European Bank
for Reconstruction and Development

IEvD
Independent Evaluation
Department

PROJECT EVALUATION

Support for the Digitalisation of Customs Procedures

Republic of Moldova

Project ID: 13677

IEvD ID: PE24-609

EBRD INDEPENDENT EVALUATION DEPARTMENT • January 2025

The Independent Evaluation Department (IEvD) at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) reports directly to the Board of Directors and is independent from the Bank Management. This independence ensures that IEvD can perform two critical functions: reinforce institutional accountability to achieve results and provide objective analysis and relevant findings to inform operational choices and to improve performance over time. IEvD evaluates the performance of the Bank's completed projects and programmes relative to objectives. Whilst IEvD considers Management's views in preparing its evaluations, it makes the final decisions about the content of its reports.

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.

IEvD's reports review and evaluate Bank activities at a thematic, sectorial or project level. They seek to provide an objective assessment of performance, often over time and across multiple operations, and to extract insights from experience that can contribute to improved operational outcomes and institutional performance.

This report was prepared by IEvD independently and 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 of IEvD, by Bilgehan Kayalar, Principal Evaluation Manager of IEvD, with the support of Sofia Keenan, Analyst of IEvD. The Internal Peer Reviewer was Harvey Susser, Senior Evaluation Manager of IEvD. The External Reviewer was Radu Cornea, Consultant.

[Image generated by Artificial Intelligence]

Contents

Abbreviations

API	Application Programming Interface
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
ASYPAP	ASYCUDA Pre-Arrival Processing Declaration
ASYPCD	ASYCUDA Postal Customs Declaration
ATA	Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission
CCI RM	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova
CDS	Customs Declaration System
CDMS	Moldovan Customs Service - Customs Decisions Management System
CPO	Certificate of Preferential Origin
CSRM	Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ETI	Expected Transition Impact
EU	European Union
EORI	Economic Operators Registration and Identification
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
IEvD	Independent Evaluation Department
NCTS	New Computerised Transit System
SCF	Strategic and Capital Framework
SIIV	Customs Integrated Information System
TC	Technical Cooperation
TD	Moldovan Customs Service - Trader Dashboard
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
TCRS	TC Reporting System
ToC	Theory of Change
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UPU	Universal Postal Union
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

Non-transactional Technical Cooperation Project data

Non-transactional Technical Cooperation Project	
Operation name	Republic of Moldova: Support for the Digitisation of Customs Procedures
Country	Republic of Moldova
Client	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 RM)
Project code (TCRS ID)	13677
Operation Leader	Andrei Mazur
Project duration	From 30 June 2021 to 30 December 2024 (42 Months)[1]
Status	Ongoing/Completed
Description	The project "is a package of four technical cooperation 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." In turn, this will: 1. Reduce the time and cost of importing goods into and through Moldova. 2. Enhance the country's competitiveness. 3. Decrease consignment fraud and corruption risks by increasing transparency in customs procedures. 4. Support the development of e-commerce in Moldova. 5. Help businesses adapt to the economic and operational impacts of Covid-19.
Donor	EBRD Shareholder Special Fund Türkiye - EBRD Cooperation Fund Account
Transition impact	Well-governed Competitiveness

[1] To finalise and synchronise the phased deployment of all the digital components in live operation and to provide initial post-implementation support, the Consultant requests a no-cost extension for post implementation support until 31 December 2024.

Technical cooperation assignments			
Assignment 1			
Name	Support to the Customs Service in implementing electronic issuance of certificates of preferential origin (CPOs)	Amount	€200,000.00
Consultancy firm	UNCTAD	Scheduled end date	31 July 2022
Start date	1 July 2021		
Assignment 2			
Name	Support to the Moldovan Customs Service in facilitating cross-border e-commerce through the digitalisation of pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments	Amount	€200,000.00
Consultancy firm	UNCTAD	Scheduled end date	30 March 2022
Start date	1 July 2021		
Assignment 3			
Name	Support to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova (CCI RM) in digitalising Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission Carnet	Amount	€50,100.00
Consultancy firm	Power IT	Scheduled end date	1 September 2022
Start date	1 February 2021		
Assignment 4			
Name	Digitalising and strengthening the operational capacity of the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova	Amount	€499,058.00
Consultancy firm	UNCTAD	Scheduled end date	1 April 2023
Start date	11 July 2022		

Evaluation data			
Evaluator	Bilgehan Kayalar	Internal Reviewer	Harvey Susser
IEvD PE ID	24-609	Operations Team Reviewer	
Field mission date	From 19 to 23 October 2024	Distribution date	05 February 2025

Project performance ratings

Criteria / *Sub-Criteria*	*IEvD Ratings* [recommended rating]
1. Relevance	Standard [Standard]
1.1 Strategic Alignment	*Outstanding*
1.2 Specification of Design & Expected Results	*Below Standard*
2. Effectiveness	Standard [Standard]
2.1 Achievement of Outputs	*Standard*
2.2 Contribution to Intended Outcomes	*Standard*
2.3 Contribution to Intended Impact	*No Opinion Possible*
2.3 Performance against Benchmarks	*No Opinion Possible*
3. Efficiency	Standard [Below Standard or Standard]
3.1 Bank Handling	*Standard*
3.2 Implementation Efficiency	*Below Standard*
Overall Project Performance Rating:	Good [Satisfactory or Good]

Criteria and sub-criteria: *Outstanding – Standard – Below standard – Deficient – No opinion possible, Not applicable*
Overall performance: *Excellent – Good – Satisfactory – Marginal – Unsatisfactory – Highly unsatisfactory*

A. What is this project evaluation about?

1 | What is the aim of this evaluation?

The evaluation assesses the performance and results of project assignments, focusing on digitalisation. It identifies potential synergies between digitalisation and project outcomes, providing insights into the progress achieved. Additionally, it offers evidence-based lessons to guide the preparation and implementation of the next Digital Approach 2026-30. Specifically, the findings 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 cooperation (TC) and its four TC assignments. It examines the results of these assignments and their contributions to the overall project goals, with an emphasis on digitalisation.

2 | What is non-transactional TC?

TC is classified as either transactional or non-transactional. Transactional TCs are directly linked to investment projects and documented in investment approval records.

Non-transactional TCs, on the other hand, are stand-alone or developed outside the investment project cycle, with approvals documented separately by the Vice Presidency for Policy and Partnerships.[2]

B. What are the evaluation findings?

1 | Relevant strategic design

The project was well aligned with Moldova's National Action Plan for Trade Facilitation and other international commitments. It supported Moldova's obligations under the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the Moldova-European Union Association Agreement. Additionally, the project complemented other technical assistance and capacity building initiatives funded by international institutions such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the European Union (EU). It also supported the EBRD's Moldova Country Strategies of 2017-22 and 2023-28 by addressing structural challenges and the increased demand for digitised public services. Furthermore, the project fits within the EBRD's ambitions as outlined in the Approach to Accelerating the Digital Transition 2021-25.

[2] EBRD, IEvD. 2023. *"Moving wheels of change": An evaluation of the EBRD's policy dialogue performance and results 2017-2023 (SS23-200)*. It provides details on the various definitions in use at the EBRD.

2 | Effective assessment and evaluation hindered by the absence of indicators and baseline data	The results framework was limited, focusing primarily on outputs rather than broader outcomes. Additionally, the project lacked clear indicators and baseline data. While political risks were identified and mitigation actions were addressed, technical risks related to IT infrastructure and resource availability were not adequately assessed.
3 | Good collaboration and enhanced stakeholder engagement thanks to local know-how	The project team, consisting of members from UNCTAD and the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova (CSRM), efficiently adapted the new ASYCUDA World modules to Moldova's specific needs. The project team's prior experience with ASYCUDA World implementation in Moldova facilitated smooth collaboration and effective stakeholder management. The use of local expert consultants further supported engagement with key stakeholders.
4 | Successful roll-out but areas for improvement in monitoring implementation	The development and roll-out of digital systems were successful, despite delays caused by capacity constraints and IT infrastructure limitations. However, after the project was completed and the contractual agreement with consultants ended, no mechanism was in place to track the progress of the actual implementation and use of the systems.
5 | Well-designed customs modules and e-portals laying the foundation for a future-ready customs system	Despite technical challenges and delays, the new customs modules and e-portals were well designed and met expectations. The electronic issuance of certificates of preferential origin (CPOs) faced delays due to IT infrastructure limitations and the late entry into force of the new Customs Code. Nonetheless, the system was technically prepared for future integration with EU customs authorities and other countries for electronic data exchange on CPOs.
6 | Impactful results even before the full roll-out	The digitisation of pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments was partially implemented. The phased approach adopted by the CSRM aimed to avoid overburdening customs staff and couriers. Significant outcomes included the implementation of automated pre-arrival and pre-departure information exchange with Universal Postal Union (UPU) systems and the introduction of an application programming interface (API) for express couriers, enabling customs to receive standardised and complete custom declaration datasets instantly.

C. What are the key evaluation insights for future projects?

Insight 1: Assessing the digital readiness of clients enables informed and realistic planning.

Insight 2: Engaging relevant experts early in the process mitigates risks and maximises long-term benefits by streamlining processes.

Insight 3: Integrating client capacity development into the project scope supports the long-term sustainability of digitalised customs services.

Insight 4: Proactive engagement with the private sector enhances the usability of and buy-in for digitalised customs services.

Insight 5: Post-deployment monitoring and self-evaluation are key for establishing effective learning loops that ensure continued benefits from the project and enable more effective implementation in future initiatives.

D. What is coming next?

What is coming next?

The current Strategic and Capital Framework (SCF) sets a vision for launching "**comprehensive and coherent activities to help countries of operations leverage the digital transition as an enabler of transition across all sectors.**" Due to the cross-cutting nature of the digital transition, insights from various upcoming evaluations will be highly relevant. In particular, the following evaluations are noteworthy:

- **Evaluation of the Digital Approach:** This will provide an early assessment of the implementation of the EBRD's Digital Approach and examine efforts to implement the Digital Approach through the lens of projects tagged as "digital" that act as catalysts for transition impact.

- **Evaluation of the Small Business Initiative Phase 2:** This will offer insights into the digitalisation/digital transformation of small and medium-sized enterprises through direct financing, partner financial intermediaries, and advisory services.

1. Background and context: the journey towards digital and sustainable trade facilitation in Moldova

1.1. Rationale for this evaluation

1. As part of its 2024 Work Programme,[3] the Independent Evaluation Department (IEvD) launched an evaluation of the "Republic of Moldova: Support for the Digitisation of Custom Procedures," a non-transactional technical cooperation (TC) project ("the Project") (TCRS ID: 13677) approved in 2021.

- **The rationale for including this project evaluation in the work programme was two-fold**: First, accelerating the digital transition is one of the three cross-cutting themes of the Strategic and Capital Framework (SCF) 2021-25. The evaluation sought to inform the preparation of the SCF 2026-30, where digitalisation is identified as a strategic enabler.

- Second, the project evaluation was designed to feed into the Digital Approach 2026-30, alongside the Thematic Evaluation of EBRD's Digital Approach 2021-25 (scheduled for delivery in Q3 2025).

2. **A non-transactional TC project, also referred to as funded policy dialogue, which slightly predates the EBRD's Digital Approach but features more advanced digital component implementation was selected for this evaluation.** This choice was made because investment projects signed after the adoption of the EBRD's Digital Approach in January 2022 and the tagging methodology have not yet started executing the digital components or are only in the very early stages of implementation. Consequently, they are not yet mature enough for an outcome-focused evaluation.

3. **This evaluation focuses on understanding and assessing the outcomes of the non-transactional TC project, particularly its digitalisation components.** 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 for digitalisation in the economies where it invests, serving both accountability and learning purposes.

1.2. Country context: Moldova's strategic path to sustainable growth and reforms

4. **Moldova has demonstrated commendable resilience in navigating significant challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic and the destabilising effects of regional geopolitical tensions (for example, the Ukraine War).** These crises have exposed vulnerabilities in Moldova's economy and underscored the urgency for transformative reforms.

[3] EBRD. 2023. *IEvD Work Programme and Budget 2024-2026*.

5. **As a landlocked nation, Moldova faces intrinsic challenges such as elevated transport costs and regulatory and procedural trade barriers which hamper its competitiveness in international trade**. However, it is strategically positioned at the crossroads of major trade routes and recognises the transformative potential of automation and digitalisation in streamlining its customs operations.

6. **The government's proactive approach to structural reforms shows a strategic vision**. It has been guided by both international commitments -- such as the Association Agreement between the European Union (EU) and the Republic of Moldova, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) – and national priorities like Moldova's Digital Transformation Strategy 2023-2030. Key initiatives -- such as improving governance to attract investment and advancing green and digital transformation -- reflect a determined effort to modernise the economy and position the country for sustainable growth. These reforms are not merely aspirational; they are essential for unlocking Moldova's trade potential in an increasingly competitive global market.

7. **The Moldova-European Union (EU) Association Agreement was signed in 2016, and the WTO TFA was ratified in January 2017**. The National Action Plan for Trade Facilitation for 2018–20 was adopted on 12 December 2017 to support the implementation of the WTO TFA.

8. **The National Action Plan for Trade Facilitation was developed by the National Trade Facilitation Committee, which is part of the Economic Council to the Prime Minister and was funded by the EBRD**. It incorporated recommendations from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Study on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in the Republic of Moldova undertaken in 2017.[4] The Government of Moldova presented the plan at the WTO Committee on Trade Facilitation in May 2018.

