



Project

Approach Paper

Republic of Moldova: Support for the Digitisation of Customs Procedures (Non-Transactional Technical Co-operation)

EBRD INDEPENDENT EVALUATION DEPARTMENT •
July 2024

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The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of EBRD Management or its Board of Directors. Responsible members of the relevant Operations team were invited to comment on this report prior to internal publication. Any comments received will have been considered and incorporated at the discretion of IEvD.

This Approach Paper is circulated under the authority of the Chief Evaluator, Véronique Salze-Lozac'h. It was prepared under the supervision of **Samer Hachem, Director of Sector, country, and project evaluations division**, by **Bilgehan Kayalar, Principal I Evaluation Manager** of IEvD, and with the support with data analysis by **Sofia Keenan, Analyst**. The Internal Peer Reviewer is **Tomasz Bartos, Associate Director, Senior Evaluation Manager** of IEvD.

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Abbreviations

ATA	Admission Temporaire or Temporary Admission Carnet
CCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova
CDMS	Customs Decisions Management System
CGPA	Competitiveness, Governance, and Political Affairs team under the Vice Presidency of Policy and Partnerships in EBRD
CoO	Country of Operations
CPO	Certificates of Preferential Origin
CSRM	Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
DH	EBRD's Digital Hub
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECS	Economic Council Secretariat
IEVD	Independent Evaluation Department of the EBRD
MDBs	Multilateral Development Banks
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
OE	Operation Evaluation
RO	Resident Office
SCF	Strategic and Capital Framework
TC	Technical Co-operation
TD	Trader Dashboard
ToC	Theory of Change
TQ	EBRD Transition Qualities
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development

Non-Transaction Technical Co-operation (NTTC) Project Description (at point of approval)	
Name	Republic of Moldova: Support for the Digitisation of Customs Procedures
Country	Republic of Moldova
Client	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Government of the Republic of Moldova - Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova (CSRM) 2. Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova (CCI)
T CRS ID	13677
Signing date	30/06/2021 - 30/12/2024 (42 Months)
Description	The project “is a package of four TC assignments for the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova and Chamber of Commerce and Industry that are designed to support the Government of Moldova with its transition towards fully electronic customs procedures.
TC Assignments	<p>Assignment 1: Support to the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova in implementing electronic issuance of Certificates of Preferential Origin (CPO).</p> <p>Assignment 2: Support to the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova in facilitating cross-border e-commerce through the digitisation of pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments.</p> <p>Assignment 3: Support to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in digitalising Admission Temporaire or Temporary Admission (ATA) Carnet.</p> <p>Assignment 4: Digitalising and strengthening the operational capacity of the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova.</p>
Transition Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well Governed • Competitiveness

1. Introduction and rationale

In an era marked by economic uncertainty, social and political unrest, and environmental catastrophes, the global economy has faced significant contraction. Despite these disruptions, one trend has rapidly accelerated: digitalisation. Digitalisation is a key driver of economic transition, particularly in the post-pandemic recovery. It enhances productivity, competitiveness, innovation, and inclusion, while also addressing environmental and social challenges. For Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) like the EBRD, supporting digitalisation aligns with their mandate to foster transition and resilience in their countries of operation.

In order to better address this challenge, the EBRD Strategic and Capital Framework 2021-2025 recognises accelerating the Digital Transition as a cross-cutting strategic theme. At the end of 2021, the Board approved EBRD's approach to Accelerating the Digital Transition, 2021-2025 (Digital Approach)¹. This is not a strategy, but rather an approach to developing internal digital capacity and piloting different new instruments as part of the digital transition commitment of the Strategic and Capital Framework (SCF) 2021-2025. This should enable the Bank to iterate and learn on which financial instruments and policy components are most effective in this context.

The EBRD's Digital Approach sets the framework for supporting digitalisation projects and describes the relationship between EBRD Digital projects and EBRD's Transition Qualities (TQs). In particular, it highlights how digitalisation is a means to achieve transition impact, presenting both opportunities and risks (*refer to Annex 4*). It outlines how the Bank will launch comprehensive and coherent activities to help clients and countries of operation to leverage digital technologies in support of their overall transition ambitions. The Digital Approach enhances the EBRD's existing instruments of policy dialogue, investment, and advisory services. This approach aims to shape three key components of digital transformation:

- Establishing the foundations of digital transformation.
- Promoting adaptation among existing clients, including governments and public entities.
- Supporting innovation and new market entrants.

While EBRD will prioritise the private sector in accordance with its mandate, investments in the public sector will also be pursued to support the transition to a sustainable market economy. Furthermore, targeted policy engagements and technical assistance projects with governments will be undertaken to open up new investment opportunities and create a competitive environment.

As part of IEvD's 2024-2026 Work Programme², IEvD is launching an Operation Evaluation (OE) of the "Republic of Moldova: Support for the Digitisation of Custom Procedures," a non-

¹ [EBRD's approach to Accelerating the Digital Transition, 2021-2025](#)

² [IEvD's 2024-2026 Work Programme](#)

transactional Technical Co-operation project (“the Project”) (TCRS ID: 13677) approved in June 2021.

IEvD has closely collaborated with the Digital Hub to identify projects with digital components under the Policy Engagement and Advisory Services instruments of EBRD. Investment projects signed after the adoption of Digital Approach and tagging methodology have not yet started executing the digital components or are only in the very early stages of implementation. They are not yet mature enough for an outcome-focused evaluation. Therefore, a non-transactional Technical Co-operation project which slightly predates the Digital Approach, but with more advanced levels of implementation of digital components, was selected as the subject of this evaluation.

This project was approved during the SCF 2021-2025 but before the Digital Approach.

