities under Output 2.1.1. The legal framework analysis and recommendations produced under the project have been reviewed by the PPG team and will be further analyzed during the implementation of activities under Output 1.1.1. Similarly, this GEF project strategy is building upon the recommendation, legal amendments and lessons learned documented by the GEF funded Project *"Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into Moldova's territorial planning policies and land -use practices"* (GEF ID 5259) and the main recommendations of the GEF Terminal evaluation of the project have been considered, e.g. the use of biodiversity passports as a methodology during the land use planning, has been considered in the design of the interventions under Output 1.1.3 and biodiversity restoration activities (e.g. the development of Biodiversity Action Plans for the Prut River meadows, in the targeted areas) under Output 3.2.1. The GEF project has learned from the valuable knowledge generated by testing approaches to mainstream gender into policy and programmes, under the UNDP implemented projects such as: ADA financed project *"Supporting Moldova's National Climate Change Adaptation Planning Process"* which has included the establishment of institutional and policy frameworks for medium- and long-term gender sensitive adaptation planning in different sectors of Moldovan economy ; and the UNDP project *"Sustainable and resilient communities through women empowerment"* funded by the Sweden Development Agency, aiming at building inclusive and resilient communities and creating an enabling environment for women's economic and social empowerment through sustainable climate resilient and environmentally sound livelihoods.

The project's strategy has also built on successful lessons learned and best practices and technical assessments of the prior GEF funded in Moldova PIMS 4183 *"Environmental Fiscal Reform"* (2011-2015) which has developed legal assessments and compiled international best practices, to support the reform of the National Ecological Fund and on the former GEF funded project PIMS 5355 *"Mainstreaming biodiversity in local development plans "* (2015-2019) which has produced legal assessments and recommendations to mainstream biodiversity in the land use and spatial planning. The experience and knowledge generated has been considered in the development of the activities under Output 1.1.1 in order to strengthen the capacity of the National Environmental Fund (NEF) to prioritize wetland focused projects.

The project is also building on the on-going work of the *EU4Environment* project that supports the current reform of the National Environmental Fund (NEF) and the development of the new Operational Manual. The UNDP/GEF project will coordinate with the EU4Environment project in order to further adjust the NEF Regulation and Operation Manual in order to include and priorities PAs and Wetlands restoration and sustainable management among funding priorities. In addition, the UNDP/GEF project preparation phase has used the assessments generated by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) funded project *"Enhancing Climate Resilience in Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve"* , especially the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment that has informed several actions under Outcome 2 and the *"Public perception of the value of the Protected Area Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and the impact of the Climate Change"* ; the results of the public perception and questionnaires have informed the project's activities under Outcome 4 (Awareness raising and KM). Similarly, the results and valuable knowledge generated by other baseline projects such as the GEF funded WWF project *"Danube River Basin Hydro-morphology and River restoration DYNA"* and the Rewilding funded project *"Restoring Danube Delta Wetlands and Steppe"* has informed the selection of the afforestation plots.

In addition, the biodiversity restoration works and afforestation of riparian strips under Component 2, has taken into consideration the tested approaches and good practices generated by other former or on-going initiatives: (i) The Project *"Soil Conservation in Moldova"* (PCSM) 2002-2022, implemented by the World Bank and Moldsilva

Agency together with ICAS, where the results are aiming at the creation of communal and state forests on 20,000 ha by afforestation of degraded land. (ii) GEF project „ Conservation of diversity ion the Lower Dniester region” A WB implemented initiatives between 2002-2005 have developed good pratics in conserving riparian biodiversity in Dniester Basin, using inter alia afforestation techniques to patch up fragmented riparian habitats and create small ecological corridors, while facilitating community participation; (iii) The rich afforestation experience of Modsilva Agency that has implemented the afforestation of 95,000 ha in Moldova. (iv) Programm for conservation of soil fertility (Gov Decision 626/211) implemented by Land Cadaster and Cadastre Agency between 2011-2020, aiming at stabilization of landslides and ravines through afforestation and grassland management, and establishment of forest shelter belts. (v)The project "Promoting the good management of forest lands managed by parties other than state institutions, by strengthening the capacities for the rational management of local natural resources" (ENPI-FLEG II), 2014-2017 , aiming at: Elaboration of management plans for 5030.2 ha of communal forests (forests, forest curtains, green spaces, etc. ; 20 town halls in 10 administrative districts); Capacity building for the National Forestry Consulting Office (ONCS) within ICAS; Providing consultancy and guidance services for owners of communal (municipal) and private forests - beneficiaries 260 mayors / institutions / organizations / private individuals within 26 administrative districts. (vi) Support programme for local communities for the sustainable and integrated forest management and carbon sequestration through afforestation, funded by the Government of Japan 2009-2014, aiming at ensuring sustainability of communal forests by increasing capacities for management and reforestation at local level, supporting integrated local forest management plans, improving management of communal meadows, and supporting the local communities to understand and tap into the carbon sequestration potential of the forest sustainable forest management measures. (vii) Ecological reconstruction of unsuitable land (unsuitable for agriculture) implemented by Moldsilva and ICAS during 2012-2015, aiming primarily at forestry and agroforestry research and observation of Acacia and boxelder (*Acer negundo*); monitoring of the impact of climate change and reconstruction of land affected by *Acer negundo* in the Padurea Domneasca Reserve. (viii) The project CLIMA EAST Moldova 2013-2016, funded by the EU and implemented by UNDP, has generated valuable knowledge and innovative tested practices for community forest adaptation and pasture management that the project has considered.

The GEF project is further building on the valuable knowledge and good practices of the cross border cooperation between Moldovan Waters Agency and Romanian Waters Agency, and will continue to support this cooperation by providing technical assistance for the amendments to the Regulation of the Stanca Costesti Dam (currently under review) aiming at providing the necessary knowledge base for the establishment of the minimum ecological flow especially under the predicted climate change induced water deficit in Prut basin.

