

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION No 1/2017 OF THE EU-REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

of 4 August 2017

on the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agenda [2017/1489]

THE EU-REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA ASSOCIATION COUNCIL,

Having regard to the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part,

Whereas:

- (1) The Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part ⁽¹⁾ ('the Agreement') was signed on 27 June 2014 and entered into force on 1 July 2016.
- (2) In accordance with Article 436(1) of the Agreement, the Association Council has the power to adopt recommendations, for the purposes of attaining the objectives of the Agreement.
- (3) Pursuant to Article 453(1) of the Agreement, the Parties are to take any general or specific measures required to fulfil their obligations under the Agreement and are to ensure that the objectives set out in the Agreement are attained.
- (4) The review of the European Neighbourhood Policy proposed a new phase of engagement with partners, allowing a greater sense of ownership by both sides.
- (5) The Union and the Republic of Moldova have agreed to consolidate their partnership by agreeing on a set of priorities for the period 2017-2019 with the aim of supporting and strengthening the resilience and stability of the Republic of Moldova while seeking closer political association and deeper economic integration.
- (6) The Parties to the Agreement have agreed on the text of the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agenda, which will support the implementation of the Agreement, focusing cooperation on commonly identified shared interests,

HAS ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATION:

Article 1

The Association Council recommends that the Parties implement the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agenda, as set out in the Annex.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 260, 30.8.2014, p. 4.

Article 2

The EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agenda, as set out in the Annex, shall replace the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agenda which was adopted on 26 June 2014.

Article 3

This Recommendation shall take effect on the day of its adoption.

Done at Chisinau, 4 August 2017.

For the Association Council

The Chair

Pavel FILIP

ANNEX

ASSOCIATION AGENDA BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Table of Contents

Association Agenda between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova	7
1. Principles, instruments and resources for implementing the Association Agenda	7
2. Priorities of the Association Agenda	8
2.1 Key priorities	8
2.2 Political dialogue, Good Governance and Strengthening Institutions	10
(i) Strengthening the stability, independence and effectiveness of institutions guaranteeing democracy and the rule of law in the Republic of Moldova	10
(ii) Further reforming the justice sector, in particular ensuring the independence, impartiality, professionalism and efficiency of the judiciary	13
(iii) Ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms	14
Human rights and fundamental freedoms	14
Freedom of expression	15
Civil society cooperation	15
Ill-treatment and torture	16
Children's rights	16
Domestic violence	16
Equal treatment	16
Trade union rights and core labour standards	16
2.3 Foreign and security policy	17
Terrorism, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and illegal arms exports	17
The Transnistria conflict	18
The International Criminal Court	18
2.4 Cooperation on freedom, security and justice	18
Protection of personal data	19
Combating organised crime	19
Police reform	19
Police co-operation and databases	20
Tackling illicit drugs	21
Trafficking in human beings	21
Fighting child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation	21
Fighting cybercrime	21
Prevention and fight against corruption and conflict of interest	22
Anti-Money laundering and Countering Terrorism Financing and combatting financial crime	23
Cooperation on migration, asylum and border management	24
Legal cooperation	25

2.5	Trade and trade related matters (DCFTA)	26
	Trade in goods	26
	Technical regulations, standardisation and related infrastructure	26
	Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures	27
	Customs and trade facilitation	28
	Rules of origin	28
	Establishment, trade in services and electronic commerce	29
	Current payments and movement of capital	29
	Public procurement	29
	Intellectual property rights (IPR)	30
	Competition	30
	Transparency	31
	Trade and sustainable development	31
2.6	Economic development and Market Opportunities	31
	Company law, accounting and auditing, and corporate governance	32
	Employment, social policies and equal opportunities	32
	Consumer protection	33
	Statistics	34
	Taxation	34
	Financial services	35
	Industrial and enterprise policy	36
	Mining and raw materials	36
	Tourism	37
	Agriculture and rural development	37
	Information society/Digital Economy and Society	37
	Public health	38
	Urban Planning and Construction	38
	Regional development	38
	Fisheries and maritime policy	39
2.7	Connectivity, Energy Efficiency, Climate Action, Environment and Civil Protection	39
	Energy	39
	Transport	41
	Environment	41
	Climate action	42
	Civil protection	42
2.8	Mobility and People to People	43
	Education, training, and youth	43
	Research and innovation	44
	Culture, audiovisual policy and media	45
	Participation in EU Agencies and Programmes	45
2.9	Public outreach and visibility	46

Association Agenda between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova

On 27 June 2014, the European Union, its Member states and the Republic of Moldova — ‘the Parties’ — signed an ambitious and innovative Association Agreement (AA), including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). The agreement contains binding, rule-based provisions and provides for an enhanced cooperation, going further than in traditional agreements and covering all areas of interest. The Agreement was provisionally applied from 1 September 2014 until completion of the ratification process, which allowed the full application of the Association Agreement on 1 July 2016.

With a view to prepare and facilitate the implementation of the Association Agreement the Parties agreed in Brussels on 26 June 2014 on an Association Agenda, drawing-up of a list of priorities for joint work in the period 2014-2016.

The present document updates and refocuses the 2014-2016 Association Agenda and sets new priorities for joint work for the period 2017-2019, including on the basis of the conclusions the Council of the European Union adopted on the Republic of Moldova on 15 February 2016. It distinguishes between short-term (on which significant progress should be achieved by end 2017) and medium-term priorities (on which significant progress should be achieved in the following 2 years).

The fact that the Association Agenda focuses on a limited number of priorities does not affect the scope or the mandate of existing dialogue under other relevant Agreements and Partnerships or under the multilateral track of the Eastern Partnership.

Furthermore, visa-free travel to the Schengen countries for citizens of the Republic of Moldova holding a biometric passport entered into force in April 2014. The Visa Liberalisation Action Plan’s benchmarks need to be continuously fulfilled to ensure the sustainability of the visa-free regime and thus contribute to mobility and people-to-people contacts between the EU and the Republic of Moldova, which are some of the fundamental elements underpinning political association and economic integration of the Republic of Moldova with the European Union as foreseen in the Association Agreement.

1. Principles, instruments and resources for implementing the Association Agenda

The following common principles will guide the implementation of the Association Agenda:

- Actions undertaken as part of the Association Agenda should be implemented in the spirit of the overall objectives of political association and economic integration;
- The priorities of the Association Agenda reflect the responsibility of the EU and the Republic of Moldova to fully implement the provisions of their Association Agreement, now that it has fully entered into force;
- Both parties must be involved in implementing the Association Agenda, in full respect of the principles of ownership, transparency, accountability and inclusiveness;
- The deliverables achieved under the Association Agenda will be an important contribution towards fulfilling the 2020 priorities to be agreed at the Brussels Eastern Partnership Summit;
- The Association Agenda aims to achieve tangible, defined and sustainable results through the progressive implementation of practical measures and involving civil society and other stakeholders. Both parties will especially ensure that any legislation and strategic documents developed in the framework of the Association Agenda will be prepared in an inclusive and evidence-based process;
- The parties recognise the importance of supporting the agreed priorities through appropriate and sufficient political, technical and financial means;
- The implementation of the Association Agenda will be subject to monitoring, annual reporting, and assessment. Progress made will be reviewed, including during the meetings of the bilateral structures set up by the Association Agreement. Civil society will also be encouraged to focus their monitoring activities on the Association Agenda;
- The European Union will support the Republic of Moldova in implementing the objectives and priorities set out in the Association Agenda. To do this, it will: offer all available sources of EU support; provide expertise and advice; facilitate the sharing of best practices, know-how, and information; and support capacity-building and institutional strengthening. The European Union will also encourage and seek coordination of support from other partners of the Republic of Moldova. It will use its relevant financial instruments to help implement the Association Agenda. However, the Association Agenda is not a financial programming document and is not a substitute for the financial programming carried out by the parties.

The EU will provide support in the context of the overall priorities for assistance to the Republic of Moldova, as outlined in the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) Single Support Framework (SSF) and in the multi-country programming prepared for the Republic of Moldova through the ENI, aiming at the same time to take into account the priorities under the Association Agenda. It may also provide assistance from other EU instruments. Any financial assistance will be provided in full compliance with the implementation rules and procedures governing EU external assistance. In line with these procedures, all EU assistance to the Republic of Moldova shall continue to be bound to strict conditionalities the fulfilment of which will be regularly monitored and evaluated. Necessary early warning systems need to be established in order to reduce risks.

The present Association Agenda will be applicable from the moment of its adoption until the end of 2019. The Association Agenda may be amended or updated at any time, by agreement of the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Council.

2. Priorities of the Association Agenda

2.1 Key priorities

Among the priorities in the Association Agenda, the following reform actions should be addressed as a matter of priority:

In the field of strengthening institutions and good governance:

1. Independence of the judiciary

Implement the current legislation relating to the justice and law enforcement agencies to ensure the independence, impartiality, integrity, professionalism and efficiency of the judiciary, including the prosecution, which should be free from political or any other undue interference, as well as to ensure zero tolerance for corruption and prevent all kinds of corrupt behaviour. Implement rules on functional immunity in line with European standards and good practice. Carry out transparent merit-based recruitment of judges and prosecutors by an independent authority.

2. Prevention and fight against corruption, fraud and conflict of interest

Implement the Law on Integrity. Implement the law that requires all relevant officials to provide a declaration of the assets they and their relevant close relatives own and to report on potential conflicts of interest in relation to their personal interests or those of close relatives, and ensure the effective implementation of the enforcement procedure. Adopt laws on proportional dissuasive sanctions for corruption and money laundering offences. Implement the new Integrity and Anti-corruption Strategy, with the aim to effectively prevent and reduce corruption in line with EU values and standards. Strengthen capacities of anti-corruption agencies and improve co-ordination and cooperation between them. Put in place a working legal framework to protect whistle-blowers.

3. Asset recovery and investigation on the banking fraud

Set up an efficient national asset recovery service. Share the main results of the ongoing second-phase of the Kroll investigation with the EU under the terms agreed with Kroll without jeopardising further investigation and the recovery of assets. Make all the cases of fraud that affected the banking system of the Republic of Moldova in 2012-2014 subject to a thorough, impartial investigation, also with a view to recovering the diverted funds and to bringing those responsible to justice.

4. Public administration reform, including public financial management

Implement the Public Administration Reform (PAR) Strategy and underlying strategies, developed in 2016 in consultation with OECD/SIGMA and the donor community. Reorganise governmental institutions, administrative authorities and state-owned enterprises in order to increase accountability, effectiveness and efficiency. Review the policy development and coordination system to enhance inclusiveness, coherence, efficiency, predictability and transparency of decision-making process. Improve the quality and accessibility of public services. Ensure a professional civil service and a modern human resources management system. Launch a territorial reform that could enable a maximisation of the resources made available to the citizens at local level. Increasingly involve civil society to enhance accountability, transparency and responsiveness of public administration reform and public service provision.

Update the public financial management (PFM) strategy of the Republic of Moldova for 2013-20. Continue the reform of the parliamentary scrutiny and oversight of the budget. Strengthen the transparency, oversight and accountability of public finance policy and management. Enhance governance through budget prudence and budget discipline, strengthened accountability processes and better management for results.

5. Fundamental freedoms

Uphold the freedom and pluralism of the media, including via the adoption of a new Audio-visual Code, in line with Council of Europe, European Union and OSCE recommendations, in order to align the legislation of the Republic of Moldova with the Audiovisual media services directive and urgently address the concentration of media ownership, the monopolisation of the advertising market, the reform of the national broadcaster. Better define the competences and tasks of the Audiovisual Coordinating Council, with the aim to strengthen its independence.

Adopt and implement the new National Human Rights Action Plan, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups, and coordinate the planning and budget processes to allocate sufficient resources for its effective implementation. Ensure the effective execution of judgments made by the European Court of Human Rights and create an efficient mechanism of Parliamentary control over such execution.

Particular attention will be given to ensuring that equality and gender issues are addressed as a crosscutting priority.

6. Transnistrian conflict settlement

Develop a vision on peaceful and sustainable settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, based on sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova in its internationally recognised borders, with a special status for Transnistria, that will fully guarantee human, political, economic and social rights of the population, and would also foster further engagement with the Transnistrian side. Continue constructive dialogue related to the situation at the central (Transnistrian) segment of Republic of Moldova-Ukraine border with all relevant counterparts.