This evaluation focuses on understanding and assessing the outcomes of the non-transactional Technical Co-operation project, particularly its digitalisation efforts. It is part of IEvD’s effort to provide evaluative insights to the Board and Management (especially the Digital Hub team) on EBRD’s support to digitalisation on its countries of operations, for accountability and learning purposes.

The rationale behind the inclusion of an Operation Evaluation of the project in the Work Programme is two-fold:

- (1) Accelerating the digital transition is one of the three cross-cutting themes of the Strategic and Capital Framework 2021-2025³, and the evaluation seeks to inform the preparation of the upcoming Strategic and Capital Framework 2026-2030, where digitalisation is identified to be one of the strategic enablers.
- (2) The Operation Evaluation is designed to feed into the Digital Approach 2.0, alongside the Thematic Evaluation of EBRD’s Digital Approach (to be approved/ delivered in Q3 2025).

This Approach Paper outlines the objective and methodology proposed by the Independent Evaluation Department for this Operation Evaluation.

2. Context

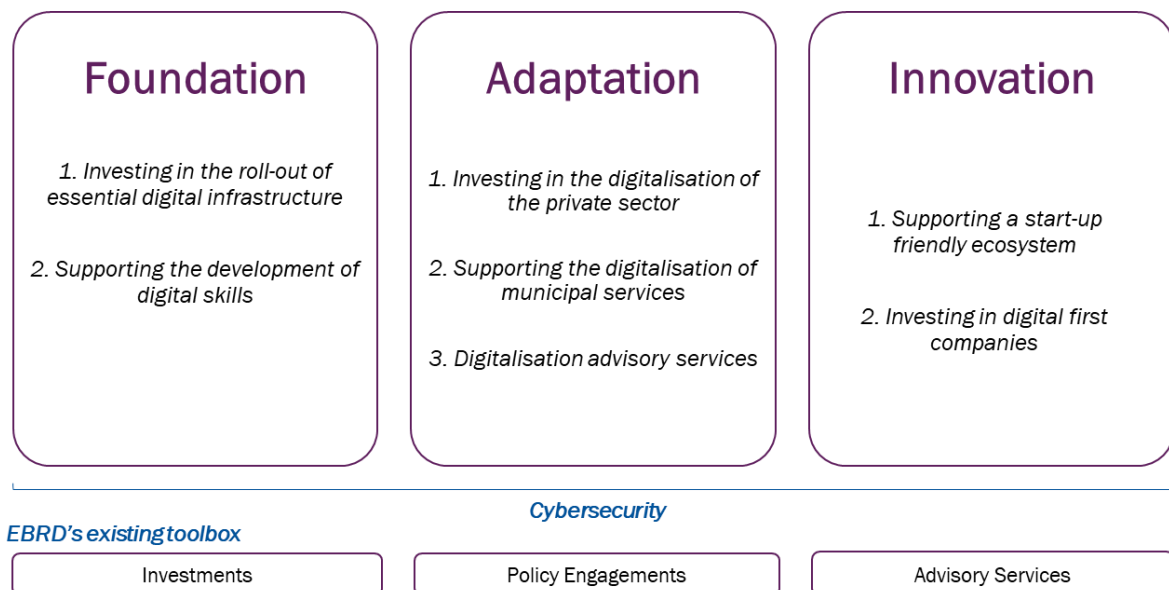
2.1. Strategic Context

Accelerating the digital transition is a key strategic objective of the EBRD’s SCF 2021-2025 ³, highlighting its commitment to enabling the Bank’s transition mandate and transition qualities, including enhancing economic governance across its Countries of Operation.

³ [Strategic and Capital Framework \(SCF\) 2021-2025](#)

In 2022, the Bank established the Digital Hub in the VP3 to support the implementation of the Digital Approach. The Digital Hub introduced three pillars to structure the Bank's Digital Approach (refer to Figure 1) and is responsible for coordinating and supporting digitalisation projects across the Bank. Since 2022, the Digital Hub has been reviewing EBRD investment projects before Board approval and tagging those it considers to include digital components delivering on the digital transition ambition. The Digital Hub also reviews signed projects using the list maintained in the Business Performance Navigator system. Projects that meet the tagging criteria are then retroactively tagged. Although the Digital Approach states that EBRD operations supporting the Digital Approach are facilitated through existing EBRD instruments of investments, policy engagements, and advisory services; policy engagements (non-transactional TCs) and advisory projects are not part of this tagging exercise. Currently, the tagging methodology applies only to investment projects and transactional Technical Co-operations (TC).

Figure 1: Definition of EBRD Digital Projects



Source: IEvD based on EBRD's Digital Approach

In the context of policy engagements and technical assistance, EBRD's Digital Approach¹ indicates that by 2025, the EBRD aims to, among others:

- Develop a legal and regulatory framework promoting innovation, healthy competition in digital markets, cybersecurity, financial stability, inclusion, diversity, ethical AI use, and data protection.
- Strengthen policy engagement and technical assistance to support governments in expanding affordable, high-capacity digital infrastructure to underserved areas.

The Transition Report 2023-24⁴ notes that economies within the EBRD regions lag behind advanced economies in digitalisation, with significant disparities in digital infrastructure, online service quality, and digital skills. Government services quality is generally lower in these regions, except for Estonia.

Moldova's e-government participation and online services saw significant improvement up until 2019. However, progress experienced a decline towards 2023, a trend exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The following analysis examines the trends in e-government participation and online services in Moldova, highlighting the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on these indicators (Figure 2 shows the indicators measuring the e-government participation and online services index produced by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in Moldova from 2017-2023 compared to EBRD and Comparators⁵ averages.). Moldova is compared to the EBRD and Comparators averages to provide a comprehensive understanding of its relative performance. This comparison provides valuable insights into Moldova's performance relative to broader regional and international benchmarks.