9. **Moldova's efforts to expand market access and deepen trade relations have yielded notable results**. The country has established a network of 16 free trade agreements (FTAs) with 47 partners, a significant achievement in diversifying trade relations and reducing dependence on any single partner. The recent signing of an FTA with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in June 2023 further highlights Moldova's strategic commitment to fostering closer economic ties with key global markets.

10. **While Moldova has made tangible strides in trade facilitation, these efforts must be sustained and expanded to ensure long-term economic resilience and integration into global value chains.** The nation's ability to capitalise on its trade agreements, overcome logistical challenges and align its development trajectory with global trends will be crucial in translating potential into enduring economic growth.

1.3. EBRD context: EBRD's strategic commitment to economic governance and digital transition

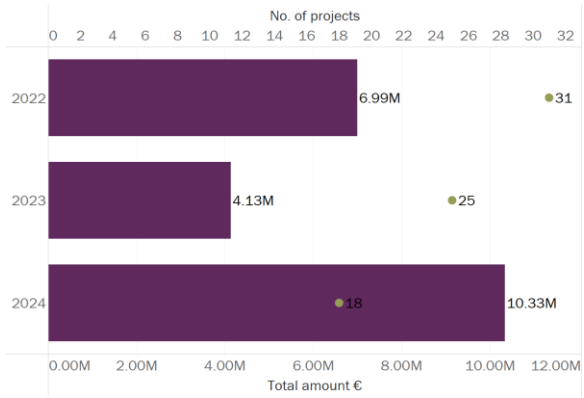
11. **Accelerating the digital transition is a key strategic objective of the EBRD's SCF 2021-25, underscoring the Bank's commitment to its transition mandate and to enhancing economic governance across the economies where it invests**. By 2025, as part of its Digital Approach, the EBRD aims to achieve several ambitious goals.[5] These include working with governments to improve the efficiency and transparency of the wider digital business environment in the

[4] United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. 2023. *Study on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade: Assessment of Trade Facilitation Framework -- Republic of Moldova.*
[5] EBRD. 2021. *The EBRD's approach to accelerating the Digital Transition, 2021-25*.

economies where it invests, and conducting maturity assessments and providing advice on appropriate regulatory frameworks and underlying platforms to support private-sector development.

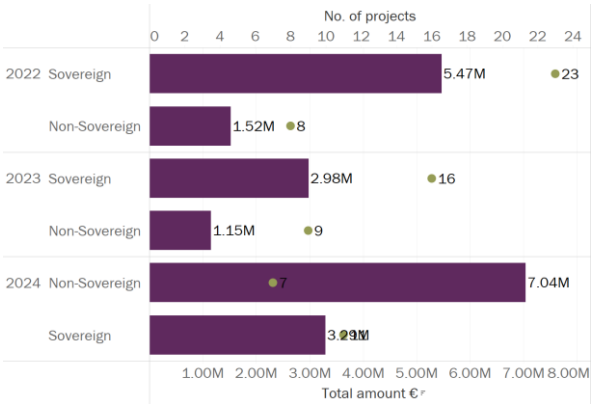
12. **The EBRD has established a strong track record in maximising its value-add and transition impact in the digital domain**. From 2022 to 2024, the Bank's non-transactional TC projects with digital components contributed €21.45 million across 74[6] projects in the countries where it invests (Figure 1). The upward trend during the pandemic highlighted an increased need for digitalisation. Additionally, there was a notable prevalence of sovereign projects over non-sovereign non-transactional TC projects during this period, as supporting countries in digitalising governance became a priority for helping governments navigate pandemic-related challenges (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Non-transactional TCs with digital components, 2022-24



TC: technical cooperation.
Source: IEvD using the EBRD Digital Hub, non-transactional TCs data.

Figure 2: Non-transactional TCs, sovereign/non-sovereign, 2022-24



TC: technical cooperation.
Source: IEvD using the EBRD Digital Hub, non-transactional TCs data.

13. **The EBRD's efforts in promoting e-governance and digitalisation have been particularly notable across several EBRD regions** (central Asia, eastern Europe and the Caucasus, south-eastern Europe, and southern and eastern Mediterranean). Digitalisation has enabled fast and safe access to vital public services and ensured the continued provision of essential services to businesses during the pandemic. By supporting countries in digitising economic governance, the EBRD has helped governments and the private sector cope with both the immediate and longer-term impacts of Covid-19 while also building companies' resilience and adaptability to future shocks.

1.4. The project: Enhancing digitalisation of Moldova's customs services to foster sustainable trade facilitation

14. **The Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova (CSRM) was required to modernise its operating systems to meet EU and WTO standards for import, export and transit procedures**. In

[6] These projects refer to technical cooperation (TC) activities that have been "approved" by Grant Review, rather than those being implemented with counterparts. This is due to a limitation in extracting project status data from TC reporting system (TCRS).

2005 it adopted the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) web-based Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) World,[7] which significantly increased annual customs revenue (Box 1). To align with its commitments under the WTO TFA and the Association Agreement with the EU, Moldova needed to further enhance its trade functions by streamlining, strengthening and simplifying customs procedures.

Box 1: What is ASYCUDA World?

The Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) World, developed by UNCTAD, is a customs management platform designed to streamline international trade and transport operations. With its comprehensive capabilities, ASYCUDA revolutionises customs procedures by managing diverse processes such as declarations, accounting, warehousing and suspense operations, while providing insightful trade data to support economic planning.

This system aligns with global standards like ISO, WCO and UN requirements, ensuring efficient and compliant customs processing. It integrates with various hardware setups, utilises databases to enhance performance and supports electronic data interchange through the United Nations/Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT) protocols, thereby facilitating effective communication between traders and customs authorities.

ASYCUDA aims to modernise customs operations by improving revenue collection and operational efficiency, reducing transaction costs and time, and enhancing security through streamlined cargo control. It also promotes transparency to combat corruption and emphasises sustainability by minimising paper use through electronic processes.

The latest iteration, ASYCUDA World, is active in over 80 countries and territories, demonstrating its global impact. Its compatibility with major databases and operating systems continues to advance customs management worldwide.

Source: ASYCUDA.

15. **To further these efforts, the Government of Moldova requested that the EBRD expand the operational capacity of the ASYCUDA World system**. In collaboration with UNCTAD, the CSRM and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova (CCI RM), the Digitisation of Customs Procedures in Moldova project was launched. The project aimed to integrate Moldova into the global trading system, develop its e-commerce sector and support economic recovery from Covid-19.

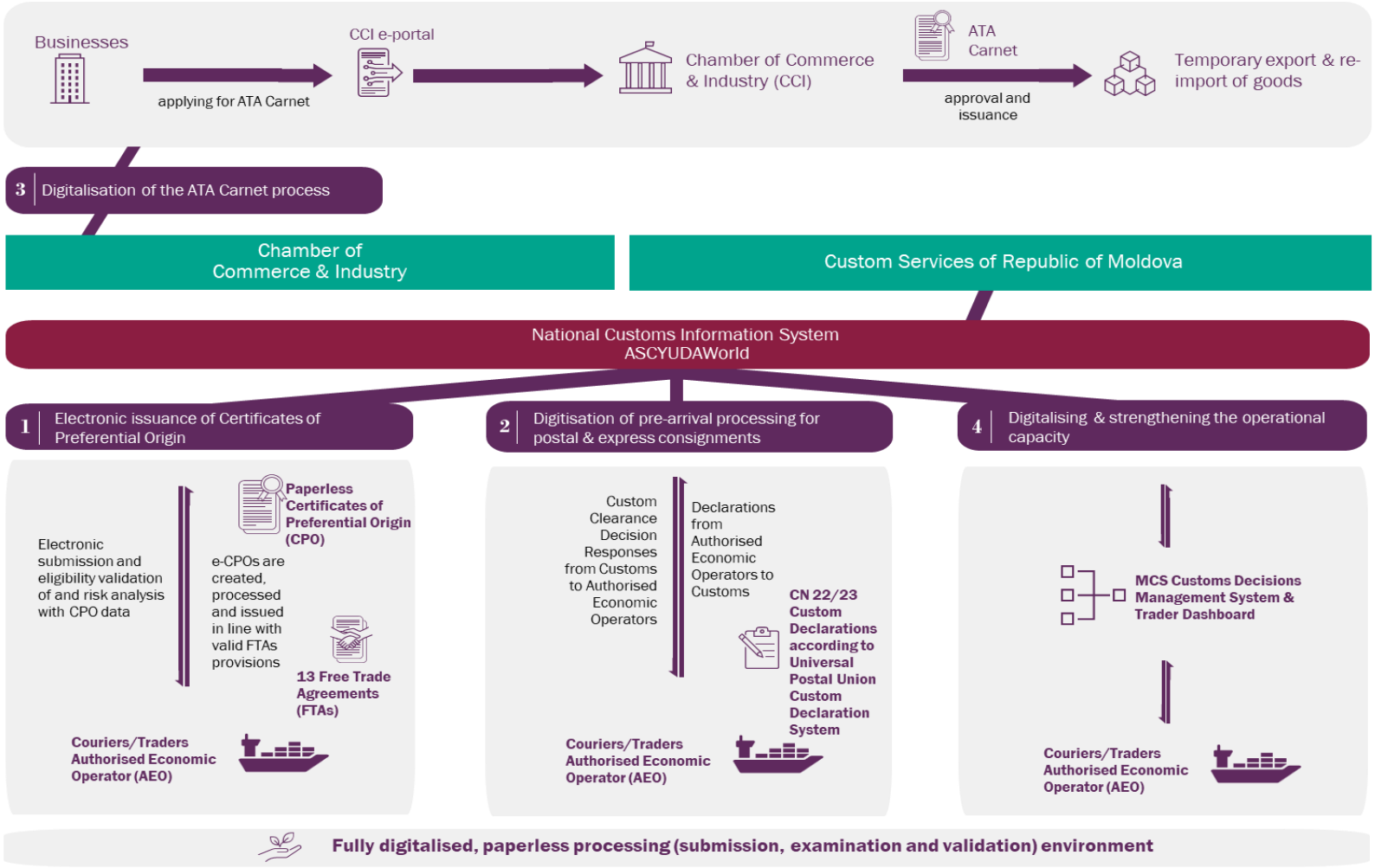
16. **The EBRD project was approved and signed in 2021 and was originally expected to be completed by February 2023**. However, the implementation period was extended to December 2024 (see Annex 5 for key project implementation milestones). The total committed amount for the project was €949,158, which was fully disbursed as of December 2024. The project received funding from two sources: the EBRD Shareholder Special Fund (€450,100) and the Türkiye – EBRD Cooperation Fund (€499,058).

17. **The project included four TC assignments designed to support the government in transitioning towards fully electronic customs procedures**. It provided technical assistance directly to the CSRM, delivered by the project consultant (UNCTAD), to digitalise Moldova's customs procedures. Additionally, CCI RM received support to digitise the application, approval and issuance of Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission (ATA) carnets, delivered by a local

[7] The Moldovan Customs Service, in cooperation with ASYCUDA, upgraded the ASYCUDAWorld platform to comply with international and EU standards and best practices.

consultant (Power IT). Other beneficiaries included businesses, e-shoppers, e-vendors and the wider trade community. The full scope of the project is described in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Digitisation of Customs Procedures in Moldova project



*ATA Carnet: Admission Temporaire or Temporary Admission, is an international customs document that permits duty-free and tax-free temporary import of goods for up to one year and serves as a guarantee to customs duties and taxes.
*CN22 and CN23 are customs declaration documents that detail the contents of a package. Any letter or parcel that is considered to contain 'commercial value' requires a CN22/23, as these items are subject to fees and taxes.

The objectives of the four TC assignments are briefly described below. Annex 6 provides a full description.

18. The **TC assignment 1** **"Republic of Moldova: Support to the Customs Service in implementing Electronic issuance of Certificates of Preferential Origin"** (CPOs) (Box 2) aimed to streamline entry and exit procedures for international trade and accelerate customs clearance times by implementing a 100% paperless CPO service. The scope included the electronic issuance of CPOs -- with electronic signature, security features and online verification.

Box 2: What is CPO?

A certificate of origin is a document used in international trade that certifies the country in which a product was manufactured. This information helps customs authorities determine the correct duties, taxes and compliance with trade regulations. There are two main types of certificates of origin:

- Preferential certificates of origin: Also known as certificates of preferential origin (CPOs), these are used when goods qualify for reduced or zero tariffs under specific free trade agreements (FTAs).
- Non-preferential certificates of origin: These are used for standard duty calculations and compliance with measures like embargoes or anti-dumping policies. The origin of a product is assessed based on where it was wholly obtained or where the last substantial, economically justified processing took place. Local Chambers of Commerce typically issue non-preferential certificates of origin, and requirements may vary depending on whether the applicant is a producer, trader or logistics service provider.

Certain countries mandate a certificate of origin to manage imports from specific origins due to political or commercial reasons. It is crucial to verify the destination country's requirements to ensure compliance. In essence, a certificate of origin is indispensable for smooth international trade, ensuring proper tariff application and adherence to customs regulations.

Source: The Trade Information Portal of the Republic of Moldova. 2025. Preferential Origin.