In the field of economic development and market opportunities:

7. Improved Business Environment and investment climate

Implement the reform program agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and carry out economic, tax and financial policies in the same spirit as the IMF reform program. Improve the regulatory framework, operational environment for SMEs and enforce competition laws to reduce monopolistic behaviours. Implement the SME Sector Development Strategy for 2012-2020 and its corresponding Action Plan, in line with the new SME law, with the country's revised Competitiveness Roadmap and with the National Strategy for Investment Attraction and Export Promotion 2016-2020. Strengthen the role of business and SME associations (including sectoral associations) in order to improve Public-Private dialogue. Simplify the system of inspectorates and various inspection bodies to increase efficiency and reduce scope for corruption, whilst enhancing law and standards enforcement.

8. Agriculture and Rural Development

Implement General Law on subsidising principles in Agriculture and Rural Development thus improving policy implementation in this area. Increase the competitiveness of agricultural production, especially in selected sectors with high export value. Improve employment and living conditions in the rural areas. Improve sustainable use of land and water resources. Improve services and infrastructure and diversification of the economic activities in rural areas.

9. Trade related reforms: Technical regulations, standardisation and related infrastructure, and customs & trade facilitation

Improve trade facilitation, taking OECD trade facilitation indicators as a benchmark. In the field of technical regulations and standards, enhance cooperation with relevant EU organisations such as CEN, Cenelec, ETSI, Euramet, EA, Welmec. Public consultations related to technical regulations and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures are essential to aim at a larger application and public understanding of the new regulations in these fields. On SPS measures, obtain accreditation of all laboratories involved in official controls to international standards in order to fulfil SPS requirements for export and strengthen food safety on the internal market of the Republic of Moldova.

Align legislation of the Republic of Moldova with the European Union Customs Code and its implementing regulations and improve the performance of the customs administration in terms of professional integrity and transparency. Align legislation of the Republic of Moldova to allow for accession of the Republic of Moldova to the Convention on Common Transit Procedure.

In the field of connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate action:

10. Energy security and energy efficiency

Strengthen independence of ANRE, including by de-politicisation of appointments and dismissal procedure for directors, as well as by autonomous budget setting. Adopt a new Energy Law in a transparent and inclusive manner. Implement all the recommendations of the review of ANRE carried out by the Energy Community Secretariat. Implement the new laws on electricity and on natural gas by undertaking the necessary actions prescribed by the law and by adopting the necessary secondary legislation. Fully implement the commitments and agreements of the Republic of Moldova, including those established among the goals of the financial programs of the IMF. Continue to take steps towards integrating the energy market of the Republic of Moldova with that of the EU. Bring into line the Law on energy efficiency in buildings and establish appropriate support mechanisms for energy efficiency measures in both public buildings and households. Based on the law on promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources, develop support schemes, administrative rules and other measures required to foster greater use of renewables.

11. Transport

Implement the reform and restructuring programme of the railway sector. Step up efforts to implement the EU aviation legislation in order to take full advantage of the Common Aviation Area Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova. Establish free and fair competition in the aviation sector, in particular include clauses on non-discriminatory access to the airport in the Chisinau airport concession, and restore effective competition in the ground handling sector. Develop economically important infrastructures, including through further implementation of projects for the development of the extended indicative TEN-T network.

12. Environment and climate action

Ensure continuation of administrative reforms and building up of proper administrative capacity to implement the environment and climate action chapters of the Association Agreement. Advance in approximation with the environmental acquis by adopting the main legal framework in the sector, namely the laws on Air Protection, Chemical Substances Management and Industrial Emissions (Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control). Implement the laws on Strategic Environmental Assessment and Waste Management.

In the field of mobility and people to people contacts:

13. Education, training, and youth

Enhance implementation of the new Education code at all levels of education. Increase the administrative capacity of the Ministry of Education and subordinated bodies. Carry out the Vocational Education and Training reform, in line with the objectives of the VET Development Strategy and Action Plan (2013-2020), in order to meet the labour market needs. Adopt a legal framework for the Sector Committees. Encourage the involvement of relevant stakeholders (including businesses and social partners) in all forms of lifelong learning for continuing professional development in order to bring them closer to the labour market needs. Carry out the implementation of the National Strategy of Youth Sector Development.

2.2 Political dialogue, Good Governance and Strengthening Institutions

Political dialogue and cooperation on reforms to be carried out in the framework of this Association Agenda seek to strengthen respect for democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities as enshrined in the core UN and Council of Europe Conventions and related protocols. Consistence should be ensured with the Council of Europe Action Plan, which will be applicable during the implementation of this Association Agenda.

- (i) Strengthening the stability, independence and effectiveness of institutions guaranteeing democracy and the rule of law in the Republic of Moldova, including through a comprehensive public administration reform and a reform of the public financial management

Short-term priorities

- Adopt and implement the revised competences of the Constitutional Court and the appointment procedures of its members, in close cooperation with the Council of Europe Venice Commission;

- Address any shortcomings identified by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe / Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), by the national civil society monitoring mission and by central public authorities in past elections, including the need to ensure transparent campaign financing, independent and unbiased mass media coverage and vote of the diaspora;
- Assess the possibility to enable direct financing of the political parties activity, of electoral campaigns/electoral contestants by citizens of the Republic of Moldova, from revenues, obtained outside the country, preventing at the same time foreign citizens, persons and states, from direct or indirect interference with political activity in the Republic of Moldova;
- Put in place a working legal framework to protect whistle-blowers;
- Implement the Reform of the territorial structure of the country by reducing the number of local authorities in line with National Decentralisation Strategy as well as PAR Strategy;
- Implement PAR Strategy and underlying strategies, developed in 2016 in consultation with OECD/SIGMA and the donor community;
- Strengthen co-ordination, monitoring and reporting mechanisms and capacities both at political and administrative level;
- Estimate costs of the Action Plan for PAR 2016-2018;
- Establish a budget in balance in accordance with the IMF agreement, with sufficient financial resources to implement planned reforms;
- Reform the State Chancellery;
- Clarify functions, roles and responsibilities of the main institutions and develop unified, written and aligned procedures and methodologies for inclusive and evidence-based policy development and co-ordination;
- Prepare the review of the legal framework for the civil service in view of amending it to cover all institutions exercising typical tasks of governmental administration and ensure that recruitment, promotion and dismissals are based on merit;
- Consolidate the role of State Secretaries as the highest-ranking civil servants in each line ministry in order to contribute to the professionalisation and de-politicisation of the public service;
- Enlarge the scope of data collection for the personnel registry, including data on salaries and gradually extend its use to all state institutions;
- Reorganise Governmental Institutions for increased accountability, effectiveness and efficiency, including the review of cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the state-owned enterprises performing administrative functions;
- Thoroughly implement legislation on decision transparency;
- Amend the Law on Access to Information to improve its implementation and set the necessary arrangements to monitor its implementation;
- Develop a general law on administrative procedures to enforce good administration principles and gradually harmonise special administrative procedures with the new law;
- Launch a territorial reform that could enable a maximisation of the resources made available to the citizens at local level;
- Update PFM strategy of the Republic of Moldova for 2013-20;
- Adopt a new Public Internal Financial Control (PIFC) strategy;
- Continue the reform of the parliamentary scrutiny and oversight of the budget; strengthen the transparency, oversight and accountability of public finance policy and management;
- Adopt the new draft Law on the the functioning of the Court of Accounts ensuring independence and efficiency in the public external audit.

Medium-term priorities

- In cooperation with the Council of Europe, explore necessary steps to strengthen institutional framework in order to foster resilience of the Republic of Moldova in the long term;
- Improve the exchange of information between the Government and the Parliament;
- Strengthen oversight by the Parliament over the implementation of the reforms and legislation;
- Ensure that presidential, parliamentary and local elections are carried out in a democratic way, in accordance with European standards;
- Examine possibility to review the state funding of political parties on the basis of international best practices, with the purpose to consider the results of the Presidential elections;
- Review the cap on individual and legal entities' donations to political parties, in accordance with the best international practices and in conformity with Venice Commission expertise;
- Pursue the implementation of the decentralisation strategy, in compliance with the Council of Europe's European Charter of Local Self-Government (Council of Europe Treaty Series No 122);
- Review the mechanisms of voter registration, according to the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations, in order to ensure the accuracy of the data;
- Develop and implement the Automated Information System 'Elections' Module — 'Financial Control' and the regulatory framework, that will automatise the process of reporting, collecting, analysing the financial reports of political parties and electoral candidates and will improve the public access to this information. Put in place effective sanctions in case of infringements and ensure the burden of proof on the origin of the funds is with the parties. Implement the possibility to confiscate unexplained assets;
- Put in place effective mechanisms to manage and coordinate the assistance flows in accordance to the needs of the Government;
- Continue with the reform of the public administration in line with the Principles of Public Administration (both central and local, as well as territorial reform), in consultation with and increasingly involving civil society, with a view to building an accountable, efficient, transparent and professional merit and evidence based civil service with its proper code of ethics, free from political pressures;
- In line with PAR Strategy, optimise the public administration at national and local level;
- Regularly use ex-ante impact assessments; ensure that costs of reforms are systematically estimated and establish inter-ministerial conflict resolution forums at both high administrative and political levels;
- Introduce a transparent and more competitive salary system for public employees in order to attract and retain talent;
- Provide easily accessible information to citizens about their rights to good administration, access to information, administrative justice and right to seek compensation, so that citizens know where and how to complain. Ensure effective and concrete follow-up to citizens' requests and complaints;
- Ensure institutional and organisational improvements necessary for strengthening Parliamentary oversight, including modalities for the cooperation with the public external audit;
- Strengthen the ability of the Ministry of Finance to perform its role as the central fiscal authority and ensure fiscal sustainability;
- Continue to improve PFM and effectively implement the updated PFM strategy;
- Establish a rolling multi-annual Public Investment Program, led by Ministry of Finance, in order to secure priority investments at national level in Multi-annual budget framework;
- Ensure institutional and organisational improvements necessary for strengthening external oversight, including further development of the external audit function of the Court of Accounts of the Republic of Moldova, in line with the standards of the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions, and modalities for the cooperation between the parliament and the public external audit;

- Carry out disciplinary procedures as appropriate and effectively apply sanctions;
- Gradually reform public accounting and external reporting standards;
- (ii) Further reforming the justice sector, in particular ensuring the independence, impartiality, professionalism and efficiency of the judiciary, including the prosecution, which should be free from political or any other undue interference. Some elements of the comprehensive reform of the justice sector may require constitutional amendments:

Short-term priorities

- Implement the current legislation relating to judges, prosecutors, lawyers and other legal professionals, to ensure zero tolerance for corruption and prevent all kinds of corrupt behaviour;
- Ensure recruitment of judges and prosecutors by an independent authority through transparent, merit-based and objective criteria and fair selection procedures, including mandatory written exams and a national pool of vacancies, in line with European standards;
- Ensure promotion of judges and prosecutors, including for chief prosecutors and in high courts, by an independent authority through transparent, merit-based and objective criteria and fair selection procedures in line with European standards;
- Ensure effective implementation of safeguards for the independence of judges;
- Ensure effective implementation of disciplinary rules and codes of ethics including procedural safeguards for judges and prosecutors and the autonomy of the Judicial Inspection towards Superior Council of Magistracy, as well as complaint mechanisms accessible to the public;
- Implement rules on functional immunity according to good practice and in full compliance with European standards;
- Implement the legislative package on integrity within the justice sector;
- Improve transparency and efficiency in the decision-making process of the Superior Council of Magistracy;
- Strengthen the independence of the Superior Council of Prosecutors in line with the provisions of the Law on Prosecution Service of 25 February 2016 and vigorously continue the comprehensive reform of the Prosecution Service, including the implementation of the new legislation;
- Ensure fair trial, access to justice and procedural rights in criminal proceedings in accordance with obligations of the Republic of Moldova under the European Convention of Human Rights, the case-law of the Court and other relevant Conventions of the Council of Europe by putting in place:
 - = legislation and measures aimed at guaranteeing the procedural rights of suspects and accused persons in criminal proceedings;
 - = legislation, measures and resources aimed at guaranteeing the rights for victims of crime for access to justice, protection, support and compensation, including under the criminal justice system;
- Strengthen implementation of legal aid and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms;
- Ensure the functioning of an effective electronic judicial case management system with reliable random case allocation and judicial statistics.