EBRD's Moldova Country Strategy 2017-2022⁶ (approved November 2017) identified structural challenges and a fragile commitment to reform as hindrances to Moldova's progress, exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis, which increased the demand for digitised public services. However, the EU's June 2022 decision to grant Moldova candidate status presents an opportunity to accelerate reforms. The EU is Moldova's main trading partner, accounting for two-thirds of its exports, which have increased significantly since the 2014 Association Agreement and the 2016 Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). In addition, the government of Moldova approved its Digital Transformation Strategy 2023-2030⁷ in early September 2023 and appointed a Deputy Prime Minister for digitalisation (also Minister of Economy). The Deputy Prime Minister launched a new iCouncil under the remit of the EBRD-supported Economic (Investment) Council in Moldova. The iCouncil's mandate is to address both immediate challenges and strategic issues related to Moldova's digital transformation.

The non-transactional Technical Co-operation project selected for this evaluation is titled "Republic of Moldova: Support for the Digitisation of Custom Procedures" aligns with the EBRD's Moldova Country Strategy 2017-2022, particularly Priority 2: Enhancing Competitiveness by supporting private firms and promoting the commercialisation of public utilities and infrastructure. It continues to align with the current Moldova Country Strategy 2023-2028 and the EBRD's 2021-2025 Strategic and Capital Framework and Digital Approach.

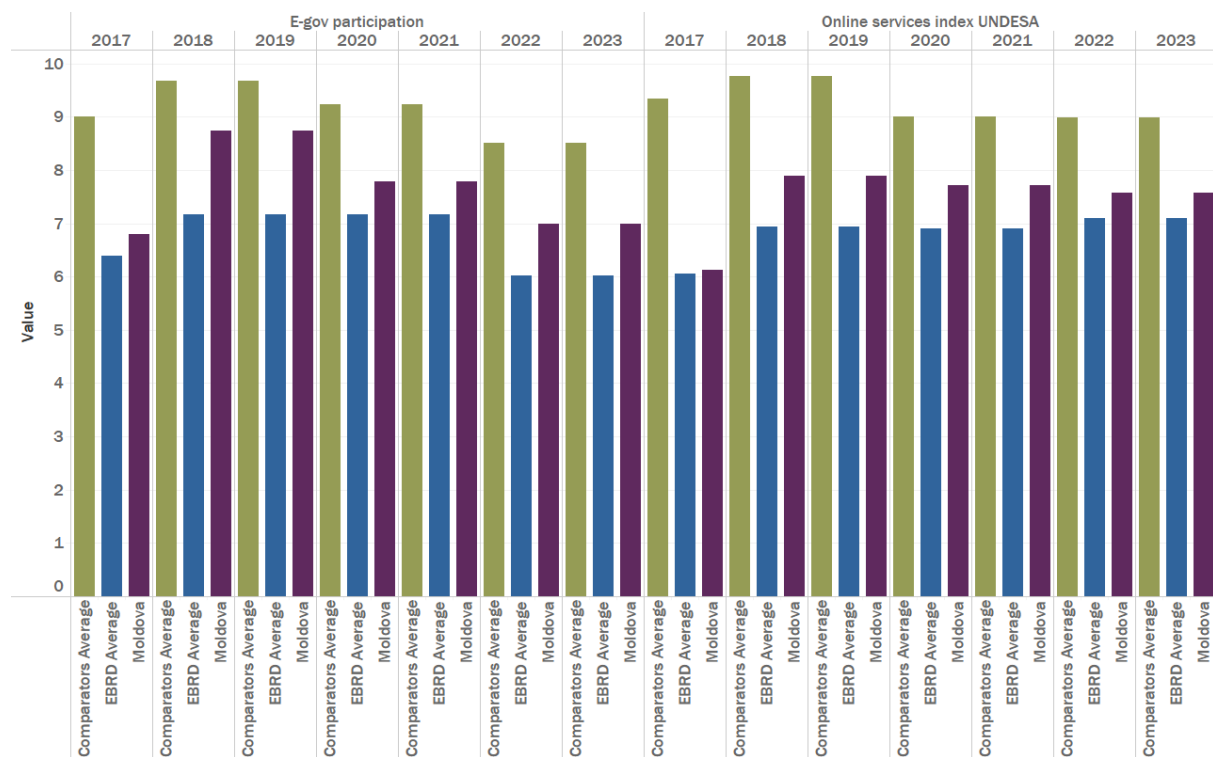
The project will contribute to the government's broader digitalisation program and e-governance efforts, enhancing competitiveness, regional connectivity, investment climate, good governance, and resilience to the economic impacts of Covid-19.

⁴ [Transition Report 2023-24](#)

⁵ Comparators Average are based on the Advance Economies (classification used by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)).

⁶ [EBRD's Moldova Country Strategy 2023-2028](#)

⁷ [Republic of Moldova Digital Transformation Strategy 2023-2030](#)

Figure 2: UNDESA, e-government participation and online services index – 2017 – 2023

Source: United Nations (UN) E-Government Development Index and Knowledgebase

Note: Scores range from 1 to 10, with 10 representing the highest level of quality achievable.

2.2. Project Context

The "Republic of Moldova: Support for the Digitisation of Custom Procedures" is a non-transactional Technical Co-operation project, initiated and coordinated by the EBRD's Competitiveness, Governance, and Political Affairs team (CGPA) within the Policy Strategy and Delivery department (PSD) under the Vice Presidency of Policy and Partnerships (VP3). The project is part of EBRD's broader ambition to lay the foundations for digital economies, including the development and implementation of digital policies and e-government initiatives.