19. The **TC assignment 2** **"Republic of Moldova: Support to the Customs Service in facilitating cross-border e-commerce through the digitisation of pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments"** involved enhancing the Moldova Customs Service's existing ASYCUDA World to enable the electronic submission of consignment documentation for pre-arrival processing. The work included expanding the ASYCUDA World system to incorporate two additional modules: ASYCUDA Postal Customs Declaration (ASYPCD) and ASYCUDA Pre-Arrival Processing Declaration (ASYPAP). These modules were designed to facilitate electronic pre-arrival processing for express and postal consignments. The assignment also supported the deployment of an electronic interface, revision of existing bureaucratic formalities and procedures, enhanced inter-agency cooperation and information sharing, and trade facilitation through the use of electronic advance data exchange between the CSRM and designated operators (that is, between ASYCUDA World and the Universal Postal Union [UPU] – Customs Declaration System [CDS]).

20. The **TC assignment 3** **"Republic of Moldova: Support to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in digitalising ATA Carnet process (Admission Temporaire or Temporary Admission)"** aimed to digitise the ATA Carnet process, an international customs document that allows for temporary export and import of goods without incurring customs duty and value added tax (Box 3).

Box 3: What is ATA Carnet?

The ATA Carnet, often referred to as a "passport for goods," is an international customs document that facilitates the temporary importation of goods without the need to pay duties, taxes or customs fees. The acronym ATA stands for Admission Temporaire (Temporary Admission in French) and Temporary Admission in English. Designed to simplify customs procedures and reduce costs, the ATA Carnet is especially valuable for businesses and individuals transporting goods across international borders for specific purposes. It is primarily used for temporary imports not intended for sale, such as professional equipment (tools, instruments, machinery), commercial samples for trade shows or demonstrations, goods for exhibitions or cultural events, and performing arts equipment (musical instruments, costumes).

Typically valid for one year, the carnet enables multiple trips to multiple countries during its validity period. It offers significant cost savings by eliminating the need to pay import duties and taxes at each border and by removing the requirement for customs deposits or bonds. Governed by the ATA Convention and the Istanbul Convention, the system is internationally accepted in over 80 countries, including major trading nations.

The carnet includes standardised customs forms for entry, transit and re-export, thereby avoiding repetitive documentation and simplifying administrative processes. It is issued by authorised organisations, such as Chambers of Commerce, in the carnet holder's country. However, it cannot be used for goods intended for sale and is not applicable to consumables or perishable items.

Source: International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), ATA Carnet.

21. The **TC assignment 4** **"Digitalising and strengthening the operational capacity of the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova"** aimed to enhance the digital and operational capabilities of the Moldovan Customs Service. This project focused on the development and implementation of the Moldovan Customs Service - Customs Decisions Management System (MCS-CDMS) to automate customs decision processes, the creation of the Moldovan Customs Service - Trader Dashboard (MCS-TD) for businesses to monitor transactions, and the integration of additional ASYCUDA World modules and functionalities to further enhance customs operations. Additional functionalities introduced were electronic document submission, a mobile application for customs officers, and an Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI)[8] database to ensure compliance with international standards.

The TC assignment was expected to enable economic operators to monitor, track and trace all customs transactions performed by or on behalf of the business/trader.

[8] An EORI number is mandatory for customs clearance within the customs territory of the EU. It applies to all types of customs operations such as export, import and transit. EORI uniquely identifies economic operators and other persons.

2. The project shows a relevant and coherent strategic design, but with weaknesses

22. **This chapter provides an overview of how well the project's objectives align with Moldova's broader framework of public and private sector priorities.** It also assesses the project's alignment with Moldova's Country Strategy, examining whether it is synergistic with other ongoing, completed or planned initiatives as part of Moldova's roadmap to promote the digitisation of the economy and e-commerce, as well as the country's overall digitalisation strategy, including those financed by other international financial institutions and bilateral agencies.

23. **IEvD's overall rating of relevance is *standard*. This is based on the individual assessments for each sub-criterion: *outstanding* strategic relevance, *below standard* specification of design and expected results. The additionality sub-criterion is not assessed for this TC project.**

2.1. The project is relevant to support the implementation of the National Action Plan for Trade Facilitation, contribute to Moldova's digital transformation and strengthen public-private cooperation.

24. **The project supports Moldova's commitments under the WTO TFA and the Moldova-European Union Association Agreement**, both of which require the digitalisation and modernisation of customs procedures to meet international standards. In doing so, the project fully aligns with the Republic of Moldova Digital Transformation Strategy 2023-30 and aids in transitioning towards fully digitised customs procedures.

25. **The digitalisation components of the project's objectives are highly relevant to the needs of the Moldovan government and stakeholders**, particularly for enhancing the digital capabilities of the CSRM and CCI RM.

26. **The project demonstrates strong relevance to private sector participation by directly addressing key challenges.** It aligns with private sector needs by simplifying bureaucratic processes, particularly in customs clearance, and by enhancing trade facilitation. These measures are critical for reducing operational inefficiencies and promoting a more conducive environment for business growth.

27. **Furthermore, active collaboration with private sector stakeholders throughout the project's lifecycle significantly reinforces its relevance.** During the pre-design phase, the project's development was shaped through active discussions between the Economic Council Secretariat and private sector participants, including small and medium-sized enterprises. This collaborative approach ensured that the project was aligned with actual market needs, particularly in the e-commerce sector.

28. **Overall, the project's digitalisation components are well aligned with the strategy and objectives of the Moldovan government and its stakeholders**, contributing to the country's broader goals of enhancing trade facilitation and economic resilience.

29. **In addition, by prioritising stakeholder involvement and addressing systemic barriers, the project not only supports private sector growth but also strengthens public-private cooperation.** This alignment underscores its relevance as a model initiative for fostering private sector participation in economic development projects. One exception is noted with local express couriers, who during the focus group session appeared not to have been consulted regarding the type and format of the required dataset nor properly informed about the specifics of the new electronic data submission requirements for the new system.

2.2. The project is coherent with EBRD strategies

30. **Overall, the project demonstrates strong alignment with the EBRD's strategic aspirations as outlined in its various strategic documents**, highlighting its relevance and potential impact in supporting Moldova's digital transformation strategy and broader international development commitments.

31. **The project is well aligned with the EBRD's Strategic and Capital Framework (SCF) 2021-25, which emphasises accelerating the digital transition as a key theme**. The SCF envisions comprehensive activities that help countries leverage digital transition across all sectors by 2025, promoting sustainability and innovation through digital technologies. Focusing on the digitalisation of government services, this project aims to foster trade facilitation, enhance the investment climate, and automate processes for resource optimisation, making it a strong fit with the SCF's strategic directions.

32. **In terms of the EBRD's Moldova Country Strategy 2017-22, the project effectively addresses the structural challenges and the increased demand for digitised public services that were exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis.** It aligns particularly well with Priority 2: Enhancing Competitiveness by supporting private firms and promoting the commercialisation of public utilities and infrastructure. This alignment continues with the current Moldova Country Strategy 2023-28, demonstrating the project's ongoing relevance to Moldova's strategic goals.

33. **Although the project was signed before the EBRD's Digital Approach was formalised, it aligns with the Bank's aspiration to enhance policy engagement and technical assistance activities to support governments in improving the efficiency and transparency of the wider digital business environment**. It is important to note that the EBRD has developed two separate tagging methodologies: one for investment projects with a digital component and another for non-transactional TC projects with digital components. This distinction corresponds to the separate project approval cycles.

2.3. The project is coherent with other development partners' initiatives supporting Moldova's trade reforms

34. **The project aligns closely with Moldova's National Action Plan for Trade Facilitation, ensuring a unified approach to achieving national priorities.** It also fosters strong synergies with initiatives led by other development partners, promoting collaboration and maximising the impact on advancing digitalisation in trade functions.

35. **The project is part of a broader effort to modernise CSRM to meet EU and WTO standards for import, export and transit procedures. This effort involves a series of interconnected**

technical assistance and capacity building projects, each funded and implemented by various international institutions. These projects are designed to build upon one another, ensuring that the developed solutions are cohesive and mutually reinforcing. Each project serves as a prerequisite for the next, demonstrating a structured and phased approach to achieving the overall goal of modernising the customs service and enhancing trade facilitation. Table 1 below summarises these projects, highlighting their progress and the collaborative efforts involved.

Table 1: Technical assistance and capacity building support from other international institutions

Other international institutions	Technical assistance/capacity building support	Progress	WTO TFA commitment
USAID	Development and enhancement of the Trade Information Portal Support for training and awareness of the new Customs Code	Completed initiatives: Trade Information Portal of the Republic of Moldova launched on 5 May 2020, integrating trade regulations and procedures for transparency Ongoing updates: Information updated to reflect the new Customs Code effective 1 January 2024 Awareness campaign: December 2023 campaign conducted to present provisions of the new Customs Code	Article 1.2: Information available through internet
EBRD, UNCTAD	Development of the CN23 module in SIIV ASYCUDA World for pre-arrival processing of customs declarations	Implementation: CN23 module integrated into the Customs Integrated Information System (SIIV) ASYCUDA World, enabling online processing of export postal item data Testing phase: Import data processing and additional modules (Manifest, H6)[9] under testing with postal operators	Article 7.1 (Pre-arrival processing)
EBRD, UNCTAD	Development of digital customs declaration modules in SIIV ASYCUDA World	Implementation: Modules "Manifest" and "H6" for customs declarations with reduced data sets developed Testing phase: Currently being tested with express operators Order No. 559-O/2023 entered into force on 1 January 2024, enabling digital format declarations and pre-arrival processing for postal items transported by express operators	Article 7.8 (Expedited shipments)
EU	Twinning Project (2017-19): Supported foundational work for Single Window implementation	Documents developed: -- A vision document outlining the implementation of the Customs Single Window -- Specifications detailing the functional and technical requirements for the Customs Single Window concept within SIIV ASYCUDA World	Article 10.4 (Single Window)

[9] Customs declaration with a reduced data set H6.

EU	New Computerised Transit System (NCTS) Development	Contribution Agreement between the EU and UNCTAD signed in July 2023 NCTS project launched on 26 September 2023	Article 11 (Transit)
Source: WTO. 2024. Notification of arrangements and progress in the provision of technical assistance and capacity building support of category C designations.			

2.4. The design was informed by lessons from past EBRD experience but shows weaknesses with respect to clarifying results

36. **The specification of design and expected results are assessed on four aspects**:

- The plausibility of the sources of expected transition impact (ETI), ensuring that the intervention can plausibly produce the intended impact
- The completeness and clarity of the specification of expected results, including outputs, outcomes and impacts, as well as the adequacy of indicators
- The use of past experiences and lessons to shape the design
- The identification and mitigation of risk factors, including spelling out assumptions in the theory of change (ToC) to identify any potential risks

Plausibility of ETI sources

37. **The Bank does not monitor the contribution of non-transactional TC projects towards transition.** ETI and portfolio transition impact scoring apply exclusively to investment transactions with connected TC assignments (transactional TCs). Although the project results matrix in the TC reporting system (TCRS) indicates transition impact criteria, the indicators are missing, and there is no linkage between the project outputs, outcomes and the indicated transition impact criteria.

Completeness and clarity of expected results specification

38. **The evaluation of EBRD policy dialogue[10] highlights significant issues with the results framework for non-transactional TC projects that apply to this project.** The non-transactional TC results captured in the TCRS are limited to activity outputs. Whilst the results matrix template in TCRS encourages the development of outcomes beyond outputs, IEvD finds that these are confined to the outputs of the consultancy contracts and do not capture broader outcomes.

39. **The project includes several examples of unclear outcome definitions**. For instance, an outcome indicator in TCRS from this project, such as "recommended policy or strategy agreed by relevant stakeholder(s)," does not specify whether the policy is implemented or has achieved the desired result, raising questions about the effectiveness of the policy dialogue. Similarly, an outcome stated as "new or updated digital government technology or product introduced" lacks

[10] EBRD, IEvD. 2024. *"Moving wheels of change": An evaluation of the EBRD's policy dialogue performance and results 2017-2023 (SS23-200).*

indicators to measure, for example, improvements in revenue collections in custom operations or reductions in custom clearance time.

Evidence of use of experience and lessons to shape design

40. **The project design incorporates experiences from similar TC assignments**, particularly those focused on digitising public services in Armenia and providing advice to support governments and the private sector across the eastern Europe and the Caucasus region during Covid-19.

41. **Lessons learned from other technical assistance projects with governmental institutions in Moldova, especially the need for close monitoring of project implementation, have also been integrated**. The involvement of the Operation Leader and Investment Climate Advisor, who maintained regular communication with the CSRM and CCI RM, highlights a proactive approach to ensuring successful project delivery. This was further supported by the EBRD-funded Economic Council Secretariat, adding an additional layer of oversight and expertise.

42. **Moreover, the project design includes an assessment of international best practices in the digitisation of customs procedures and systems design for implementation within the Moldovan context**. This commitment to adopting globally recognised standards enhances the project's credibility and ensures that the solutions are tailored to Moldova's specific needs and conditions.

Identification and mitigation of risk factors

43. **During the project design phase, the primary identified risk was political constraints due to upcoming elections and potential changes in the agenda**. Mitigation actions for this risk were identified and tracked in the TCRS.