Medium-term priorities

- Ensure the independence of justice-sector institutions, so that they are not subject to political or any other form of pressure from the administration, the government or the parliament;

- Ensure full independence of all prosecutors and reduce the oversight role of the General Prosecutor's Office, as provided by the new Law on prosecution service;
- Ensure that National Institute of Justice delivers initial and continuous training according to identified needs;
- Demonstrate a track record of measures to strengthen integrity and accountability of the judiciary such as vetting and convictions for corruption-related offences;
- Work towards improving the public perception of independence, integrity, transparency and accountability of the judiciary;
- Make progress on a comprehensive reform of the prosecution, including the specialised prosecutors for organised crime and corruption;
- Make progress on the implementation of the Law on the optimisation of the judicial map, in line with the Action Plan approved by Parliament Decision no 21 of 3 March 2017;
- Improve access to justice, in particular for women and vulnerable groups;
- Work towards a substantial reduction of the duration of the proceedings on civil and criminal cases;
- Work towards increasing clearance rate of cases.

(iii) Ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms through comprehensive cooperation on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. This cooperation will include work in the following areas, to:

Human rights and fundamental freedoms

Short-term priorities

- Finalise and subsequently implement the new National Human Rights Action Plan, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups, and coordinate the planning and budget processes to allocate sufficient resources for its effective implementation;
- Establish a National Council and a Secretariat to draft, monitor and report on the implementation of the new National Human Rights Action Plan;
- Ensure the effective execution of judgments made by the European Court of Human Rights and create an efficient mechanism of Parliamentary control over such execution;
- Start implementing the Strategy for consolidation of interethnic relations 2017-2027 and adopt the relevant action plan;
- Advance with the pilot implementation of the European Charter for Minority and Regional Languages in 7 localities, as part of an effort of the Republic of Moldova to ratify the Charter;
- Complete the reform of the Ombudsman institution, by improving the Law on the Ombudsman No 52 of 3 April 2014, in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission and financial provision according to the Paris Principles;
- Ensure the functioning of the National Preventive Mechanism against Torture, in accordance with Art. 18, par. 3) of the Optional Protocol of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment;
- Ratify the Protocol no 12 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms;
- Adopt and implement the amendments to legislation on hate crime to bring it in line with European standards. Step up efforts to investigate and act upon instances of hate speech and hate crime and to ensure effective access to justice for victims.

Medium-term priorities

- Ensure the application of laws and regulations against discrimination on all grounds, including the Law on Ensuring Equality, and strengthen the capacity of the Council for Preventing and Eradicating Discrimination ('Equality Council');
- Consider the recommendations made by the Council of Europe's structures and experts regarding compliance with the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities, and implement them in agreement with these structures and experts. In this context, pay attention to ensuring the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, including through dialogue and consultations with the latter, also taking into consideration the relevant opinions of the Council of Europe Venice Commission;
- Enhance implementation of the legislation on accessibility for persons with disabilities. Increase accessibility to public buildings, transport and information for persons with disabilities;
- Ensure the effective implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including Articles 12 (Equal recognition before the law) and 14 (Liberty and security of person);
- Sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- Continue the deinstitutionalisation of children;
- Maintain effective pre- and non-judicial mechanisms for dispute settlement in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Continue to give access to information on citizens' rights and adequate legal solutions;
- Implement effective measures to avoid unjustified arrests and unlawful interceptions, taking into account that a proportionate level of intrusiveness may be necessary to ensure proper investigation of corruption or other types of offences;
- Promote and raise awareness of human rights and anti-discrimination in the judiciary, law enforcement and the administration;
- Implement the 1994 Law on the Special Legal Autonomous Status of Gagauzia on the basis of the 2002 Venice Commission and the 2013 OSCE recommendations;
- Safeguard procedural rights of persons in police and NAC detention and in remand.

Freedom of expression

Short-term priorities

- Continue work on ensuring the freedom of expression and independence of the media, in line with Council of Europe, European Union and OSCE recommendations;
- Develop and adopt a mass-media development strategy in line with European practices;
- Set up a regular dialogue to exchange best practices on freedom of the media, media pluralism, decriminalisation of defamation, protection of journalist sources, and cultural diversity in the media;
- Adopt a new Audiovisual Code fully in line with OSCE and CoE recommendations, along the lines of the 2011 draft;
- Create conditions for full independence of Public Broadcasters.

Civil society cooperation

Short-term priorities

- Involve civil society organisations, including representative employers' organisations and trade unions, in collecting information and monitoring policies;
- Adopt and ensure implementation of a Civil Society Development Strategy for 2017-2020.

Medium-term priorities

- Adopt a new Law on non-governmental organisations in line with international standards, which will inter alia improve the legal framework for civil society effective participation in decision-making process;
- Strengthen the framework of participation of civil society in developing and monitoring the implementation of public policies, including by amending the law on transparent decision making;
- Promote and strengthen the financial sustainability of civil society and consider introducing social contracting, expanding public grant programs, facilitating legal framework concerning donations;
- Develop the active civic and volunteering spirit.

*Ill-treatment and torture*Short-term priorities

- Effectively address any reported ill-treatment of detainees by law enforcement officials, in particular in pre-trial detention;

Medium-term priorities

- Put in place a comprehensive policy framework to prevent and combat impunity based on the guidelines on eradicating impunity for serious human rights violations (Council of Europe, 2011);
- Ensure effective investigation and sanctions for torture and ill-treatment.

*Children's rights*Medium-term priorities

- Implement the 2016-2020 Action Plan on the Child Protection Strategy for the years 2014-2020.

*Domestic violence*Short-term priorities

- Ensure implementation of the existing legislative and policy framework on domestic violence.

Medium-term priorities

- Ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

*Equal treatment*Medium-term priorities

- Ensure harmonisation with European standards as regards health and safety rules, rules on maternity leave, and rules on the reconciliation of parental and professional responsibilities;
- Promote women's participation in decision-making and public, political and business life, and carry out targeted activities to aim to equal participation and representation of men and women in these areas.

*Trade union rights and core labour standards*Medium-term priorities

- Continue work to ensure that trade union rights and core labour standards are upheld in accordance with European standards and International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions;
- Advance on ensuring gender equality in the labour market, with a particular focus on women's employment;
- Implement the legislation on combating child labour.

2.3 Foreign and security policy

Dialogue and cooperation in the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) aim at gradual convergence, including on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In particular, they will address conflict prevention and crisis management issues, regional stability, disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control and export control. Cooperation in this area will be based on common values and mutual interests, and will aim to increase policy harmonisation and effectiveness, making use of bilateral, international and regional fora. It will include work to:

Short-term priorities

- Sign the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova on security procedures for the exchange of classified information.

Medium-term priorities

- Continue to promote peaceful conflict resolution and international stability and security based on effective multilateralism;
- Develop cooperation on EU sanctions;
- Promote respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, and independence, as set out in the UN Charter and the OSCE Helsinki Final Act;
- Strengthen practical cooperation on conflict prevention and crisis management, by facilitating participation of the Republic of Moldova in EU-led civilian and military crisis management operations, and provide consultation and training activities in the CSDP area (on the basis of the Framework Participation Agreement in force from 1 July 2013 and the multilateral framework of the Eastern Partnership Panel on CSDP).

Terrorism, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and illegal arms exports

Short-term priorities

- Exchange information on terrorist organisations, groups, their activities and their support networks, in accordance with international law and the legislation passed by the parties, including via the operational and strategic cooperation agreement between the Republic of Moldova and Europol, as well as via the cooperation agreement between the Republic of Moldova and Eurojust;
- Ensure that the law on combating terrorism is human rights-based and undergoes review by the Venice Commission;
- Cooperate on risk-based customs controls that ensure the safety and security of goods that are imported, exported, or in transit;
- Cooperate in the prevention of terrorism;
- Adopt a comprehensive WMD counter-proliferation and CBRN strategy and related National Action Plan.

Medium-term priorities

- Cooperate with a view to strengthening international consensus on the human-rights-based fight against terrorism, including on the legal definition of terrorist acts;
- Continue to improve the legislative and regulatory national framework in the area of fighting terrorism, in particular in full respect for the rule of law, international human rights law, refugee and humanitarian law and in full accordance with relevant UN and Council of Europe Conventions, such as the 2005 Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (CETS 196) and its Additional Protocol, and the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism (CETS 198);
- Put stronger emphasis on understanding and tackling drivers of radicalisation and factors conducive to violent extremism;
- Explore possibilities for cooperation, including on capacity building, in the area of aviation (including airport) security and soft target protection;

- Develop ways of working together on the fight against arms trafficking and the destruction of stockpiles;
- Develop ways of working together and exchanging information on detecting and tracking illegal weapons;
- Cooperate on and contribute to countering the proliferation of WMDs and related materials, as well as their means of delivery, through full compliance with and national implementation of the parties' current obligations under international disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements, and other relevant international obligations;
- Set up an effective system of national export and transit control of goods related to WMDs, including a WMD-end-use control on dual-use technologies, with effective penalties for breaches of export controls;
- Tackle the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, including their ammunition, under current international agreements and UN Security Council resolutions, and commitments under other international instruments applicable in this area;
- Continue to cooperate in the area of conventional arms export control, in light of the EU's common position on control of exports of military technology and equipment.

The Transnistria conflict

Medium-term priorities

- Maintain functionality of all existing dialogue platforms and negotiation formats, aimed to identify viable solutions to the problems that people face on both banks of Nistru river and to comprehensively and peacefully settle the Transnistrian conflict based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognised borders with a special legal status for the Transnistrian region;
- Develop a vision on the Transnistrian conflict settlement as a basis for the engagement with the Transnistrian side;
- Maintain effective cooperation between the EU and the Republic of Moldova on settling the Transnistria conflict, and promoting confidence building measures, within agreed formats, including consultations on post-settlement arrangements;
- Strengthen dialogue, with the aim of explaining the benefits of the Association Agreement and ensuring its applicability in the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova, while taking measures to legalise the activity of economic operators from the left bank of the Nistru river;
- Continue constructive dialogue related to the situation at the central (Transnistrian) segment of the Republic of Moldova-Ukraine border with all relevant counterparts;
- Develop platforms of dialogue between representatives of civil society and media outlets from the right and left banks of the Nistru river.

The International Criminal Court

Short-term priorities

- Implement the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and its related instruments, with due regard to preserving its integrity.

2.4 Cooperation on freedom, security and justice

The Republic of Moldova is expected to continuously fulfil the requirements set in the four Blocks of the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation of 16 December 2010. The effective and sustainable implementation of all the benchmarks contained in the Action Plan, including those in Block 3 (Public Order and Security), is essential for maintaining the visa-free regime with the EU. In line with the revised visa waiver suspension mechanism ⁽¹⁾, visa-free travel can be suspended in cases where one or more of the benchmarks are no longer fulfilled. In case of a justified concern on the fulfilment of concrete benchmarks of the Action Plan, the Republic of Moldova will provide the European Union, on request, information.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2017/371 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 1 March 2017 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (revision of the suspension mechanism) (OJ L 61, 8.3.2017, p. 1).

Furthermore, the Parties duly note the recommendations obtained following the Peer Review missions organised in 2015 and 2016, aimed at assessing the justice, anti-corruption and anti-money-laundering sectors in the Republic of Moldova. In this regard, the Republic of Moldova commits to use those recommendations, together with the other EU recommendations, as well as with other recommendations of international organisations, for the development of the post-2016 policy document in the field of anti-corruption and of the post-2017 policy documents in the field of justice and anti-money laundering.

The parties will furthermore work together in the following areas:

Protection of personal data

Medium-term priorities

- Continue harmonisation of the national legal framework in the field of personal data protection to the EU law with a particular focus on Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽¹⁾ and Directive (EU) 2016/680 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽²⁾;
- Continue implementing the legal framework on personal data protection in all sectors in order to ensure a high level of data protection in line with the European instruments and standards;
- Continue to strengthen the capacity building of the National Centre for Personal Data Protection.