In 2006, the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova (CSRM) adopted the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) web-based Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDAWorld), which significantly increased annual customs revenue. Following the 2016 Moldova-European Union (EU) Association Agreement, the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova has been modernising its custom services operating systems to meet EU standards for import, export, and transit procedures.

To further these efforts, the Government of Moldova requested the EBRD to expand the operational capacity of the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova's ASYCUDAWorld system. The Bank, in collaboration with the UN Conference on Trade and Development, Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova, launched the "Digitisation of Customs Procedures in Moldova" project. The project aims to integrate Moldova into the global trading system, develop its e-commerce sector, and support economic recovery from Covid-19.

The project "Republic of Moldova: Support for the Digitisation of Custom Procedures" includes four TC assignments designed to support the government in transitioning towards fully electronic customs procedures. The project provides technical assistance directly to the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova to digitalise Moldova's customs procedures (refer to Table 1).

The project was approved/signed in 2021 and originally expected to complete in February 2023 however, the implementation period/target has been extended to December 2024.

Table 1: TC assignments of the project: "Republic of Moldova: Support for the Digitisation of Custom Procedures"

Assignment No.	Client	Assignment Title	Objective	Digital Components
1	Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova	Support to the Customs Service in implementing electronic issuance of Certificates of Preferential Origin (CPO).	The main objective of this Assignment is to enhance the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova in digitalising the issuance of Certificates of Preferential Origin (CPOs) for exporters. This will contribute to the Government of Moldova's broader digitisation and e-governance effort , as well as help facilitate cross-border trade and enhance competitiveness by reducing export costs for businesses.	Yes
2	Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova	Support to the Moldovan Customs Service in facilitating cross-border e-commerce through the	The main objective of this Assignment is to enhance the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova's UNCTAD Automated	Yes

		digitalisation of pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments.	System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) World system to enable pre-arrival electronic processing for postal and express consignments. This will help develop the e-commerce sector in Moldova and improve the country's competitiveness , as well as enhance the speed and transparency of customs clearance processes.	
3	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova	Support to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) in digitalising Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission Carnet.	The main objective of the Assignment is to support the CCI Moldova in digitalising the process of issuing the Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission (ATA) Carnet for exporters to help facilitate and reduce the costs of cross-border trade.	Yes
4	Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova	Digitalising and strengthening the operational capacity of the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova.	The main objective of the Assignment is integrate additional UNCTAD-developed modules into the system to enable Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova to a) transition fully to a digital, paperless system; b) digitalise processes related to the application for a customs decision (Customs Decisions Management System); and c) develop and implement a Trade Dashboard (TD)	Yes (Task 1, 2, and 3)

Source: Project Profile Document for Republic of Moldova: Support for the Digitisation of Customs Procedures, TCRS #13677.

At the time of approval, it was expected that these improvements in custom procedures, resulting from the TC assignments, would help businesses adapt to the economic impacts of Covid-19, increase government revenue, and enhance the overall efficiency of customs operations. The project also supports the government's digitisation roadmap, aiming to boost transparency, reduce costs, and build economic resilience.

3. The evaluation approach & methodology

3.1. Evaluation objective and scope

This evaluation aims to:

1. Assess the performance and results of the project assignments with an emphasis on digitalisation, capturing potential synergies between digitalisation and the project outcomes, and providing insights on the progress achieved.
2. Provide evidence-based lessons and recommendations that can guide the preparation and implementation of the next Digital Approach 2.0. Specifically, the findings may highlight synergies between the digitalisation of government services and private sector development.

The scope of this evaluation covers the “Republic of Moldova: Support for the Digitisation of Custom Procedures” non-transactional Technical Co-operation, and its four TC assignments. The assessment will focus on the results of the TC assignments, their contributions to the project's overall goals, with an emphasis on digitalisation.

The key management counterpart for this evaluation is the Digital Hub (DH), the Competitiveness, Governance and Political Affairs (CGPA) both under the Policy Strategy and Delivery (PSD) Department under the Vice Presidency of Policy and Partnerships (VP3), and the Chisinau Resident Office (RO).

To ensure the smooth and efficient gathering of evaluative evidence, the team will maintain regular communication with Management counterparts and engage with clients and stakeholders in the country.

3.2. Evaluation approach

IEvD is employing a Theory of Change (ToC) based approach for this Operation Evaluation. ToC maps each step towards a long-term goal which provides an explicit and testable diagram of *how*

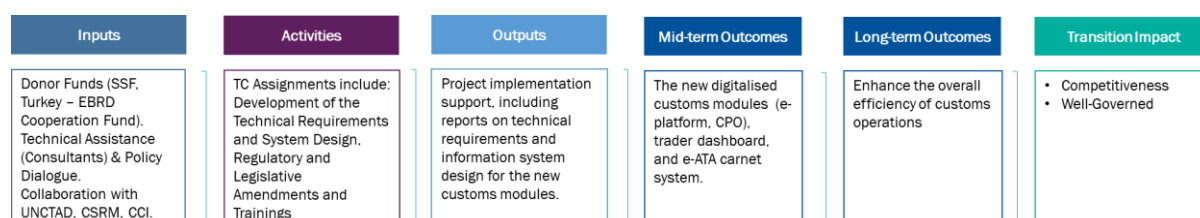
and *why* a change is expected to happen in a particular context. The ToC will help identify processes of “causal logic” or “causal mechanisms” that will guide this evaluation.

The methodology will combine both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.

This approach aims to address evaluation questions based on the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and to gather evidence on the linkages between digitalisation, and the project objectives.