44. **However, risk factors related to TC assignments are not adequately identified. For instance,** during the evaluation interviews with project consultants reveal that TC assignments experience delays due to technical difficulties related to IT infrastructure constraints and the limited resource capacity of the authorities. Although the current TCRS and the project profiles for TC assignments promote the identification of risk factors and the development of mitigation plans, the issue lies in the early assessment and identification of possible risks related to the development and roll-out of digital systems. The implementation risks follow a different structure, as they require the involvement of project consultants and are identifiable only at certain phases of project development.

45. **Overall, the IEvD evaluation team rates the specification of design and expected results as *below standard*** due to the lack of adequate outcome and impact indicators and insufficient identification of risks related to project development phases (Table 2).

Table 2: Assessment of the specification of design and expected results

Aspects	Assessment
Plausibility of expected transition impact sources	No opinion possible
Completeness and clarity of expected results specification	Partly achieved
Evidence of use of experience and lessons to shape design	Achieved
Risk factors adequately identified and considered	Partly achieved

3. Customs modules and e-portals were delivered with initial results visible

46. **As mentioned above, non-transactional TC projects are not designed to demonstrate direct outcome linkages.** This limitation is reflected in output and outcome indicators within the results matrix in TCRS, which often focus on consultant final report submissions with minimal emphasis on monitoring implementation or understanding the beneficiary-side perspective on project execution. The evaluation of EBRD policy dialogue[10] highlighted this finding, noting a lack of outcome-based focus in such projects. This project is typical in this respect, proposing the implementation of systems as the primary outcome rather than measuring the outcomes derived from the use of digital systems (for example, time savings, cost reduction).

47. To mitigate this limitation, IEvD **reconstructed the results framework using indicators from the TCRS** to clarify the linkage between digitalisation initiatives outputs and the broader outcomes detailed in the objectives of the TC assignments (see Annex 1 for details on the methodology, and Annexes 2 and 3 for the theory of change (ToC) and reconstructed results framework). In addition, IEvD suggested potential indicators that could be used to better assess outcomes for learning purposes. However, these indicators were not included in the assessment.

48. **This chapter provides an overview of the results of the non-transactional TC project based on the reconstructed results framework.** This assessment 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.

3.1. Outputs: The new customs modules and e-portals were developed, tested and partially implemented despite technical challenges and delays.

49. **Overall, IEvD's assessment of the achievement of outputs from the TC assignments is *standard*.** Table 3 below summarises the assessment against outputs defined in the reconstructed results framework for the project (see Annex 3).

Table 3: Expected outputs from TC assignments

Expected project outputs (based on reconstructed result framework)	Assessment
1. Project implementation support completed. Report on technical requirements for e-ATA Carnet, and CPO system development and roll-out submitted.	**Achieved**
*The report prepared and submitted detailing project achievements, impact on problems encountered, lessons learned and potential follow-up measures. (Results Matrix - TCRS)	☑
***Completion and timely submission of the technical requirements report (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
*Final, tested electronic system successfully rolled out (Results Matrix - TCRS)	Partially achieved
2. Project implementation support completed. Report on technical requirements and information system design for the e-platform (and AW/ASYPCD and ASYPAP) submitted and approved.	**Achieved**

*Desk-based study undertaken and quality report provided on regulatory requirements to commence Stage 2 (design of technical requirements) (Results Matrix - TCRS)	☑
*The report prepared and submitted detailing project achievements, impact on problems encountered, lessons learned and potential follow-up measures. (Results Matrix - TCRS)	☑
**Completion and timely submission of the technical requirements report (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
*Final, tested electronic system successfully rolled out (Results Matrix - TCRS)	Partially achieved
3. Project implementation support completed. Report on detailed technical recommendations to enhance fully digitalised, paperless environment and improvement of the overall efficiency of customs operations.	**Achieved**
*Final report – (a) digitalising processes related to the application for a customs decision; (b) development of Trader Dashboard; (c) support for a fully digitalised, paperless environment and improved customs operational efficiency -- prepared and submitted detailing project achievements, impact on problems encountered, lessons learned and potential follow-up measures. (Results Matrix - TCRS)	☑
**Final, tested Customs Decisions Management System (MCS-CDMS) and Trader Dashboard (MCS-TD) portals successfully rolled out (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
**Completion and timely submission of the technical requirements report (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
4. Training sessions (including Train the Trainers) were organised and conducted: Training sessions for CCI RM and CSRM, and Postal Operators.	**Partially achieved**
*1 online training session for CCI RM staff, including 5 online training sessions for staff in all regions of CCI RM branches organised and conducted (Results Matrix - TCRS)	☑
*1 online training session for CSRM staff, including in conjunction with the Universal Postal Union (UPU), training for a designated postal operator for one Train-The-Trainers (TTT) session (up to 10 MCS technical and functional staff per TTT group) (Results Matrix - TCRS)	Partially achieved
**Number of trainers successfully certified or trained under the TTT approach (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
**Stakeholder feedback on the applicability of training content to operations (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
**Participant satisfaction rate with the training sessions (e.g., content, delivery, relevance) (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
5. Awareness campaign was organised and conducted, with banners and press release available on the CCI RM, CSRM and Moldovan Economic Council websites.	**Achieved**
*Awareness campaign organised and conducted, banner and press release available on the CCI RM, CSRM and Economic Council websites (Results Matrix - TCRS)	☑
**Number of platforms/websites where campaign materials were published (CCI RM, CSRM and Moldovan Economic Council websites) (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
**Number of inquiries or follow-up actions resulting from the awareness campaign (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
6. Policy advice delivered: draft recommendations for improved policy/strategy submitted	**No opinion possible**
*Detailed technical recommendations to enhance a fully digitalised, paperless environment and improvement of the overall efficiency of customs operations (Results Matrix - TCRS)	No data available
**Number of recommendations integrated into official policies, strategies or action plans (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
Indicators from the Results Matrix under TCRS Project Profile: these are part of the assessment and rating. **Suggested indicators for future interventions: these are not part of the current assessment.	

Electronic issuance of certificates of preferential origin

50. **The project team completed the analysis for enhancing and integrating new functional requirements,** including the capability to integrate specific rules of origin and process applications/requests for the issuance of certificates of preferential origin (CPOs) with digital images of supporting documents. At the request of CSRM, a new simplified interface for capturing

the rules of origin was developed, aligning with the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Convention (Box 4), new FTAs and updated rules of origin, introducing printouts for all types of CPOs.

Box 4: What is PEM Convention?

The system of Pan-Euro-Mediterranean (PEM) cumulation of origin allows for the application of diagonal cumulation between the EU, EFTA states, Türkiye, the countries which signed the Barcelona Declaration, the Western Balkans, the Faroe Islands and Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. It is based on a network of free trade agreements (FTAs) that share identical origin protocols. Those origin protocols are now being replaced by a reference to the Regional Convention on Pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin (PEM Convention).

Source: European Commission. Taxation and Customs Union. The Pan-Euro-Mediterranean cumulation and the PEM Convention.

51. **The development and testing of new modules for the electronic issuance of CPOs in the ASYCUDA World system faced delays due to technical challenges and the late entry into force of the new Customs Code.** To mitigate the impact, CSRM decided to gradually enable features and modules in phases, thereby reducing the burden on customs staff and local express couriers.

52. **Although the system digitises the submission, processing and validation of CPOs, physical copies are still required for dispatch because of international legislation**. Compliance with EU regulations has reduced the number of visits by economic operators to customs from twice to once, but printing QR codes remains necessary under current laws.

Digitisation of pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments (e-commerce)

53. **The development, customisation and testing of the ASYCUDA Postal Customs Declaration (ASYPCD) module for postal consignments and the ASYCUDA Pre-Arrival Processing Declaration (ASYPAP) module for express consignments were completed on time within the existing ASYCUDA World system.** Due to the introduction of additional functionalities requested during the testing phase and new legislation,[11] both modules were further amended and enhanced in 2023. In addition, CSRM requested enhancements to the export and import workflows, including EMC/EMD data exchange, to enable better control over the arrival and departure of postal items. Testing and simulation of information exchanges continued until July 2024, with multiple changes and adaptations implemented outside the initial project scope.

54. **UNCTAD experts and CSRM staff completed the tests and aligned the ASYPCD module with national requirements to enable information exchange between the Universal Postal Union (UPS) - Customs Declaration System (CDS) and ASYPCD**. However, Posta Moldovei was not ready to send data until June 2022, which caused delays in testing the ASYPCD module.

55. **The e-commerce solutions for express operators (local express couriers), represented by the ASYPAP model, were deployed in the live environment after the new legislation supporting all processes entered into force on 1 August 2024**. The UNCTAD team introduced multiple changes and adaptations outside the initial project scope, such as significant changes to the structure of IATA Cargo Extensible Markup Language (XML) messages to accommodate national requirements. Express couriers experienced issues with the electronic submission of customs

[11] A new legislation on legal provisions for receiving and/or sending postal items entered into force on 1st August 2024.

declaration datasets due to a lack of initial consultation. Consequently, they had to devise and adapt their own solutions to ensure data compatibility with the new modules.

56. **The technical integration of the new modules with the existing ASYCUDA World system was successful.** However, the phased deployment approach, adopted to reduce the burden on staff and the business community, means that certain features and modules are not yet enabled in the live environment. Although this approach effectively mitigates immediate operational disruptions, it indicates a need for ongoing monitoring to ensure full implementation.

Digitalising and strengthening the operational capacity of the Moldovan Customs Service

57. **The Moldovan Customs Service - Customs Decisions Management System (MCS-CDMS) and Trader Dashboard (MCS-TD) were developed** using the same open-source platform as the New Computerised Transit System (NCTS).[12] Both solutions were fully interfaced with NCTS as well as with CSRM's ASYCUDA World system.

58. **The deployment of MCS-CDMS and MCS-TD portals was delayed due to the late allocation of web domains for testing/training, and production/live environments**. Additionally, the new Customs Code and a significant volume of out-of-scope changes needed to facilitate additional alignment in CSRM's ASYCUDA World system further delayed the integration of certain features and modules of ASYCUDA World into the MCS-CDMS and MCS-TD portals.

Digitalisation of the ATA Carnet process

59. **The final system met all the functional requirements outlined in the project scope, delivering the expected digitalisation of the ATA Carnet approval and issuance process**. The digitalisation and automation of the workflows related to the application, approval and issuance of ATA Carnets were successfully integrated into the e-platform of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova (CCI RM) and tested with necessary government tools and platforms such as MPay (government electronic payment service) and MSign (government electronic signature service). The testing phase successfully identified and resolved potential issues, but it also prompted CCI RM to review and streamline existing workflows for ATA Carnet approval and issuance, leading to further refinements from the project consultant. Although these adjustments extended the testing period, they ultimately ensured that the system met CCI RM's expectations.

60. **Despite adherence to the agreed technical specifications, some uncertainty remains regarding the alignment of the e-ATA Carnet platform with broader international best practices for e-ATA systems**. On 24 May 2022, CCI RM informed the project consultant that, due to updates from the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), all ATA Carnets issued after 1 January 2023 must have synchronised digital records within the ICC's electronic ATA Carnet system. Consequently, while the module developed for CCI RM is operational for application processing and internal/local issuance, the issuance of ATA Carnets at the international level directly from CCI RM's system is currently not possible. The need for manual input adds complexity to the process and limits the system's full potential for international use, necessitating further adjustments.

[12] NCTS is a Europe-wide digital system designed to enhance the management and control of goods under Union and Common Transit. It operates by enabling the electronic submission of transit declarations and the electronic exchange of data among the customs authorities involved in a transit procedure: the office of departure, transit office and office of destination. The benefits of NCTS include improved service quality for economic operators, enhanced data security, electronic confirmation of transit operations, reduced costs and delays caused by hard-copy declarations, and a lower risk of fraud and corruption through online monitoring of transit operations.

Training and awareness campaigns

61. **Relevant awareness campaigns were organised, and marketing materials, including press releases, were made available**. Additionally, businesses were informed about the new process and the online portal, and information on the ATA Carnet and leaflets was available at CCI RM premises.

62. **Training sessions for CSRM staff were postponed** due to the phased deployment approach of the new modules and pending approval of the new version of CPOs by CSRM.

3.2. Outcomes: The new customs modules and e-portals were made available using a phased approach to avoid overburdening staff and economic operators while still showing initial effects.

63. **Overall, IEvD's assessment of the project's contribution to outcomes through the TC assignments is *standard*.** Table 4 below summarises the assessment against intermediary outcomes defined in the reconstructed results framework for the project (Annex 3). Although it is still too early to fully assess the overall project outcomes and its contribution to impact before the complete roll-out of the digitalised customs systems, several key improvements and enhancements to the Moldovan Customs Service's functionalities, in line with EU and international requirements, have already been achieved.

Table 4: Intermediary outcomes of TC assignments

Intermediary project outcomes (based on reconstructed result framework)	Assessment
1. Expanded UNCTAD ASYCUDA World system: to enable the issuance of electronic CPOs	**Partially achieved**
*CPOs available in electronic format by the end of the project (Results Matrix - TCRS)	Partially achieved
**Number of electronic CPOs successfully issued through ASYCUDA World (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
***Reduction in manual CPO issuance as a percentage of total CPOs issued (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
2. Expanded UNCTAD ASYCUDA World system: to facilitate electronic pre-arrival processing for express and postal consignment	**Partially achieved**
*Two modules (ASYPAP and ASYPCD) e-platform integrated into the existing UNCTAD ASYCUDA World system (Results Matrix - TCRS)	Partially achieved
***Percentage of express and postal consignments processed through electronic pre-arrival processing compared to total consignments (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
***Reduction in the average customs clearance time for express and postal consignments (measured in minutes/hours) (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
***Percentage of express and postal operators utilising the electronic pre-arrival processing feature (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
3. Expanded UNCTAD ASYCUDA World system: to digitalise processes related to the application for a customs decision	**Partially achieved**
*** Customs Decisions Management System (MCS-CDMS) and Trader Dashboard (MCS-TD) portals were made available. (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
***Percentage of stakeholders (e.g., traders, customs officers) utilising the digital application system (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
***Number of processes related to customs decisions digitalised (e.g., submission, review, approval and notifications) (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
***Percentage of customs decision processes automated compared to baseline (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
4. Digitalised the ATA Carnet process	**Achieved**
***All ATA Carnet applications, approvals and issuances are completed in electronic format by the end of the project. (Suggested)*	*Not assessed*
Indicators from the Results Matrix under TCRS Project Profile: these are part of the assessment and rating. **Suggested indicators for future interventions: these are not part of the current assessment.	

Electronic issuance of certificates of preferential origin

64. **Previously, economic operators had to submit CPO applications and documents in paper form, which led to inefficiencies and administrative burdens.** Customs officers processed CPOs manually, resulting in delays and errors. The lack of integration between export declarations and CPOs hindered effective tracking and verification. Furthermore, the absence of a centralised digital record of issued CPOs limited the customs authority's ability to improve risk assessment and optimise controls.

65. **The implementation of electronic issuance of CPOs is aligning Moldova with global best practices for trade facilitation.** The system was technically prepared for future integration with EU customs authorities and other countries for electronic data exchange on CPOs.

66. **The new system is expected to ensure compliance with requirements and reduce the workload on customs officers by pre-filtering incomplete or ineligible applications.** With the full integration into electronic submission of CPOs, economic operators will be able to electronically submit applications and supporting documents for CPO issuance directly within the ASYCUDA World system. This automation will reduce paperwork, expedite submission processes and improve data accuracy, while enabling customs to track the entire lifecycle of a transaction, from declaration to certification.

67. **In addition, greater transparency and accountability are expected at all levels of the process.** The digitalisation project will enable the storage of all issued CPOs in electronic customs registers, supporting detailed risk profiling, data-driven decision-making, and optimised customs controls.

68. **However, despite significant progress, the system remained in a transition phase during the evaluation field visit to Moldova.** Regulations in Moldova and existing FTAs still required hard copy document submissions. Consequently, economic operators were in the process of adopting the new system, and full integration had not yet been achieved.

Digitisation of pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments

69. **Prior to digitalisation, postal and express couriers relied on manual data-sharing methods, such as Excel files, which caused delays and inefficiencies**. This approach hindered preliminary risk assessments because the data were not suitable for automated profiling. Customs authorities lacked real-time data, making it difficult to identify high-risk shipments and trends, thereby undermining effective decision-making and control optimisation.

70. **The digitalisation project reduced processing times and enhanced operational efficiency**. For instance, the implementation of automated pre-arrival and pre-departure information exchange with UPU systems using Extensible Markup Language (XML) file formats ensured accurate and timely data sharing for postal consignments. Interviews with relevant stakeholders and the project team confirmed that the digitalisation project contributed to a reduction in manual errors and paperwork due to digitised processes. In addition, the project ensured compliance with international standards for customs data exchange and enhanced collaboration between customs authorities, couriers, and international organisations, resulting in a more cohesive trade ecosystem.

71. **A large majority of postal items arriving in Moldova accompanied by information from the origin.** In December 2024, 94.8% of postal consignments included electronic advance data, a figure comparable to the average of 95.57% observed across Western and Eastern Europe combined . This high percentage enabled the reuse of existing information, eliminating the need for additional data capture. This indicates that the system for pre-arrival advance data is highly effective and well-integrated, significantly streamlining the customs process and reducing administrative burdens.

72. **Overall, the availability of pre-arrival data enabled customs to plan resources more effectively, reducing bottlenecks during peak shipment periods**. Automated systems reduced human error, ensuring a consistent and fair application of customs regulations. Moreover, strengthened partnerships with international logistics providers and compliance with global

standards (e.g., UPU and World Customs Organization frameworks) enhanced Moldova's reputation as a reliable trade partner.

73. **With the new Custom Code and legislative changes that took effect in August 2024, there was a significant increase in the volume of electronic manifests and air waybills submitted by express couriers.** This indicated that the new system was being adopted and utilised by a growing number of express couriers. Initially, only two participants were involved in the testing phase, but this number steadily grew from 5 in August 2024 to 12 by December 2024. This growth demonstrated the system's increasing acceptance and integration within the industry.[13]

74. **However, the e-commerce solution has been partially implemented as CSRM opted for a phased approach to avoid overburdening customs staff and postal and express couriers**. With the new Customs Code in force from January 2024 and legal provisions already established, this phased approach is expected to ease the transition significantly and create a smoother operational environment.

Digitalising and strengthening the operational capacity of the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova

75. **Overall, the project contributed to the integration with EU standards and databases.** For instance, it facilitated automatic updates of Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI) data, ensured compliance with EU data protection standards and positioned Moldova for deeper EU integration. Authorised economic operators from Moldova were recognised by all the relevant EU systems.

76. **Although some functions were still in the development stage, the MCS-CDMS enabled comprehensive digital management of authorisations**, allowing for the electronic application, processing and issuance of customs authorisations.[14] These authorisations include statuses such as authorised consignee, authorised consignor and the use of comprehensive guarantees.[15]

77. **The Trader Dashboard (MCS-TD) simplified the monitoring and management of transactions by providing a consolidated view of customs data.** Traders can access a single interface displaying critical information such as the status of import/export declarations, transit declarations, cargo manifests and issued authorisations.

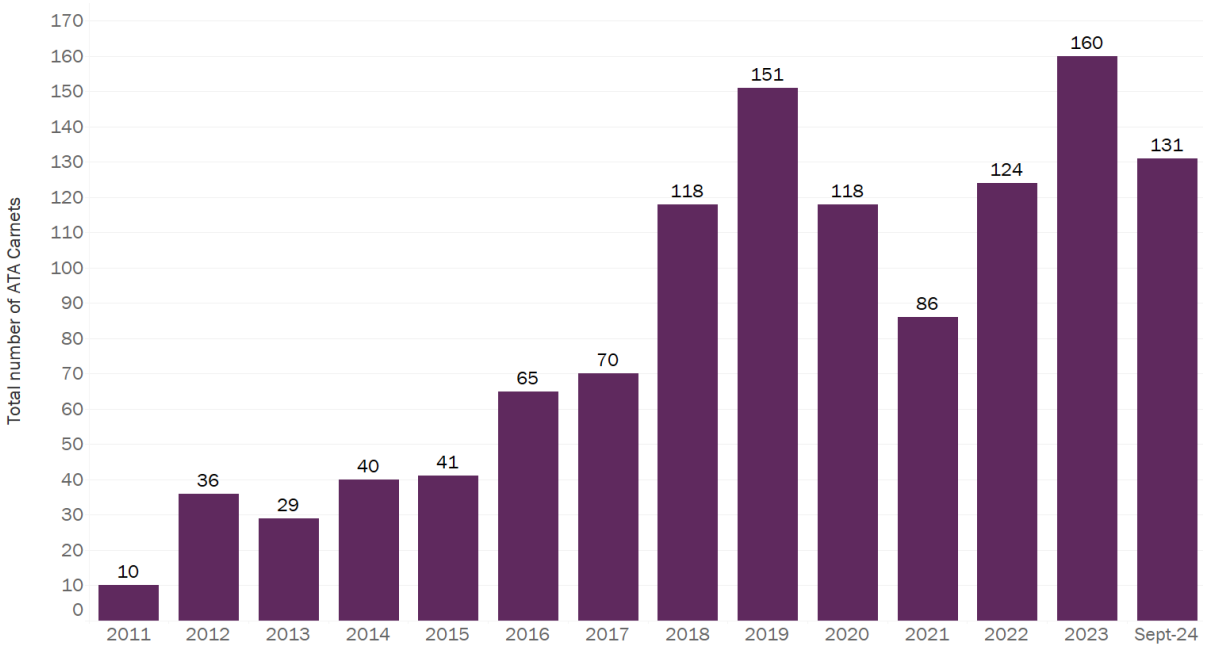
78. **While both the MCS-CDMS and MCS-TD portals were accessible and operational, the IEvD evaluation team was unable to confirm whether the system was actually in use by economic operators during the evaluation.** Additionally, the team could not verify if the system fully facilitated the transition to a paperless environment in customs processes.

Digitalisation of the ATA Carnet process

79. **Over the years, the number of ATA Carnet applications has grown steadily** (Figure 4). Previously, all applications had to be physically submitted at CCI RM headquarters in Chisinau, requiring businesses to travel twice: first to submit the application and later to collect the issued ATA Carnet.

[13] The data is derived from UNCTAD's presentation on January 29, 2025.
[14] 16 types of authorisations as per Government Decree (GD 92 of 2023).
[15] A guarantee is the financial cover for customs duties and other charges that are temporarily suspended. A guarantee is required for charges which may be incurred (e.g., transit procedures) or have been incurred (e.g., release for free circulation). The guarantee needs to be provided at the moment of lodging the customs declaration for that particular (customs) procedure.

Figure 4: Number of ATA Carnets issued by CCI RM, 2011-24



Source: Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova (CCI RM).

80. **The digitalised process (application, approval and issuance) now enables businesses across Moldova to apply for ATA Carnets without needing to travel to Chisinau**. Physical visits are required only for collecting the issued ATA Carnets, significantly reducing logistical burdens for businesses (with average travel times ranging from 2 to 8 hours).

81. **The new system has streamlined the processing and issuance of ATA Carnets**, reducing the average processing time by more than 20%, as confirmed by CCI RM.

3.3. Comments on the sustainability of digitalised processes, online portals and developed/rolled-out customs modules

82. **This section provides comments on the sustainability of the digital systems implemented during the project**. It is not part of the overall assessment and, therefore, is not rated.

83. **Sustaining digital solutions is challenging due to limited post-deployment support and capacity development.** Weak tracking and monitoring mechanisms, along with insufficient stakeholder engagement to institutionalise changes, can hinder sustainability.

84. **The maintenance of the CSRM's ASYCUDA World system is currently outsourced, and there are no clear plans for maintaining the new platform (Customs Decisions Management System & Trader Portal)**. The project team has prepared comprehensive documentation to support

continued technical maintenance. It is expected that UNCTAD will continue to offer in-country support for all implemented digital components for as long as there is an ongoing project, with remote support provided afterward.

85. **The system's infrastructure for the digitalisation of the ATA Carnet process was designed to be scalable, allowing it to accommodate higher user loads and future feature enhancements**. This ensures the system can grow and adapt as the needs of CCI RM evolve. Moreover, the project consultant conducted multiple training sessions with CCI RM staff to ensure they were fully equipped to maintain and operate the system.

86. **Having a local consultant with a physical presence in the Republic of Moldova has proven advantageous, and using open-source platforms guarantees system scalability and ease of future modifications.** At the time of evaluation, there were no formal provisions for ongoing technical support and maintenance. However, CCI RM had recently raised the topic of making certain changes, and the project consultants were awaiting further details before finalising any long-term support agreements.

87. **For the TC assignments related to digitalising and strengthening the operational capacity of CSRM, digitisation of pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments (e-commerce), and electronic submission of CPOs, the UNCTAD project team ensured post-deployment scalability of the e-commerce modules**. This approach was designed to cope with the steeply increasing volume of postal and express e-commerce. For example, Nova Poshta anticipated an increase from 20,000 to 60,000 parcels per day during festive periods.

88. **UNCTAD took significant steps to ensure the long-term stability and scalability of the e-commerce components post-deployment**. Comprehensive documentation was prepared to support continued technical maintenance, although the current outsourcing of the ASYCUDA World system maintenance raised concerns about local capacity building. The project's scalability was well considered, with provisions to handle increasing postal and express e-commerce volumes.

89. **Finally, regulatory changes and new legislation are critical to sustaining the implementation of new solutions**. Digital transformation processes often encounter resistance from beneficiaries and stakeholders; however, with capacity building and the establishment of regulatory and legislative frameworks, this resistance can be effectively mitigated. Ensuring that relevant policy dialogues are conducted in tandem with e-governance projects is essential for fostering the adoption and continued use of the deployed digital solutions and for reinforcing institutional ownership.

4. The collaboration between EBRD and UNCTAD worked well despite delays

90. **This chapter provides an overview of how efficiently the project's resources were utilised to achieve the expected project outputs and outcomes and whether the resources were optimally allocated and managed to deliver the digital components effectively, within budget and on time.** In particular, it reviews implementation efficiency and the Bank's handling of resources, as well as the project management processes employed by the EBRD and the project consultants in executing the digital components in the TC assignments.

91. **One specific point to note in this non-transactional TC project is that it is jointly managed by the EBRD and other stakeholders, including UNCTAD, as well as CSRM and CCI RM.** While this assessment attempts to separate the Bank's handling of the project as much as possible, it remains within the limits of such joint management.

92. **IEvD's overall rating of efficiency is *standard*, combining a *below standard* rating for implementation efficiency and a *standard* for Bank handling.**

4.1. Delays in implementation were largely due to evolving requirements, dependencies on external stakeholders, and changes in the regulatory environment

93. **Overall, the delays in the project were largely due to evolving requirements, dependencies on external stakeholders and changes in the regulatory environment. These factors highlight the importance of clear initial scoping, effective stakeholder management and adaptability to external changes when managing project timelines.** For example, the timeline for TC Assignment 1 (implementing the electronic issuance of CPOs) was originally set for completion by May 2022 but has since been extended to October 2024. Similarly, TC Assignment 2 (digitising pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments) was rescheduled from November 2021 to July 2024, and TC Assignment 4 (digitalising and strengthening the operational capacity of CSRM) has been extended from April 2023 to April 2024. In contrast, TC Assignment 3 (digitalising the ATA Carnet process) was completed on time (see Annex 5 for project implementation milestones).

94. **The lack of initial clarity and evolving project requirements required further amendments and enhancements.** In particular, the delay in TC assignment 1 – digitisation of pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments (e-commerce), involving the customisation of the ASYPCD and ASYPAP modules – was primarily due to the introduction of additional functionalities that were not initially scoped. Similarly, the development of technical requirements and the system design for the issuance of CPOs was delayed by requests for additional functionalities and the need for alignment with changes to FTAs.

95. **Another factor contributing to the delays was the lack of readiness of external systems or capacity issues.** This affected the testing of the ASYCUDA World ASYPCD and ASYPAP modules. Specifically, the Posta Moldovei Custom Declaration System (CDS) and local express couriers were not prepared to exchange data with the ASYPCD module and adapt their systems, respectively, due to unsynchronised agendas and limited resources among the involved

stakeholders. For the digitalisation of the ATA Carnet process, scheduling issues during the testing phase arose because CCI RM staff had busy schedules, and differing perspectives within CCI RM on how processes should be digitised led to further adjustments. Despite these challenges, key integration issues were resolved, and the system was successfully tested without delays.

96. **Finally, decisions on the project approach and changes in the regulatory environment also triggered delays.** The piloting and rollout of the ASYCUDA World ASYPCD system were delayed due to a strategic decision by CSRM to phase the e-commerce component, starting with outbound postal shipments. While this phased approach may be beneficial for gradual implementation, it extended the overall timeline. Similarly, the development, testing and rollout of the e-platform were delayed by changes in national requirements, further emphasising the impact of external regulatory changes. However, the development and testing process was carried out efficiently. The same issues also affected the training of end-users and necessitated periodic retraining following legislative and system changes.

97. Based on the factors described above, the project's implementation efficiency is rated *below standard*.

4.2. Clear scoping, effective stakeholder management, and adaptability facilitated completion of development and testing phases

98. **The contract provisions, including responsibilities, timelines and quality processes, were shared with the beneficiaries in advance.** Good cooperation between the EBRD and UNCTAD allowed for changes in requests without additional costs, demonstrating flexibility. However, the initial terms of reference were based on the prospect of the new Customs Code that was not in force until January 2024, making changes inevitable.

99. **The new regulations became feasible only once the relevant infrastructure in place, and institutions like the EBRD were appreciated for funding and supporting these processes.** On 1 January 2024, the new Customs Code, approved by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova in June 2021, entered into force. The development and implementation of the new code were influenced by development partners and the commitments assumed by the Republic of Moldova in the EU accession process. The process of developing the new code began in 2017 and proceeded slowly, resulting in a delay in its full implementation. Moreover, on 1 January 2024, the new Customs Code was implemented only partially, with some aspects of the old Customs Code no. 1149/2000 and related government decisions still in effect.

100. **The TC assignments were overseen by a dedicated Operations Leader based in the Moldova Resident Office, in collaboration with the Economic Council Secretariat.** The progress of the TC assignments was monitored by the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova, UNCTAD, CCI RM, and the EBRD, with support from the EBRD-funded Economic Council Secretariat, against clearly defined deliverables. The Economic Council Secretariat played a crucial role in facilitating the involvement of local express couriers during the testing of digital modules. By enabling input from businesses, particularly local express couriers, who are key users of the ASYPCD and ASYPAP systems, the Secretariat ensured effective collaboration with stakeholders during this critical phase.

101. **The agreement between the EBRD and UNCTAD is the first of its kind and can be replicated for similar initiatives in the future.** The EBRD and UNCTAD signed a contribution agreement for the development and support of the implementation of electronic certificates for exporters and ASYCUDA World modules for postal and express pre-arrival processing. UNCTAD's decades of expertise and local knowledge ensured a smooth adaptation to Moldova's needs. The collaboration worked well, and this model could be replicated for similar initiatives.

102. **Local experience and the physical presence of project consultants ensured close cooperation with stakeholders.** For the digitalisation of the ATA Carnet process TC assignment, Power IT successfully integrated the digitalisation of the ATA Carnet process with existing systems. The local consultant, familiar with the CCI RM e-portal, facilitated smooth integration. However, process re-engineering support for CCI RM could have further streamlined workflows.

103. **The UNCTAD project team collaborated efficiently with CSRM and other stakeholders to adapt the new ASYCUDA World modules to Moldova's specific needs.** All project team members had prior experience with ASYCUDA World implementation in Moldova, eliminating language barriers and facilitating discussions on legislative interpretations. The project team's physical presence at CSRM ensured close cooperation with Posta Moldovei (the national postal operator), local express couriers, and DG TAXUD.

104. **Managing in-person meetings presented challenges that added complexity to both project management and budgeting.** CCI RM preferred conducting physical workshops and in-person meetings over online sessions, believing that this approach would facilitate more efficient discussions on key topics. However, at that time, in-person meetings were discouraged due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and logistical complexities.

105. **The provision of first-level technical support at the national level further contributed to the project's sustainability and effectiveness.** The inclusion of a National Project Manager and qualified IT and Customs experts for an extended period ensured that the project had the necessary leadership and technical expertise to meet its objectives.

106. Based on these factors, the Bank's responsiveness and execution performance are rated *standard*.

5. Key insights for future digitalisation projects

107. **This chapter provides an overview of key evaluation insights for future projects.** Although the evaluation focuses on a single project, IEvD considers these insights highly relevant for future digitalisation initiatives. They are consistent with and complement the recently issued "Connecting the Dots" series on Advancing Digital Frontiers,[16] which presents five independent evaluation insights drawn from 10 independent evaluation reports and a knowledge paper from the EBRD and other multilateral development banks.

Insight # 1 – Assessing the digital readiness of clients enables informed and realistic planning

108. **Digital readiness assessment should serve as a diagnostic tool to evaluate the current state of beneficiaries' digital preparedness.** This process involves a comprehensive preliminary review of IT infrastructure and capacity, which is crucial for identifying potential limitations and bottlenecks early on. Conducting this assessment before finalising the work plan and budget for the TC assignment ensures a more informed, strategic and effective implementation.

Insight # 2 – Engaging relevant experts early in the process mitigates risks and maximises long-term benefits by streamlining processes

109. **Engaging business consultants or process re-engineering experts at an early stage, especially during the design phase of e-governance or workflow digitalisation projects, is essential.** Their expertise plays a crucial role in ensuring that workflows are streamlined, practical and compatible with digital solutions.

110. **Moreover, these experts help restructure organisational processes to align seamlessly with automated systems, enhancing efficiency and reducing resistance to change.** This proactive approach not only facilitates successful project implementation but also supports long-term sustainability.

Insight # 3 – Integrating client capacity development into the project scope supports the long-term sustainability of digitalised customs services

111. **To ensure long-term sustainability of digital systems, training and skill development must be integrated into the project scope from the outset.** Comprehensive training programs for both system users and administrators are essential to equip them with the skills required to efficiently operate and manage the systems.

112. **Building a skilled workforce capable of maintaining and supporting these systems over time is critical for long-term success.** Creating detailed user manuals or guidance notes offers ongoing support and reference. Establishing knowledge-sharing platforms further promotes continuous learning and adaptability, leading to a self-sustaining digital ecosystem.

[16] EBRD, IEvD. 2025. *Connecting the Dots, Advancing Digital Frontiers: Insights from Evaluation*.

Insight # 4 - Proactive engagement with the private sector enhances the usability of and buy-in for digitalised customs services

113. **Proactive collaboration between competent authorities and the private sector should be a central focus in the digitalisation and modernisation of customs projects.** Engaging economic operators and other private-sector stakeholders early on promotes user-friendliness, builds stakeholder buy-in and strengthens public-private partnerships.

114. **Such engagement facilitates the identification of challenges, addresses potential issues and supports the acceptance of re-engineered processes** required for successfully implementing new digital systems.

Insight # 5 – Post-deployment monitoring and self-evaluation are key for establishing effective learning loops that ensure continued benefits from the project and enable more effective implementation in future initiatives

115. **Developing a robust monitoring and self-evaluation framework is critical for assessing the implementation and usage of digital solutions after project completion.** The monitoring framework should include mechanisms for collecting user feedback to identify challenges in system adoption, enabling timely interventions. Incorporating post-completion self-evaluation ensures that a continuous feedback loop is maintained to capture lessons for future interventions.

116. **Furthermore, using comprehensive key performance indicators with established baselines is essential** for effectively evaluating project performance, measuring user satisfaction and assessing the overall impact of the digital solutions.

ANNEXES

Annex 1. Evaluation methodology

Objective and scope of this evaluation

The evaluation aimed to assess the performance and results of the project assignments, focusing on digitalisation. It identified potential synergies between digitalisation and the project outcomes, providing insights on the progress achieved. Additionally, it provided evidence-based lessons to guide the preparation and implementation of the next Digital Approach 2.0. Specifically, the findings highlighted synergies between the digitalisation of government services and private sector development.

The scope of this evaluation covered the "Republic of Moldova: Support for the Digitisation of Custom Procedures" non-transactional technical cooperation (TC) and its four TC assignments. The assessment focused on the results of these TC assignments and their contributions to the project's overall goals, with an emphasis on digitalisation.

Evaluation questions

The evaluation is structured around the following overarching evaluation question (evaluation framework is provided in Annex 4):

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

To respond to the overarching question, this evaluation used four evaluation questions based on OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability.

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?

The rationale for this question was to assess how well the project's objectives responded to the broader framework of Moldova's public and private sector priorities. Understanding this relevance helped determine whether the project addressed 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 international financial institutions 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?

The rationale for this question was to look into the Bank's handling of the project, including financial, human, and technical resources, as well as the project management processes

employed by the EBRD. Evaluating efficiency helped 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?

The rationale for this question was to assess the success of the project in meeting its specific objectives. By evaluating the achievement of intended outcomes, such as the reduction in average custom clearance time, customs revenue yield, and the availability of reliable trade statistics, it examined the direct impact of the digital components on the overall effectiveness of the project interventions (TC assignments).

It also aimed to capture the broader spectrum of outcomes, both positive and negative. Identifying these outcomes ensured 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?

The rationale for this question was to evaluate the longevity and durability of the project's benefits beyond its active phase. Assessing sustainability helped determine whether the digital components would continue to provide value and support customs operations in the long term. This ensured that the investments made were enduring and that the systems put in place could be maintained and scaled up independently by the government and stakeholders.

Methodological framework and data collection

The evaluation method combined qualitative and quantitative methods, including document reviews, stakeholder interviews, and analysis of the customs data. It included an in-country visit by IEvD evaluators.

Theory of Change

IEvD employed a theory of change (ToC) based approach for this Operation Evaluation. The ToC mapped each step towards a long-term goal, providing an explicit and testable diagram of how and why a change was expected to happen in a particular context. The ToC helped identify processes of "causal logic" or "causal mechanisms" that guided this evaluation.

The methodology combined both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. This approach aimed 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 developed ToC for the project (refer to Annex 3). The ToC aimed to clarify the causal links between the TC assignments, the project outputs, and outcomes, showcasing how digitalisation enabled 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 served as a starting point for consultation. During the evaluation phase, IEvD organised discussions with management to incorporate their understanding of the linkages between digitalisation and the project objectives.

Document Review

Document review covered internal documents; grant review documents, terms of references for consultants, TC assignments progress interim reports, donor reports, and external publications from different organisations,

Semi-structured interviews including focus group sessions with traders

Semi-structured interviews, including focus group sessions with traders, were conducted with the following participants:

Internally:

- Competitiveness, Governance and Political Affairs (CGPA) part of the Policy Strategy and Delivery (PSD) Department
- Digital Hub
- Chisinau Resident Office

Externally:

- Digitalisation Adviser to the Economic Council Secretariat (ECS)
- The Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova
- The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova
- Traders from private sector companies
- Experts and consultants from UNCTAD and Power IT involved in TC assignments

Performance Rating

The Operation Evaluation followed IEvD's methodology to assess the project's performance, as of December 2023, against objectives stated in project profile on TCRS. It also assessed the achievement of targets as defined in a reconstructed results framework prepared by IEvD, based on the information presented in project profile, terms of reference of TC assignments and result framework in TCRS.

IEvD's methodology aligned with the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) good practice standards and applied the OECD- DAC.

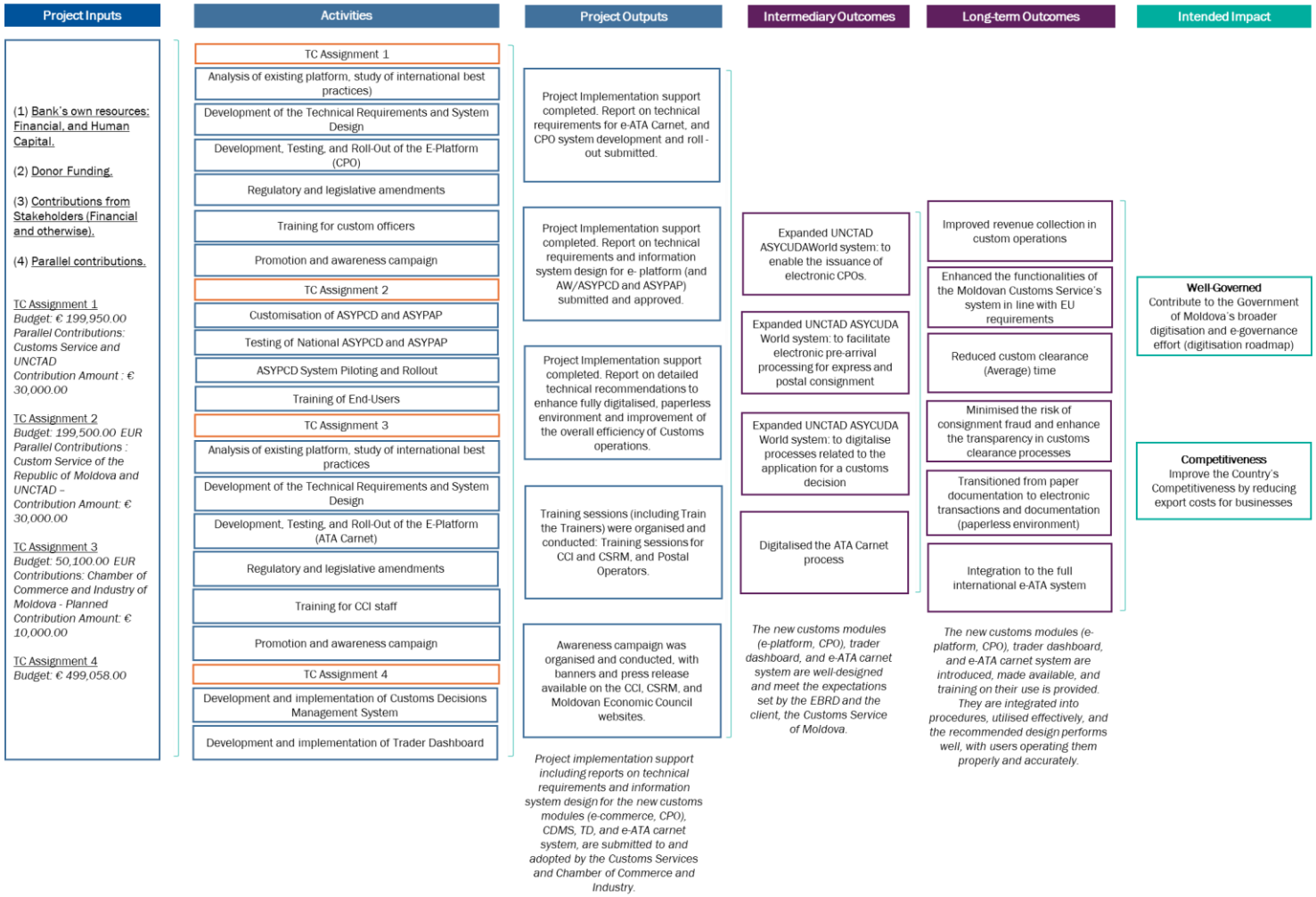
The following rating scales apply:

Criteria and sub-criteria: Outstanding – Standard – Below Standard – Deficient – No Opinion Possible, Not Applicable

Overall performance: Excellent – Good – Satisfactory – Marginal – Unsatisfactory – Highly Unsatisfactory

The purpose of the rating table is to help identify at a glance which factors had an influence on project performance (i.e., on achievement of results or on aspects of efficiency). In addition to those listed, the evaluator can also define any additional factors as required. In each case, specify whether the factor had a positive, neutral or negative impact.

Annex 2. Theory of change



Annex 3. Reconstructed results framework

13677 Republic of Moldova: Support for the Digitisation of Custom Procedures, approved June 2021				
Inputs	**Outputs (expected project objectives)**	**Intermediary Outcomes**	**Long-term Outcomes**	**Impacts**
(1) Bank's own resources: Financial, and Human Capital. **(2) Donor Funding.** **(3) Contributions from Stakeholders (Financial and otherwise).** **(4) Parallel contributions.** **TC Assignment 1** ***Budget:*** *€ 199,950.00* ***Parallel Contributions:*** *Custom Service of the Republic of Moldova and UNCTAD –* ***Contribution Amount:*** *€ 30,000.00* **TC Assignment 2** ***Budget:*** *199,500.00 EUR* ***Parallel Contributions:*** *Custom Service of the Republic of Moldova and UNCTAD –* ***Contribution Amount:*** *€ 30,000.00*	**(1) Project implementation support completed. Report on technical requirements for e-ATA Carnet, and CPO system development and roll-out submitted.** • The report prepared and submitted detailing project achievements, impact on problems encountered, lessons learned and potential follow-up measures. (Results Matrix - TCRS) • *Completion and timely submission of the technical requirements report (Suggested)* • Final, tested electronic system successfully rolled out (Results Matrix - TCRS) **(2) Project implementation support completed. Report on technical requirements and information system design for the e-platform (and AW/ASYPCD and ASYPAP) submitted and approved.** • Desk-based study undertaken and quality report provided on regulatory requirements to commence Stage 2 (design of technical requirements) (Results Matrix - TCRS) • The report prepared and submitted detailing project achievements, impact on problems encountered, lessons learned and potential follow-up measures. (Results Matrix – TCRS) • Completion and timely submission of the technical requirements report (Suggested)	**(1) Expanded UNCTAD ASYCUDA World system: to enable the issuance of electronic CPOs.** • CPOs available in electronic format by the end of the project. (Results Matrix- TCRS) • *Number of electronic CPOs successfully issued through ASYCUDA World. (suggested)* • *Reduction in manual CPO issuance as a percentage of total CPOs issued. (suggested)* **(2) Expanded UNCTAD ASYCUDA World system: to facilitate electronic pre-arrival processing for express and postal consignment.** • Two modules (ASYPAP and ASYPCD) e-platform integrated into existing UNCTAD ASYCUDA World system. (Results Matrix- TCRS) • *Percentage of express and postal consignments processed through electronic pre-arrival processing compared to total consignments. (suggested)* • *Reduction in the average customs clearance time for express and postal consignments (measured in minutes/hours). (suggested)*	***(1) Improved revenue collection in custom operations. (from TC assignments ToR)*** • *Percentage increase in annual customs revenue compared to baseline. (suggested)* ***(2) Enhanced the functionalities of the Moldovan Customs Service's system in line with EU requirements. (from TC assignments ToR)*** • *Percentage of customs system users reporting improved ease of use and efficiency. (suggested)* ***(3) Reduced custom clearance time. (from TC assignments ToR)*** • *Reduction in average customs clearance time compared to baseline. (suggested)* • *Time variance in clearance for high-risk vs. low-risk consignments. (suggested)* • *Percentage of consignments processed within standard timeframes. (suggested)*	**(1) Well-Governed** *Contribute to the Government of Moldova's broader digitisation and e-governance effort (digitisation roadmap)* **(2) Competitiveness** *Improve the Country's Competitiveness by reducing export costs for businesses*

TC Assignment 3 ***Budget:*** *50,100.00 EUR* ***Contributions:*** *Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Moldova - Planned* ***Contribution Amount:*** *€ 10,000.00* **TC Assignment 4** *Budget: € 499,058.00*	• Final, tested electronic system successfully rolled out (Results Matrix - TCRS) **(3) Project implementation support completed. Report on detailed technical recommendations to enhance fully digitalised, paperless environment and improvement of the overall efficiency of customs operations.** • Final report – (a) digitalising processes related to the application for a customs decision; (b) development of Trader Dashboard; (c) support for a fully digitalised, paperless environment and improved customs operational efficiency – prepared and submitted detailing project achievements, impact on problems encountered, lessons learned and potential follow-up measures. (Results Matrix - TCRS) • *Final, tested Customs Decisions Management System (MCS-CDMS) and Trader Dashboard (MCS-TD) portals successfully rolled out (Suggested)* • *Completion and timely submission of the technical requirements report (Suggested)* **Training sessions (including Train the Trainers) were organised and conducted: Training sessions for CCI RM and CSRM, and Postal Operators.** • 1 online training session for CCI RM staff, including 5 online training sessions for staff in all regions of CCI RM branches organised and conducted (Results Matrix - TCRS) • 1 online training session for CSRM staff, including in conjunction with the Universal Postal Union (UPU), training for a designated postal operator for one Train-The-Trainers (TTT) session (up to 10 MCS technical and functional staff per TTT group) (Results Matrix - TCRS)	• *Percentage of express and postal operators utilising the electronic pre-arrival processing feature. (suggested)* **(3) Expanded UNCTAD ASYCUDA World system: to digitalise processes related to the application for a customs decision. (from TCRS)** • *Customs Decisions Management System (MCS-CDMS) and Trader Dashboard (MCS-TD) portals were made available. (suggested)* • *Percentage of stakeholders (e.g., traders, customs officers) utilising the digital application system. (suggested)* • *Number of processes related to customs decisions digitalised (e.g., submission, review, approval, and notifications) (suggested)* • *Percentage of customs decision processes automated compared to baseline. (suggested)* **(4) Digitalised the ATA Carnet process** • All ATA Carnets applications, approvals and issuances available in electronic format by the end of the project. (Results Matrix-TCRS)	***(4) Minimised the risk of consignment fraud and enhance the transparency in customs clearance processes. (from TC assignments ToR)*** • *Reduction in the number of fraud cases detected per 1,000 consignments. (suggested)* • *Increase in the number of consignments flagged by automated risk-assessment tools. (suggested)* • *Stakeholder perception survey results on transparency in customs processes (measured annually). (suggested)* ***(5) Transitioned from paper documentation to electronic transactions and documentation (paperless environment). (from TC assignments ToR)*** • *Percentage of customs documentation submitted electronically. (suggested)* • *Reduction in the number of paper-based transactions. (suggested)* • *Percentage of customs officers and users trained in electronic systems. (suggested)* • *Level of system integration with trade platforms. (suggested)* ***(6) Integration to the full international e-ATA system. (from TC assignments ToR)***	

	• *Number of trainers successfully certified or trained under the TTT approach (Suggested)* • *Stakeholder feedback on the applicability of training content to operations (Suggested)* • *Participant satisfaction rate with the training sessions (e.g., content, delivery, relevance) (Suggested)* **(4) Awareness campaign was organised and conducted, with banners and press release available on the CCI RM, CSRM and Moldovan Economic Council websites.** • Awareness campaign organised and conducted, banner and press release available on the CCI RM, CSRM and Economic Council websites (Results Matrix – TCRS) • *Number of platforms/websites where campaign materials were published (CCI RM, CSRM and Moldovan Economic Council websites) (Suggested)* • *Number of inquiries or follow-up actions resulting from the awareness campaign (Suggested)* **(5) Policy advice delivered: Draft recommendations for improved policy/strategy submitted** • Detailed technical recommendations to enhance a fully digitalised, paperless environment and improvement of the overall efficiency of customs operations (Results Matrix - TCRS) • *Number of recommendations integrated into official policies, strategies or action plans (Suggested)*		• *Number of e-ATA carnet transactions processed annually. (suggested)*	

Annex 4. Evaluation matrix

EVALUATION QUESTION *OECD-DAC CRITERIA*	JUDGMENT CRITERIA	METHODS AND SOURCES
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? *RELEVANCE, COHERENCE*	• 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.	• Internal and external document review: Moldova's National Digital Strategy and policies/directives on digitalisation/digital transformation. • Stakeholder interviews (Digitalisation Adviser to the Economic Council Secretariat (ECS) which is supported by the EBRD).
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? *EFFICIENCY*	• 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.	• 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.
EQ3: To what extent has the project achieved its intended outputs and outcomes, positive and negative, resulting from digitisation of custom	• The project successfully delivered the specific planned outputs, including the report on technical requirements and information system design,	• Theory of Change will be employed to map the sequence of inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts of the project. This will facilitate understanding

services? What are the observed changes since implementation? ***EFFECTIVENESS***	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.	the causal links between the project's activities and its intended outcomes, demonstrating how each component contributes to the overall objectives. • Document review, semi-structured interviews (internal and external), analysis of custom data
EQ4: To what extent are the benefits of the digital components likely to be sustained after the project completion? ***SUSTAINABILITY***	• Longevity, durability, and flexibility of the new system.	• Stakeholder Interviews (Custom Service of the Republic of Moldova's officials, IT and Custom experts, UNCTAD)

Annex 5. Project implementation milestones

TC Assignment 1: Support to the Customs Service in implementing electronic issuance of Certificates of Preferential Origin	Scheduled end date, per work plan	Actual end date of phase / activity
Phase 1. Preparation Stage (Analysis and Concept)	31.08.2021	31.08.2021
Phase 2. Development of the Technical Requirements and System Design	31.10.2021	31.10.2021 (initial version in line with project requirements) 01.10.2024 (revised version)
Phase 3. Development, testing and roll-out of the e-platform	31.12.2021	31.12.2021 (initial version in line with project requirements) 21.10.2024 (revised version)
Phase 4. Implementation and Maintenance of the e-platform	31.05.2022	31.05.2022 (initial version) 31.10.2024

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.	Scheduled end date, per work plan	Actual end date of phase / activity
Phase 1: Customisation of ASYPCD and ASYPAP	30.11.2021	30.11.2021
Phase 2. Testing of National AW/ASYPCD and ASYPAP	31.01.2022	01.07.2023
Phase 3. AW/ASYPCD System Piloting and Rollout	01.03.2022	01.03.2024 (piloting) 01.08.2024 (full rollout)
Phase 4. Training of End-Users	30.11.2022	31.07.2024

TC Assignment 4: Digitalising and strengthening the operational capacity of the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova.	Scheduled end date, per work plan	Actual end date of phase / activity
Phase 1: Development and implementation of MCS Customs Decisions Management System (MCS-CDMS)	01.12.2022 (Development) 01.04.2023 (Implementation)	01.12.2023 (Development) 01.04.2024 (Implementation)
Phase 2: Development and implementation of Trader Dashboard (MCS-TD)	01.02.2023 (Development) 01.04.2023 (Implementation)	01.12.2023 (Development) 01.04.2024 (Implementation)
Phase 3: Support for a fully digitalised, paperless environment and improvement of the overall efficiency of Customs operations	01.12.2022 (Development) 01.04.2023 (Implementation)	01.12.2022 (Development) 01.04.2024 (Implementation)

Annex 6. Detailed description of the TC assignments

1 Support to the Customs Service in implementing electronic issuance of certificates of preferential origin

The TC assignment "Republic of Moldova: Support to the Customs Service in implementing Electronic issuance of Certificates of Preferential Origin" (CPO) (Box 5) aimed to help streamline entrance and exit procedures for international trade and accelerate customs clearance times through the implementation of a 100% paperless CPO service. This included electronic issuance of CPO with electronic signature, security features, and online verification.

CSRM, the legal entity to issue CPOs in Moldova, operated within the framework of its existing Free Trade Agreements with the European Union, Republic of Türkiye, United Kingdom, and the EFTA countries. CSRM issued an average of 50,000 CPOs each year, but both the application for issuance of the CPOs and the CPOs itself were only available in paper format.

Enabling CSRM to issue electronic CPOs required the expansion of the UNCTAD Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA World) used by CSRM. Expanding the current ASYCUDA World system to enable the digitisation of further customs processes, including the provision of electronic issuance of certificates of preferential origin (CPOs), was a priority for CSRM, particularly in light of the challenges to international trade posed by Covid-19.

In parallel with TC assignment "Support to the Customs Service in facilitating cross-border e-commerce through the digitisation of pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments," this TC assignment aimed to support Moldova's transition towards a fully electronic customs clearance process (Box 5). It was also expected to contribute to the government's digitisation programme and efforts to enhance transparency and efficiency in cross-border trade, reduce costs for businesses, and help build resilience to the economic impacts of Covid-19 and it was a commitment from WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA Commitment - Category C[17]).

[17]The WTO TFA provides three categories of provisions in relation to developing and least developed country (LDC) Members: Categories A, B, and C. Category A provisions require the shortest time for implementation, and Category C requires additional capacity building, with support being provided by developed countries.

The TC assignment was expected to be delivered in four phases:

Phase 1: Preparation Stage (Analysis),
Phase 2: Development of Technical Requirements and System Design,
Phase 3: Development, testing and roll-out of the e-platform, and
Phase 4: Implementation and Maintenance of the e-platform.

Each phase involved specific tasks such as analysing the existing CSRM platform, detailing technical specifications, creating and testing the e-platform, and training customs officers on its use and maintenance.

This assignment was implemented by a team of UNCTAD experts to expand CSRM's existing ASYCUDA World system, develop the e-platform, and establish an interface between ASYCUDA Customs declaration processing system and the e-platform.

Box 5: What is Certificate of Preferential Origin?

Certificate of origin (CO) is a document used in international trade. It certifies the country where a product was manufactured, helping customs authorities determine the correct duties, taxes, and compliance with trade regulations. There are two main types of COs:

Preferential COs also known as certificates of preferential origin: These are used when goods qualify for reduced or zero tariffs under specific free trade agreements (FTAs).

Non-Preferential COs: These are for standard duty calculations and compliance with measures like embargoes or anti-dumping policies. The origin of a product is assessed based on where it was wholly obtained or where the last substantial, economically justified processing took place. Local Chambers of Commerce typically issue Non-Preferential COs, and the requirements may vary depending on whether the applicant is the producer, trader, or a logistics service provider.

Certain countries mandate a CO to manage imports from specific origins due to political or commercial reasons. It's crucial to verify the destination country's requirements to ensure compliance. In essence, a Certificate of Origin is indispensable for smooth international trade, ensuring proper tariff application and adherence to customs regulations.

Source: Trade Information Portal of the Republic of Moldova

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 TC assignment "Republic of Moldova: Support to the Customs Service in facilitating cross-border e-commerce through the digitisation of pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments" involved the enhancement of the Moldova Customs Service's existing Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA World) to enable electronic submission of consignment documentation for pre-arrival processing, intended to increase the speed and efficiency of customs clearance processes, facilitate e-commerce and cross-border trade, increase revenue receipts for the government, and minimise the risk of consignment fraud (Box 6).

Expanding the current ASYCUDA World system to enable the digitisation of further custom clearance processes, including facilitating cross-border e-commerce through the digitisation of pre-arrival processing for postal and express consignments, was a priority for CSRM, particularly in light of the challenges to international trade posed by Covid-19, and it was a commitment from WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA Commitment - Category C[Error! Bookmark not defined.]).

The scope of work involved expanding the ASYCUDA World system currently used by the Moldova Customs Service to include two additional modules (ASYCUDA Postal Customs Declaration (ASYPCD) and ASYCUDA Pre-Arrival Processing Declaration (ASYPAP)) to facilitate electronic pre-arrival processing for express and postal consignments. This included supporting the deployment of an electronic interface, revising existing bureaucratic formalities and procedures, supporting inter-agency cooperation and information sharing, and supporting trade facilitation through the use of electronic advance data between CSRM and designated operators (i.e., between ASYCUDA World and Universal Postal Union – Customs Declaration Systems (UPU-CDS) (Box 3).

Box 6: What is Universal Postal Union - Customs Declaration System (CDS)

The Customs Declaration System (CDS) is a comprehensive solution developed by the Universal Postal Union (UPU) to streamline and digitise the customs declaration process for postal items. It facilitates the electronic exchange of customs data between postal operators and customs authorities, enhancing the efficiency and accuracy of cross-border mail processing.

Source: Universal Postal Union, Customs Declaration System (UPU – CDS), 2024

The project was delivered by UNCTAD experts in four phases, with the support of a National Project Team appointed by the Moldovan Customs Service. The phases include customisation of ASYCUDA Postal Customs Declaration (ASYPCD) and ASYCUDA Pre-Arrival Processing Declaration (ASYPAP), testing of National ASYPCD and ASYPAP, ASYPCD system piloting and rollout, and training of end-users.

3 Support to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in digitalising the ATA Carnet.

The TC assignment "Republic of Moldova: Support to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in digitalising ATA Carnet (Admission Temporaire or Temporary Admission)" aimed to digitise the ATA Carnet system, an international customs warranty document that allows temporary export and import of goods without payment of the customs duty and VAT (Box 7).

The ATA Carnet System, administered by the International Chamber of Commerce World Chambers Federation (ICC/WCF), was almost entirely paper-based. The ICC piloted a digital solution called "Mercury II" in six countries in 2019, aiming for full implementation in 2021. This solution allows users to download ATA Carnets to mobile wallets, prepare declarations, and receive transaction confirmations electronically.

Digitalising the ATA Carnet process in Moldova was a prerequisite for integration into the full e-ATA system, ensuring trade transactions were digitally recorded and accessible worldwide. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova (CCI Moldova) was responsible for issuing ATA Carnets. Digitalisation was expected to support Moldova's transition to a fully electronic customs clearance process, enhancing transparency and efficiency in cross-border trade.

The TC assignment was expected to be delivered in two stages:

1. Stage 1 involved preparation and development of technical requirements and system design (e-platform).
2. Stage 2 involved development, testing, and roll-out of the e-platform, as well as its implementation and maintenance.

The project aimed to enable businesses to submit electronic requests for ATA Carnets, processing their issuance electronically, and be ready for future secure online data exchange with customs authorities.

Box 7: What is ATA Carnet?

The ATA Carnet, often referred to as a "passport for goods," is an international customs document that allows for the temporary importation of goods without the need to pay duties, taxes, or customs fees. The acronym ATA stands for Admission Temporaire (Temporary Admission in French) and Temporary Admission in English. Designed to simplify customs procedures and reduce costs, the ATA Carnet is especially valuable for businesses and individuals transporting goods across international borders for specific purposes.

It is primarily used for temporary imports that are not intended for sale, such as professional equipment (e.g., tools, instruments, and machinery), commercial samples for trade shows or demonstrations, goods for exhibitions or cultural events, and performing arts equipment like musical instruments and costumes.

Typically, valid for one year, the carnet enables multiple trips to multiple countries during its validity period. It offers significant cost savings by eliminating the need to pay import duties and taxes at each border and removing the requirement for customs deposits or bonds. Governed by the ATA Convention and the Istanbul Convention, the system is internationally accepted in over 80 countries, including major trading nations.

The carnet includes standardised customs forms for entry, transit, and re-export, avoiding repetitive documentation and simplifying administrative processes. It is issued by authorised organisations, such as Chambers of Commerce, in the carnet holder's country. However, it does have limitations, as it cannot be used for goods intended for sale and is not applicable to consumables or perishable items.

Source: International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), ATA Carnet

4 Digitalising and strengthening the operational capacity of the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova.

The TC assignment "Digitalising and strengthening the operational capacity of the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova" aimed to enhance the digital and operational capabilities of the Moldovan Customs Service. This project focused on the development and implementation of the Moldovan Customs Service - Customs Decisions Management System (MCS-CDMS) to automate customs decision processes, the creation of a Moldovan Customs Service - Trader Dashboard (MCS-TD) for businesses to monitor transactions, and the integration of additional ASYCUDA World modules and functionalities to further enhance customs operations. These included electronic document submission, a mobile application for customs officers, and an Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EU EORI)[18] database to ensure compliance with international standards.

The TC assignment was expected to enable economic operators to monitor, track, and trace all custom transactions performed by or in the name of the business/trader.

The scope of work involved expanding the existing ASYCUDA World system used by the Moldova Customs Service. This included the development and implementation of the MCS Customs Decisions Management System (MCS-CDMS), the Trader Dashboard (MCS-TD), and the integration of additional modules and functionalities, such as the ASYCUDA World Mobile application and the EU EORI database.

[18] An EORI number is mandatory for customs clearance in the customs territory of the European Union. That relates to all types of customs operations such as export, import and transit. EORI uniquely identifies economic operators and other persons.

Box 8: What is Customs Clearance?

Customs clearance is a cornerstone of international trade, ensuring that goods crossing borders comply with all regulatory requirements. The journey begins with the customs declaration, a detailed submission outlining the nature of imported or exported goods. This declaration, made either by the goods' owner or an authorised representative such as a logistics provider, is typically submitted to the customs office of the country where the goods arrive.

Within the European Union (EU), declarations are standardised, and centralised clearance is an option for businesses with Authorised Economic Operator (AEO)[19] status. This streamlined approach allows declarations to be submitted in the company's home country, regardless of the goods' point of entry. Modern trade relies heavily on Electronic Declarations, mandated by the Union Customs Code (UCC). While written or oral declarations are still possible for specific cases, electronic submissions dominate, with the Single Administrative Document (SAD) as the standard format for written declarations. A crucial component in this process is the Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI) number, which links traders to various customs systems across the EU.

Once consignment documentation is submitted, customs authorities move to inspection and verification. The initial stage involves acceptance and a preliminary check for completeness. Any discrepancies can halt the process. For more thorough scrutiny, a detailed inspection may occur, including physical examination and sampling of goods, culminating in the issuance of a customs certificate.

Consignment documentation includes:

- The commercial invoice, detailing the transaction specifics between buyer and seller.
- Customs value information, outlining factors like exchange rates and transport costs (included in SAD)
- Transport documents such as road waybill (CMR), bills of lading (B/L) or air waybills (AWR).
- Product-specific certificates, which may include permissive documents, certificates of preferential origin, and declarations for excise duties or species protection.

Following successful verification, goods move toward release and free Circulation. After duties and taxes are paid, customs authorities release the goods, allowing them to enter the importing country or proceed for export beyond the customs union. However, the duration of customs clearance can vary based on shipment type, size, and customs workload. Accurate documentation and compliance significantly expedite this timeline.

Source: Trade Portal, European Commission

[19] The Authorised Economic Operator is a status granted to "trusted economic operators", who are eligible to benefit from a number of customs simplifications and operational benefits. The AEO status is accessible to all economic operators, including small and medium-sized enterprises, irrespective of their role in the international supply chain. These roles may include importer, exporter, producer, carrier, customs broker, freight forwarder, or customs warehouse holder.