Combating organised crime

Short-term priorities

- Define and split in clear terms what are the competences and powers of the police to be implemented for the purpose of intelligence gathering and the collection and use of (forensic) evidence;
- To create and effectively enhance a financial investigations system focused on search, seizure and confiscation of assets received from organised crime;
- Annually publish an activity report of the specialised prosecutor in charge of fight against organised crime.

Medium-term priorities

- Further implement and strengthen throughout the territory the concept of intelligence-led policing requiring a well-developed system of risk and threat analysis and management (Europol's methodology applied in the context of its SOCTA).
- Clearly describe the tools (including Special Investigation Means when they are to be used) and the conditions under which they can be used in an investigation.

Police reform

Short-term priorities

- Finalise the establishment of an accountable, reliable and effective police organisation, integrated in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Ministry's political leadership will be restricted to establishing the police forces' strategic priorities and broad policies. No injunction right (neither positive nor negative) will exist as regards the police forces' operational activities;
- Implement community policing and ensure that citizens can easily approach police with information;
- Reinforce the accountability and ensure there is no undue influence on the police.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) (OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1).

⁽²⁾ Directive (EU) 2016/680 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by competent authorities for the purposes of the prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties, and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA (OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 89).

Medium-term priorities

- Implement the Public Order and Security Strategy, including as public order and crowd management are concerned.
- Continue the implementation of the Police Development Strategy 2016-2020, with a particular focus on modernising the police forces' (a) Human Resource Management, (b) management techniques and (c) operational capabilities (respect for fundamental human rights in dealing with police detainees; developing effective relationships with the general public; updating its ICT environment; enhancing crime scene investigation capacities and further develop its anti-corruption strategy);
- Adopt a Development Strategy for the Carabinieri troops and ensure progress in the implementation of the strategy;
- Establish an effective witness protection system (specialised unit) and offer the necessary guarantees to witnesses to be protected from intimidation and physical threats;
- Promote a culture of integrity and ethical values throughout Ministry of Internal Affairs and Police. Develop rules and standards of conduct to prevent and effectively sanction police wrongdoings. Set up tools to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the police activities;
- Establish a Joint Law Enforcement Training Centre (JLETC) in order to ensure adequate basic and specialised in service training, including highly specialised training where needed. Based on the 2012 Working Arrangement between the Republic of Moldova and the EU Police Academy (CEPOL), the JLETC will develop a close operational relationship with CEPOL;
- Improve the conditions of custody within the Police;
- On the basis of EU best practices, ensure that there is an independent police monitoring mechanism which will monitor the overall working of the police and the way in which all officials with police powers perform their policing activities.
- Increase the Police's rapid reaction response capacity.

*Police co-operation and databases*Short-term priorities

- Further develop the automated centralised database on both investigations and prosecutions (national e-case management system), in order to avoid the risk of overlapping criminal cases and failure to match cases that often have a large geographical or even international scope. Such a system should ideally cover all facets of the investigation/prosecution chain, including information on asset recovery, freezing and confiscation;
- Further improve the national statistical instrument in place for measuring the crime rate and clearing-up rate. It should be effectively used as a management tool in the development of new policy priorities.

Medium-term priorities

- Ensure that under a single administrative structure (Single Point of Contact — SPOC) the central units for international police cooperation (Europol National Unit and Interpol National Central Bureau) have access to relevant national and international databases;
- Step up cooperation and exchange of data between the Republic of Moldova and Europol (qualitatively and quantitatively) in cross-border criminal cases;
- Develop strategic analysis of crime phenomena, both at global and sectoral levels, and share it with competent law enforcement bodies and Europol;
- Develop multi-annual action plans defining the operational priorities of law enforcement agencies, on the basis of the Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment;
- Strengthen the exchange of information with the EU and its Member states on terrorism, illegal migration, money laundering and financial matters.

*Tackling illicit drugs*Short-term priorities

- Participate in the European information network on drugs and drug addiction (Reitox) of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and relevant experts meetings organised by the EMCDDA, within the limits of the available budget;
- Implement a clear allocation of tasks and co-ordination between authorities competent for drug demand reduction, as well as between authorities involved in reducing drug supply.

Medium-term priorities

- Extend co-ordination to all aspects of drugs policy including social and public-health aspects, enforcement measures, international co-operation and policy on youth;
- Approve and implement the 2017-2018 National Action Plan for the implementation of the National Antidrug Strategy for the years 2011-2018.

Trafficking in human beings

- Approve and implement the National Strategy for preventing and combating Trafficking in human beings for the years 2017-2022, which will cover also the national referral system.
- Further streamline the information flow by improving the communication and cooperation between Europol and the national multidisciplinary law enforcement units of the Republic of Moldova, as well as between these units themselves;
- Ensure capacity building in law enforcement institutions to ensure cooperation with EU agencies in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings.

Fighting child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation

- Strengthen the capacity of the relevant investigative unit to attempt to identify child victims of sexual abuse, in particular child pornography;
- Set up structures to conduct an individual assessment of each particular child victim of sexual abuse with a view to establishing specific assistance and support;
- Provide for a special representative for child victims of sexual abuse where the holders of parental responsibility are precluded from representing the child because of conflict of interest, or where the child is unaccompanied or separated from the family;
- Make available appropriate intervention measures or programmes to manage the individual risk linked to all convicted offenders for child sexual abuse or exploitation.

*Fighting cybercrime*Short-term priorities

- Strengthening cooperation with EC3 Europol.

Medium-term priorities

- Invest in building up capacity (including of criminal justice authorities), know-how and specialisation in countering cybercrime (tailored cybercrime actions, bilateral justice/police programmes);
- Reinforce cooperation to fight cybercrime and child sexual exploitation by aligning priorities and streamlining communication;

- Explore possibilities of cooperation specifically on the protection of critical infrastructures as described in Council Directive 2008/114/EC ⁽¹⁾, by also taking into account Directive (EU) 2016/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽²⁾, as well as the link to addressing hybrid threats, building on previous cyber resilience assistance programmes of the EU and other donors;
- Step up cooperation to enhance cyber resilience and preparedness: facilitate the development of the post-2020 National Cyber Security Strategy based on a multi-stakeholder approach, set up a national Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT), promote the establishment of appropriate coordination frameworks and structures among public sector entities and with the private sector;
- Work together to ensure implementation of the OSCE cyber confidence-building measures that aim to increase transparency and cooperation at regional and sub-regional levels;
- Implement the Budapest Convention, in particular as regards procedural law for the purpose of domestic investigations, public-private cooperation and international cooperation.

Prevention and fight against corruption and conflict of interest

Short-term priorities

- Implement the Law on Integrity;
- Implement the law that requires all relevant officials to provide a declaration of the assets they and their relevant close relatives own and to report on potential conflicts of interest in relation to their personal interests or those of close relatives, and ensure the effective implementation of the enforcement procedure. Correctness of the content of the declarations of assets/potential conflicts of interest should be assessed by National Integrity Authority (NIA) and related criminal investigation should be carried out by National Anti-corruption Centre (NAC). The assessments should be adequately prioritised, with primary focus on high-level declarations, including judges and prosecutors;
- Ensure sufficient follow-up on suspicious declarations and systematically apply sanctions (fines, disciplinary measures and others) in case of false declarations, late declarations or failure to declare assets. The burden of proof on the origin of the money or assets must be with the official. Continue to make public declarations of assets;
- Ensure gradual transition to online submission of declarations;
- Ensure NIA full functioning;
- Develop transparent, merit and professional based appointment mechanisms for the Integrity Council, management and integrity inspectors of the NIA in order to ensure that the NIA is independent and free of any political influences. Ensure that the NIA has access to the necessary registers, including state and private records, in order to ensure efficient verification of wealth and personal interests;
- Ensure representation of civil society in the Integrity Council;
- Adopt the law on proportional dissuasive sanctions for corruption and money laundering offences;
- Start to effectively implement the new Integrity and Anti-corruption Strategy as a strategic instrument designed to prevent and reduce corruption in line with EU values and standards. Strengthen the capacities of the Monitoring Group for the implementation of the National Integrity and Anticorruption Strategy in close cooperation of the Parliament, government, judiciary, private sector and civil society;
- Ensure effective cooperation with and assistance to the relevant EU institutions and bodies, including the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) for on-the-spot checks and inspections related to the management and control of EU funds, to be provided in line with the applicable rules and procedures.

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive 2008/114/EC of 8 December 2008 on the identification and designation of European critical infrastructures and the assessment of the need to improve their protection (OJ L 345, 23.12.2008, p. 75).

⁽²⁾ Directive (EU) 2016/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 concerning measures for a high common level of security of network and information systems across the Union (OJ L 194, 19.7.2016, p. 1).

Medium-term priorities

- Improve the mechanism for co-ordination and cooperation in the fight against corruption between anti-corruption agencies such as NAC, NIA, General Prosecutor, Internal Protection and Anti-Corruption Service of Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and Intelligence and Security Service;
- Establish an effective mechanism of coordination in anti-corruption, anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism financing within public administration at governmental level;
- Reinforce the role of the NAC in the fight against corruption with the aim of producing concrete results. Ensure it has sufficient budget and staffing, clear responsibilities, sufficient competencies and the necessary autonomy and that it is protected from undue political influences and cooperates well with other law enforcement institutions involved in the fight against corruption, especially the Anti-corruption prosecution office.
- Continue raising awareness on different forms and types of corruption and on how to prevent these. Information campaigns should be conducted on a regular basis. Communication tools and strategies shall be tailored to the audience concerned and their effect shall be regularly evaluated;
- Enhance the system for investigation and prosecution of high-level officials for cases of corruption, ensuring the transparency and impartiality of the judicial proceedings by among others creating conditions for open media coverage. In this regard, the Anticorruption Prosecution Office should focus on high-level corruption and strengthen its capacities in the fight against high-level corruption;
- Achieve more tangible results in the fight against corruption by improving the track record of the authorities combating corruption through more effective sanctions and real sentences, especially against high-level officials;
- Amend the legislation in order to narrow the mandate of the Anticorruption Prosecution Office to high-level corruption and transfer other corruption cases that have been investigated by the NAC to ordinary prosecutors;
- Develop and enhance a comprehensive and coherent legislative framework to promote integrity within public sector;
- Thoroughly investigate the bank frauds, with the aim of recovering the money diverted, and regularly report on progress in investigation in a transparent manner;
- Share the main results of the ongoing second-phase Kroll investigation with the EU, under the terms agreed with Kroll without jeopardising further investigations and the recovery of assets;
- Ensure inter-operation of the e-integrity system with all state and private records necessary for efficient verification of wealth and personal interests;
- Further implement the system of institutional integrity assessment by NAC and corruption risk management by public institutions.

*Anti-Money laundering and Countering Terrorism Financing and combatting financial crime*Short-term priorities

- Align the legislation with the fourth Directive on money-laundering and financing of terrorism;
- Increase the technical and operational capacities of the Financial Intelligence Unit in order to implement effectively all tasks in the AML/CFT area, especially in the field of improvement of financial intelligence;
- The Financial Intelligence Unit should increasingly and pro-actively tackle allegations of money laundering and terrorism financing, starting with those bodies under reporting obligation that systematically report suspicious transactions, which should be sanctioned in case of failure to report;
- Strengthen preventive freezing regime by allowing relevant reporting entities the power to suspend suspicious financial transactions;
- Set up a national Asset Recovery Service which promotes, through enhanced cooperation, the fastest possible EU-wide tracing of assets derived from crime.