IEvD has developed a simplified ToC for the project (*refer to Annex 3 for more detailed ToC including assumptions*).

Figure 3: Simplified ToC for the project



Source: IEvD based on project profile document.

The ToC aims to clarify the causal links between the TC assignments, the project outputs, and outcomes, showcasing how digitalisation enables the project objectives, such as:

- Improved revenue collections in custom operations.
- Reduced custom clearance time.
- Transitioned from paper documentation to electronic transaction (creating a paperless environment).
- Minimised the risk of consignments fraud and enhanced transparency in customs clearance processes.
- Enhanced the functionalities of the Moldovan Customs Service’s system in line with EU requirements.
- Integration to the full international e-ATA system.

The ToC presented serves as a starting point for consultation. During the evaluation phase, IEvD will organise discussions with management to incorporate their understanding of the linkages between digitalisation, and the project objectives.

3.3. Evaluation questions

The evaluation aims to answer a series of evaluation questions derived from the objective above. The evaluation questions cover the following OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability.

The overarching evaluation question IEvD aims to address is:

To what extent did the digitalisation components of the project achieve their objectives and contribute to a more successful project?

The evaluation questions are as follows, with the rationale for each question also outlined:

Relevance and coherence

EQ1: To what extent were the digitalisation components of the project's objectives relevant to the needs of the Moldovan government and stakeholders (Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova and Chamber of Commerce and Industry and coherent with the Moldova's Country Strategy and Moldova's digital roadmap?

Rationale: This question assesses how well the project's objectives respond to the broader framework of Moldova's public and private sector priorities. Understanding this relevance helps assess whether the project addresses the real needs and challenges faced by key stakeholders, thereby enhancing its overall impact and integration into the local context.

It also assesses the project's alignment with Moldova's Country Strategy. It looks at whether the project is synergistic with other ongoing or planned initiatives as part of Moldova's Roadmap to promote the digitisation of the economy and e-commerce, and the overall digitalisation strategy of the country, including those financed by other IFIs and bilateral agencies.

Efficiency

EQ2: How efficiently were the project's resources used to achieve the outcomes? Specifically, how well did the Bank handle and execute the digital components of this project?

Rationale: This question looks into the Bank's handling of the project, including financial, human, and technical resources, and the project management processes employed by the EBRD. Evaluating efficiency helps identify whether the resources were optimally allocated and managed to deliver the digital components effectively and within budget and time constraints.

Effectiveness

EQ3: To what extent has the project achieved its intended outputs and outcomes, positive and negative, resulting from digitisation of custom services? What are the observed changes since implementation?

Rationale: This question assesses the success of the project in meeting its specific objectives. By evaluating the achievement of intended outcomes, such as reduction in average custom clearance time, as well as customs revenue yield, and availability of reliable trade statistic and the direct impact of the digital components on the overall effectiveness of the project interventions (TC assignments).

It also aims to capture the broader spectrum of outcomes, both positive and negative. Identifying positive and negative outcomes ensures a comprehensive understanding of the project's effects, helping to learn from successes and address any adverse consequences or challenges that arose during implementation.

Sustainability

EQ4: To what extent are the benefits of the digital components likely to be sustained after the project completion?

Rationale: This question evaluates the longevity and durability of the project's benefits beyond its active phase. Assessing sustainability helps determine whether the digital components will continue to provide value and support customs operations in the long term, ensuring that the investments made are enduring and that the systems put in place can be maintained and scaled up independently by government and stakeholders.

3.4. Data collection methods

The evaluation method will combine qualitative and quantitative methods, including document reviews, stakeholder interviews, and analysis of the country's customs data (if available). It includes an in-country visit by IEvD evaluator(s).

- **Document Review/Data Analysis**

Review project documents (terms of references, grant agreements, procurement notices, progress reports, and donor reports), reports from consultants, and relevant policy documents to understand the project's context, design, and implementation. Review custom/trade statistics (if available) for data analysis.

- **Stakeholder Interviews**

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes, it is crucial to reach out to a diverse range of private sector companies. The evaluation team plans to conduct focus group discussions with various sub-groups, including MSMEs, sector-specific businesses, and women-led enterprises. This approach will help capture both positive and negative effects across different segments.

Internal:

- EBRD's Competitiveness, Governance and Political Affairs (CGPA)

- EBRD's Digital Hub
- EBRD's Chisinau Resident Office.

External:

- Digitalisation Adviser to the Economic Council Secretariat (ECS)
- Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova
- Traders (private sectors companies),
- Experts/Consultants (UNCTAD experts) involved in TC assignments.

3.5. Challenges and mitigating actions

- **Data Availability and Quality**

Challenge: Accessing reliable and comprehensive data is crucial for a thorough evaluation. However, gaps in the data may exist, which can affect the validity of the evaluation findings and make it difficult to draw conclusions about the project's outcome.

Mitigation Strategy: Work closely with the project team to fill data gaps. Conduct additional data collection activities, such as interviews and collaborations with local consultant, to supplement existing data.

- **Attribution of Outcomes**

Challenge: This methodology explicitly aims to assess how the digital components of TC assignments has contributed to the project outcomes. Identifying the outcomes of the project's digital components impacting customs operations and trade can be complex.

Mitigation Strategy: Employing a Theory of Change (ToC) based approach to clarify the causal links between the TC assignments, project outputs and outcomes, showcasing how digitalisation enables the project objectives.

- **Stakeholder Engagement**

Challenge: Ensuring active participation from all relevant stakeholders, particularly end beneficiaries (e.g., customs officials, private sector companies, traders, IT, and custom experts) can be difficult due to their availability.