The project will explore cooperation with national and local stakeholders for greening businesses; in this regard the GEF project will build on the knowledge and experience generated under the national programme “*Greening of the small and medium sized enterprises*” implemented by the Organization for Development of SME Sector (ODIMM). The ODIMM implemented national programme started in 2020 and since then approximately 80 small and medium size entrepreneurs have been trained in green business approaches<sup>111</sup> and promoting eco-innovation. The GEF project will cooperate with ODIMM in supporting the development of knowledge products ( i.e. SME training curricula) with an emphasis on green business models within PAs and sustainable use of the natural resources.

The project has taken into account the knowledge generated by several assessments under the UNDP project *UNDP Dniester Hydro Power Complex Social and Environmental Impact Study* e.g. environmental and hydro-ecological assessments. Finally, this GEF project has reviewed the rich knowledge generated by the results of the Danube Parks implemented project “ *Transdanube Travel Stories- Sustainable mobility linking Danube Travel Stories*”<sup>112</sup> This GEF project’s strategy includes several activities that promotes knowledge sharing and cooperation with DanubeParks projects, aiming at exchanging lessons learned and good practices. Under Component 3 the project includes areas of cooperation with DanubeParks for the development of integrated tourism packages including cross-border biodiversity and cultural itineraries and promoting the knowledge products through DanubeParks supported regional knowledge platform that links several countries in the Danube Basin.

<sup>111</sup> <https://www.odimm.md/en/>

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.danubeparks.org/projects>

## 2. Assessing and documenting results

The project team will ensure extraction and dissemination of lessons learned and good practices to enable adaptive management and upscaling or replication at local and global scales. Results will be disseminated to targeted audiences through relevant information sharing fora and networks. The project will contribute to strengthening of the scientific data-base on water ecological flow parameters in Prut River basin, enriching the data base on key species and habitats and land degradation information, therefore enabling evidence-based wetland management policy making and supporting inter-sectorial coordination and broad stakeholder participation.

Assessment of project results will start with establishing a baseline and a questionnaire will be conducted at the project inception and at project end, targeting four groups : (i) general public, NGOs, representatives of media (ii) government officials at local and national levels with activities relevant to natural resources management (iii) local natural resources/wetlands users, farmers, pastoralists, local households; (iv) private enterprises, microcredit organizations, banks. The questions will assess awareness on the following key issues:

- Unsustainable water management, uneven distribution of water between different sectors, and shortage of water for natural ecosystems; wetlands ecosystem decline due to past engineering works and climate change induced water river flow decrease;
- Unsustainable agricultural practices in the riparian areas and their negative impact on Prut wetlands, degradation of land, wetlands and riparian areas.
- Habitat destruction and inappropriate biodiversity management.
- Wetlands ecosystem services and their importance for environment and livelihoods.

During the PPG stage, the project has drawn from the results the ADA funded project's study " Public perception study of the value of the protected areas Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and the impact of Climate Change". The study highlights the importance of cooperation among all local stakeholders and the engagement of local communities in the PAs, enabling their participation in the local decisions over the natural resources and incentivizing the gradual switch to green business models. The main recommendations of the study are presented below to inform the GEF project's awareness raising activities and the cooperation on awareness raising activities between the GEF project and the ADA-Eco Contact project: The conclusions drawn from the ADA-EcoContact project assessments will inform the awareness raising activities and the development of the baseline awareness questionnaires (to be conducted during the inception stage). The project's focus during the first part of implementation will be on increasing awareness and technical knowledge, analyses and guidance. Collection and consolidation of lessons learned and good practices will become more prominent from midterm onwards.

## 3. Knowledge sharing and Communication

The project information dissemination system will be based on a package of various information thematic products that will contribute to raising the stakeholders awareness on issues related to wetland ecosystems in Prut River basin and the impact of climate change on wetlands, biodiversity conservation, integrated water management based on IWRM principles, biodiversity friendly rural business models. The project will use a mix of information channels, including traditional print and electronic materials, media publications, formal and informal forums and face-to-face meetings, internet sites and forums, and social media. Tailored delivery of information will ensure the most effective, locally available and accessible communication ways for specific audience.

The project stakeholders are diverse in terms of knowledge, awareness, cultural background, influence and interests. These include decision makers at the regional and local levels, farmers, local users of resources, the general public, including media, NGOs, representatives of the tourism industry, teachers, border guards, representatives of oil and gas companies, employees of organizations involved in the preparation of international agreements in Danube Basin, donors, financial organizations, international project consultants, UNDP and other international partners of the project, etc.

The table below summarizes the main stakeholders and communication priorities:

Stakeholder Group (Stakeholder Group)	Role in the project	Communication/information needs	Communication tools to address these needs
Decision-makers, at the national and local levels: specialists and heads of local administrations, heads and representatives of the Ministry of Environment; Moldovan Waters and Moldsilva Agencies; State Cadaster; Agency for Geology and Mineral Resources; Environment Protection Agencies; Local Ecological Inspectorates; State Hydro-meteorological Service.	<p>Providing support to and actively participating in project activities</p> <p>Review and adoption of some of the KM products (manuals and guidelines)</p> <p>Support to the implementation of wetland restoration works on Camenca River.</p> <p>Participation in training and awareness events</p> <p>Commitment to ensure sustainable project results</p>	<p>Clear, accessible baseline information to back evidence-based policy making (in as much as possible- gender sensitive).</p> <p>Information materials and briefs about the project's approaches and benefits for environment and socio-economic</p> <p>Information to sensitize public opinion on the importance of addressing sustainable wetland management, and adoption of environmental standards that prevent water pollution.</p>	<p>Policy Briefs</p> <p>Stakeholders coordination mechanism facilitated intersectoral dialogue</p> <p>Information materials on Prut river wetlands and assessment of the current condition of the KBAs/IBAs;</p> <p>Availability of scientific conclusions on wetlands and lakes water requirements to attenuate climate change impact;</p>
Farmers, local users of resources in the targeted areas of the project, around the PAs and agricultural producers living near the PAs; local economic operators, SMEs.	<p>Participation in (and benefiting from) project activities; trainings on ISO14001</p> <p>Demonstration of sustainable wetland management and biodiversity-friendly businesses and eco-tourism practices in and around PAs;</p> <p>Taking action to maintain wetlands ecosystem services</p> <p>Dissemination of experience at local level and sharing of knowledge.</p> <p>Potential cooperation with eco-tourism entrepreneurs in Danube Delta/Romania; discussions on the future (potential) trilateral biosphere</p>	<p>Information to improve understanding and awareness on the importance of ISO 14001 and adopting higher environmental standards in order to prevent water pollution</p> <p>The importance of maintaining healthy ecosystem services to sustain livelihoods;</p> <p>Information to improve awareness and understanding on PAs, biodiversity conservation requirements and ways of living in harmony with nature</p> <p>Information on available financing opportunities for "green" businesses and eco-tourism</p> <p>Technical knowledge on alternative sources of income to sustain livelihoods</p> <p>Information on environmental and livelihoods benefits of</p>	<p>Cooperation and dialogue between all stakeholders and exchange of experience.</p> <p>Small roundtable meetings at village level in targeted areas and near the targeted PAs; discussions with farmers; awareness and training events</p> <p>Quarterly newsletters</p> <p>Guidelines on sustainable pastures and forests management and benefits that can be derived</p> <p>Information materials on the economic, environmental and social benefits and practical application of biodiversity-friendly</p> <p>Social media posts</p> <p>Radio talk shows</p>