Medium-term priorities

- Implement an overarching, financial crime and financial investigations policy/strategy covering all relevant authorities, including the prosecution, aimed at speeding up complex and lengthy investigations in the field of financial crime. Include a concept of parallel financial investigations and intelligence-led policing in the strategy, to allow pro-active enforcement measures on the basis of data analysis;
- Enhance and implement a robust anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing legislative framework that is in line with UN Security Council Resolutions and FATF recommendations and in compliance with the results of the mutual evaluations in the frame of Moneyval;
- Implement a robust and ambitious asset seizure and confiscation legislation that goes beyond the minimum standards established at EU level and thus also includes e.g. provisions on non-conviction based (or civil) confiscation.
- Enhance operational cooperation on confiscation, asset recovery and asset management through effective communication and exchange of best practices between the Asset Recovery Office of the Republic of Moldova and the EU;
- Enhance operational cooperation between financial intelligence-, police-, financial inspection, tax- and customs services and units via interoperability and data exchanges (for example, on the basis of tailor-made agreements on data exchange). Liaison officers between services should be appointed to facilitate operational cooperation. Temporary exchanges of staff for training purposes should be considered;
- In cooperation with the Joint Law Enforcement Training Center (cf. *supra*), establish training curricula with a clear accreditation process for financial crime investigators and analysts and enable and encourage colleagues from other fields to participate in training on financial investigations. The importance of financial investigations should be duly reflected in the training of investigators, prosecutors and judges;
- Develop the guidance and instructions for the bodies under reporting obligation that systematically report suspicious transactions in order to enhance the effectiveness of the implementation of the National Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Terrorism Financing legislation.

*Cooperation on migration, asylum and border management**Migration and Asylum*Short-term priorities

- Continue implementation of the readmission agreement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova, and continue providing assistance for the reintegration of citizens of the Republic of Moldova;
- Continue to provide information that aim to clarify the rights and obligations of visa-free travel, including information on rules regulating access to the EU labour market (including through the EU immigration portal), on the EU framework on legal migration (Directives on the conditions of entry and residence of certain categories of third country nationals) and on liability for abuse of rights under the visa-free regime, as well as on rights and obligations pertaining to the EU MS health systems;
- Continue to develop practical cooperation in the framework of the EU-Republic of Moldova Mobility Partnership.

Medium-term priorities

- Promote and enhance cooperation within the EU-Republic of Moldova Mobility Partnership through active participation of the EUMS with special focus on migration and development part;
- Reinforce the existing infrastructure (including detention centres) and staffing of responsible bodies to ensure the effective return of illegally residing and/or transiting third-country nationals from the territory of the Republic of Moldova, ensure respect for the human rights of immigrants in administrative detention;
- Continue to strengthen the existing integration framework through integration centres;

- Strengthen the activity of Bureau for migration and asylum, as the main actor in the system of accounting and migration flows management, by: (1) strengthening the legal framework, reception conditions and foreigners documentation, (2) strengthening the regional services in combating the illegal stay of foreigners and in counting foreigners, (3) improving infrastructure, as well as, allocating necessary financial and human resources;
- Continue to strengthen the system of collection and analysis of data about migration flows and asylum by updating the Extended Migration Profile and continue drawing up the evaluation and risk analysis reports on migration and asylum;
- Continue effective implementation of legislation on asylum, which provides a solid framework for the protection of those who need international protection, strengthening the infrastructure of the Accommodation Centre;
- Train the civil servants, MIA employees, judges and magistrates on asylum and migration;
- Pursue an integrated approach in the diaspora field and consolidate national and local authorities capacities on diaspora related matters;
- Develop more effective ways to promote circular migration.

Border management

Short-term priorities

- Further strengthen border management and maintain the high quality of border checks and border surveillance, and extend and upgrade fixed- and mobile video surveillance facilities;
- Enhance joint border management at the EU-Republic of Moldova border, including via joint border control and exchange of information (including pre-arrival).

Medium-term priorities

- Continue to provide adequate infrastructure, technical equipment, IT systems, and financial and human resources, in accordance with Integrated Border Management (IBM) Strategy and action plan of the Republic of Moldova.
- Continue to strengthen the cooperation in border management with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex);
- Strengthen the border coordination system at national level;
- Upgrade the situational picture at national and local level by strengthening risk analysis, information analysis and information exchange with national and international partners.

Legal cooperation

Medium-term priorities

- Step up cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and Eurojust (qualitatively and quantitatively) in cross-border criminal cases;
- Continue to strengthen judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters by:
 - = Acceding to and implementing multilateral conventions on civil judicial cooperation and, in particular, the 1970 Convention on Taking of Evidence Abroad in Civil or Commercial Matters;
 - = Acceding to and implementing multilateral conventions on the protection of children, especially the Conventions of the Hague Conference on Private International Law in the field of family law;
 - = Preparing the ground for accession and implementation of the 1996 Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Cooperation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children, in particular by assessing national capacities and resources;

- Strengthen judicial cooperation in criminal matters by acceding to and implementing the relevant conventions, especially those of the Council of Europe.

2.5 Trade and trade related matters (DCFTA)

The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area makes up an extensive part of the Association Agreement. It is therefore expected that implementation of this part, contained in Title V (Trade and Trade-related matters) of the Agreement, will be granted a level of priority commensurate with its importance in the overall context of the Association Agreement and in the framework of EU-Republic of Moldova relations.

Trade in goods

The parties will work together to implement the provisions on market access for goods, including energy, in particular through joint consultations, to:

Short-term priorities

- Make further improvements in the area of trade balance statistics in order for the parties to correctly continue applying the anti-circumvention mechanism;
- Cooperate on implementing the roadmap for improving competitiveness in the Republic of Moldova;
- Exchange information on market-access-related developments in the Republic of Moldova and its policy on market access;
- Implement measures to improve the business climate for business operators in trade.

Medium-term priorities

- Increase the export capacity of the Republic of Moldova, including through the launch of company-individual export development financial and non-financial support (grant) schemes;
- Strengthen cooperation between the EU and the Republic of Moldova in the process of preparation and implementation of legislation that may be required to implement DCFTA provisions;
- Eliminate customs duties on goods originating from the EU in accordance with Annex XV-D of AA;
- Ensure compliance with trade-related energy provisions;
- Implement the 2018-2020 export elements of the National Strategy for Investment Attraction and Export Promotion 2016-2020 including a mid-term review of this strategy in 2018.

Technical regulations, standardisation and related infrastructure

The parties will work together to achieve compliance with EU technical regulations, standardisation, metrology, accreditation, conformity assessment procedures and the market surveillance system as provided for in the Association Agreement and more specifically its DCFTA part.

The preparations will include work to:

Short-term priorities

- Exchange information on fulfilment of commitments to approximate domestic legislation to the Union *acquis*, as specified in the relevant annexes to the Agreement, and on its enforcement;
- Strengthen administrative capacities of relevant government bodies, institutions and agencies.

Medium-term priorities

- Develop and modernise the infrastructure related to the administration of technical regulations, standardisation, metrology, accreditation, conformity assessment procedures and the market surveillance system, including creation of a national information system;
- Enhance cooperation with EU organisations such as CEN, Cenelec, ETSI, Euramet, EA, Welmec;
- Exchange information on other relevant aspects of the plans of the Republic of Moldova in the area of technical barriers to trade, and the applicable timeframes;
- Design and implement, in cooperation with private sector's representative bodies in the Republic of Moldova, an in-depth information, counselling and consulting Campaign/Action in view of assisting business community in the Republic of Moldova to better understand the EU product rules and requirements for placing products on the market;
- Cooperate in the preparatory process for the Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products (ACAA).

Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures

The parties will work together to bring sanitary and phytosanitary standards for food and feed, plant health, and animal health and welfare legislation and practice in the Republic of Moldova closer in line with those of the EU, as set out in the relevant annexes to the Association Agreement. This cooperation will include work to:

Short-term priorities

- Simplify the agro-food products import/export certification;
- Develop and implement Food Safety Strategy for 2017-2022;
- Reinforce cooperation between the National Food Safety Agency and Ministry of Agriculture in order to prepare, adopt and implement legislative reforms in the SPS area;
- Strengthen administrative capacity by training staff in responsible governmental and executive bodies and agencies to prepare and implement legislation in line with EU law;
- Organise information campaigns with related agencies, businesses and NGOs on the requirements for accessing the EU market, and with civil society on the consumer aspects of food and feed safety;
- Obtain internationally recognised accreditation of all laboratories involved in official controls in order to fulfil SPS requirements for export and strengthen animal, plant health and food safety in the internal market of the Republic of Moldova.

Medium-term priorities

- Re-organise and develop capacities of the National Food Safety Agency, based on the provisions of the future new Food Safety Strategy 2017-2022;
- Complete implementation of the current Food Safety Strategy of the Republic of Moldova, with a particular focus on the quality of legislation and enforcement capacity, and address any identified shortcomings;
- Approximate domestic laws to the Union *acquis* listed in the relevant annexes to the Agreement, and ensure their effective implementation and enforcement;
- Further improve infrastructure and related capacity necessary to implement the legislation, in particular in the areas of animal health, plant health, food safety laboratories and Border Inspection Posts, in line with EU requirements;
- Finalise work on setting up an early warning system for food and feed, animal health and plant health safety.

Customs and trade facilitation

The parties will work together to bring the legislation of the Republic of Moldova in line with EU law, the EU Customs Blueprints and the international standards listed as defined in Chapter 5 and the relevant annexes to the Association Agreement. This cooperation will include work to:

Short-term priorities

- Align the legislation of the Republic of Moldova with the European Union Customs Code;
- Continue implementation of the Strategic Framework for Customs Cooperation;
- Continue to modernise the customs service, and its infrastructure, and to organise staff training, in particular to reinforce service-oriented and corruption-free culture in the Republic of Moldova;
- Draw up a roadmap for the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the Convention on Common Transit Procedure and set up a project team;
- Strengthen measures to fight against fraud and to prevent illicit trade, including in excisable products, in particular through enhanced cooperation under the Protocol on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters;
- Ensure effective enforcement of the legislation of the Republic of Moldova on protection of Geographical Indications and Intellectual Property Rights, and provide appropriate training to the customs officials in this regard.

Medium-term priorities

- Develop regulation for the implementation of the new Customs Code;
- Align the Authorised Economic Operator system of the Republic of Moldova to that of the EU, with the prospect of mutual recognition;
- Align legislation and establish the conditions for the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the Convention on Common Transit Procedure;
- Continue to simplify and modernise customs procedures and ensure their effective implementation;
- Cooperate on risk-based customs control and sharing of relevant information that contributes to improved risk management and security of the supply chains, facilitation of legitimate trade and safety and security of goods imported, exported or in transit;
- Step up procedures for the swift accession to and implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products.

Rules of origin

The parties will work together to implement rules of origin laid out in the protocol to the Association Agreement and deriving from the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin. This cooperation will include work to:

Short-term priorities

- Discuss and, if necessary, review the current procedures applied by the customs service of the Republic of Moldova in certifying and verifying the origin of goods.

Medium-term priorities

- Help the Republic of Moldova implement its obligations arising from its accession to the Convention;
- Provide training on certification and verification of preferential origin to the customs service of the Republic of Moldova.

Establishment, trade in services and electronic commerce

The parties will continue their dialogue on establishment, trade in services and electronic commerce according to the relevant provisions of the Association Agreement. They will implement commitments made in the services areas, as specified in the relevant annexes to the Association Agreement. This cooperation will include work to:

Short-term priorities

- Provide training and sufficient administrative capacity to cope with the approximation of legislation;
- Ensure regular exchange of information on the envisaged or ongoing legislative work in areas selected for approximation and conduct dialogue for this purpose;
- Ensure that the legal framework for services and establishment in the Republic of Moldova reflects the rights and obligations and enables effective implementation of market access commitments deriving from the DCFTA.

Current payments and movement of capital

The parties will continue their dialogue on capital movements and payments, in particular with a view to monitoring compliance with all existing commitments of the Association Agreement.

Public procurement

The parties will work together on implementation by the Republic of Moldova of the Procurement Chapter of the Association Agreement and the related reforms. This cooperation will include work to:

Short-term priorities

- Coordinate the harmonisation of the public procurement legal and institutional framework in the Republic of Moldova with the European Commission;
- Provide precise and timely information on developments in the legislation of the Republic of Moldova, in particular for planned legislative work affecting procurement policy and enforcement and on the development of the institutional set-up;
- Further implement the public procurement strategy of the Republic of Moldova, ensuring a well-functioning, competitive, accountable and transparent procurement system that engenders and secures the confidence of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, and the international community in the procurement function;
- Put in place and implement procurement legislation in the field of utilities, concessions and public-private partnerships, in alignment with the relevant EU legislation;
- Ensure that the independent National Complaint Settlement Agency has sufficient administrative capacity to provide effective remedies in line with the relevant EU legislation;
- Develop the necessary competences and administrative capacity in the bodies responsible for overseeing the implementation of procurement policy;
- Align the remedies system with the European acquis on standards of independence, probity and transparency, which provides for rapid and competent handling of complaints;
- Develop the necessary competences and administrative capacity fostering increased efficiency of the public procurement processes, including those aspects which can contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth of the Republic of Moldova.

Medium-term priorities

- Continue implementing the public procurement strategy of the Republic of Moldova;
- Ensure the national public procurement reform through gradual alignment with the relevant and up-to-date EU legal framework and ensure its proper implementation and enforcement;

- Define procurement rules for public undertakings in line with EU standards and best practices;
- Further implement eProcurement and improve the functionalities of the relevant IT tool;
- Consider creating centralised purchasing bodies and ensure that all contracting authorities/entities are appropriately staffed and have the necessary resources to conduct their activities.

Intellectual property rights (IPR)

The parties will work together to bring legislation in the Republic of Moldova in line with EU law and international standards on the protection of intellectual property rights and will ensure the effective protection of all IPR, including geographical indications, as specified in the Association Agreement. This cooperation will include work to:

Short-term priorities

- Take measures to increase public awareness in the field of intellectual property protection and ensure effective dialogue with rights holders;
- Ensure proper implementation and enforcement of domestic legislation in line with EU standards in this area, including on protection of Geographical Indications, and develop monitoring tools for the implementation and enforcement of IPR as per the Association Agreement;
- Provide adequate training on protection of Geographical Indications to officials of the relevant administrations and members of the judiciary.

Medium-term priorities

- Ensure that right holders from both parties have an adequate and effective level of protection of their IPR and that adequate measures are in place to enforce these rights;
- Strengthen the enforcement capacity of the responsible governmental bodies and executive agencies, including the customs service of the Republic of Moldova, and regularly report on the situation of administrative capacity;
- Ensure the existence of a proper legal framework to guarantee access to justice for right holders and the availability and effective implementation of penalties;
- Consolidate the relevant institutional structures, as well as the State Agency on Intellectual Property and collecting societies; strengthen cooperation with third-country authorities, collective management organisations and industry associations;
- Implement the standards embedded in the Enforcement Directive 2004/48/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽¹⁾ and Regulation (EU) No 608/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽²⁾;
- Take effective measures against counterfeiting and piracy and ensure effective implementation of the enforcement legislation and of penalties for infringing intellectual property rights on the basis of the IPR National Strategy up to 2020, and produce regular reports based on tangible and measurable targets and data.

Competition

The parties will work together to implement the competition chapter of the Association Agreement and related reforms. This cooperation will include work to:

Medium-term priorities

- Ensure that the institutional framework of the Republic of Moldova and its administrative capacity guarantee the effective implementation of the competition legislation in an impartial manner and ensure a level-playing field for all economic operators;

⁽¹⁾ Directive 2004/48/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the enforcement of intellectual property rights (OJ L 157, 30.4.2004, p. 45).

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) No 608/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 concerning customs enforcement of intellectual property rights and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1383/2003 (OJ L 181, 29.6.2013, p. 15).

- Strengthen dialogue on the experience of enforcing legislation in this area, as well as on other legislative developments related to competition, including by providing training for the authorities and ad-hoc expert advice on the general enforcement of state aid rules.

Transparency

The parties will pay special attention to work that aims to:

Short-term priorities

- Develop a government's communication strategy and define key themes to focus administration's communication efforts;
- Strengthen government communication office's strategic planning capabilities;
- Discuss best practices and experiences of transparent policy-making, notably by engaging civil society in the policy dialogue;
- Exchange information and provide relevant training, including on communication mechanisms and stakeholder consultations;
- Conduct seminars and other events for the wider public, aimed at explaining the implementation of the Association Agreement and the approximation process.

Medium-term priorities

- Respect the commitments on transparency in trade-related policy-making and consider the necessary mechanisms that may need to be put in place;
- Enhance free and easy access to public information granted by the law.

Trade and sustainable development

The parties will continue their dialogue and work on the issues covered by the relevant chapter of the Association Agreement. This will include work to:

Short- and medium-term priorities

- Exchange information on the implementation of the relevant domestic policy framework or of international commitments related to sustainable development;
- Discuss the effective implementation of commitments under this chapter with regard to stakeholder involvement and civil society dialogue;
- Ensure that the labour inspection remains in compliance with ILO standards and EU principles;
- Exchange best practices and relevant experience.

The parties will bear in mind that the priorities relating to trade unions' rights and core labour standards in section 2.2 and the priorities identified in section 2.6 (*Employment, social policies and equal opportunities*) are highly relevant for implementation of the 'Trade and Sustainable Development' chapter, and should therefore be addressed in relation to this part of the Association Agreement.

2.6 Economic development and Market Opportunities

The Parties will work together to support the Republic of Moldova in establishing a fully functioning market economy and gradually bringing its policies more in line with EU policies, in accordance with the guiding principles of macro-economic stability, sound public finances, a strong financial system and a sustainable balance of payments. In particular, this cooperation shall contribute to achieving the following objectives:

Short-term priorities

- Implement the reform program agreed with the International Monetary Fund;
- Start to implement, once adopted, the macro-financial assistance operation agreed with the EU.

Medium-term priorities

- Complete implementation of the reform program agreed with the International Monetary Fund;
- Fully implement, once adopted, the macro-financial assistance operation agreed with the EU;
- Monitor macroeconomic developments, discuss key policy challenges and exchange information on best practices by strengthening the regular macroeconomic dialogue in order to improve the quality of economic policymaking;
- Continue to strengthen the independence, regulatory powers and capacity of the National Bank of the Republic of Moldova and the National Commission for Financial Markets. Share EU experience on monetary and exchange rate policy as well as financial and banking sector regulation and supervision policies, to further develop the capabilities of the Republic of Moldova in these areas;
- Improve the sustainability and governance of public finances, by implementing fiscal reforms, including improvement of the implementation of the parliamentary budget oversight;
- Continue to develop open, competitive and transparent privatisation rules and procedures, and implement them in line with best EU practices.

Company law, accounting and auditing, and corporate governance

The parties will work together to prepare the Republic of Moldova for implementation of EU law and the international instruments mentioned in the relevant annexes to the Association Agreement, in particular to:

Short-term priorities

- Approximate legislation of the Republic of Moldova on auditing and accounting to the EU's and international instruments as listed in Annex II of AA;
- Exchange timely, relevant and precise information about the state-of-play of existing legislation and its compliance with EU law, based on the format agreed between the parties, to implement EU law in line with the agreed timetable;
- Identify areas in which training, capacity-building and expertise should be provided;
- Simplify the system of inspectorates and various inspection bodies to increase efficiency and reduce scope for corruption with the ultimate objectives to improve the business environment and to enhance law and standards enforcement.

Medium-term priorities

- Develop the administrative capacity of the state institutions of the Republic of Moldova involved in the implementation of company law, accounting and auditing, and corporate governance;
- Initiate discussions about the establishment of a register of beneficial ownership for companies.

Employment, social policies and equal opportunities

The parties will work together in order to:

Short-term priorities

- Ensure conditions for effective implementation of the Employment Strategy for 2017-2020;
- Ensure that basic conditions are in place to allow for effective functioning of the labour inspection;
- Continue to promote social dialogue, including through capacity-building of social partners.

Medium-term priorities

- Continue effective implementation of the Employment Strategy for 2017-2020;
- Implement the EU law in the area of health and safety at work, labour law and working conditions, as mentioned in the relevant annexes to the Association Agreement, and in particular to:
 - = strengthen administrative and enforcement capacity in the areas of health and safety at work and labour law, notably the labour inspectorate and relevant judiciary bodies;
 - = build the capacity of social partners (e.g. training on EU legislation and standards on health and safety, and on labour law);
- Develop a strategic approach to employment, aiming at more and better jobs with decent working conditions, better matching of skills and jobs in the labour market and promoting active support and efficient employment services, promote inclusive labour market; implement the decent work country programmes agreed between the ILO and the Republic of Moldova;
- Strengthen the capacity of the administration in charge of developing and implementing employment and social policies, notably employment services and social services.

Consumer protection

To prepare for implementation of EU law and the international instruments mentioned in relevant annex to the Association Agreement, the parties will work together to:

Short-term priorities

- Revise all consumer protection *acquis* in the Republic of Moldova adopted to date as per the recently adopted EU *acquis* in this area (as listed in Annex IV of AA);
- Implement the Multi-Annual Consumer Protection Agency (CPA) Institutional Development Plan;
- Implement the Multi-Annual National Food Safety Agency (ANSA) Institutional Development Plan.

Medium-term priorities

- Establish and activate a national system allowing efficient communication between national stakeholders about and recall of dangerous non-food consumer products;
- Establish and activate a system of information exchange about dangerous food consumer products, based on an EU-model rapid alert system for food and feed;
- Integrate the different food safety check points (border inspection point, plant health and animal health services and National Centre for Crop and Soil Testing and Certification) into one integrated and managed MIS System;
- Further develop and enforce risk-based management analysis control procedures for food and non-food products;
- Periodically assess the Multi-Annual CPA Institutional Development Plan and if necessary, revise it;
- Periodically assess the Multi-Annual ANSA Institutional Development Plan and if necessary, revise it;
- Further align the SPS legal and normative frameworks of the Republic of Moldova with the EU *acquis*;
- Strengthen the administrative capacity of consumer protection enforcement in the Republic of Moldova, notably by training government officials and other consumer interest representatives on the transposition of EU legislation and its subsequent implementation and enforcement.

Statistics

The parties will work together to bring legislation in the Republic of Moldova closer in line with EU law in the field of statistics. This cooperation will include work to:

Short-term priorities

- Approve the Law on official statistics developed based on the Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and Council ⁽¹⁾ on community statistics and based on generic law on official statistics for Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asia countries;
- Approve NUTS Classification following the Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽²⁾ with further amendments and adjustments;
- Disseminate the final results of Population and Housing Census (PHC) 2014 and improve population statistics by extending the use of administrative data sources;
- Develop estimations for regional accounts following the SNA 1993/ESA 1995 methodology;
- Ensure the professional and institutional independence of the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova in the implementation of the forthcoming reform of the public administration through maintaining its current status and place in the public administration.

Medium-term priorities

- Ensure the calculations of the 'Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices' (HICP) according to EU standards;
- Implement SNA 2008/ESA 2010 methodology and the recalculation of time series for the main macroeconomic indicators according to the approved methodology;
- Implement a quality management system in official statistics, following the European standards.

Taxation

The parties will strengthen cooperation aiming to improve and develop the tax system and administration of the Republic of Moldova based on EU and international standards. This will include preparation to gradually bring legislation in the Republic of Moldova more in line with EU law and the international instruments mentioned in annex to the Association Agreement, and in particular work to:

Short-term priorities

- Harmonise the tax code of the Republic of Moldova on VAT and excises with the relevant EU directives according to the provisions of Annex VI of AA;
- Continue developing cooperation with the OECD and with tax administrations of EU Member States by exchanging new experiences and trends in the field of taxation.

Medium-term priorities

- Improve and simplify tax legislation;
- Adopt measures aiming at ensuring fair and effective imposition and collection of direct taxes;

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2009 on European statistics and repealing Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1101/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the transmission of data subject to statistical confidentiality to the Statistical Office of the European Communities, Council Regulation (EC) No 322/97 on Community Statistics, and Council Decision 89/382/EEC, Euratom establishing a Committee on the Statistical Programmes of the European Communities (OJ L 87, 31.3.2009, p. 164).

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003 on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) (OJ L 154, 21.6.2003, p. 1).

- Approximate legislation of the Republic of Moldova on VAT and excise duty exemptions to the EU's legislation in accordance with Annex VI of AA;
- Improve international tax cooperation to enhance good governance in the tax area, i.e. by implementing the principles of transparency, exchange of information and fair tax competition;
- Improve the capacity of the tax administration by strengthening change management, implement the institutional and the operational reform, contribute to the European integration process and modernise information technology;
- Improve the capacity of the tax administration to avoid the accumulation of arrears, to ensure effective tax collection and to reinforce the fight against tax fraud and tax avoidance;
- Take measures to harmonise policies to combat fraud and the smuggling of excisable products.

Financial services

The parties will work together to prepare the Republic of Moldova for the modernisation of its financial regulatory and supervisory framework, so as to conform itself to internationally agreed regulatory standards in the field of financial services, using EU legislation and international instruments referred to in the relevant annexes to the Association Agreement, including the Title IV (Economic and other sectoral cooperation) of this agreement, as a reference to develop a set of rules appropriate for the Republic of Moldova. This cooperation shall include the following actions and contribute to achieving the following objectives:

Short-term priorities

- Take steps to ensure shareholder transparency and guarantee financial stability of the insurance market;
- Ensure that the cases of frauds that affected the banking sector of the Republic of Moldova in 2014 are made subject to a thorough, transparent and impartial investigation, with a view to recovering the diverted funds and to bringing the responsible persons to justice;
- Further improve the legal framework by providing the necessary instruments and measures (e.g. increasing the responsibility of shareholders, imposing tougher sanctions) in order to address the factors which lead to the banking fraud in 2014 and to prevent similar fraudulent transactions at all levels;
- Progressively develop and adopt a deposit insurance framework, in line with internationally agreed standards;
- Adopt the law on non-bank credit organisations developed by the National Commission of Financial Markets;
- Establish contacts and exchange information with the EU financial supervisors. In particular, the EU will provide the necessary support to the authorities of the Republic of Moldova in concluding agreements on information exchange and cooperation in the field of financial services with the relevant EU regulatory and supervisory authorities (e.g. the European Central Bank and the authorities from EU member states);
- Exchange timely, relevant and precise information about the state-of-play of the existing legislation in the Republic of Moldova;
- Identify areas in which training, capacity-building and expertise should be provided.

Medium-term priorities

- Create a new regulatory and supervisory framework conform with internationally agreed regulatory standards, including new supervisory approach, tools and instruments;
- Put in place a comprehensive framework for improving corporate governance and risk management in the banking financial sector;
- Develop a macro-prudential supervision framework;

- Build up capacity to implement the new legislation in the financial sector;
- Improve the administrative capacity of supervisory authorities in accordance with internationally agreed standards;
- Develop national legislation on preventing and combatting money laundering and the financing of terrorism, in particular by: implementing EU legislation in these areas; strengthening cooperation with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the Council of Europe, in particular the latter's Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL), any other relevant authorities in EU Member States; and signing Memoranda of Understanding between the financial intelligence authorities of the Republic of Moldova and EU Member States;
- Develop cooperation between state authorities and organisations responsible for the supervision of the implementation of National Anti-Money laundering and Countering Terrorism Financing legislation.

Industrial and enterprise policy

The parties will work together to improve the business and regulatory environment in the Republic of Moldova, to stimulate investments and business activities by all types of companies, with special attention to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), including microenterprises. This cooperation will include work to:

Short-term priorities

- Implement the SME Sector Development Strategy for 2012-2020 and its corresponding Action Plan in line with the new SME law, with the country's revised Competitiveness Roadmap and with the National Strategy for Investment Attraction and Export Promotion 2016-2020 and its corresponding Action Plan;
- Develop an industrial policy focussed on infrastructure development and innovation;
- Effectively implement the Programme on Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs (COSME) which includes such initiatives as the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, cluster cooperation projects, etc., through strengthening the capacity of relevant institutional and private sector stakeholders in the Republic of Moldova;
- Implement initiatives to strengthen innovation capacities, in line with the new EU4Innovation initiative launched in the Eastern Partnership, fostering the development of policy measures and incentives for supporting innovative businesses.

Medium-term priorities

- Implement the country-specific roadmap and the recommendations of the SBA (Small Business Act) Assessment;
- Link SME development to the opportunities created by the DCFTA including through business (support) networks (such as the Enterprise Europe Network) and clusters, and finalise the development of a dedicated cluster policy within this context;
- Strengthen the role of business and SME associations (including sectoral associations) in order to improve Public-Private Dialogue;
- Implement the conceptual, legislative and operational framework stimulating the development of industrial production through modernisation and innovation as an employment generator, including through clusters where economically relevant, in the Republic of Moldova. In this regard, further develop and implement the new industrial policy.

Mining and raw materials

The parties will exchange information on mining and raw materials to achieve a better understanding of their respective strategic directions and policies. The discussions will take place through the dedicated Subcommittee.

Tourism

The parties will work together to:

Medium-term priorities

- Establish contacts to strengthen the development of a competitive and sustainable tourism industry and outlining the steps needed to deepen the collaboration between the Republic of Moldova and EU operators in the field of tourism;
- Continue to exchange best practices and share knowledge, training and education in the field of tourism.

Agriculture and rural development

To cooperate in the policy and legislative approximation to the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and, in particular, to respect the timeframe commitments on the specific areas laid down in the relevant annexes to the Association Agreement, the parties will work together to:

Short-term priorities

- Implement General Law on subsidising principles in Agriculture and Rural Development thus improving policy implementation in this area;
- Develop Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry's capacities in agricultural statistics and economic analysis.

Medium-term priorities

- Develop and implement the policy, legal and institutional framework (including food safety requirements, quality policy, organic farming and marketing standards) in the area of agriculture and rural development;
- Develop, promote and implement sectorial programmes for specific agricultural sub-sectors;
- Improve the competitiveness of agricultural production and the diversification of economic activities in rural areas;
- Develop an up-to-date, transparent land cadastre as a basis for monitoring land use, as well as facilitating land reform and consolidation of agricultural holdings, with a view to improving the structural situation of the agri-food sector and the implementation of agriculture and rural development policies;
- Improve the sustainable use of land in the agri-food sector;
- Improve the sustainable use of water resources in the agri-food sector, by using new technologies;
- Develop capacities of central and local administrations on rural development policies;
- Strengthen the capacity of the Paying Agency to ensure transparency, efficiency and predictability of disbursed state aid;
- Reduce vulnerability of the agricultural sector to climatic hazards.

Information society/Digital Economy and Society

The parties will cooperate to align the country's digital environments to the EU's Digital Single Market. This will create in the Republic of Moldova jobs, growth and innovation, particularly benefiting the young in terms of opportunities for education and employment, locally or at a distance, and for starting up low initial capital businesses. In particular, the parties will cooperate to support the Republic of Moldova for the implementation of EU *acquis* mentioned in the relevant annexes of the Association Agreement in order to:

Short-term priorities

- Strengthen the independence and administrative capacity of the national regulator for electronic communications, in order to ensure its ability to take appropriate regulatory measures and enforce its decisions and all applicable regulations and to promote fair competition in the markets;
- Advance the implementation of 112 Single European Emergency Number in the Republic of Moldova.

Medium-term priorities

- Strengthen the digital sector by exchanging information and experience on the implementation of the Digital Single Market (DSM). Promote in the Republic of Moldova the alignment to the EU legislation, best practices and norms *inter alia*, on: eCommerce; data protection through network resilience; national cyber security strategy definition; national CERT capacity building; and national model definition for rural broadband implementation;
- Enhance the level of cyber security and the protection of personal data in electronic communications, in order to ensure the availability and integrity of electronic public services and to increase the trust of citizens in these services.

Public health

The parties will cooperate to:

Short-term priorities

- Facilitate the active participation of the Republic of Moldova in the EU Health Programme 2014-2020.

Medium-term priorities

- Foster health sector reforms and support the Republic of Moldova in preparing for the implementation of EU health *acquis*, as mentioned in the annexes to the Association Agreement, in particular concerning legislation in the areas of tobacco control, quality and safety of substances of human origin (blood tissues, organs, and cells) and health threats in line also with the international obligations of the Republic of Moldova under the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and the International Health Regulations;
- Strengthen preparedness, training and epidemiological surveillance and control of communicable diseases through *inter alia*: 1) participation of the Republic of Moldova in the Mediterranean Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training (MediPIET); 2) cooperation with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control; 3) ensuring country ownership and sustainability of national HIV, tuberculosis and hepatitis prevention and control programmes; 4) strengthening of immunisation programmes;
- Ensure the accession to and subsequent implementation of the Protocol for Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products;
- Strengthen national multi-sectorial action to fight anti-microbial resistance *inter alia* by strengthening surveillance, prudent use of antimicrobials and infection control in health care settings.

Urban Planning and Construction

Medium-term priorities

- Implement Urban Planning and Construction Code for years 2017-2020, through the development and adoption of the secondary legislation (draft laws and Government decisions) in line with the 'Moldova 2020 Strategy';
- Undertake measures to ensure the spatial planning schemes of the national, regional and rayon levels, as well as master plans and municipal development plans, in order to promote integrated regional development policy.

Regional development

The parties will cooperate in the framework of regional development policies and the EU-Republic of Moldova Dialogue on Regional Policy, in the view of the efforts of the Republic of Moldova to:

Short-term priorities

- Further enhance the participation of the Republic of Moldova in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region in order to benefit from exchange of experience and best practice with participating regions from EU Member States;
- Improve institutional arrangements and build adequate capacity on national/regional/local levels to participate in all cross-border cooperation (CBC) programmes;

- Start participating in the ENI Cross Border Cooperation Programmes 2014-2020 (Joint Operational Programme Romania/Republic of Moldova and Joint Operational Programme Black Sea), and Danube transnational programme. Continue the implementation of the Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programme Republic of Moldova-Ukraine.

Medium-term priorities

- Implement the Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for Regional Development for 2016-2020, in line with the Moldova 2020 agenda, throughout the entire territory of the country with a view to supporting a more balanced growth of the country as a whole;
- Promote in particular, as part of the objective enshrined in the Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for Regional Development of ensuring sustainable economic growth in the regions, regional economic specialisation and innovation, entrepreneurship and enhancement of the competitive economic development potential of urban centres, and promote the concept of smart specialisation for the design of research and innovation strategies;
- Strengthen the institutional and operational capacity of national, regional and local institutions in the field of regional development, including work on developing an effective system of multi-level governance and a clear division of responsibilities;
- Enhance the involvement of stakeholders at the regional and local levels and consolidate the partnership between all the parties involved in regional development;
- Enhance its participation in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region in order to allow the Republic of Moldova to benefit from exchange of experience and best practice with the participating regions from EU Member states on a series of topics, including those covered by the Association Agreement.

Fisheries and maritime policy

The parties will work together to:

Short-term priorities

- Foster an integrated approach to maritime affairs by nominating a national contact point, and participating in the sea-basin-wide EU initiatives with a view to identifying areas of common interest for Black Sea cooperation and project development.

Medium-term priorities

- Step up cooperation and work towards sustainable fisheries in the Black Sea, both in the context of bilateral and multilateral frameworks, in line with the 2016 Bucharest Declaration of all riparian States, and based on an ecosystem approach to fisheries management;
- Increase administrative, scientific and technical cooperation to enhance the monitoring and control of fishing activities and of trade in fisheries products and their traceability, in order to effectively fight Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU fishing).

2.7 Connectivity, Energy Efficiency, Climate Action, Environment and Civil Protection

Energy

The parties will work together towards improved energy security through increased diversification, as well as greater energy efficiency and use of renewable energy. The common goal remains the establishment of a competitive and transparent energy market in the Republic of Moldova and its full integration in the EU's energy market.

Short-term priorities

- Strengthen independence of ANRE, including by de-politicisation of appointments and dismissal procedure for directors, as well as by autonomous budget setting. For this purpose, the Republic of Moldova will adopt a new Energy Law in a transparent and inclusive manner, and implement all the recommendations of the review of ANRE carried out by the Energy Community Secretariat;

- Continue to take steps towards integrating the energy market of the Republic of Moldova with that of the EU;
- Implement the new ('third energy package') law on electricity by undertaking the necessary actions prescribed by the law and by adopting the necessary secondary legislation;
- Fully implement the commitments and agreements of the Republic of Moldova, including those established among the goals of the financial programs of the IMF such as the full recovery of previous tariff deviations, following the recommendations of the Energy Community Secretariat;
- Implement the new ('third energy package') law on natural gas;
- In line with IMF recommendations, continue working towards the elimination of accumulated debts within the energy sector;
- Take steps towards greater natural gas market opening;
- Complete the legal unbundling and prepare for the full unbundling of Moldovatransgas taking into account the Energy Community Ministerial Council's decision on the timing for unbundling in the gas sector;
- Implement the roadmap for improving gas and electricity interconnections between the Republic of Moldova and Romania. A level playing field in terms of equivalent basic rules with respect to market access, infrastructure and opening, as well as compatible environmental and safety standards will facilitate substantial electricity and gas trade between the EU and the Republic of Moldova in the future;
- Complete the corporate restructuring of Termoelectrica;
- Improve and guarantee the transparency of tenders and contracts for supply of electricity;
- Based on the law on promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources, develop support schemes, administrative rules and other measures required to foster greater use of renewables;
- Draft and implement an action plan regarding strategic oil reserves in line with Energy Community obligation;
- Bring into line the Law on energy efficiency in buildings and establish appropriate and transparent support mechanisms for energy efficiency measures in both public buildings and households;
- Identify and implement measures to increase competition in the electricity and gas markets and diversification of energy sources, while ensuring non-discrimination between operators;
- Take measures to comply with the SoS regulation(s).

Medium-term priorities

- Take further steps to reduce transmission and distribution losses in electricity, gas and heat networks;
- Adopt and implement an action plan to increase the share of renewable energy sources in total gross consumption of energy to 17 % by 2020;
- Adopt a new Energy Efficiency Law in compliance with Directive 2012/27/EU and continue extending labelling on the consumption of energy and other resources to new products;
- Further develop competition in the electricity and gas markets in order to reach the necessary degree of liquidity that would enable the development of organised competitive markets;
- Based on periodic evaluation of market conditions, identify steps and actions to be taken for gradual transition to market-based (competitive) pricing mechanisms;
- Improve tariff-setting methodology in order to ensure transparency and cost-recovery in line with IMF and Energy Community recommendations;
- Implement the full unbundling of Moldovagas and Moldovatransgaz, and adopt new entry-exit tariffs in the natural gas sector;

- Identify and implement measures to strengthen social support and protection of vulnerable consumers;
- Complete energy interconnections with Romania (and/or Ukraine) and take steps towards regional market integration. A level playing field in terms of equivalent basic rules with respect to market access, infrastructure and opening, as well as compatible environmental and safety standards will facilitate substantial electricity and gas trade between the EU and the Republic of Moldova in the future;
- Initiate on-line exchange of environmental radiation data by facilitating the accession of the Republic of Moldova into the European Radiological Data Exchange Platform (EURDEP);
- Update the Energy Strategy 2030 in line with new legal approximation and the outcomes in the area of interconnections.

Transport

The parties will work together to ensure further implementation of the EU legislation mentioned in the annexes to the Association Agreement and to support the Republic of Moldova. This cooperation will include work to:

Short-term priorities

- Implement the reform and restructuring programme of the railway sector;
- Step up efforts to implement the EU aviation legislation in order to take full advantage of the Common Aviation Area Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova;
- Establish free and fair competition in the aviation sector, in particular include clauses on non-discriminatory access to the airport in the Chisinau airport concession, and restore effective competition in the ground handling sector.

Medium-term priorities

- Implement the comprehensive transport and logistics strategy for 2013-22;
- Secure the Road Fund while ensuring a stable financing for the implementation of the Performance Based Maintenance Contracts (PBMC);
- Implement the necessary reforms so that the Republic of Moldova can be removed as soon as possible from the black list of the Paris Memorandum of Understanding;
- Develop infrastructure, in particular by preparing and implementing further projects for the development of the extended core TEN-T network, as agreed at the 2016 Rotterdam TEN-T days ministerial meeting;
- EU member states to consider the possibility of gradually opening road transport market based on the progress made by the Republic of Moldova in transposing relevant EU acquis.

Environment

The parties will work together to prepare for implementation of EU law and international standards, in particular to:

Short-term priorities

- Ensure continuation of administrative reforms of environmental institutions and building up of proper administrative capacity to implement the environment chapter of the Association Agreement;
- Advance in approximation with the environmental acquis by adopting the main legal framework in the sector, namely the laws on Air Protection, Chemical Substances and Industrial Emissions (Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control);
- Implement the laws on Strategic Environmental Assessment and on Waste Management;
- Develop and adopt implementing mechanisms for applying Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), in order to mainstream environment as a cross cutting issue in the other key policy areas;

- Develop and adopt the national strategies, programs and plans on Air Protection, Chemicals Management and Water management.

Medium-term priorities

- Adopt the necessary implementing legislation in various environmental sub-sectors, in particular on water quality and management, waste management, chemicals management, nature protection, air quality and industrial pollution, to meet the obligations described in the Association Agreement;
- Enhance the development of green economy in the Republic of Moldova;
- Ensure continuation of the implementation of the Environmental Strategy for the years 2014-2023 and the national strategies on Water Supply and Sanitation, Waste Management and Conservation of Biodiversity;
- Review the Waste management law in order to examine the possibility of strengthened environmental provisions.

Climate action

The parties will work together to strengthen dialogue and cooperation on climate change, to:

Short-term priorities

- Further elaborate the roadmap for implementation for the Nationally Determined Contribution.

Medium-term priorities

- Start implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change;
- Ensure implementation of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and its Action Plan covering the period up to 2020;
- Start implementing the Low Emission Development Strategy covering the period until 2030 with respect to the country's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC);
- Improve the inter-institutional and inter-sector coordination and mainstreaming climate change adaptation and mitigation in policies and plans at all levels;
- Approximate legislation in the Republic of Moldova more in line with applicable EU acts and international instruments as foreseen by the Association Agreement in accordance with Annex XII thereof;
- Enhance the transparency framework for climate action in the Republic of Moldova, in particular through a robust national system for the monitoring and reporting of climate policies, measures and greenhouse gas emissions based upon the EU model.

Civil protection

The parties will work together to:

Short-term priorities

- Develop arrangements to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the field of civil protection with the aim of bringing the Republic of Moldova closer to the Union Civil Protection Mechanism;
- Promote the adoption and implementation of EU guidelines on host nation support;
- Start a dialogue on the policy aspects of disaster prevention, preparedness and response by exchanging best practices, organising joint trainings, exercises, study visits and workshops, and summarising lessons learnt in real emergency operations and exercises;

- Continue to develop prevention activities, by educating, training and informing the general population, in particular young people, on major risks.

Medium-term priorities

- Ensure effective 24-hour-a-day communication, including exchange of early warnings and information on large-scale emergencies affecting the EU and the Republic of Moldova, as well as third countries in which either of the parties is involved in disaster response;
- Facilitate mutual assistance, in particular through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, in the event of major emergencies, as appropriate and subject to the availability of sufficient resources;
- Progress with the development of a country-wide disaster risk assessment and mapping, and support the development of the Electronic Regional Risk Atlas (ERRA) and ensure its effective use at national level;
- Improve the knowledge base on disaster risks and economic losses by strengthening cooperation on data accessibility and comparability;
- Improve prevention policies, in line with provisions of the *EU acquis* and best practices, for major industrial accidents involving hazardous materials;
- Improve cooperation that will lead to a more resilient civil protection and disasters risk management system in the Republic of Moldova based on EU best practices and closer cooperation with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

2.8 Mobility and People to People

Education, training, and youth

The parties will work together on the overall modernisation and reform of the education, up to the needs of the young people and the country, fair with pupils and students across all social and geographical extractions, efficient in terms of resource-usage, and trust-provider to the society through the good quality of its human resources and output, training and youth systems in the Republic of Moldova. This cooperation will include work to:

Short-term priorities

- Finalise the adoption of all by-laws to allow full implementation of the new Education code at all levels of education;
- Increase the administrative capacity of the Ministry of Education and subordinated bodies;
- Establish a system of output indicators that reflect the relevance of the outputs realised by the education system;
- Increase the quality of initial teacher training, the quality of the recruitment procedures and the attractiveness of jobs in the education sector, including through the level of financial reward;
- Promote systemic cooperation between the education system and private sector to match labour market needs;
- Continue and adequately finance the VET reform, in order to match the objectives of the VET Development Strategy and Action Plan (2013-2020) and meet the labour market needs;
- Adopt a legal framework for the Sector Committees;
- Carry out joint activities and exchanges that further promote the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European Higher Education Area, in the context of its membership in the Bologna process;
- Promote academic cooperation, capacity building and student and staff mobility through the Erasmus+ programme and researchers' mobility and training through Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions;
- Fully operationalise title VII of the Code of Education (Life Long Learning), in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour;

- Encourage the involvement of relevant stakeholders in all forms of lifelong learning for continuing professional development in order to bring them closer to the needs of the labour market;
- Carry out the implementation of the National Strategy of Youth Sector Development;
- Improve exchanges and cooperation in the field of non-formal education for young people and youth workers, as a means of promoting intercultural dialogue and supporting civil society, including through EU programmes in the youth field.

Medium-term priorities

- Ensure constant participation in PISA testing;
- Continue reforms in basic education in order to strengthen quality of teacher education, modernise curricula and move towards the greater use of performance assessment;
- Decrease the early school leaving rates;
- Connect education to research and innovation, as well as to the economic and social environment;
- Work towards modernising the public higher education institutions, in particular with the view to rationalise the network to make them more attractive and competitive and through increased transparency in managing staff hiring;
- Carry out external evaluation and accreditation of all programmes for all 3 cycles (bachelor, master, doctoral) and all higher education institutions;
- Carry out external evaluation and accreditation of providers of adult education;
- Increase life-long learning;
- Implement and support a strategic approach to VET with a view to bringing the VET system of the Republic of Moldova in line with the modernisation of EU VET structures, as pursued through the Copenhagen Process and its instruments;
- Continue to strengthen the VET system by fully implementing the Action Plan of the VET Development Strategy (2013-2020).

Research and innovation

The parties will work together to:

Short-term priorities

- Adopt new modification in the research legislation, based on the recent Review of the Research System of the Republic of Moldova performed through the Policy Support Facility and coherent with the new Education code;
- Create new structures that will undertake the role of coordination of research and innovation at government level.

Medium-term priorities

- Facilitate the integration of the Republic of Moldova in the European Research Area (ERA);
- Enhance the participation of the Republic of Moldova in the Horizon 2020 programme;
- Move forward on implementing the Strategy for research and development until 2020, Action plan and Innovation Strategy 2013-20, 'Innovation for Competitiveness', and the recommendations of the Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility peer-review;

- Reinforce human, material and institutional resources in order to improve research and innovation capacities;
- Integrate the Open Science Policy Agenda.

Culture, audiovisual policy and media

Culture

The parties will work together to:

Short-term priorities

- Promote the implementation of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions;
- Promote the participation of cultural and audio-visual operators from the Republic of Moldova in EU programmes, in particular Creative Europe.

Medium-term priorities

- Cooperate on developing an inclusive cultural policy in the Republic of Moldova and on preserving and promoting cultural and natural heritage;
- Strengthen capacities for developing cultural entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative sectors (including cultural heritage) and for providing cultural services.

Audiovisual policy and media

The parties will work together to prepare for implementation of EU law mentioned in the annexes to the Association Agreement. This cooperation will include support for the Republic of Moldova to:

Short-term priorities

- Strengthen the capacity and independence of regulatory authorities/bodies for the media and in particular work towards the full independence of the Audio-visual Coordination Council;
- Amend legislation in order to guarantee that public financial assistance for the media is allocated according to strict objective criteria equally applicable to all public media and broadcasters;
- Together with the European Commission, explore possibilities to participate in selected EU programmes and activities of the EU agencies focused on the ENP countries;
- Develop a new law on advertising in line with the to-be adopted new Audiovisual Code and European standards and aiming at effective competition in the sector.

Medium-term priorities

- Address the concentration of media ownership according to EU best practices;
- Work towards adopting audio-visual legislation in compliance with European standards. Exchange views on audio-visual policy and applicable international standards. Cooperate in the fight against racism and xenophobia in the audio-visual and media fields.

Participation in EU Agencies and Programmes

Medium-term priorities

Review the implementation of the Protocol on Participation in EU Programmes on the basis of the actual participation of the Republic of Moldova in specific EU Programmes.

2.9 Public outreach and visibility

Short-term priorities

- Ensure well-grounded communication about the opportunities and implications of EU-the Republic of Moldova Association Agreement, with a focus on the DCFTA.

Ensure relevant visibility of all EU projects and programmes, as well as the visibility of their impact, through close work with media outlets, civil society and business community at local, regional and national levels.