Mitigation Strategy: Schedule interviews with the help of colleagues from the Resident Office. Use multiple methods (e.g., interviews and focus groups) to engage stakeholders.

4. Administrative arrangements

4.1. Evaluation team

The evaluation team is led by Bilgehan Kayalar, Principal I Evaluator at IEvD, and includes Sofia Keenan, Analyst, from Sector, Project, and Country Evaluation Division of IEvD.

The team will be supported by local consultant with essential local knowledge and capabilities to ensure the productive and efficient interaction between the IEvD evaluation team and local stakeholders. Recruitment will take place at the implementation stage. The consultant will be engaging with the external stakeholders along with the evaluator and supervised by the Team Leader.

Samer Hachem, Director of Sector, Project, and Country Evaluation division will provide overall guidance on the evaluation, in close coordination with the Chief Evaluator, Véronique Salze-Lozac'h. Internal peer reviewer is Tomasz Bartos, Associate Director, Senior Evaluation Manager from Sector, Project, and Country Evaluation Division of IEvD. An external peer reviewer will be identified and selected during the implementation stage.

4.2. Deliverable and dissemination plan

The main deliverable will be an evaluation report, containing key lessons, findings, and recommendations.

An external version of this report will be prepared with specific considerations for data confidentiality, in alignment with the EBRD's Access to Information Policy⁸ and Evaluation Policy⁹.

IEvD will also create a summary for external publication. Additionally, the results may be shared through various evaluation networks, MDB events, and professional conferences.

IEvD will also host a learning event for the EBRD's Competitiveness, Governance and Political Affairs, Digital Hub, and the Chisinau Resident Office.

⁸ [EBRD Access to Information Policy](#)

⁹ [EBRD Evaluation Policy](#)

4.3. Indicative timetable

Milestone	Delivery
Kick-off message and launch	May 2024
Draft Approach Paper shared with management	June/July 2024
Final Approach Paper approved by Chief Evaluator	July 2024
Recruit Consultant	August 2024
Document review	July/August 2024
Field Visit	October 2024
Draft with executive summary circulated to IEvD Director & Peer Reviewer	November 2024
Draft approved by Chief Evaluator and shared with management for comments	December 2024
Final report approved by Chief Evaluator and shared with management	December 2024
Final report disseminated to the Board	January/February 2025
Final Report shared with OGC and cleared	February 2025
Final report disseminated to External Stakeholders (including web publication)	Q1 2025

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Annex 1. Project Description (at point of project approval)

TC Project Description (at point of approval)	
Name	Republic of Moldova: Support for the Digitisation of Customs Procedures
Country	Republic of Moldova
Client	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Government of the Republic of Moldova - Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova 2. Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova
TCSR ID	13677
Signing date	30/06/2021 - 30/12/2024 (42 Months)
Description	<p>The project is a package of four assignments for the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry designed to support the Government of Moldova with its transition towards fully electronic customs procedures. In turn, this will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the time and cost of importing goods to and through Moldova. • Enhance the country's competitiveness. • Reduce consignment fraud and corruption risks by increasing transparency in customs procedures. • Support the development of e-commerce in Moldova. • Help businesses adapt to the economic and operational impacts of Covid-19
TC Assignments	<p>TC Assignment 1: "Support to the Customs Service in implementing Electronic issuance of Certificates of Preferential Origin". The main objective of this Assignment is to enhance the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova's in digitalising the issuance of Certificates of Preferential Origin for exporters. This will contribute to the Government of Moldova's broader digitisation and e-governance effort, as well as help facilitate cross-border trade and enhance competitiveness by reducing export costs for businesses.</p> <p>TC Assignment 2: "Support to the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova in facilitating cross-border e-commerce through the digitisation of pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments". The main objective of this Assignment is to enhance the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova's UNCTAD Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDAWorld) system to enable pre-arrival electronic processing for postal and express consignments. This will help develop the e-commerce sector in Moldova and improve the country's competitiveness, as well as enhance the speed and transparency of customs clearance processes.</p> <p>TC Assignment 3: "Support to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in</p>

	<p>digitalising the ATA Carnet process". The main objective of the Assignment is to support the CCI in digitalising the process of issuing the ATA Carnet for exporters to help facilitate and reduce the costs of cross-border trade.</p> <p>The Assignment will help improve data security and reduce the administrative costs and corruption risks of relying on a paper-based process, whilst also supporting the Government of Moldova's broader digitisation and e-governance efforts will enable Moldova's transition towards electronic customs clearance process with integration to the full international e-ATA system. The Client (CCI) will contribute to the project through the provision of in-house legal expertise and support for the development and implementation of the marketing strategy for the e-platform, including through the organisation of promotional activities for regional CCI employees to raise awareness of the new platform.</p> <p>TC Assignment 4: 'Digitalising and strengthening the operational capacity of the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova'. The Project will expand the UNCTAD ASYCUDAWorld system currently used by the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova. This will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task 1: Development and implementation of CSRM's Customs Decisions Management System (CDMS). • Task 2: Development and implementation of Trader Dashboard (TD) The purpose of this development is to provide businesses/traders with the capability to monitor, track and trace all transactions performed by/or in their name by the Customs brokers. • Task 3: Support for a fully digitalised, paperless environment and improvement of the overall efficiency of Customs operations. <p>To finalise and synchronise the phased deployment of all the digital components in live operation and provide initial post-implementation support the Consultant request no cost on extension to the post implementation support until 31 December 2024.</p>
Transition Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well Governed • Competitiveness