Stakeholder Group (Stakeholder Group)	Role in the project	Communication/information needs	Communication tools to address these needs
	reserve uniting Lower Prut (Moldova) and Danube Delta (Romania and Ukraine)	harmonization of management measures and approaches in Lower Prut and Danube Delta.	
Media, NGOs, representatives of the tourism industry, teachers, ecological inspectors, representatives of oil and gas companies, representatives of other companies operating near PAs; scientists etc.  NGOs e.g. Women's Association for the Environment Protection and Sustainable Development (NGO); Biotica (NGO); Eco Contact (NGO); Society for the Protection of Birds and Nature (SPPN); Association of the Environment and Ecological Tourism Journalists in Moldova	Raising awareness of the general public on issues related to climate-smart agriculture, biodiversity conservation, integrated natural resource management  Dissemination of project experience and contribution to the general discussion on selected thematic issues.  Contribution to the creation of communication networks among stakeholders  Participation in information campaigns  Providing legal enforcement of environmental norms	General information on key biodiversity values existing in Prut River Basin and importance at national, and regional level.  Information on wetlands ecosystem services and livelihoods that depend on it  Briefs on the benefits of biodiversity friendly business models and implementation of ISO 14001 and high environmental standards by the economic operators located near wetlands and lakes in or around PAs (protected areas)	Web publications  Radio and TV talk shows (through collaborative partnerships with public broadcasting institutions, facilitated by MOE)  Online media presence  Briefs and information about the project, reports on the achieved project results  Documented project good practices  Press releases  Information thematic publications  Media forums  Newspaper articles
Employees of organizations involved in the preparation of cross-border Trilateral Biosphere reserve Danube Delta and Lower Prut (respective ministries in the three countries Moldova, Romania, Ukraine)	Participation into Trilateral Ministerial Meetings  Participation in regional project (e.g. Danube Parks), communication campaigns, dialogues with other stakeholders, webinars	Technical briefs and analytical reports as a basis for the preparation of national contribution to the regional agreements and negotiation processes  Available data on water requirements of lakes and wetlands in Prut River Basin  Available research conclusions	Availability of good practices in IWRM based water management  Technical support to regional water programming  Events and seminars, international conferences to increase exposure on international experience  Information materials for the meetings of the Working Groups on the

Stakeholder Group (Stakeholder Group)	Role in the project	Communication/information needs	Communication tools to address these needs
		Exposure to international good practices in sustainable wetlands management  Technical background for water programming in the region	development of International Agreements.  Technical and analytical reports and relevant scientific research conclusions developed under the project's activities
Development partners, other donor supported initiatives	Synergies and joint activities such as joint awareness and training, upscaling project results;	Information about project results, challenges, progress, achievements, lessons learned and best practices Exploration of potential joint programming opportunities	Web Stories and Blogs Briefs and information materials; participation into project activities; bilateral and round table meetings Documented project good practices Social media posts

The overall proposed objectives of the communication and awareness raising activities could be summarized below:

1. Raising awareness of stakeholders, their level of knowledge, and understanding of approaches to sustainable wetland management; the necessity of a guaranteed minimum ecological flow in Prut River Basin considering the climate change impact; the benefits of greening the businesses in and around protected areas at wetlands; the importance of the wetlands ecosystem services for environment and livelihoods. The implementation of this goal will aim to bridge the knowledge and awareness gaps established by the public perception surveys that will be conducted by the project at the Inception stage. Achievement of Goal 1 will represent a significant contribution to the implementation of Component 4 and the achievement of final result 4.1 by conducting educational and information campaigns for local users of resources (including private sector/companies operating in core protected areas) on the key values of biodiversity and approaches to sustainable wetland management (Output 4.1.1) and organizing an information campaign on sustainable water use focused on local and national decision-makers.
2. Strengthening communication and collaboration between project stakeholders, as well as between projects key stakeholders and other relevant groups at the country and at regional level ( i.e. cross- border between Moldova, Romania and Ukraine) . The project will support Moldovan national partners to participate in the negotiations with Romanian counterparts on establishing the minimum ecological flow under climate-induced water scarcity and support to the amendment of the Regulation of the cross-border Stanca Costesti Dam. Therefore, supporting cross-border coordination and providing sound scientific and technical expertise will allow (i) both parties to receive the necessary technical information before making decisions; (ii) find innovative integrated solutions; (iii) increase trust between the parties involved and help ensure that the interests of all parties are considered. Collaboration, not only at the country level, but also at regional/ cross-border level is essential for sharing best practices and fostering a learning environment that will contribute to improved freshwater resources management at river basin level (IWRM principles), global benefits in terms of negative impacts on carbon sequestration and climate change, resilient ecosystems and livelihoods. In this regard, the collaboration with regional platforms ( e.g. IW:Learn) and organizations such as Danube Parks, WWF, ICPDR, REC as well as other development partners will be promoted.
3. Development of communication at the project level, ensuring transparency and wide dissemination of its results. The involvement of the media in the project is of particular importance. Active media engagement will contribute to

raising the awareness of journalists, as well as creating the basis for ensuring transparency and wide dissemination of the results of the project, contributing to its sustainability.