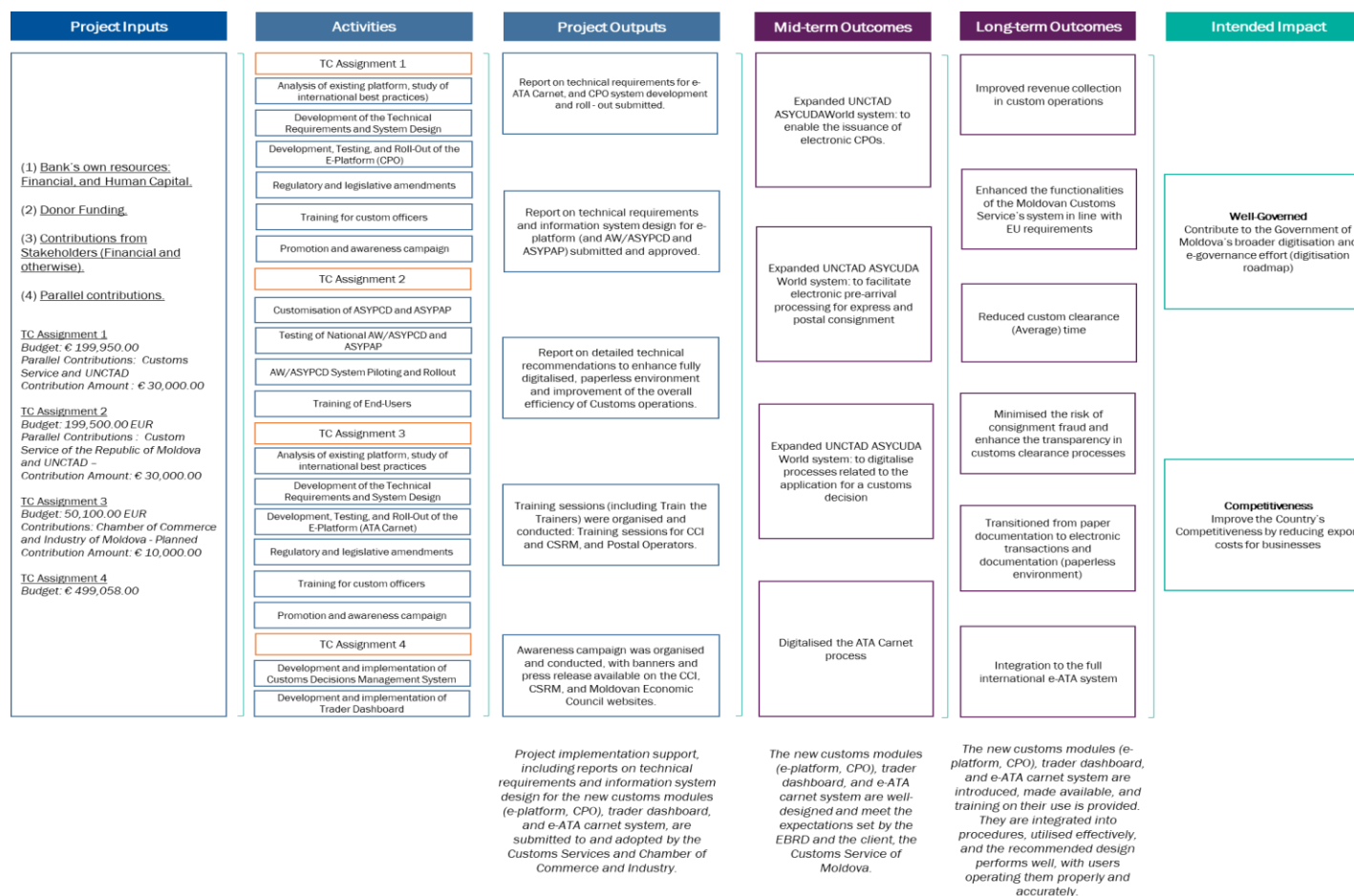
Annex 2. Evaluation matrix

EVALUATION QUESTION <i>OECD-DAC CRITERIA</i>	JUDGMENT CRITERIA	METHODS AND SOURCES
<p>EQ1: To what extent are the digitalisation components of the project's objectives relevant to the needs of the Moldovan government and stakeholders (Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova and Chamber of Commerce and Industry) and coherent with the Moldova's Country Strategy and Moldova's digital roadmap?</p> <p><i>RELEVANCE, COHERENCE</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project addresses the digital priorities outlined by the Government of Moldova in their National Digital Strategy. • The project's objectives meet the specific digitalisation needs and operational priorities of the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova. • The project aligns with the digitalisation needs and strategic priorities of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. • The project aligns with the strategic priorities and goals outlined in EBRD's Country Strategy for Moldova. • The project's objectives and activities are highly consistent with Moldova's digital roadmap. • The project's objectives align well with Moldova's National Digitalisation Strategy. 	<p>Internal and external document review: Moldova's National Digital Strategy and policies/directives on digitalisation/digital transformation.</p> <p>Stakeholder interviews (Digitalisation Adviser to the Economic Council Secretariat (ECS) which is supported by the EBRD).</p>
<p>EQ2: How efficiently were the project's resources used to achieve the outcomes? Specifically, how well did the Bank handle and execute the digital components of this project?</p> <p><i>EFFICIENCY</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project stayed within budget and effectively allocated donor funds. • The staff involved in implementing the digital aspects of the project were adequately skilled and demonstrated significant expertise. • The project successfully met its milestones and adhered to the established timelines. • The selection and deployment of digital technologies and tools in the project were appropriate and effective. 	<p>Document review, interviews with the project team, project consultants (IT and Custom experts, UNCTAD experts) and representatives of Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova.</p>