## Annex 23: Proposed Biodiversity and PA Training Topics

### #1 Biodiversity Conservation

Subject breakdown	Involvement	Beneficiaries
<p><u>Biological diversity</u> - levels of biodiversity (genetic, species, ecosystems), regional &amp; national indicators, CBD global indicators (+reporting to CBD through National Reports), sustainable principles, projects (national, regional) involving wetlands, nature-based solution approach to biodiversity conservation</p> <p><u>Ecosystem Services</u> (ES) provided by biodiversity, biological productivity, identifying ES, benefits shared among stakeholders, evaluations (monetary, non-monetary), practical applicability, payments for ecosystem services, revenue losses, national &amp; international experience</p> <p><u>Monitoring</u> of biodiversity, inventories, record-keeping tools, international experience (IUCN, IPBES), improving methodology, reporting mechanisms, regional cooperation and integration</p> <p><u>Assistance in designing projects</u> to be submitted either to NEF or other funding institutions (national or international)</p>	<p>Conservation specialists from MOE, Moldsilva, NGOs, research institutions, Universities, economists, invited experts</p>	<p>Staff from PAs, Agency Moldsilva and Moldovan Waters, Biosphere Reserve Prutul de Jos, Nature Reserve Padurea Domneasca</p>

### #2 Legal & Institutional Framework (Biodiversity and Protected Areas)

Subject breakdown	Involvement	Beneficiaries
<p><u>National legislation</u> (Constitution, Codes, Laws), regulatory framework &amp; bylaws (technical norms, regulations), latest updates and rationale, implementation, law enforcement issues, infringements &amp; associated illegalities, legal ambiguity, harmonizing with EU &amp; international standards</p> <p><u>International legislation</u> – conventions ratified by Moldova regional treaties, technical committees (e.g. Danube, Dniester), main priorities and what is applicable for Moldova, implementation process, accountability, regional cooperation (e.g. RO-MD-UA)</p> <p><u>Institutional</u> governance – Parliament, Government, MOE, inert-sectoral cooperation, sub-level (agencies), local public authorities, private institutions (companies, individuals), farmers, citizens</p>	<p>Legal &amp; Institutional Specialists from MOE, Moldsilva, NGOs, research institutions, Universities, invited PA &amp; biodiversity-related experts, legal environment experts</p>	<p>Staff from PAs, Agency Moldsilva, Biosphere Reserve Prutul de Jos, Nature Reserve Padurea Domneasca, Environment Protection Inspectorate</p>

### #3 Protected Area Management

Subject breakdown	Involvement	Beneficiaries
<p><u>Protected Area</u> definition and purpose, coverage (evolution, trends), national categorization, international guidelines, reviewing examples of all 13 national categories (Biosphere Reserves, National Park, Nature/Scientific Reserves, Ramsar site etc.)</p> <p><u>Ecosystem approach</u> to improved conservation and PA sustainable management, integrated landscape management (e.g. organic &amp; ecological agriculture, linking forests &amp; water), addressing challenges (e.g. siltation, soil erosion, conversion, pollution)</p> <p><u>Stakeholder involvement</u> – national authorities, local communities, local public authorities, local groups,</p> <p><u>Opportunities</u> through national &amp; international funded projects, PA expansion, international cooperation, possible assistance and support</p>	Legal & Institutional Specialists from MOE, Moldsilva, NGOs, research institutions, Universities, invited PA & biodiversity-related experts, legal environment experts	Staff from Agency Moldsilva, Biosphere Reserve Prutul de Jos, Nature Reserve Padurea Domneasca, Environment Protection Inspectorate

### #4 Protecting Species & Habitat Diversity

Subject breakdown	Involvement	Beneficiaries
<p><u>Species composition</u>, structural &amp; spatial distribution, migration (waterfowl), hot-spots, conservation incentives, within PA system, threats to populations, native species versus exotic (introduced) invasive taxa</p> <p><u>Habitat architecture</u> – multilayer landscapes, species integration, interrelationships, food webs, habitat disturbance, addressing restoration &amp; rehabilitation, reducing pollution</p> <p><u>Red Book database</u> – national developments (only 3 editions ever) &amp; latest 2015 national data, IUCN Threatened List of Species, wetland-related RB species</p> <p><u>Loss in species and habitats</u> – direct threats, indirect impacts, revenue loss from unsustainable practices (illegal logging, illegal fishing, poaching etc.), restoration opportunities, compensation schemes</p>	Conservation specialists from MOE, Moldsilva, NGOs, research institutions, Universities, invited PA & biodiversity-related experts, IUCN commissions (CEM, CSS)	Staff from Agency Moldsilva, Biosphere Reserve Prutul de Jos, Nature Reserve Padurea Domneasca, Environment Protection Inspectorate, local administrations, local school teachers, local branch of the Society of Hunters and Anglers

### #5 Climate Change affecting wetlands

Subject breakdown	Involvement	Beneficiaries
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Impacts – the complex (global, local) issue, biotic & abiotic, direct & indirect influences, cross-cutting management issue, sectoral approach, latest updates (figures, data, studies), heat waves & droughts affecting wetlands, hydropower (Costesti-Stanca) impacts

Mitigation – avoiding/reducing GHG emissions, enhancing natural ecosystems, improving wetland protection, maintaining needed hydrological regime, coping with heat waves from the south, selecting right species for agriculture or forestry

Adaptation – adjusting to actual or expected future climate, climate learning platforms, reduce ecosystem & human vulnerability to extreme events, looking for opportunities (more suitable crops, promoting adapted species), advantages (raising gradient associated with species preferences)

Climate (climatologist) Specialists from MOE or sub-entities, Moldsilva, Moldovan Waters, NGOs, research institutions, Universities, invited experts	Staff form Agency Moldsilva, Biosphere Reserve Prutul de Jos, Nature Reserve Padurea Domneasca, Environment Protection Inspectorate, local communities, local private companies (framers, tourism)
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**Annex 24: List of People consulted during the PPG phase**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name &amp; Role</b>	<b>Comments/Purpose for Contacting</b>
26.02.2021	Veronica JOSU, principal specialist at Department of Biodiversity Policy (national Ramsar focal point), Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment	Discussion on project concept and components, management plans for PAs, designing Ramsar site, gaps in legal frame, oil exploitation in Beleu lake, tri-lateral cooperation
26.02.2021	Vladilena TOIA, Tatiana CHIRIAC\ National Ecological Fund Ministry of Environment	Discussions on the National Ecological Fund capacity to identify and finance wetlands and PAs; clarification on the mechanism of fees collection.
01.03.2021	Dumitru COJOCARU, Director General of Agency Moldsilva Ion PLATON, economic deputy director of Agency Moldsilva Victoria COVALI, deputy director of the Division of Forest Fund, Protected Areas and Forest Regeneration of Agency Moldsilva Constantin BOBOC, director of the Juridical Division, Agency Moldsilva	<p>Presentation of the project with goals and components (outputs/outcomes), Moldsilva involvement and participation, co-financing and synchronizing activities on the ground</p> <p>Management plans for Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve and Pădurea Domnească Natural Reserve – current state, need for improvement / development;</p> <p>Designation of Pădurea Domnească Ramsar Site – supported as a stage in the intention of improving the system of national protected areas (future creation of a natural/national park);</p> <p>Funding activities for ensuring the regime of protected natural areas – done by Moldsilva; need for the contribution of NEF, from state budget, etc.;</p> <p>Perspectives of expanding NEF by afforesting the lands of local authorities and private lands through the forest entities subordinated to Moldsilva – initiation of a company to identify the lands for afforestation; establishing the shares from NEF meant for afforestation projects/programs; increasing the contribution from the state budget; identification of international sources;</p> <p>Afforestation activities in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve – they are very welcome, shall contribute to stopping the flows of organic matter in Beleu lake and Prut River; the strongly eroded lands in the area need to be examined to have a clearer picture of the possible intervention, including from the point of view of land owners (local authority, private, Moldsilva) and their availability to participate in complementary interventions. New draft of the Forest Code, its improvement and participatory process, uses of forests and wetlands, other forest normative legislation</p>
3.03.2021	Andrei Isac, National Coordinator EU4Environment	Discussions on the OECD and EU4Environment project support to the National Environmental Fund reform and potential complementarities/synergies with UNDP/GEF project.
3.03.2021	Ioanna Bobâna, Women's Association for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development ( NGO), President	Program of Measures under the Management Plan for the Camenca River basin, including restoration of the Camenca River water course in its lower stretch
3.03.2021	Ruslan Melian, Independent Environmental Expert	Pre-feasibility Study "Ecological reconstruction of the Camenca old riverbed"

3.03.2021	Iurie Bejan, Institute of Ecology, head of Laboratory of Landscape Ecology	Program of Measures under the Management Plan for the Camenca River basin, including restoration of the Camenca River water course in its lower stretch Land use at targeted district levels
10.03.2021	Dumitru Gorelco, Biodiversity Policy Department Head	Discussions on the current situation regarding the adoption of relevant normative acts, regulations and legislative amendments.
10.03.2021	Sergiu Dobrojan, ODIMM	Discussions on the use of environmental certification by the private sector in Moldova and potential synergies between ODIMM training programmes and UNDP/GEF project
14.03.2021	Mahu Vitalie, Head of Environment Protection Inspection of Glodeni	Observance of the forest regime in the woods held by ATU from Glodeni district – limited institutional and technical capacities to ensure the guarding and management of woods; from 19 village halls, rangers (guards) are employed in 9 ATU); lack of forest management plans; in the period of 2019-2020 Glodeni EPI issued 35 statements on illegal cutting (approximately 90 m <sup>3</sup> ) in the woods from ATU; Management of meadows held by ATU of Glodeni district – overgrazing, fire in spring and after harvesting the grain-bearing plants are persisting; lack of silvopastoral arrangements; in 19 village halls there is an "Order of the mayor on the regulation of lands for grazing"; in the period of 2019-2020 Glodeni EPI issued 27 statements on illegal grazing in forests and meadows/pastures; Observing the regime of using the water from Camenca river – multiple infringements, construction of illegal barrages, etc.; supporting the idea on returning to the old riverbed;
16.03.2021	Gheorghe VASILICA, director of the Prutul de Jos Nature Reserve, Agency Moldsilva	General management of the Nature Reserve, financial activity & funding received (from relocation), guarding & protection of forests / wetlands
17.03.2021	Viorica PALADI, head of scientific department of the Prutul de Jos (Biosphere) Nature Reserve  Druță Victoria, main forest engineer, state-owned enterprise Lower Prut Natural Reserve  Cassir Polina, scientific collaborator, state-owned enterprise Lower Prut Natural Reserve	Species conservation & monitoring, threats and impacts, METT completion with the most updated information Strengthening the participation interests of LPNR in the project (monitoring the biodiversity of wetlands by means of specific actions, etc.) – LPNR is interested in the project, in cooperating and being involved in activities; the biodiversity of the area is a priority, although it is difficult to perform its monitoring because of various constraints (especially relating to technical facilities); Capacity of LPNR for management and conservation – the existing staff is not enough; gaps in the organizational diagram; critical gaps in funding (Moldsilva only); Identification of locations/sectors meant for afforestation in order to decrease the soil and pollutants leakages into the Beleu/Manta lakes and Prut River – may be both by windbreaks (3 at 9 rows) and by protective frost plantations, it is important that they are located in the right places (locations near national roads, near railway, settlements, etc.); synergism with Moldsilva activities in the area (ÎS Silva-Sud, ÎSC Manta-V), projects: DYNA/WWF, ICAS/GIZ etc. Capacity of LPNR for implementing afforestation projects – limited, insufficient experience and technical capacities to plant forest crops on degraded lands held by ATU.

17.03.2021	Victoria DRUTA, chief forest engineer of the Prutul de Jos (Biosphere) Nature Reserve	Forest management and protection activities, restoration measures, area affected by fires, NEF project implementation
17.03.2021	Polina CASSIR, research specialist of the Prutul de Jos (Biosphere) Nature Reserve	METT completion, floristic and animal diversity, Belev silation processes, willow advancement, altered water connection
18.03.2021	Silvia STIRBET, mayor of the Valeni local administration, chairwoman of local GAL	Local development in the context of newly created Biosphere Reserve, oil extraction issues (pollution, fires), illegal logging & hunting, saving biodiversity
18.03.2021	Valentian Tapes State Secretary, Ministry of Environment  Viocoria Gratii, advisor, Integrated management policies and water resources Department	On the status of the Bilateral Hydrotechnical Commission within the Stanca Costesti Agreement between Romania and Moldova  Discussions on the status of amendments to the Stanca Costesti regulation and potential project entry points.
24.03.2021	Valeriu TARIGRADSCHI, director of the Padurea Domneasca Nature Reserve	Project concept and goals, forest management, tourism, impacted floodplains and forests by altered hydrologic regime, Camenca river threatened, species conservation, completing METT Restoration of the natural riverbed of Camenca river – it is supported by PDNR, as the (re)bringing of water would decrease the pressure in the wetland and would revitalize the entire area (meadows, forests, etc.); planting of windbreaks adjacent to the flow of Camenca river Camenca; cleaning the springs as sources of water supply to Camenca river, etc.; Management plan for Pădurea Domnească Natural Reserve – need for development, key aspects, etc.; Designation of Pădurea Domnească Ramsar Site – supported as a stage of improving the system of protected areas in Moldova; a natural/national park is supposed to be created in the future; Problem of invasive species – boxelder maple ( <i>Acer negundo</i> ) represents a danger for native biodiversity; lack of a legal concept of forest invasive species; the area of boxelder maple in PDNR according to the recent arrangement is of 171.1 ha; identification of a certain demonstration sector to test the technology of eliminating boxelder maple, including for replication;
24.03.2021	Sergiu BUCATARI, deputy head of science of the Padurea Domneasca Nature Reserve  Vitalie Stelea, scientific researcher	Species conservation, working on METT, threats on native biota by invasive species, bird colony, forest management  Land use and land property in the Royal Forest Reserve area  Existing constructions on River Camenca;
25.03.2021	Teodor GLAVAN, independent expert, environmental impact assessment specialist, ornithologist	Checking animal species diversity & assessment vision in the Put river ecosystems, Land od Heron's colony size, Ramsar site designation perspectives

2.04.2021	Radu CAZACU, deputy technical director of Agency Moldovan Waters	Water management, water level fluctuation, effects of Costesti-Stance dam on downstream ecosystems, addressing siltation Current status of the amendments to the Stanca Costesti Dam and UNDP GEF entry points; synergies.
5.04.2021	Alexandru Tambur Head of Soil resources department Igor Lungu deputy director National Agency for Geology and Mineral resources	Discussions on the activity of the Ministerial Committee related of the current situation of the oil concession contract between the Moldovan Government and “Valiexchim” company
6.04.2021	Ghenadii Syrodoev, Institute of Ecology/ Head of laboratory of Geomorphology and Ecopedology	Geology and geomorphology in Padurea Domneasca and Lower Prut target areas
8.04.2021	Veaceslav PURCIC, vice dean of the Department of Biology and Soil Sciences, State University of Moldova	Hidrobiology and water regime affected by Costesti-Stanca dam, aquatic biodiversity, DYNA pilot-project preparation in Beleu lake
9.04.2021	Nicolae TALPA Sr., forest management planning specialist, Forest Research and Management Institute, Agency Moldsilva	Forest Management Planning processes in the Prutul de Jos Nature Reserve, DYNA Beleu pilot-project team member in addressing siltation and restoration
10.04.2021	Rodica IORDANOV, chairperson of NGO EcoContact	Discussion on project concept and sincronization of activities, sharing knowledge and expeiences, PA legal status versus conservation
16.04.2021	Ecaterina MELNICENCO, Project manager EcoContact /Aarhus Centre for Environmental Information and Consultation	Exchange of information with the ADA / EcoContact project on Prut River (vulnerability of communities to climate change in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve)
22.04.2021	Dimitriadi Valentin, director, state-owned enterprise Silva-Sud Cahul Forestry Enterprise	Locations of sectors meant for afforestation – without essential modifications; Risks associated with afforestation = vegetation fire, floods, grazing; range of species – according to stational conditions in the sectors meant for afforestation and growths in forest nurseries;
22.04.2021	Nebunu Artur, director, Cahul Center for environmental counseling	Locations of sectors meant for afforestation – without essential modifications; Risks associated with afforestation = vegetation fire, floods, grazing; Range of species – according to stational conditions in the sectors meant for afforestation and growths in forest nurseries; Cooperation of ATU (Local authorities) with NGOs – there is a rich experience in implementing local and international projects and initiatives;
28.04.2021	Caisin Valeriu, deputy director for science, Institute for Forest Research and Arrangements	Locations of sectors meant for afforestation – without essential modifications, punctual specifications shall be made at the design stage; Risks associated with afforestation = vegetation fire, floods, grazing, quality of afforestation works; Range of species – according to stational conditions in the sectors meant for afforestation and growths in forest nurseries, the need to include species resistant to floods (poplars, willow), salts (tamarisk, mahaleb cherry, etc.), degraded soils and carbonates (black pine, Turkestan elm; sophora, etc.); Effect of afforested sectors– decrease of leakages into Beleu/Manta lakes and Prut river; increase of efficiency by simple hydrotechnical measures (fascines, filtering dikes, etc.);

29.04.2021	Galupa Dumitru, director, Institute for Forest Research and Arrangements (IFRA)	Covering IFRA contribution to the project – it is possible, as IFRA does forest arrangement works on an area of 30-35 thousand ha, the estimative cost of works is MDL 2.9 million per year or approximately USD 161 thousand;
29.04.2021	Igor Miclaus, mayor of Crihana Veche village, Cahul district	Locations of sectors meant for afforestation in Crihana Veche village hall – without essential modifications, except for sector CV7;
22.04.2021	Boghean Claudia, cadastral engineer, Crihana Veche village, Cahul district	Risks associated with afforestation = vegetation fire, floods, grazing (ovine/caprine population – 3156 heads; bovine population – 136 heads); Development of management plans for forests and meadows – currently low interest;
22.04.2021	Hîncu Violeta, mayor of Manta community, Cahul district	Locations of sectors meant for afforestation in Manta community hall – without essential modifications, except for sectors PA1, PA5, MA1; Risks associated with afforestation = vegetation fire, floods, grazing; Development of management plans for forests and meadows – there is interest; Guarding and managing communal forests – ranger employed by ATU;
22.04.2021	Alexandra Piscunov, mayor of Vadul lui Isac village, Cahul district	Locations of sectors meant for afforestation in Vadul lui Isac village hall – without essential modifications, except for sector VI2;
22.04.2021	Șeremet Vasile, cadastral engineer, Vadul lui Isac village, Cahul district	Risks associated with afforestation = vegetation fire, floods, grazing (ovine/caprine population – 2000 heads); Development of management plans for forests and meadows – low interest;
22.04.2021	Dolganiuc Ion, mayor of Colibași village, Cahul district	Locations of sectors meant for afforestation in Colibași village hall – configuration modifications in sectors: CO2, CO3, CO5, CO6, CO7, excluding sector CO8 and its replacement with a new one;
22.04.2021	Niță Vasile, deputy mayor, Colibași village, Cahul district	Risks associated with afforestation = vegetation fire, floods, grazing (ovine/caprine population – 2500 heads); Development of management plans for forests and meadows – there is interest, there are available meadows held by ATU in the floodplain; deficit of fund in ATU;
22.04.2021	Florea Veaceslav, cadastral engineer, Colibași village, Cahul district	Guarding and managing communal forests – ATU;
22.04.2021	Cătera Leonid, mayor of Brânga village, Cahul district	Locations of sectors meant for afforestation in Brânga village hall – configuration modifications in sectors: BR4, excluding sectors BR1, BR2, BR3; Risks associated with afforestation = vegetation fire, floods, grazing; Development of management plans for forests and meadows – there is interest; Guarding and managing communal forests – ATU;
22.04.2021	Știrbeț Silvia, mayor of Văleni village, Cahul district	Locations of sectors meant for afforestation in Văleni village hall – location modifications in sector VA1; Risks associated with afforestation = vegetation fire, floods, grazing;

		Development of management plans for forests and meadows – there is interest; Guarding and managing communal forests – ATU;
4.05.2021	Vitalie Dilan, GIS expert, Tiraspol University	Discussions about state cadastre of the Protected Area System and the necessity of its re-evaluation
19.03.2021, 24.04.2021	Știrbeț Silvia Mayor of Văleni village, Cahul district, president of the Lunca Prutului de Jos LAG	Potential synergies with the UNDP/GEF Project. Founder of Museum The Traditional Court “Casa Dorului” and the pension “Eco-village Văleni”, which is part of the cluster “Lunca Prutului de Jos” and Local Action Group (LAG) “Lunca Prutului de Jos”. Discussions on the cooperation opportunities under Component 3.
15.04.2021	Sergiu Manea, executive director of the Association of Employers in the Tourism Industry (APIT)	Potential synergies with the UNDP/GEF Project. The Association of Employers in the Tourism Industry (APIT) is interested in attracting new members from the targeted PAs areas. In 2021 they promoted anti-covid actions and measures to protect tourists on the national and international dimension, organized a thematic working group with representation in government structures (Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure, Investment Agency, Parliament of the Republic of Moldova). Some members of the association have their own routes in the Lower Prut area and the Danube Delta, as well as experience operating Moldova-Romania bilateral routes.
16.04.2021	Victoria Bucătaru, executive director of ANTRIM	Potential synergies with the UNDP/GEF Project. The NGO ANTRIM developed and promoted within a USAID project in 2020 “Guide with Recommendations of Sanitary Protocols for Enterprises in the field of inbound and domestic tourism in the Republic of Moldova in the context of the epidemiological crisis caused by COVID-19 virus”, mandatory but recommended by National Tourism Authority (Investment Agency). The proposed recommendations are for public catering units, accommodation, tour operators, tourist guides, tourist transport, interactive tourist activities. Currently, 21 units have voluntarily taken over these sanitary protocols (9 wineries, 5 guest houses, 3 tour operators, 2 hotels, 2 providers of tourist experience, none in the area of the Lower Prut and the Royal Forest). In 2021 these Protocols need to be updated, extended with requirements related to the recommendations of EU countries and rethought the wider implementation mechanism. Likewise, some members of the association have their own routes in the Lower Prut area and the Danube Delta, as well as experience operating Moldova-Romania bilateral routes (eg: Tatra Bis, International Travel, Visit Moldova, etc.).
21.04.2021	Olesea Vulpe, head of ODIMM department	Potential synergies with the UNDP/GEF Project. ODIMM has a state program for financing the green economy of the SME Greening Program, which is implemented from 2020. Currently approx. 80 interested entrepreneurs have passed the necessary training modules (there are 34 different thematic modules, including Greening SMEs for beginners and advanced, <a href="https://www.odimm.md/ro/module-de-instruire-gea">https://www.odimm.md/ro/module-de-instruire-gea</a> ). Discussions on proposed complementary actions of the future GEF project with the actions of the SME Greening Program managed by ODIMM.
19.03.2021	Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Director of Cahul branch,	Potential synergies with the UNDP/GEF Project.

	Olga Pereverzev	The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova (CCI) is the largest business association in Moldova, which brings together 1100 members, large, small and medium enterprises in all branches of the economy and is a member of International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and European Association of Chambers of Commerce (EUROCHAMBRES).
16.04.2021	Vasile Raru, Head of the Department of Agriculture, Land Relations and Cadastre, CR Cahul, 029931406, raru_vasile@mail.ru	Discussion of the list of small agricultural and organic agriculture producers from the villages of the Prutului de Jos scientific reserve area, Cahul district
16.04.2021	Oleg Agake, head of the Agriculture and Food Department, CR Glodeni, 024923548, 069107922 agakeo@mail.ru	Discussion of the list of small agricultural and ecological agriculture producers from the villages of the Pădurea Domnească scientific reserve area, Glodeni district
16.04.2021	Povivailov Ion, head of the Economics Department of CR Făleşti, 025923941	Discussion of the list of small agricultural and ecological agriculture producers from the villages of the Pădurea Domnească scientific reservation area, Făleşti district
16.04.2021	Stoica Eugenia, manager of the Prutul de Jos LAG, +37379818449	Discussion of the Preventive List of economic agents for environmentally friendly businesses
19.04.2021	Motelica Valeriu, head of the Agriculture and Food Department, CR Făleşti, 025922866, faldaa@rambler.ru	Discussion of the list of small agricultural and ecological agriculture producers from the villages of the Pădurea Domnească scientific reservation area, Făleşti district
19.03.2021	Silvia Strelciuc, MiDL expert, Cahul CONTACT Center	Involvement of entrepreneurs, structure of proposals for diversification of the local economy, provision of data relevant to the local economy in the Lower Prut area
23.04.2021	Museum of History and Ethnography village Slobozia Mare, rn Cahul, Gheorghe Placinta, director, +373 (299) 60476	Potential participation in the tourism routes development. As a member of the agrotourism cluster "Lunca Prutul de Jos" offers information services on the local tourist potential.
23.04.2021	"Prutul de Jos" nature reserve, Viorica Paladi, interim director, +373 (299) 60159 Slobozia Mare village, Cahul district	Discussions on nature tourists' attractions and participation in the tourism routes. It can receive guests, being a member of the agrotourism cluster "Lunca Prutul de Jos"
23.04.2021	Cahul Community Foundation for Sustainable Developmenttineriifcddc@gmail.com	Participation in the project activities. Being a non-governmental organization contributes to improvement of the quality of life of the citizens of Cahul city and the region by supporting citizens' initiatives now and for future generations. In particular, it contributes to the conservation of cultural heritage as a factor in sustainable development and cross-border cooperation. It is member of the agrotourism cluster "Lunca Prutul de Jos".
23.04.2021	The "Nufărul Alb" sanatorium from Cahul, Elena Balanaru, director, +373 (299) 23440	Participation in the project activities. For the agrotourism cluster "Lunca Prutul de Jos" is an important source of visitors and hikers on routes developed jointly with the other members of the cluster.
24.04.2021	Lazăr Lidia (076008350), owner of the "Casa Bunicului" boarding house in Manta commune, Pașcani village, rn Cahul.	Participation in the project activities. He has experience in carrying out projects attracted from ODIMM, USAID, UKAid funds, starting in 2018. Main products and services: accommodation (6-room house), meals (mini-restaurant), events (2 gazebos), catering, small wine cellar, parking . It wants to expand the business by attracting sources from other funds relevant to the Lower Prut area.
24.04.2021	Munteanu Svetlana (060300538), startup owner for a bakery and pastry shop with local specialties, Slobozia Mare village, rn Cahul.	Participation in the project activities. The traditional pastry of the Prutului de Jos area is very diverse, so the business owner also opts for environmentally friendly ways to use local resources. She is interested in expanding the business and refurbishing (solar panels, solutions to save water and energy, eco-processing of dishes served to tourists, etc.).

24.04.2021	Dumitru Zaporojan (060120612) owner of leather processing business, folk craftsman, member of UMPM, Slobozia Mare village, rn Cahul.	Participation in the project activities. It capitalizes on the resources of local raw materials, collaborating with people in the field of shepherding. It plans to expand the business with the use of more environmentally friendly leather processing technologies, it wants to attract funds to increase the quality of the business.
19.03.2021	Cojan Constantin and Elena (078499321), leather processing, folk craftsman, UMPM member, Colibași village, rn Cahul.	Participation in the project activities. Self-employed craftsmen go through the whole process of processing and production: from collecting and processing leathers to making clothing, and everything is done manually. They want to develop and simplify the process of obtaining raw materials, more environmentally friendly leather processing, water recycling, etc.
24.04.2021	Bratu Marcela (060145004), Slobozia Mare, Cahul. The business is based on shepherding activity.	Participation in the project activities. The company owns the local brand - Cavarma de Slobozia Mare. It also produces cheese, curd, sheep urda. Plans the development and expansion of the business by modernizing the machine, using environmentally friendly techniques for processing sheep products.
24.04.2021	Căpățînă Domnica (068332470), Slobozia Mare village, rn Cahul. The business is based on shepherding activity.	Participation in the project activities. She managed to carry out local economic development projects (eg: ODIMM / "Women in Business" Program; Leader project through LAG). Plans to expand the business by improving grazing and the location of the sheepfold, using environmentally friendly technologies to process sheep products.
25.04.2021	SRL „ Nicu Tudor ”(069715615) from Crihana Veche village, rn Cahul. President of the National Federation of Sheep and Goat Breeders of the Republic of Moldova	Participation in the project activities. The company raises sheep, owns a store in Cahul for animal products. There are several problems related to the expansion of the business, because it is a sector with several products (milk, lamb, meat, wool). Plan environmentally friendly activities for the future, attract funds for expansion.

**Annex 25: Micro HACT Assessment and Partner Capacity Assessment Tool**

(Please see separate attachment)

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Accepted: 23-Aug-22 | 09:48

ID: 2444142a-cd7a-44f1-9e06-0916ecbfc035

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Sent: 23-Aug-22 | 09:49

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Accepted: 27-Oct-21 | 17:26

ID: e9eb62de-f6b7-4818-999d-a0436756f63f

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