<p>EQ3: To what extent has the project achieved its intended outputs and outcomes, positive and negative, resulting from digitisation of custom services? What are the observed changes since implementation?</p> <p>EFFECTIVENESS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project successfully delivered the specific planned outputs, including the report on technical requirements and information system design, detailed technical recommendations, training sessions, and an awareness campaign. • The outputs were delivered within the planned timeframe. • The quality and appropriateness of the outputs delivered were examined, ensuring they met the standards and requirements set out in the project plan. • The project achieved the broader intended outcomes, including reduced average customs processing and clearance times, increased customs revenue yield, improved availability of reliable trade statistics, and enhanced overall effectiveness of the project due to the digital components. • Evidence of non-anticipated outcomes, positive or negative. 	<p>Theory of Change will be employed to map the sequence of inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts of the project. This will facilitate understanding the causal links between the project's activities and its intended outcomes, demonstrating how each component contributes to the overall objectives.</p> <p>Document review, semi-structured interviews (internal and external), analysis of custom data</p>
<p>EQ4: To what extent are the benefits of the digital components likely to be sustained after the project completion?</p> <p>SUSTAINABILITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longevity, durability, and flexibility of the new system. 	<p>Stakeholder Interviews (Custom Service of the Republic of Moldova's officials, IT and Custom experts, UNCTAD)</p>

Annex 3. Theory of Change (draft)

Approach Paper: Republic of Moldova - Support for the Digitisation of Customs Procedures (Non-Transactional Technical Co-operation)



Annex 4. Digital Transition - opportunities for and risks to the EBRD's TQs

Transition Quality	Opportunities	Risks
Competitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewed business dynamism in mature industries Increased productivity across the economy Emergence of new products and services markets and accelerated innovation Consumer benefits in the form of greater transparency, lower prices, more choice and instant availability of products and services Enhanced global competitiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrenched dominance of market leaders due to 'winner takes all' dynamics, with long-running negative impacts on innovation, price and productivity Abusive behaviour by dominant firms Policy frameworks struggle to keep up with rapid technological change
Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smarter energy use Resource efficiency gains and waste reduction Improvements in environmental and climate monitoring and resilience Digital solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation, plus diffusion of business models that support behavioural changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased energy consumption Environmental degradation linked to extraction and processing of raw materials Electronic waste generated by hardware and products
Inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider access to learning and employment opportunities and reduced labour market bias Strengthened financial inclusion, including through digital literacy Improved access for underserved groups, including through digital accessibility and the better use of data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discriminatory practices reinforced Skewed benefits to different segments of the population widen gaps Stranded skills and jobs in sectors undergoing digital transformation heighten concerns related to a just transition
Integrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced transaction costs and increased transparency and traceability across value chains Emergence of wider and deeper digital markets benefitting businesses and customers Adoption of big data collection technologies Cross-border digital payments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data flow regulation and restrictions on digital trade Restrictiveness of services affects digital trade in services Lack of definition of goods and services across borders Regulatory fragmentation
Resilient	<p>Financial services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attraction of unbanked customers, also through better risk assessment Improved financial services and more efficient banking operations Improved quality of supervision and regulatory compliance <p>Energy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower cost of delivery and extended lifetime of power generation and network infrastructure assets Improved safety, sustainability and reliability of energy systems Energy savings through smart applications 	<p>Financial services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to illegal activities and increase in operational risk Cybersecurity, data protection and privacy concerns Potentially lag in effective supervision of new fintech firms <p>Energy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased vulnerability to cyberattacks and data protection issues Increased direct energy use by consumers and data centres/network services

Well-Governed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved national and local governance and reduced corruption through e-governance ▪ Better decision-making and more efficiency due to better data availability ▪ Greater trust in governments where legal principles support transparency and e-participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data privacy and cybersecurity concerns leading to mistrust in institutions ▪ Governments struggle to anticipate regulatory needs ▪ Mismatch between digital readiness of public services, businesses and individuals
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Source: *The Digital Approach paper provided a high-level illustration of how digital transformation has both opportunities and risks for each of the six TQs*

Annex 5. UNCTAD Web-based Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) World

Box 2: UNCTAD Web-based Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) World

Overview of UNCTAD's ASYCUDA System

The UNCTAD Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) is an advanced, integrated customs management system designed to streamline international trade and transport operations.

Key Features of ASYCUDA

- Comprehensive coverage: ASYCUDA manages a wide range of foreign trade procedures, including manifest and customs declarations, accounting, warehousing, and suspense procedures.
- Detailed data generation: The system provides extensive information on foreign trade transactions, useful for economic analysis and planning.
- Compatibility: The software operates on various hardware in a client/server environment, using a relational database management system for transaction and control data.
- International standards: It adheres to international codes and standards set by the ISO, WCO, and UN for customs processing.
- Customisation: ASYCUDA can be tailored to fit national customs regimes, tariffs, regulations, and legislation, and remains adaptable to changes.
- Electronic data interchange: It supports electronic data interchange between traders and customs administrations using UN/EDIFACT rules.

Implementation strategy

ASYCUDA's implementation involves a phased approach to ensure the effective transfer of know-how and long-term sustainability, requiring strong national commitment and continuous progress evaluation.

Goals of ASYCUDA

- Modernise customs operations: Improve revenue collection and efficiency.
- Facilitate trade: Enhance trade efficiency and competitiveness by reducing transaction time and costs.
- Improve security: Streamline cargo control, transit, and clearance procedures.
- Fight corruption: Increase transaction transparency.
- Promote sustainability: Reduce paper usage through electronic transactions and documents.

The latest version, ASYCUDAWorld, is operational in over 80 countries and territories. It is compatible with major database management and operating systems, continuing to support and advance global customs management practices.

Source: UNCTAD Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA)