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MOLDAVIAN MODEL OF URBAN REGENERATION BASED ON THE POLISH REVITALISATION SYSTEM

Aleksandra Jadach-Sepioło,
Edyta Tomczyk (eds.)

WARSZAWA – KRAKÓW 2022





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ABBREVIATIONS

- FPM – Popular Front of Moldova
- HDI – Human Development Index
- IRMiR – Instytut Rozwoju Miast i Regionów (Institute of Urban and Regional Development, IURD)
- MARDE – Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of the Republic of Moldova
(Ministerul Agriculturii, Dezvoltării Regionale și Mediului, MADRM)
- MDFRP – Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy
(Ministerstwo Funduszy i Polityki Regionalnej, MFiPR)
- NURN – National Urban Revitalisation Network
- RDA – Regional Development Agency (Agenția de Dezvoltare Regională, ADR)
- Revitalisation Act or the Act – Revitalisation Act of 15th October 2015 – Polish normative act regulating urban regeneration processes
(Ustawa z dnia 15 października 2015 r. o rewitalizacji, Dz.U. 2015 poz. 1777)
- SF – Solidarity Fund in Moldova



1. INTRODUCTION

This publication in the form of a scientific monograph is devoted to the presentation and analysis of the Moldavian revitalisation system which is an example of a successful transfer of knowledge between two countries, Poland and Moldova. The local basis for the revitalisation policy was inspired by Polish solutions and developed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of the Republic of Moldova (MARDE) with the support of Polish specialists.

The large-scale transfer of knowledge and practices, which enabled to build the revitalisation system in Moldova from scratch in just a few years, was possible thanks to the project implemented by the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy (MDFRP), since 2016, “Support for the Moldavian administration in implementing the National Strategy of Regional Development of Moldova 2016-2020 in the field of urban policy and urban development”. The aim of the support was to help the Moldavian administration in building a revitalisation system understood as a modern regional development tool, increasing the effectiveness of regional policy by creating and testing new instruments in the area of urban regeneration, based on Polish experience and methodology. Knowledge transfer took place during working meetings, conferences, training sessions and study visits. Polish specialists, in cooperation with the Moldavian partners, primarily the MARDE and the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), helped to develop *Linii directoare privind revitalizarea urbană în Republica Moldova* (Guidelines for urban regeneration in the Republic of Moldova) (MARDE, 2019), which are the legal basis for revitalisation in Moldova, as well as pilot urban regeneration programmes and projects. As a result of the transfer of knowledge and experience, representatives of the Moldavian administration at all levels: national, regional and local, gained knowledge and strengthened their competences in planning and implementing regeneration processes.

Thanks to the long-term support, it was possible to transfer knowledge and experience in an incomparable scale, which became an important element

of the foundations of the national revitalisation system in Moldova. Due to the scope and scale, this project has been, so far, the greatest support in the field of revitalisation that Poland has provided to a foreign partner – that was the conclusion reached by the authors of *Badanie systemu zarządzania i wdrażania procesów rewitalizacji w Polsce* (Jadach-Sepiolo, 2020) in the context of the analysis of the European added value of the Polish revitalisation system.

Conclusions on the importance of this transfer and the role of Poland as a country whose solutions inspire other European countries became the starting point for this publication. It was important for the team from the Instytut Rozwoju Miast i Regionów (IRMiR, Institute of Urban and Regional Development) to present the already created and implemented model of revitalisation in Moldova and its comparison with the solutions adopted in Poland. Hence, the purpose of this monograph is to portray the course of the transfer between Poland and Moldova, to compare the Moldavian revitalisation system with the Polish one, and to analyse examples from the Moldavian cities that have been successfully implementing urban regeneration for last few years. In order to obtain a complete picture of the conditions in which the revitalisation policy is implemented, Chapter 2 presents the geopolitical and internal context of contemporary Moldova. Then, in Chapter 3 the institutional dimension of Polish-Moldovan cooperation, which enabled the development and implementation of the revitalisation system in Moldova based on the transfer of knowledge from Poland is discussed.

The main part of the publication is devoted to the analysis of the transfer of experiences and good practices between Poland and Moldova. Chapter 4 includes a comparison of terminology and definitions of basic concepts related to urban regeneration; the content and principles for developing municipal revitalisation programmes; places, forms and role of social participation during the revitalisation process; finally, the rules for implementing the adopted revitalisation programmes. In this part, the analysis was based on source materials: documents developed as a result of the support, as well as urban regeneration programmes of selected Moldavian cities. The subject of the next, Chapter 5, is the discussion of the first results – the successes of the Moldavian revitalisation. This chapter focuses on the analysis of specific case studies of some cities that participated in pilot actions, during which they prepared revitalisation programmes and carried out one or two pilot projects. In addition to the analysis of revitalisation programmes in terms of the method for designating degraded and revitalisation areas, analysis of crisis phenomena or in-depth diagnosis, the content, implementation method and results of the activities carried out are presented on the basis of the available source materials.

The next, Chapter 6, focuses on the assessment of the institutional and HR capacities of the local-level organisers of revitalisation processes in Moldova. The diagnosis of their capacities view to tasks awaiting them during an active implementation of revitalisation processes, along with the identification of specific competency gaps, are based on the results of two studies conducted by the IRMiR team in 2020 (Tomczyk, 2020; Jadach -Sepioło, Tomczyk, 2020) and other existing data, mainly analytical and legal documents on the most important development challenges, as well as the adopted regional development strategies. Chapter 7, which is a summary of the monograph, contains conclusions and recommendations resulting from the material analysed in the previous chapters.

According to the authors, the recipients of this work should be, first of all, scientists and experts dealing with revitalisation: creating the legal and organisational frames at the central, regional and local levels, as well as preparing and implementing of revitalisation programmes. The solutions described in the analysis may be the subject of further research and comparisons with solutions developed in other countries. They may also inspire decision-makers in other countries where revitalisation activities have not been undertaken so far.

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2. GEOPOLITICAL AND INTERNAL SITUATION OF MOLDOVA IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERN REGIONAL POLICY

For 30 years that have passed since the Republic of Moldova proclaimed its independence, the country has been struggling with a number of problems that limit and, sometimes, even make its social and economic development, and the consolidation of a young and very insecure Moldavian state impossible. The key reason of such situation are the extraordinary historical and identity conditions that define the political and social reality of the country, as well as its location between the geopolitical influences of the West and Russia, which makes it a permanent field and a subject of competition between the two actors. As a result, for 30 years, the Moldavian statehood has remained fragile and come off as temporary. Despite such a long time, successive governments have not been able to build up effective state institutions or lay the foundations for a stable economy enabling citizens to meet their basic needs. In the face of the state's weakness, Moldova has developed an oligarchic model known from other post-Soviet republics, in which the country is ruled by a narrow elite, not interested in modernising and democratising the country, but in using its institutions and resources to obtain measurable financial benefits and protection of own political and business interests.

An important challenge that the Moldavian political and intellectual elites have not managed to achieve is the development of an attractive and universally acceptable model of a national identity or an idea that unifies all inhabitants. The still-unsolved problem of identity is one of the key issues influencing the cohesion of an ethnically diverse society: approximately 78% of the inhabitants of the right-bank Moldova (without Transnistria) are Moldavians / Romanians, 9% are Ukrainians, 6% are Russians, and 4% are the Gagauzes. The majority is torn and unsure of the ethnic identity, and the whole of society, including the minorities, remains deeply divided as for history, national symbols, certain

values or the language used, and even its name (sic!). The identity problem has a negative impact on attempts to build attachment to the state and a sense of patriotism, understood as a pro-work attitude and a devotion to the country development.

The reasons for that can be found in the history of the region. For almost five centuries, from the 1450s, the territory of the present-day Republic of Moldova (except for Transnistria, on the left bank of the Dniester) were part of the Principality of Moldova. In 1812, these territories, along with the entire historical region called Bessarabia (including, apart from the present right-bank Moldova, also Budjak and Khotyn along with the surrounding territories), were separated from the rest of the principality and formally incorporated into the Russian Empire. From then on, the population living in these areas (mostly peasants without any supra-identity, all the more, a national identity) was detached from the accelerating national and state-building taking then place in the remaining parts of the Principalities of Moldova and Wallachia, which in 1881 merged to form the modern Romanian state. At the same time, people living in Moldova were subject to intense russification. In an attempt to stimulate trade and development of the region, the Russian authorities began to settle in it Slavic, Jewish, Armenian and German populations. The situation changed with the WWI and the October Revolution. In 1918, Bessarabia was incorporated into the Romania, and its inhabitants underwent intensive, though ineffective and unskilful Romanianisation. However, this process was relatively short and, as early as 1940, as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Bessarabia was incorporated into the USSR.

The so-called Moldavianism, which held the position that Moldavians are a different nation than Romanians, speaking a different language (Moldavian, not Romanian) and, because of the past, featuring greater openness than Romanians to the Slavic culture (cooperation with Russia, including). On one hand, this ideology justified the Bessarabia annexation by the USSR, and allowed the Moscow authorities to call themselves the “Moldovans’ liberators” from Romanian oppression, and on the other hand, minimised the threat related to possible pro-Romanian movements, which consider Moldavians as part of the Romanian nation and advocate for joining the republic to Romania. Under the occupation of the Red Army, the vast majority of pro-Romanian supporters (largely intelligentsia) fled abroad, were repressed or exterminated. Nevertheless, the wave of transformation taking place in the USSR in the second half of the 1980s resulted in a revival of the Pan-Romanian idea in Moldova. In 1989, the Popular Front of Moldova (FPM) was established, being mainly a movement of pro-Romanian intellectuals, anti-communist activists and reformist organi-

sations. A mass meeting organised on 27th August 1989 in the central square of Chişinău was a turning point of the front, as it led (on 31st August 1989) to an act changing the Cyrillic alphabet, used so far, into the Latin alphabet, which in practice made the “Moldavian” language almost identical to the Romanian, used on the western bank of the Prut River.

A year later, the FPM, along with some reformist-oriented communists, managed to seize power in the first partially free elections to the Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR. The new pro-Romanian authorities started talking openly about joining the historic motherland. The will to unite the country with Romania was also quite unequivocally expressed by the Declaration of Independence adopted on 27th August 1991, which directly condemned the incorporation of Bessarabia to the Russian Empire in the 19th century and called for the “elimination of the consequences of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact”, that is, in fact, for the return of the Moldavian territory to Romania. At the same time, steps were taken to symbolically start the unification process. The official language in Moldova was Romanian, and the official symbols of the independent republic were the Romanian flag and the Romanian anthem. However, pro-Romanian sentiment began to fade quickly, which was related, firstly, to Bucharest’s lack of real interest and commitment to the unification idea, and, secondly, to the growing resistance of a large part of Moldavian society (especially Russian-speaking population). This resistance was particularly strong in Gagauzia and Transnistria, regions with a predominantly Russian-speaking population that declared independence from Moldova in the 1990s. The secession of both regions, especially Transnistria, which is highly industrialised and lies on strategic trade and communication routes, led in March 1992 to the outbreak of an armed conflict between the Moldavian government forces and Transnistrian volunteers, supported by the Russian troops stationed in the region. The five-month war, which claimed the lives of at least 650 people on both sides, resulted in a defeat of Chişinău forces. Moldova de facto lost control of the territories located on the left bank of the Dniester River and right-bank city of Bender (Romanian: Tighina). The post-war trauma, the disintegration of a young state, as well as the collapse of the unification project meant that Moldova, whose course had seemed clear so far, and whose independence was understood by the ruling elite as a transitional stage, found itself in a specific ideological vacuum which, despite attempts, has not been able to fill in with a new content to this day.

As a result, the Moldavian society remains divided into two ideological and identity groups: supporters of the aforementioned Moldovanist idea, who are in favour of close ties with Russia, and usually pro-Western pan-Romanists,

who not only regard Moldavians as part of the cultural, linguistic and even national Romanian community, and see the future in integration with the EU (and sometimes directly in union with Romania). At the same time, it should be emphasised that a large group of Moldavians do not identify themselves with any group, their self-identification remains blurred and relatively shallow, largely related to the local area or simply their place of residence. According to a survey from 2016, on the occasion of the 25th year of the Moldova's independence, 75% of the inhabitants when asked about their identity answered "a citizen of the Republic of Moldova", but more than 50%: "local" (respondents could choose several answers, starting from the most important identity).

Although these results indicate the existence of a specific supra-ethnic state identity, it seems rather superficial. Those who declare their identity as a "citizen of the Republic of Moldova" share fundamental issues, such as their attitude towards historical events, symbols, values or language (including its name) which are of key importance for the perception of the state. As a result, although Moldavians (regardless of national or ethnic affiliation) in the vast majority feel primarily citizens of their country or region, they do not feel a bond with other inhabitants (especially with the minorities) and, to a large extent, as a society they do not trust each other. According to the last available survey (carried out in November 2018), 68.7% of the respondents think that the Moldavian society is little or very little united, and every fifth respondent thinks that it cannot be described as such at all. In 2019, Moldova scored just 0.3 points on the Partnership for Development Centre (PDC) and East Europe Foundation (EEF) Social Cohesion Index, where 1 means the highest social cohesion while 0 means no social cohesion.

The low social trust and no tradition of grassroots self-organisation, resulting from the Soviet past, have a negative impact on the Moldavians engagement in any public collective initiatives. The majority of the population does not feel represented either by NGOs or by trade unions, which are considered trustworthy by only 22% and 17% of Moldavians, respectively (IPP, October 2020). Moreover, trust in civil society is consistently undermined by political elites who accuse the 3rd sector representatives of acting in the interests of external entities. The overall number of NGOs operating in Moldova is satisfactory, but most of them operate in the capital. Such organisations are less frequent in Bălţi (northern Moldova) and in Comrat (the capital of the Gagauz Autonomy). In smaller towns, civic activity is very low or non-existent.

The identity problem is a serious obstacle for building a sense of attachment to the state and promotion of modern patriotism, resulting, among others, in the ineffectiveness and corruption of the state apparatus, further labour migration. It also limits the development of civil society and any grassroots

social activity. It is a factor discouraging residents from engaging in political activities (including, for example, protests). Political elites and administration, deprived of a sense of the state's permanence and attachment to it, are not too motivated to work honestly on its behalf and often prefer to focus on protecting their own, more tangible interests. At the same time, the lack of consensus on self-identification means that political elites can easily manipulate the electorate by playing on identity (and their political consequences), that on one hand deepens the existing divisions, and, on the other, limits the political debate, eliminating economic issues or a deeper reflection on the shape of the state and necessary reforms, among others.

The blurred and fragile Moldavian identity is conducive to the recurring subject of the unification of Moldova and Romania, which fuels social divisions, radicalises the anti-Romanian part of society (including minorities), serves in political games, strengthens the impression of the temporary nature of the state, and negatively affects the citizens' loyalty towards it. Due to the lack of a strong identity along with the deteriorating social, political and economic situation, and the growing discredit of the ruling class mired in corruption scandals (especially in recent months), the concept of unification with Romania is perceived by an increasing part of society as a panacea and a way of real integration with the EU, and avoiding the risk of a pro-Russian turn as a result of a seizure of power by "left-wing" groups. Currently (data for 2020), around 30% of Moldavians would vote for the unification with Romania, compared to 10 and 15% in the previous years. It should be added that the policy of "restoring" Romanian citizenship to the former citizens of the Kingdom of Romania and their descendants, pursued by Bucharest since the 1990s, is also not conducive to the process of building a Moldavian state identity.

Apart from the identity problem, the economic crisis that has lasted for three decades and the resulting poor condition of infrastructure and mass labour migration is another major problem. Since the 1990s, Moldova has remained one of the poorest countries in Europe. In 2019, its GDP (according to the purchasing power parity) amounted to only USD 13,625, which was the third lowest in Europe after Ukraine, plunged in armed conflict with Russia (USD 13,314), and Kosovo (USD 11,871), not-fully recognised at the international level. In 2020, the average gross salary in Moldova was around USD 450 (i.e. around USD 370 net). In 2019, as many as 25% of Moldavians lived below the poverty line (currently just over MDL 2,000 or around USD 110). Poverty particularly affects rural regions, where over 33% of the population lives on less than MDL 2,000 per month, especially in the south, where around 40% of the population is below the poverty line. Low incomes do not go hand in hand with equally

low consumer prices. According to a survey conducted in October 2020 by the Institute of Public Policy from Chişinău, almost 43% of Moldavians declared that their earnings allow them to meet only the most basic needs, and 18.4% said that they could not even afford that. The economic problems that have persisted since the beginning of the independence translate into low budget revenues, which (combined with endemic corruption) means that the state does not have sufficient funds to maintain and develop the key water, energy and road infrastructure networks. For example, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, in 2019 53 cities and 724 villages, i.e. only about 50% of all localities in the country, had access to the public water supply network. In 2017, only about 23.1% of the population had access to the centralised sewage system, while in rural areas – only 2.3% (sic!). Stagnation of social situation in the country is reflected in the Human Development Index (HDI), in which, in 1990-2020, Moldova's rating increased by only 0.1 point (from 0.65 to 0.75).

The permanent economic crisis is the main cause of another serious problem with which the state and society have to deal with since the 1990s, i.e. mass economic emigration. According to various sources, up to 30% of the population (i.e. about one million people) currently works abroad. This is almost half of able to work citizens. Due to very low wages and relatively high costs of living, remittances from the migrants are often a key part of household budgets, essential for livelihood. In 2019 alone, official remittances (via banks and specialised intermediaries) amounted to USD 1.22 billion, or 10% of GDP. No doubt, this amount is in fact much higher, but the earnings that migrants bring home in cash elude the customs service. Mass economic emigration is facilitated by the policy of granting (or, in Romanian, restoring) citizenship to the former Romanian citizens (and their descendants) who, against their will, have lost it, pursued by Romania since 1991. It is addressed to the inhabitants of the territories that belonged to Romania before 1940, i.e. the current Republic of Moldova. Moldavian holders of Romanian passports can work legally in the EU.

Although the mass migration has a temporary positive effect on the inhabitants' standard of living, it has very bad consequences for the society and, in the long term, for the Moldavian economy. It contributes to the increase in the so-called emigration orphans (children left in the country in the care of a distant family, as their parents were forced to work abroad), favours the families' weakening and breakdowns, and limits the number of people able to work on the local market, which deprives Moldova of one of the most basic foundations of economic development. In addition, the country experiences the so-called brain drain, related to the outflow of highly educated and competent people from the country.

In addition to its measurable impact on the living standards, the persisting social, political and economic crises are conducive to nostalgia for the USSR. In March 2016, 59% of Moldavians believed that the collapse of the USSR was bad (compared to 29% who believed the opposite). Interestingly, about 70% of young people (aged 18-24) have a positive opinion about the Soviet reality, although for obvious reasons they cannot remember life before 1991.

The last of major problems shaping the Moldova's state is the unresolved issue of the separatist Transnistrian Moldavian Republic on the eastern border of the country. The existence of Transnistria means that Chişinău is de facto unable to control more than 30% of its borders (around 450 km). On the so-called administrative line between the territories controlled by Chişinău and Tiraspol, there are no Moldavian border guards or customs posts (although Transnistrian checkpoints there are). This means that the authorities are unable to control the migration on the Moldova's territory (one can enter and leave without any verification), which is a threat to the country's security. These are ideal conditions for smuggling, which annually generate huge losses for the Moldavian budget. Worse still, the prolonged functioning of an unregulated administrative identity within the borders is also conducive to the corruption of the Moldavian state apparatus as well as political and business elites who are willing to take advantage of the situation. Finally, the lack of control over a significant part of the border and around 10% of the country's constitutional territory make the building of an attachment and loyalty to the state by its inhabitants even more difficult. For them Moldova, torn by Transnistrian separatism for 30 years, is not a completed project.

The Transnistrian problem and resulting uncertainty also affects the perception of Moldova by its neighbours, and fosters (often politically fuelled by various forces) revisionist discussions, which increase tension in the region and create the impression that the Moldavian state is "provisional". The consequence of the protracted Transnistrian problem is a constant presence of Russian troops in the territory legally belonging to Moldova. According to various data, the number of Russian forces in Transnistria ranges from 1,500 to 2,500 soldiers. The Moldavian authorities regularly call for their withdrawal from Transnistria, but Russians do not agree, arguing that the forces have to protect one of the largest weapons and ammunition depots, the remaining warehouses from the 14th Army in Cobasna, in the north Transnistria. According to Moscow, some of the Russian forces will be able to leave Transnistria after taking away or liquidation of the depot. In practice, however, Russia is not taking any steps that could lead to that. The presence of Russian troops in Moldova not only affects the sovereignty of the Moldavian state, but also undermines its constitu-

tional neutrality. All that contributes to the impression of incompleteness and temporary nature of the Moldavian state. The Russian presence is also used as an argument against the cooperation of the Moldavian and Western forces (especially Romanian and American), including joint exercises in Moldova, which are always presented by the Russians as a provocation.

Despite the challenges faced by the still young Moldavian state, it seems that promoting and sharing Polish experience in creating the foundations of the revitalisation system and implementing revitalisation projects may be one of the most effective ways to deal with at least some of the above-mentioned problems. Activities from the revitalisation field can also help to build a sense of pride and local patriotism (which should translate into a greater interest in public affairs) and to encourage Moldavian citizens to be publicly active (revitalisation projects are most often of non-political and non-ethnic nature). All this, in turn, will generate increased trust in fellow citizens and the 3rd sector representatives. Revitalisation and urban movements related to it give citizens a sense of agency and create perfect conditions for the development of civic identity, which may be a response to the identity problems that Moldova have been experiencing since the 1990s. Such activities will have to strengthen the Moldavians' pro-Western orientation and European ambitions, and the significant improvement in the quality of urban tissue and space resulting from revitalisation projects will accelerate the process of melting the Moldavians' sentiment towards the Soviet past.

3

3. INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION PROJECTS

Development cooperation as part of the strategy for cooperation with foreign countries

For many years, Poland has been successfully supporting developing countries in the process of democratisation, building a civil society and introducing effective social and economic reforms. The experience gained during the transformation in the 1990s is extremely valuable and constitutes an example of a positive systemic change that concerned many areas of the state and society.

Public administration plays a special role in transferring these experiences, actively participating in international cooperation, transmitting its knowledge and know-how to public administration bodies in partner countries. That does not only apply to the experiences of the transformation period from over 30 years ago, but also to the changes that took place after joining the European Union. Currently, more and more public administration bodies, including ministries, central offices and local government units, engage in international cooperation projects and programmes, sharing their knowledge in various areas of the state functioning.

One of the institutions involved in development cooperation is the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy (MDFRP), which for many years, has been supporting the partner countries in creating and implementing public policies in various areas and sectors. The supported countries include mainly states belonging to the “post-Soviet area”, such as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia (who has signed the EU Association Agreement), but also countries such as Albania (who are still in the pre-accession period).

However, Moldova is a priority country for Polish development aid, receiving a significant part of the financial support offered by Poland.

The MDFRP development cooperation is part of the cooperation strategy with foreign countries, one of the priorities of which is greater involvement of the Ministry in the implementation of development cooperation projects, focusing them on the implementation of specific goals, such as building a stable state management system, entrepreneurship development, regional and urban development, spatial planning policy, and also programming and implementation of European funds. Polish solutions play an important role in carrying out the social and economic transformation in the supported countries.

The MDFRP development cooperation is carried out mainly through projects financed by Polish development aid implemented under the “Wieloletni program współpracy rozwojowej na lata 2012-2015” (Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme for 2012-2015) and “Wieloletni program współpracy rozwojowej na lata 2016-2020” (Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme for 2016-2020) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland and by the European Union under twinning cooperation. Since 2007, the MDFRP has implemented 18 projects for the above-mentioned countries.

The main goal of these activities is to promote European standards and approaches in creation and implementation of public policies by strengthening the institutional capacities of public administration and increasing the competences of the staff. At the same time, this cooperation is also an important instrument for strengthening European values in these countries, attracting them to the European zone of political and economic ties.

An interesting example of institutional cooperation between the Polish and Moldavian administrations is the MDFRP project on urban development and urban regeneration, implemented in 2017-2019 in the Republic of Moldova. The project was a continuation of the MDFRP activity in this country, which was officially launched in 2010. The cooperation is carried out on the basis of *Porozumienie o współpracy między Ministerstwem Rozwoju Regionalnego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej¹ oraz Ministerstwem Budownictwa i Rozwoju Regionalnego Republiki Mołdawii²* (Agreement on cooperation between the Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Poland and the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Republic of Moldova) of 18th February 2010, which defines the areas and principles of cooperation in the field of regional development between the two institutions. The agreement

¹ Currently, the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy.

² Currently, the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of the Republic of Moldova.

was the implementation of the protocol provisions of the first meeting of the Polish-Moldavian Economic Cooperation Commission, which took place in Warsaw in June 2008. It initiated formal cooperation between Poland and Moldova in the field of regional development.

Since then, the MDFRP has been actively supporting the activities of the Moldavian administration aimed at increasing the potential of the Moldovan administration in the field of regional development and urban policy. It consists in sharing know-how, knowledge and Polish and European solutions on how to effectively manage the development of the country and regions, but also development on a local scale, in this case, the development of cities.

All development cooperation projects implemented by the MDFRP in Moldova since 2010 have been financed by the Polish aid programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland (Polish Aid). The first aid project was implemented by the MDFRP in 2012. In the years 2012-2020, seven projects were implemented. The most important result was the support of the Moldavian administration in the preparation of *Națională de Dezvoltare Regională pentru anii 2016-2020* (*National Strategy of Regional Development for 2016-2020*) (NDR 2016-2020), developing recommendations for urban policy and building a system of urban regeneration. Until 2016, the main beneficiary was the central administration, including the Ministry responsible for regional development and its subordinate local administration institutions: the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs).

Experience from institutional cooperation within the MDFRP project entitled “Support for the Moldavian administration in implementing the National Strategy of Regional Development of Moldova 2016-2020 in the field of urban policy and urban development”

A new stage in the development cooperation of the MDFRP in Moldova was the project on urban development and revitalisation of urban areas, which was implemented in 2017-2019. Its unique and innovative nature consisted in involving not only the Moldavian government administration, but also local authorities, non-governmental organisations, residents of Moldavian cities, and foreign donors. Thanks to the inclusion of many institutional and non-institutional entities in the revitalisation process, it was possible to create a wide cooperation network of stakeholders interested in local and urban development in Moldova. On the Moldavian side, the project involved a number of institutional partners, apart from the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development

and Environment of the Republic of Moldova (as a government partner), Regional Development Agencies and Moldavian cities, including municipalities, the non-governmental sector and social partners.

Characteristics of the project

The project assumed support in the construction of an urban regeneration system, understood as an instrument of local development, taking into account Polish experiences. In recent years, Poland (MDFRP) has created many modern instruments of regional and local development, including a new revitalisation system. Therefore, on the basis of the experiences of the MDFRP, Polish regions and cities, the project was aimed at strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of Moldavian regional policy tools by creating, testing and piloting new support instruments in the field of urban regeneration.

The project is considered the most ambitious and important of the MDFRP interventions in Moldova for many reasons, of which the most important are:

- it was implemented for over three years and had the largest budget;
- it was addressed to the Ministry, i.e. to the central level, but also to the regional and local levels;
- it was implemented in broad partnership with Polish and Moldavian institutions and entities;
- its effects are directly felt by city inhabitants, improving their quality of life;
- the project had an investment component, under which regeneration projects were financed.

The project was innovative due to the following aspects:

- long-term project perspective – for the first time, the MDFRP implemented in Moldova a longer than one-year project, which gave much more opportunities than standard projects and translated into the need for long-term planning and forecasting;
- striving for institutional development while achieving real effects that will be “tangible”, model and inspiring (pilot revitalisation projects in several cities) – that helped increasing the recognition and positive reception of projects financed with funds from Polish Aid;
- multi-agency – continuous cooperation within the project between several entities on the Polish side: the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland and the Solidarity Fund PL (SF) is a new quality in projects financed by Polish Aid implemented by the MDFRP, which is a considerable coordination challenge, but at the

same time gives a chance for high added value and a positive reception of the project.

Establishment of a partnership for cooperation

In order to formalise cooperation within the project and define the most important arrangements, a memorandum on the implementation of the project was concluded. The memorandum was signed by the Ministry of Investment and Development of the Republic of Poland (currently MDFRP), Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of the Republic of Moldova and Solidarity Fund PL / Information Centre for Local Authorities in the Republic of Moldova, who were the main partners in the project.

The memorandum in question was not a legally binding contract, but it allowed to define scope and form of project activities, duties and responsibilities of the project partners and main beneficiaries of the support, among others. It was also a guarantee of the involvement of all Polish and Moldavian partners at every stage of the project implementation.

According to the provisions of the memorandum, the beneficiaries of the support were the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of the Republic of Moldova, Regional Development Agencies (RDA North, RDA Centre, RDA South and RDA TAU Gagauzia) as well as local authorities of cities invited to participate in the project. Finally, 19 Moldavian cities participated in the project: Bălți, Căușeni, Cimișlia, Edineț, Ialoveni, Ungheni, Soroca, Ocnița, Vulcănești, Rezina, Comrat, Ștefan Vodă, Sîngerei, Briceni, Strășeni, Drochia, Ceadăr-Lunga, Orhei, Cahul.

Stages of the project implementation with the participation of institutional partners

The project implementation was divided into several stages. On the one hand, the work took place at the inter-ministerial level, focusing mainly on the regulatory / systemic tools that were to serve cities in the future. The second stage of cooperation took place at the city level, where strategic documents, i.e. urban regeneration programmes, were developed. This stage was joined by the local community, as well as the Regional Development Agencies, which in the future were to carry out specific tasks regarding coordination and implementation of revitalisation processes in Moldova. The third stage, also developed at the level of individual cities, included the identification and implementation of specific regeneration projects. At this stage, the system of financial support

for the implementation of projects was initiated, with the involvement of other foreign donors. As a result, a system of developing good, well-thought-out projects responding to the city's needs was to be created, which would guarantee success and which could be financed from various sources, not only from the Polish government programme.

Project participants – their role and significance

The project was aimed at building systemic solutions in Moldova enabling urban regeneration processes with the participation of various institutional and non-institutional entities, including the local community (residents, non-governmental organisations and local business representatives).

The project was based on the knowledge of Polish experts and, what is very important, on the experience and activity of the Solidarity Fund operating in Moldova. The success of the project would not be possible without an active role in the creation of systemic solutions of the MARDE and representatives of Moldavian cities. As can be seen from the above, this process was complex and involved various institutions, entities, and most importantly, local communities in the cities, i.e. the target beneficiaries of revitalisation.

The leader of the project was the Polish Ministry, which was responsible for its implementation and coordination, as well as for ensuring the achievement of the results and maintaining its sustainability. At the same time, the MDFRP played an important role in the process of knowledge and know-how transfer from Poland to Moldova. That was done through the selection of experts and institutional partners from the Polish self-governments, as well as the organisation and substantive preparation of training, study visits and internships in Poland for Moldavian participants.

The cooperation between the MDFRP and the FS in Moldova played also an important role in the urban regeneration process in Moldova. The FS supported not only the implementation of the project in the field of cooperation with local authorities in Moldavian cities, but was primarily responsible for the coordination of the revitalisation process at the local level and the adjustment of knowledge and Polish know-how to the Moldavian conditions. It was important because Polish and European solutions had to be adequately adapted to the specific Moldavian regional policy and local development system, and also had to take into account the conditions of the national and local administration systems in Moldova. In addition, the FS was responsible for the investment component in the project, which consisted in distributing grants for regeneration projects and technical support for the participating cities.

Polish cities also played an important role in the project, sharing their experience, good practices and know-how with the Moldavian cities. The city representatives not only played the role of experts in the field of revitalisation, but also actively participated in the organisation of training courses, study visits and internships in Poland. The choice of Polish cities to participate in the project resulted from the willingness to show the Moldavian partners various approaches to revitalisation. Seven cities participated in it: Starachowice, Wałbrzych, Leszno, Dobiegniew, Grajewo, Elk and Warsaw. They all featured a comprehensive approach to revitalisation activities, being, at the same time, beneficiaries of the support under the MDFRP project entitled “Model Urban Regeneration” (Modelowa Rewitalizacja Miast).

It should also be emphasised that the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Moldova became an important partner, too. The Embassy actively participated in most of the activities (raising the political rank and strengthening the image of Poland in Moldova), and supported the project implementation through substantive consultancy and logistic assistance. The involvement of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Chişinău in the activities promoting the project among foreign donors and Moldavian partners, in particular those representing the non-governmental sector, ensured greater synergy and complementarity with the other donors’ activities and international organisations. Moreover, the participation of the Polish Embassy significantly contributed to the promotion of the project among NGOs, encouraging them to participate in the project.

On the Moldavian side, partners from national, regional and local authorities were engaged in the project as well as non-governmental organisations and city dwellers were involved in the process. At the national level, the MARDE supported it by developing regulations and implementing instruments that were to create a national system for urban regeneration in Moldova. The Regional Development Agencies also participated in the project, creating a cooperation network node and supporting the cities in search for financial sources.

The key partner in the project were albeit 19 Moldavian cities³, which were not only beneficiaries of the support, but worked for many months on the creation of the first pilot revitalisation programmes in the country and implemented the first urban regeneration projects in Moldova.

³ Some of the cities participated in the whole project (e.g. Soroca, Ungheni, Cimişlia), others in its chosen components (e.g. only in trainings, preparation of revitalisation programmes or micro-grants). Their involvement depended on various factors, in particular on the size of funds for grants and the HR capacities of a given city.

At all stages of the project implementation, Moldavian beneficiaries received comprehensive advisory and training support, which was provided by experts, not only Polish experts from central and local government administration and external consultants, but also local Moldavian experts.

The team of Polish consultants⁴ was composed of experienced practitioners specialising in regional and local development, urban development policy and urban regeneration. Their task included advising and training the representatives of the Moldavian administration in creating a revitalisation system, developing documents and conducting urban regeneration processes. They also acted as mentors and trainers for both the representatives of Moldavian cities and local experts. The selection of Polish experts was based on their knowledge, experience and unquestionable achievements in the field of regional development, urban policy and revitalisation in Poland.

The participation of local Moldavian consultants who worked with the city representatives was an important element of the project. They helped the local authorities to prepare urban regeneration programmes in accordance with applicable standards and good practices. They also acted as content supervisors, providing direct advice and initiating the involvement of inhabitants in the preparation of the revitalisation projects.

The cities themselves, however, played a key role. In each of them, the Revitalisation Agent was elected and Advisory Committees were appointed, which were composed of the City Hall representatives and local stakeholders from a given revitalisation area. Their tasks included, among others, development of revitalisation projects.

The inhabitants of the cities made a huge contribution to the project. Their presence, commitment, voice and needs were crucial for the success of the entire project.

Key conclusions from project cooperation

The three-year perspective of the project allowed the achievement of the assumed results. The foundations of the revitalisation system at all levels of public administration were built. In addition, over a dozen micro-projects were financed and implemented, and a large training programme, from basic knowledge to training trainers, was carried out. Such a comprehensive approach shows that multi-annual projects involving a large group of participants guarantee the achievement of greater and visible results.

⁴ The consultant team consisted of experts from the Projekt Miejskie company from Warsaw, which was selected under the public procurement procedure.

The result of the project is not only the developed documentation, training sessions and the exchange of knowledge between Polish and Moldavian administration officials at various levels, but also visible effects of the projects in the cities. This translated into the creation of a positive and strong image of Poland as a country supporting the processes of political changes.

Several hundred people participated in the project: central and local authorities, representatives of non-governmental organisations, residents, school and kindergarten teachers, youth, children and their parents. As part of the activities carried out, consultation committees and local initiative groups were established in the revitalisation areas.

The key element of the project was knowledge sharing between the administration from Poland and Moldova. This contributed to the creation of an atmosphere of trust between the officials and institutions from all administrative levels in Moldova, from the government level to the municipal one.

The added value of the project was stimulation of social participation and cooperation between local authorities and residents. As a result, a network of institutions and people was created, i.e. a network of Moldavian cities, revitalisation experts and partners in Moldova, but also and a network between people involved in revitalisation processes in Moldova and Poland.

Institutional cooperation as an element of mutual learning – lessons learned

Cooperation between institutions from different countries, especially those where there are differences in the state development potential and administration institutional capacities, enables the exchange of experience in the implementation of public policies and the creation of administrative and organisational solutions adequate in various economic and social conditions.

The cooperation with the MARDE and other Moldavian public institutions is a good example of bilateral cooperation, within which institutions from Poland and Moldova learn from each other. Thanks to this cooperation, different views and experiences in implementing the regional and local development policy collide with each other.

Participation in the project brought not only many positive experiences to the Moldavian administration, but also many benefits for the Polish MDFRP and cities in Poland. It gave an opportunity to share Polish good practices as well as to verify the existing solutions in Poland, confronting them with new opportunities.

A valuable experience for all project participants was the opportunity to compare the operation principles of two different administration systems,

the Polish and Moldavian ones. Some methods or ways of operating, obvious and adopted in the Polish system, were unknown to the other party and vice versa. This knowledge made it possible to improve the operation system of both administrations. In addition, good contacts between the employees of these institutions and a positive opinion about the competences of the Polish administration were also an important effect of this cooperation.

In Poland, there is access to a wide stream of European funds, which unfortunately are not available to Moldova. For this reason, an example of how to effectively manage relatively small funds at the local and national level may be very interesting for the Polish administration. The Polish cities participating in the project could benefit from this knowledge.

An important element of the project cooperation was the involvement of NGOs and residents. In this context, the role of the project was not limited to technical the support in creating systemic solutions for the Moldavian administration, but also to promoting democratic mechanisms and social participation as part of good governance at the local level. It also means strengthening state institutions in the field of good governance, which is one of the EU priorities.

In the context of Moldova's pursuit of the EU membership, cooperation with the Polish administration gives it the opportunity to learn about the experiences of cooperation with external institutions, primarily with the EU institutions. Poland has been a member of the European Union for over 15 years. Moldova, on the other hand, has signed the Association Agreement. However, Poland and Moldova have many of the same partners in Brussels and it is worth sharing experiences, while conducting this European dialogue.

Summarising the achievements and results of the project, it should be stated that thanks to the comprehensive and well-planned, long-term cooperation between various institutions and organisations from Poland and Moldova, it was possible to create the foundation and framework for the Moldavian revitalisation system. Undoubtedly, the project also contributed to strengthening the image of Poland as a country supporting the democratic aspirations of states and their willingness to become a member of the great European family.

4

4. TRANSFER OF EXPERIENCES AND GOOD PRACTICES BETWEEN POLAND AND MOLDOVA

4.1. Moldavian approach to the urban regeneration process – terminology transfer

The degradation of the housing substance in Polish cities and a low quality of public space became a significant problem for local governments right after the start of the systemic transformation in the early 1990s. Urban regeneration was one of the solutions that inspired Polish local government officials and experts. On the basis of Western experiences, mainly German, French and British, efforts were made to develop a Polish approach to revitalisation (Guzik, 2009; Skalski, 2009; Bryx, Jadach-Sepioło, 2009). For many years, starting in 1992, experts discussed the need and scope of legal regulations in this field. Ultimately, urban regeneration was defined in the Polish legal system in Art. 2 para 1 of the Revitalisation Act from 15th October 2015 (the Revitalisation Act or the Act). Therefore, the evolution and shaping of the revitalisation system in Poland took over twenty years, before the legal and financial framework were finally created (*Wytyczne Ministra Rozwoju z dnia 2 sierpnia 2016 r. w zakresie rewitalizacji w programach operacyjnych na lata 2014-2020* (Guidelines of the Minister of Development from 2nd August 2016 on revitalisation in operational programmes for 2014-2020)).

In Moldova, thanks to the support of Polish experts, it was possible to shorten this process to few years, and, at the same time, avoid many obstacles that Polish experts had to overcome. The transfer of the approach allowed to reduce the time needed to reach a coherent revitalisation system in Moldova, which covers both the legal framework included in the *Linii directoare privind revitalizarea urbană în Republica Moldova* (Guidelines for urban regeneration in the Republic of Moldova, the Guidelines) (MADRE, 2019) and financial one (financing source for revitalisation under the National Fund for Regional Development). This is the result of a several-year consulting and training project

of the Polish Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy called “Support for public administration in Moldova in sustainable urban development through the effective implementation of urban development programmes and projects”, described in detail in 3 Chapter of this study. The key project partner was the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of the Republic of Moldova. The project was co-financed by Polish Aid of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland and implemented in cooperation with Solidarity Fund in Moldova (SF). In this part of the study, we present the legal framework (terminology and rules of conducting urban regeneration) of the revitalisation processes in Moldova, with references to the Polish model that inspired its creation at the national level and its application by Moldavian regions and cities.

In Moldova, revitalisation has been defined very similarly as in Poland. In *Guide to urban revitalisation for the cities of the Republic of Moldova (Ghid privind revitalizarea urbană pentru orașele din Republica Moldova)* (2020), it was defined as in the course of discussions as a process of elimination of a crisis of degraded urban areas, regarding local communities, space and economy, territorially concentrated, carried out in a complex way by local administration with a help of local, regional and national partnerships, on the basis of a revitalisation programme (Ryś, Brzozowy, Stefanita, Pragert, Malai, 2020, p. 4). Therefore, urban regeneration is focused on the reconstruction and renewal of urban spaces, and the scope of the intervention results from an in-depth diagnosis identifying the problems and potentials of a specific area.

In Ryś et al. (2020) other key concepts for the proper preparation and implementation of the revitalisation process were also defined.

Table 1. The terminology of the urban regeneration process introduced in *Guide to urban revitalization for the cities of the Republic of Moldova*

Term	Definition
Revitalisation programme	<p>Instrument of sustainable urban development in which a designated authority defines an action plan in the revitalisation area for a specified period of time (3 to 5 years).</p> <p>The revitalisation programme is a two-part document that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – strategic part: area analysis, vision of change and goals; – executive part: list of projects with their description, simplified financial framework as well as management structure of the urban regeneration process.

Revitalisation project	A series of activities and investments performed in a specified period, designed to meet an identified need and leading to the achievement of a specific goal. The projects correspond to the activities from the revitalisation programme, and are carried out in urban areas precisely determined in the space where there is an accumulation of dysfunctions. A revitalisation project can be integrated (multi-sectoral) or sectoral (thematic).
Degraded area	Area of accumulation of specific negative social phenomena, which are accompanied by economic, ecological, technical or functional and spatial problems.
Revitalisation area	An area covering all or part of a degraded area where, due to the importance for local development, revitalisation activities, i.e. implementation of revitalisation projects, are planned.
Public participation	Involvement of residents, NGOs and business entities in the process of revitalisation in the selected area.
Basic projects	Revitalisation projects that represent the main activities carried out on a larger scale with a greater impact on the revitalisation area. They should form a coherent whole, enabling the achievement of the intended goal.
Complementary projects	Revitalisation projects that complement basic projects. They can be concentrated on a smaller area or have a smaller impact on changes in the revitalisation area.
Advisory Committee	A group of citizens composed of the area representatives (representatives of residents, entrepreneurs, NGOs).
Steering Committee	The organisational structure of the City Hall, established by the Mayor in order to coordinate the preparation and implementation of the revitalisation programme. The members of the Steering Committee are representatives of various office units, responsible for the tasks resulting from the revitalisation programme.

Source: based on Ryś et al., *Guide to urban revitalization for the cities of the Republic of Moldova*, 2020, pp. 5-6.

Revitalisation in its most universal meaning serves the renewal of cities, introducing new life to their degraded areas. Therefore, it is associated with spatial transformations aimed at improving the living conditions in a given area. The change should concern all aspects of the functioning of urbanised areas and should be reflected in activities relating to the economic, social, infrastructural and cultural dimensions of a city, depending on specific needs. The planning is based on the delimitation of a degraded area, during which a comparative analysis of selected indicators from each of the crisis spheres is carried out. By analysing such data, a spatial unit that requires interventions leading to the improvement of physical structures, as well as the social, economic and environmental conditions is selected.

An important element of the Polish and Moldavian revitalisation models is the necessity to include problems and potentials of all above-mentioned spheres in the diagnosis. Thanks to this, it is possible to obtain a complete picture of the revitalisation area and to select the most appropriate measures. Limiting the diagnosis to crisis phenomena could result in narrowing and minimising the available potentials. The territorial concentration of activities is no less important. Such measure is to ensure the effective implementation of the programme and the greatest probability of achieving the intended goals. It is a result of the transfer of the Polish approach. In the Polish system, the area of revitalisation may not exceed 20% of the municipality area, neither cover more than 30% of its inhabitants. In Moldova, no such restriction was introduced, but from the beginning, activities have been concentrated in no more than one urban unit of a particular city.

In Moldavian and Polish terminologies, the social dimension of activities aimed at improving the life of the local community is strongly emphasised. In both models the participatory way of carrying out revitalisation and the inclusion of residents, entrepreneurs and initiative groups (or NGOs) as stakeholders' groups throughout the process is crucial. Therefore, in the Polish model, the Revitalisation Committee (Komitet Rewitalizacji) (Spadło, Kułaczkowska, 2019), and in the Moldavian model, the Advisory Committee are appointed. Their members represent stakeholders from the area who, with an advisory voice, support local authorities in carrying out regeneration activities.

A noteworthy difference between the Moldavian and Polish approaches is the multi-level management of urban regeneration. In Polish conditions, it is shaped organically in the course of cooperation during the preparation of the process and coordination of expenditure of funds on revitalisation under Regional Operational Programmes. In Moldova, from the very beginning, close cooperation between the national, regional and local levels was included in the

principles of revitalisation. For the national level (MARDE), this means not only establishing legal rules, but also allocating specific funds in the National Fund for Regional Development and supporting the networking of cities in Moldova, seeking to exchange experiences in the field of revitalisation. The regional level (Regional Development Agencies) is responsible for substantive support for the development of programmes, similarly to Poland, but on the basis of legally determined rules that legitimise this support. The local level is responsible for the development and implementation of the revitalisation programmes, but due to the hierarchical structure of the Moldavian administration, revitalisation would not be feasible without the cooperation of all levels.

The strong emphasis on the importance of education and exchange of experiences between cities is also a similar in the both models. In Poland, as a result of the pilot projects and the grant competition entitled “Model Urban Regeneration” (Modelowa Rewitalizacja Miast), detailed paths to solve various problems in degraded areas were tested. From the beginning of the implementation of these projects, the cities exchanged their experiences, which led to the immediate identification of verified solutions and their dissemination, also in other Polish cities. In Moldova, a similar network of cities is in the process of being built. So, the contact with Polish cities that share their experiences in this area additionally supports this process.

4.2. Principles of creating the Municipal Revitalisation Programme and its content

According to the *Guide to urban revitalization for the cities of the Republic of Moldova* (Ryś et al., 2020), the city authorities and the appointed Steering Committee are responsible for the development and implementation of the revitalisation programme. It is assumed that the programme covers activities planned for three to five years, which is a shorter period than in the Polish model. This is due to the initial stage of revitalisation implementation in Moldova. This implementation perspective makes the programme concrete and realistic. Although certainly not all social problems could be solved during the term of the programme, and the implementation of more complex projects may exceed the established period, such rules require prioritisation of activities due to the fact that their implementation and results should be assessed at the end of the programme. Based on the conclusions from the assessment, another programme, which may continue the selected unfinished activities, will be developed. A new document could also allow to tackle problems that, in the meantime, can be better identified.

According to Ryś et al. (2020) in Moldova, when creating a municipal revitalisation programme, certain main principles that are consistent with the Polish model should be followed. They include:

- completeness – the obligation to include in the programme all the features and elements required by the Guidelines;
- comprehensiveness – the need to draw comprehensive projects that take into account the most urgent needs of the revitalisation area in order to lead it out of the crisis state; therefore, the programme does not comprise tasks aimed at a temporary effect, but with a long-term impact, capable of limiting the crisis of the regeneration area;
- concentration – this principle limits the tendency to disperse the revitalisation tasks and weaken the effects of the urban regeneration process;
- spatial complementarity – thanks to limiting the revitalisation area, the activities of all entities are concentrated on a selected area of the municipality, which increases the chances of its fundamental change;
- problem complementarity – the programme should bring results in several spheres simultaneously, which limits the risk of focusing activities on one type of phenomena (e.g. from a technical sphere);
- procedural and institutional complementarity – the need to embed the revitalisation programme management system in the adopted municipal management system, and ensure its compliance with the vision of the city's development; for the purposes of managing the revitalisation process and programme implementation, there is no need to create completely new management structures or appoint new entities; the best results are achieved by including tasks in the field of revitalisation in the well-functioning, current organisational structure of the municipality through the Steering Committee in Moldova and task teams in Poland;
- intertemporal complementarity – the obligation to plan revitalisation activities using the effects of previous projects or eliminating their shortcomings;
- complementarity of funding sources – the ability to combine support from different funding sources (including public and private ones);
- partnership, engagement and cooperation of all actors;
- defining an effective management and cooperation system for all actors and an effective mechanism for monitoring and evaluating programme implementation.

The revitalisation programme should be clear and legible for local recipients, so it should not be too extensive. According to Ryś et al. (2020), as in Poland, the minimum content of the revitalisation programme was determined, as presented in the Table below.

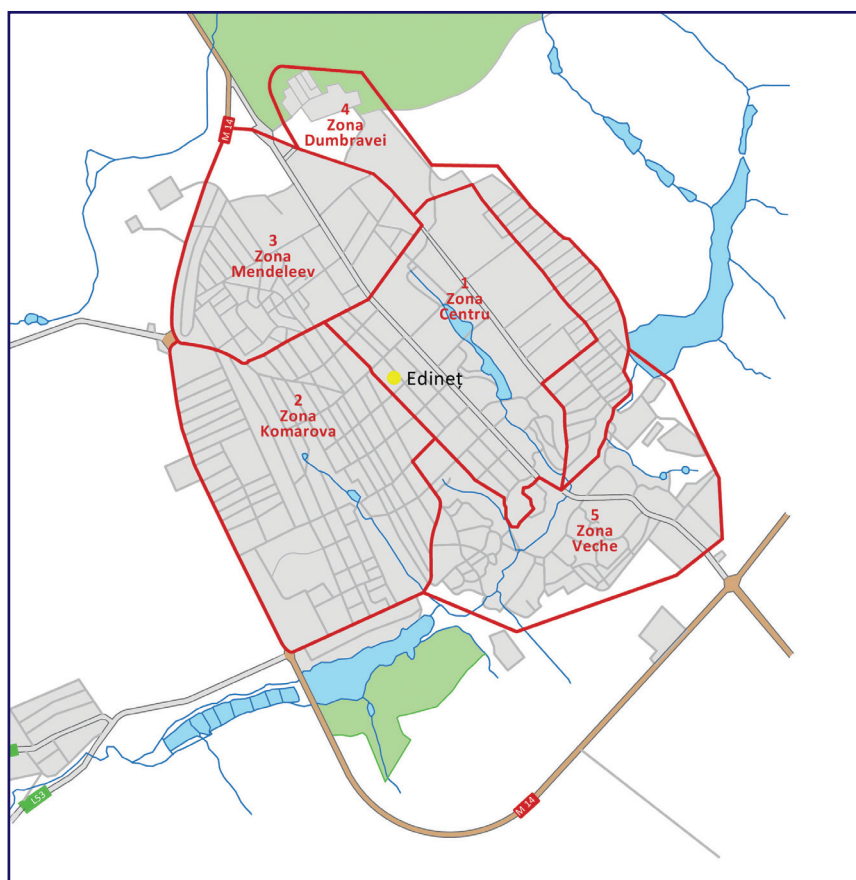
Table 2. Structure of the revitalisation programme in accordance with the Guidelines (MARDE, 2019)

Main parts	Detailed content
Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General description of the city 2. Concept of urban revitalisation 3. Connection of the programme to national strategic documents
City analysis – determination of degraded revitalisation areas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delimitation of the city areas (division into urban units) 2. Description of the study methodology 3. Analysis of differences between the city units <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Social sphere b. Economic sphere c. Environmental sphere d. Spatial and functional sphere e. Technical sphere f. <i>Other spheres (optional)</i> 4. Identification of degraded areas 5. Determination of the revitalisation area
In-depth analysis of the revitalisation area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Description of the revitalisation area 2. Analysis of the respective spheres <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Social sphere b. Economic sphere c. Environmental sphere d. Spatial and functional sphere e. Technical sphere f. <i>Other spheres (optional)</i>
Vision and development objectives of the revitalisation area	
Revitalisation projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Basic projects 2. Complementary projects
Financial framework	
Implementation and management of the revitalisation programme	
Monitoring and evaluation of the programme implementation	
<i>Involvement of residents and stakeholders in the development of the programme (optional)</i>	

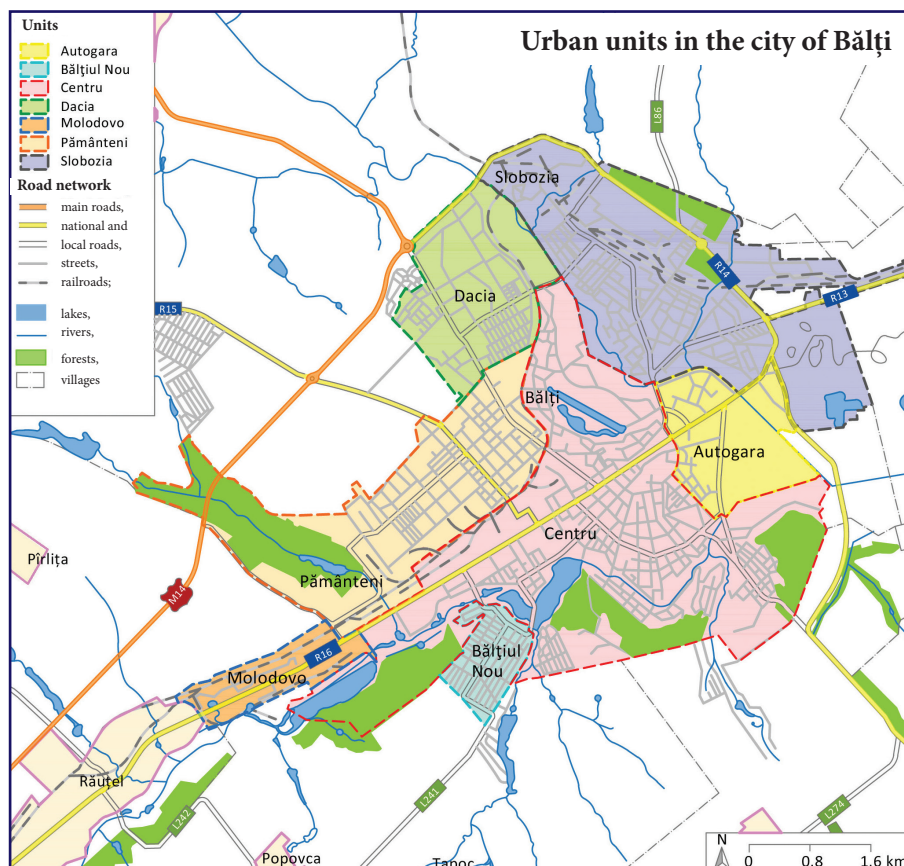
Source: based on Ryś et al., *Guide to urban revitalization for the cities of the Republic of Moldova*, 2020, p. 7.

Regarding the elements of the programme content, in both cases there is a requirement to describe the relation to other strategic documents in force. In the case of Moldova, it refers to national strategic documents to verify whether the programme assumptions are in line with the regional development policy, and strategic and planning documents for a municipality. The latter is also obligatory in Polish practice. The introductory part of the revitalisation programme in Moldova is of general character and in this respect is similar to other documents developed at the local level. The first challenge related to the development of the revitalisation programme is the selection of urban units to analyse negative phenomena in the city. The maps included in the revitalisation programmes show that the cities meticulously approached this task.

Figure 1. Division of the city of Edineț into urban units



Source: *Program de Revitalizare Urbană. Municipiul Edineț* 2019, 2019, p. 8.

Figure 2. Division of the city of Bălți into urban units

Source: *Programul de Revitalizare Urbană al Municipiului Bălți Etapa I (2019-2021)*, 2019, p. 14.

For these areas, the main characteristics concern the area surface and the number of inhabitants. Thanks to this, when a specific unit is selected as the revitalisation area, it is possible to confirm compliance with the principle of concentration of activities.

In both cases, a diagnosis of crisis factors and phenomena is required, as well as a description of the extent of the revitalisation area along with the grounds for the choice. The requirements also include an in-depth diagnosis of the mechanisms and phenomena that led to the accumulation of crisis phenomena in a given area. Most of the Moldavian programmes clearly presented the analysed indicators. For greater clarity, each one had a comment on whether it was treated as a stimulant or a destimulant, and data sources were also specified.

Table 3. Population and surface of urban units in Edineț

No..	Area name	Population according to statistical data	Surface (sq. km)
1	Centru	6,522	1.319
2	Komarova	4,942	2.600
3	Mendeleev	3,135	1.605
4	Dumbravei	1,751	1.467
5	Veche	1,692	1.505
	Total	18,042	8.496

Source: based on *Program de Revitalizare Urbană. Municipiul Edineț 2019*, 2019, p. 9.

Table 4. Population and surface of urban units in Bălți

No.	Surface	Population	All population %	Surface (ha)	All surface %
1	Centru	36,960	25,23	1549.9	37.41
2	Autogara	21,970	15,00	274.3	6.62
3	Dacia	32,370	22,09	371.9	8.98
4	Slobozia	17,800	12,15	985.7	23.79
5	Pamanteni	30,430	20,77	710.0	17.14
6	Molodovo	1,880	1,28	141.7	3.42
7	Baltiul Nou	5,100	3,48	109.5	2.64
	Total	146,510	100	4143	100

Source: based on *Programul de Revitalizare Urbană al Municipiului Bălți Etapa I (2019-2021)*, 2019, p. 14.

Table 5. List of indicators used in the analysis of urban units

Sphere	Indicator	Source	Type of indicator/ interpretation
Social	Beneficiaries of social assistance	Department of Social Assistance in Cimişlia	Destimulator
	People with special needs	Department of Social Assistance in Cimişlia	Destimulator
	Consultation provided by the Employment Agency	Employment Agency	Destimulator
	Initiative groups	City Hall	Stimulator
	Family doctor addresses	Public Health Centre in Cimişlia	Stimulator
Economic	Number of enterprises	Public Services Agency in Cimişlia	Stimulator
	Number of enterprises	Chamber of economic records	Stimulator
Environmental	registered / deleted	Chamber of economic records	Stimulator
	Number of waste collection points	Public services in Cimişlia	Stimulator
Spatial and functional	Traffic intensity	Road transport infrastructure strategy	Destimulator
Technical	Socio-cultural institutions	City Hall	Stimulator
	Road length from hardened surface	City Hall	Stimulator

Source: based on *Programul de Revitalizare Urbană a oraşului Cimişlia 2019-2021*, 2019, p. 9.

The indicator analysis is sometimes accompanied by qualitative data and residents' assessments collected during the participatory document development procedure.

Table 6. Needs and potentials of the revitalisation area in Bălți in relation to unemployment

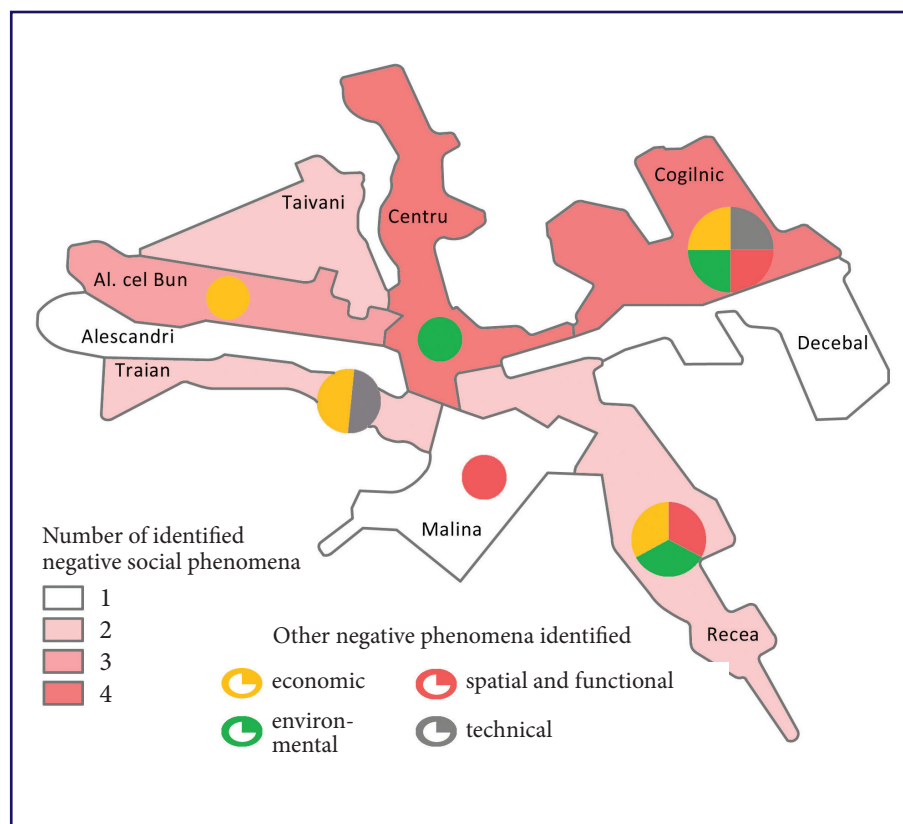
Needs	Due to the difficulty of returning the long-term unemployed to the labour market, support for these people must be comprehensive. It should cover various types of activities and meet the needs of individual beneficiaries. Disadvantaged people need to strengthen their professional skills through a special approach. It is also necessary to guide the unemployed, registered in the Employment Agency, in choosing the area of their interests and a convenient field of activity. Their economic education is absolutely necessary. Most such people are unable to manage the limited financial resources at their disposal.
Potentials	In the revitalisation area, it is possible to implement projects aimed at training the unemployed. One could organise training on the IT tools or other specific skills that are essential for the area population to benefit from the increased employment opportunities. In this context, the unemployed become one of the revitalisation area potentials.

Source: based on *Programul de Revitalizare Urbană al Municipiului Bălți Etapa I (2019-2021)*, 2019, p. 34.

The authors of the documents also try to present the delimitation results in an accessible way, so that the complicated calculations of the indicators are illustrated with a clear summary.

In Polish and Moldavian programmes, it is necessary to present a vision of the area condition after the end of the revitalisation process, and to define goals and directions of activities aimed at eliminating negative phenomena. In both models, it is also recommended to make a list and a description of planned projects. In Polish practice, the list may also include the characteristics of additional activities that the programme might be extended during implementation. The list of planned projects in Poland is therefore more flexible, while in Moldova it is recommended at the stage of preparing the programme to list all activities planned for implementation. Though, they might be supplemented with other projects to be implemented by partners (mainly private investors). In addition, in both cases, the revitalisation programmes should include the methods of ensuring integration and complementarity of the implemented measures and mechanisms of involvement of all interested parties, including residents, entrepreneurs and other entities, as well as an indicative financial

Figure 3. Results of the assessment of negative phenomena in the city of Cimişlia



Source: *Programul de Revitalizare Urbană a oraşului Cimişlia 2019-2021*, 2019, p. 18.

framework and a description of the implementation system. A very important element in both practices is also the description of monitoring and evaluation methods of the revitalisation programme in order to enable verification whether the programme is achieving the expected results.

On the basis of the above comparison, it should be stated that Moldavian and Polish practice are characterised by many similarities. As for noticeable differences, Polish documents are more detailed, which result from a longer validity period and a more complex system of financing activities. However, the entire procedure is based on similar principles, and the scheme for the preparation and implementation of urban regeneration activities are similar.

4.3. Public participation in the revitalisation process

The city authorities are responsible for the development of the revitalisation programme as well as for the whole process, but the process of its creation should take place in close and direct cooperation with residents and other stakeholders (partners). The revitalisation programme should become a kind of a social contract, so it is necessary that not only the city authorities, but, most of all, the inhabitants of the revitalised area, NGOs, entrepreneurs and other partners identify with the planned goals and undertaken actions. For this purpose, it is necessary to involve all partners in the discussion on urban regeneration from the very beginning of works on the programme.

In the case of the Polish model, the involvement of local communities was stronger than in traditional planning procedures, e.g. thanks to extending basic tools, such as the possibility of submitting applications, to more diverse methods, like organising study walks or planning workshops. Residents were identified as one of the most important stakeholder groups in the entire process. Open and transparent implementation of activities, ensuring the active participation of stakeholders at every stage, was put first in the specification of the municipal tasks. This underlines the importance of residents' participation in urban regeneration. The preparation, implementation and evaluation of the revitalisation process are to be based on the knowledge and understanding of stakeholders' expectations and the consistency of the undertaken actions with their needs. It is suggested to actively conduct educational and information activities about the entire process, initiate and support activities aimed at improving communication between stakeholders, as well as ensure their participation in the preparation of documents on revitalisation (in particular, the municipal revitalisation programme).

It is required to ensure appropriate conditions and sufficient time for stakeholders to express their views and to submit their opinions. Public consultations, in the form of comments in paper or electronic form, as well as meetings, debates, workshops or study walks, are required in each planning procedure regarding the revitalisation process and must be made public no later than seven days before the date of their conduct. Information about the consultation meeting, a note on its course and publicly referring to the comments are also mandatory in the preparation of revitalisation programmes. Similarly, an obligatory element of strengthening public participation in Poland is the establishment of the Revitalisation Committee in each city that conducts urban regeneration based on the municipal revitalisation programme. The Committee performs opinion-making and advisory functions,

but it is on the commitment and attitude of its members that depends how actively it will support the renewal of the area.

The scope of participatory activities in Moldova was based on Polish experiences (Ryś et al., 2020). It includes the following issues:

- involvement of as many people and partners as possible, who will be able to present their views in the process of creating an urban revitalisation programme;
- informing residents and other stakeholders about the goals, principles of urban regeneration and planned activities;
- organising discussions and using other methods of getting to know the needs and expectations of stakeholders;
- common identification of potential solutions and their inclusion in the revitalisation programme;
- initiating, facilitating and supporting a dialogue between stakeholders and involving them in the revitalisation process;
- supporting grassroots initiatives increasing the parties' interest in the programme and its preparation.

The recommended forms of engaging residents, i.e. surveys, consultation meetings, local visits, workshops, organisation of consultation points, gathering comments, and individual interviews and discussions, were also transferred to in the Moldavian operational document (Ryś et al., 2020). The following detailed descriptions from Moldavian urban regeneration programmes show how broadly the community participated in their development.

Example 1. Involvement of the residents of the revitalisation area in Bălți

“An important source for the implementation of the Bălți revitalisation programme was the local community from the revitalisation area. In particular, after designating a degraded area and revitalisation area, the inhabitants of this area were involved in developing an in-depth analysis of the revitalisation area as well as ideas for basic and complementary projects. In this sense, the energy of the inhabitants of the revitalisation area during the preparation of this document brought it to life.

Thus, the first step to an in-depth analysis of the revitalisation area was to conduct the Actual Mission (study visit) in the area close to the gymnasium ‘A.I. Cuza’. Field study visits were organised on 5th and 21st September 2018. Their aim was to discuss local problems, the specificity

of the district, as well as to identify resources, local leaders and other stakeholders of the revitalisation area.

According to the *Guidelines for urban regeneration in the Republic of Moldova* (Guidelines, MARDE, 2019), an Advisory Committee was established in Bălți, which actively participated in the planning process, identifying problems, needs and potential of the area, took part in formulating ideas for regeneration projects and consulted them with the Bălți City Hall. The meeting to appoint the Advisory Committee was held in the gymnasium of 'A.I. Cuza' on 21st September 2018. During the meeting, the members of the Committee got acquainted with the revitalisation process in the Republic of Moldova and the city of Bălți, analysed the results, needs and potentials of the revitalisation area. Their 'homework' for the next meeting was to identify other problems and needs of the neighbourhood.

On 27th September 2018, also in the gymnasium 'A.I. Cuza', the second meeting of the Advisory Committee was held. This meeting was of particular importance due to the presence of a representative of the Ministry of Investments and Development of the Republic of Poland and Polish experts on urban regeneration. The partners told the participants about good practices, the importance of involving residents in solving local problems, the challenges of Polish cities, and presented practical solutions to specific problems of the revitalisation area. It is worth mentioning that the members of the Advisory Committee did an excellent job by presenting a set of issues identified with the residents.

On 9th November 2018 the third meeting of the Advisory Committee was held in the gymnasium 'A.I. Cuza'. This time, a number of projects for solving the problems in this area were discussed. Work was performed in three groups to gain greater impartiality. At the end of the meeting, ideas for projects were identified. They turned out to be similar, interrelated and covering the entire revitalisation area. All ideas identified by the members of the Advisory Committee were taken into account in the basic and complementary projects.

On 16th November 2018, the fourth meeting of the Advisory Committee was held. At this meeting, the vision of the urban regeneration process in Bălți was discussed. At the same time, the members of the Committee agreed to participate in the implementation of projects. On 7th December 2018, the fifth (last) meeting of the Advisory Committee took place. The

main purpose of the meeting was to formulate an idea for a micro-project initiated by the members of the Advisory Committee in order to draw attention and promote the revitalisation process. A decision was made to purchase a projector, screen and extension cord, equipment that will be used during social activities. At the same time, the Committee developed an action plan for the use of this equipment in the context of promoting urban regeneration in Bălți in 2019.

The work of the Advisory Committee was important to the process of creating the Bălți revitalisation programme, even if the members' contribution was very personal. It was important to discuss the conclusions with the inhabitants of the area, because only members of the local community know problems, needs and potentials of their area”.



Source: based on *Programul de Revitalizare Urbană al Municipiului Bălți Etapa I (2019-2021)*, 2019, pp. 72-73.

Similar provisions can be found in other revitalisation programmes, as the procedure standardisation has unified the Moldavian cities' approach. Of course, depending on the local social capital, consultation meetings were more or less effective, but they always brought a big input to the revitalisation programme, thanks to the information on the area as well as the project proposals and residents' energy.

Figure 4. Participatory process in the city of Drochia



Source: Archives of the city of Drochia.

The Steering Committees were not only concentrated on the dialogue with the residents. They made effort to involve as many stakeholders as possible, including local entrepreneurs, non-governmental organisations and public institutions. An example of such an approach was described in the revitalisation programme of the city of Cimişlia.

Example 2. Involvement of the stakeholders from the revitalisation area in the city of Cimişlia

“When developing and planning the implementation of the revitalisation programme in the area of the Vocational School in Cimişlia, the conditions for creating partnership, multi-sectoral involvement and lasting cooperation were ensured, which are one of the basic principles of the urban regeneration process.

At the preparation stage, cooperation with local public institutions was ensured (Cimişlia City Hall, Health Centre, Cimişlia Social Welfare management, Cimişlia Statistical Section, Public Services Agency, City Library, Territorial Employment Agency) in order to provide a reliable diagnosis based on objective indicators. At the stage of analysing urban units, the public was consulted on the identification of degraded areas in the city and the need for the revitalisation process. In the Mayor’s office, a working group responsible for the revitalisation process, i.e. the Steering Committee (whose coordinator is responsible for the city revitalisation), was created.

For an in-depth analysis of the revitalisation area, stakeholders were consulted during interactive discussions and working meetings with residents and representatives of the business community of the Vocational

School in Cimişlia. The participants' proposals were included in the protocols that were taken into account when drawing up the document. Public consultations were also organised and the draft of the programme was published on the City Hall website”.

Source: based on *Programul de Revitalizare Urbană a oraşului Cimişlia 2019-2021*, 2019, p. 38.

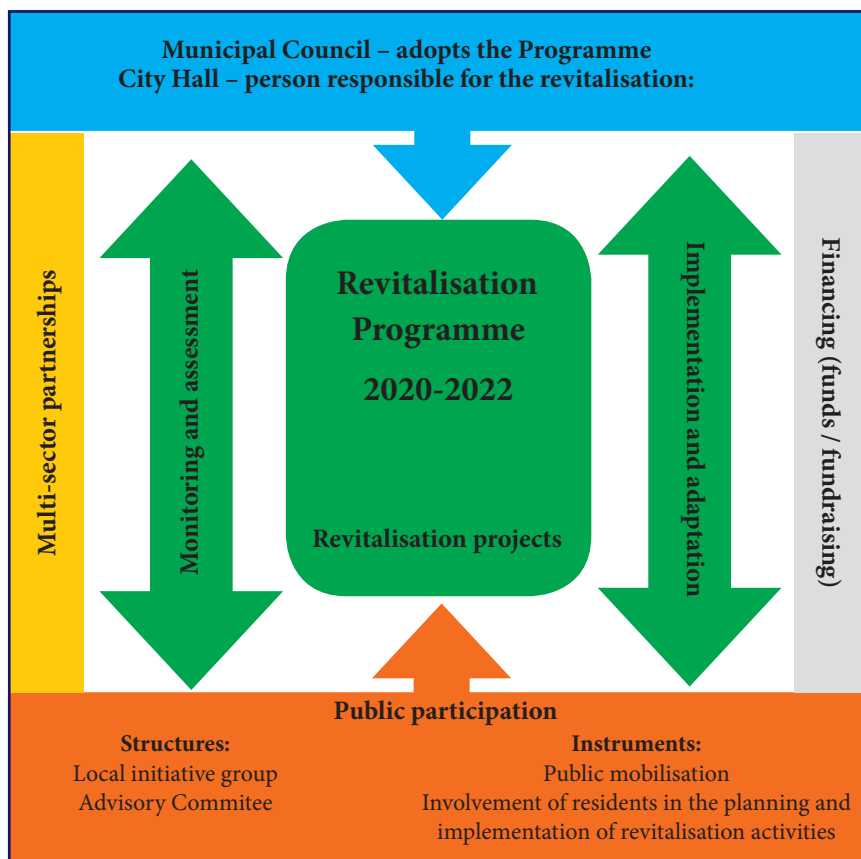
4.4. Implementation of the urban revitalisation programme

In the case of Moldova, after the City Council officially adopts the revitalisation programme it should be then approved by the Regional Development Agency, which confirms compliance with national laws and regulations, one moves on to the implementation of the investment projects. This stage involves an institutional framework, necessary to implement the activities contained in the programme, by creating an organisational structure (often within the City Hall, but not necessarily) responsible for project management. The next step is to prepare projects on the basis of contracts with external entities, which often takes form of public tenders. Then, technical documentation is prepared and the details of implementation are defined. They also become the subject of subsequent public tenders, within which it is possible to submit offers for the implementation of given interventions. The designated organisational structure monitors the project implementation as well as evaluates the implementation of the revitalisation programme. In some programmes, the general rules are also illustrated in a diagram.

In the Polish model, the decision on preparation of the revitalisation programme and its adoption lies within the competence of the Municipal Council. After adopting the programme, the Municipal Council introduces revitalisation projects to the annex of the resolution on the Long-Term Financial Forecast, implements them, and, at the next stages of the programme implementation, also evaluates the implemented activities. Preparation and coordination of the revitalisation process as well as creating conditions for it, conducting and evaluating it are the tasks of the municipality, however the activities themselves may be entrusted to other entities, public or private. The entity responsible for the project implementation and the project itself, must, however, be clearly indicated in the revitalisation programme, which requires including them at the stage of its creation.

In Moldova most often local government budgets are indicated as the main sources of financing. Unlike in Poland, however, this means the right to

Figure 5. General scheme of managing the revitalisation process in Strășeni



Source: based on *Program de Revitalizare Urbană a Municipiul Strășeni 2020-2022*, 2019, p. 50.

conduct activities to collect extra-budgetary funds from alternative sources to support the programmes of local importance, because the local budget may not be able to meet all the needs of the community. Indication of the costs of the revitalisation projects should take place at the earliest possible stage of preparation of the programme, so that it can be assessed whether the programme is financially feasible also for potential investment partners. The described financing system should also take into account guarantees or grants that may be required when carrying out the investment. The main financing sources in addition to the local government budgets, include, among others the National Fund for Regional Development, Fund for Energy Efficiency, National Environmental Fund or Social Investment Fund in Moldova. The possibility of using a given source of financing differs, depending on the nature of the project being

implemented. In addition, revitalisation projects may receive financing through public-private partnerships, which often contribute to increasing the efficiency, or rely on other sources of financing, including agreements with developers or other private partners. These partnerships are rare and, like in Poland, most local governments are still afraid of them.

In the Polish model, indication of financing sources is also required at the stage of preparing the revitalisation programme. The financial framework should identify sources divided down into public and private ones. In addition, it is also possible to finance revitalisation programmes with funds from the European Union or state budget, which is a significant facilitation compared to the conditions in which the Moldavian cities carry out revitalisation processes. All the more, the determination and commitment of the Moldavian cities to develop revitalisation programmes and their implementation in more difficult financial conditions cannot be overestimated.

5

5. MOLDAVIAN SUCCESSES IN REVITALISATION

5.1. Framework of pilot revitalisation activities in Moldova

The pilot project related to the implementation of revitalisation as a valuable regional development tool, lasting from 2017, involves intervention at all levels of government: the central one through the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and the Environment, regional ones through the Regional Development Agencies, and, above all, at the local level in selected cities. The achievements obtained at the latter level will be the topic of this chapter. As the role of the two other levels was discussed in Chapter 4, and here it is mentioned only briefly, in order to obtain a full picture of what has already been achieved in the field of revitalisation in Moldova.

Actions taken at the national level concerned the determination of the legal and implementation framework for the revitalisation process. The most important document, currently constituting the basis for these activities, is the *Linii directoare privind revitalizarea urbană în Republica Moldova* (Guidelines for urban regeneration in the Republic of Moldova) (MARDE, 2019), developed by the MARDE, the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy and the Solidarity Fund in Moldova. This document, adopted in 2020, defines the methodology for creating revitalisation programmes, the conditions for implementing revitalisation projects and indicates procedures ensuring complementarity of interventions from various sources of financing, and indicating the possible sources. In addition, it formulates the role and tasks assigned to individual actors (institutions) involved in the urban regeneration process.

In Moldova, revitalisation has become part of the national urban development policy as a set of actions that fit into the paradigm of sustainable development (UNECE, 2008), hence it has been included in such documents of the central level as *Naționale de Dezvoltare Regională pentru anii 2016-2020* (National Strategy of Regional Development of 2016-2020) (NDR 2016-2020, 2016) or *The New Concept (Paradigm) of Regional Development in the Republic*

of *Moldova* (MARDE, 2020). The importance of revitalisation as an instrument of regional development is expressed by the admission of projects included in revitalisation programmes to permanent financing under the National Regional Development Fund (Operational manual, 2020), which, in accordance with the adopted policy, should enter into force from 2021.

The Regional Development Agencies: North, South, Centre and TAU Gagauzia, which are an intermediate level between the national and local levels, aim to implement regional development policy by ensuring sustainable development throughout the country in terms of economic, social, cultural, environmental, by reducing disproportions between the regions, among others. The role of agencies relates directly to the revitalisation policy, so they play also an important role in the revitalisation process: their task is to support preparation and implementation of revitalisation programmes by Moldavian cities in accordance with the national guidelines on the urban regeneration process. In addition, the agencies aim to facilitate the exchange of knowledge between cities located in a given region, between regions, as well as between cities and regions and the MARDE (Ryś et al., 2020). Thus, it can be concluded that the RDAs play a double role: on the one hand, they are the cities' partners, and on the other hand, they are, in a sense, a "regional branch" of the national system of urban regeneration, with which collaborate other central development institutions (e.g. in financial, organisational, institutional and educational terms).

While the national and regional levels play the role of an organiser supporting the revitalisation process, at the local level, 19 selected Moldavian cities joined the first pilot actions in 2017-2020 (see Figure 6).

The pilot activities were based on the definition of revitalisation developed in the Guidelines, understood as "the process of recovering degraded urban areas from the state of crisis, implemented in a comprehensive manner, through territorially integrated activities by local authorities through effective local, regional, nationwide partnerships based on the revitalisation programme" (MARDE, 2019). They consisted in the development of three components: (1) determining the revitalisation area on the basis of a comparative analysis; (2) creating an urban revitalisation programme taking into account social inclusion in the form of the Advisory Committees and local partnerships, and planning integrated activities; (3) planning comprehensive activities covering various diagnosed crisis spheres. Recently, these components have been characterised in a practical *Guide to urban revitalization for the cities of the Republic of Moldova* (Ryś et al., 2020), which was developed by Polish experts and adapted to Moldavian conditions by experts from the Solidarity Fund. This operational handbook allows Moldavian cities to prepare their revitalisation process (for more, see Chapter 4).

Figure 6. Map of Moldova showing the cities that take part in the revitalisation pilot project



Source: Albu M., 2020, *The retrospective of urban revitalisation approach in the Republic of Moldova*, *Solidarity Fund*, conference “General Assembly of the National Urban Revitalisation Network in the Republic of Moldova”.

In 2018-2019, revitalisation areas requiring intervention were designated in 19 pilot cities, where then, with social support, revitalisation programmes were developed. Moreover, 22 pilot projects were implemented in 13 cities. The pilot budget exceeded MDL 41 million⁵, of which 45% was co-financed, mainly from the Polish Aid funds (Albu, 2020). The Table below presents in detail the types and number of the implemented projects and their budgets.

⁵ MDL – Moldavian Leu; in the course of work on the publication, in 2020, 1 MDL = PLN 0.22 and EUR 0.048.

Table 7. Revitalisation pilot projects implemented in 2018-2020

Type of project	Number of projects	Budget
Construction and modernisation of public infrastructure	9	MDL 16.9 millions
Renovation of social infrastructure	6	MDL 12.8 millions
Renovation of living spaces	5	MDL 6.6 millions
Mixed projects	2	MDL 2.1 millions

Source: based on Albu M., 2020, *The retrospective of urban revitalisation approach in the Republic of Moldova...*

Most of the projects were of an infrastructural nature. They mainly concerned the revalorisation and renovation of recreational spaces, refurbishment works in educational institutions, improvement of the technical infrastructure, including street lighting, water and sewage systems, access roads, renovation of courtyards. To ensure the integrated nature of the projects, they were accompanied by “soft” activities involving the local community. They consisted primarily of cleaning and planting works as well as workshops, e.g. in the form of meetings, raising the inhabitants’ knowledge about the revitalisation processes and the role of public participation.

The revitalisation activities carried out show that the involvement of the local community is a very important element of the implementation of revitalisation programmes in the Moldavian practice. That should be considered as an appropriate way of conducting the intervention, because only by involving inhabitants an effective and harmonious development of a city can be achieved, i.e. a permanent change in the revitalisation area as well in the entire city. A positive result of many interventions was the creation of official groups of local communities to be responsible for the further maintenance of the renewed common spaces. Thanks to such solution, one can expect the continuation of positive changes, prevention of degradation of public spaces, as well as strengthening of social involvement and social relations in the area. In this way, the long-term sense of belonging to given local communities is built, which is an extremely important aspect of the city’s functioning.

Later in this Chapter, examples of successful pilot activities carried out in the selected Moldavian cities are discussed in detail. The cities and the implemented projects were chosen due to the fact that they stand out from others in terms of the content and participatory way of the revitalisation programme preparation, as well as the activities carried out, which show an integrated, comprehensive nature and are marked by a special commitment of the local community.

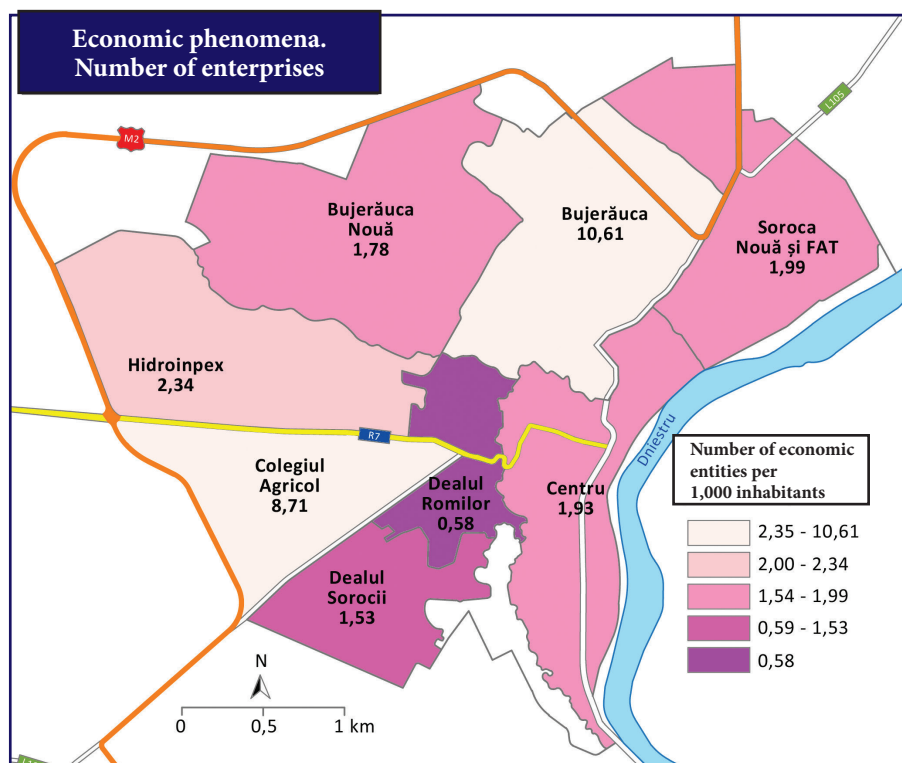
5.2. Soroca

Soroca is situated in the eastern-northern part of the country, on the Dniester River, which marks the border with neighbouring Ukraine. The city is located approximately 160 km from Chişinău, in an area served by the Regional Development Agency North. Soroca is the district city and administrative centre. For this reason, for many years the city has played an important role in the settlement structure as the centre of the region providing the most important public services such as hospitals and administrative institutions.

It is estimated that about 37,000 people live here today, but the city experienced one of the largest demographic declines in the country, by 48% since 1989. However, the number of the inhabitants has stabilised since the 1990s and has remained relatively unchanged in recent years.

Tourism is one of the main potentials of the city. Soroca, one of the oldest Moldavian cities, is an important point on the tourist map of the country thanks to its historical heritage, primarily the castle from the 15th century. The city is

Figure 7. Number of business entities operating in the city of Soroca



Source: *Program de Revitalizare Urbană a mun. Soroca pentru anii 2019-2021*, 2018, p. 18.

also recognisable due to a large group of Moldavian Roma, which is why it is commonly considered the “Roma capital of Moldova”. Currently, apart from tourism, its economy is mainly based on food processing, including the production of wine, wheat, sweetcorn and tobacco.

The urban revitalisation programme of the Soroca municipality for the years 2019-2021 (*Program de Revitalizare Urbană a mun. Soroca pentru anii 2019-2021*, Program Soroca, 2018) was created as one of the first in Moldova, in 2018. During the preparation stage, it was focussed on identifying the main development barriers and indicating the concentration of negative phenomena. For this purpose, the city was divided into eight urban units: (1) Centru (population 4,650, area 2.50 km²); (2) Dealul Sorocii (2,620 and 1.10 km², respectively); (3) Colegiul Agricol (2,870 and 1.44 km²); (4) Hidroinpeș (4,270 and 1.73 km²); (5) Bujerăuca Nouă (4,490 and 2.09 km²); (6) Bujerăuca (2,640 and 1.93 km²); (7) Dealul Romilor (3,430 and 0.75 km²) and (8) Soroca Nouă și FAT (12,052 and 1.58 km²) (Program Soroca, 2018, pp. 8-9).

Based on the diagnosis of indicators relating to the social sphere, it was found that the greatest threats facing the city were the increase in the percentage of the elderly in the general population, low interest in education, especially in the case of the Roma minority, and high unemployment. In the field of infrastructure and technology, including environmental, spatial and functional, and technical issues, an ineffective and territorially unbalanced waste management system was found, which has a negative impact on the environment. Moreover, the lack of recreational green areas and poor road infrastructure were diagnosed. In the economic sphere, the development barrier was mainly the low level of entrepreneurship. The distribution of the latter indicator in the respective urban units, as an example, is presented in the Figure below.

The unit no. 7 “Dealul Romilor”, known as Roma Hill, was selected as the revitalisation area, meeting the criteria. The decision was also taken because of the presence of human resources, who are a driving force for the revitalisation process and the city’s development. The presence of many undeveloped spaces in this unit was also noted. They can be used for activities involving the local community, but also as attractive public spaces. Typical for the district, the houses of the Roma community that resemble palaces, have been highlighted as a potential landmark, due to their unique architecture, and as an important element of the city’s cultural identity.

In addition to the development and improvement of the quality of public spaces and shaping the landscape, the Soroca’s revitalisation programme included important postulates of social involvement and building civic attitudes. The programme goal was stimulating social interactions and working

out agreements between various entities interested in the planned activities. Its entire course, from the document preparation stage, was to take place with the widest possible public participation.

Despite initial concerns about the residents' active participation in the development of the city's spatial policy, it turned out that the local community was interested in the planned activities and took an active part in public consultations. About 45 people participated in the discussions and even contributed financially or undertook voluntary work. The group included representatives of the Roma minority, who contributed to a better understanding of the needs of their community, as well as to improving relations between different ethnic groups and developing a common vision of the area's development.

Figure 8. "Pitaciok" square before and after the implementation of the revitalisation project in 2019



Source: *Raport privind Revitalizarea Urbană în Republica Moldova 2017-2019*, 2019, p. 28.

The revitalisation programme included activities aimed at modernising the kindergarten situated in the revitalisation area, promoting education, courses and workshops, especially for children and youth of the Roma origin, organising a Roma cultural festival, creating high-quality public spaces and an integration centre for the Roma minority, as well as increasing environmental awareness, especially in terms of waste management.

The project “Civic involvement in the arrangement of public space at the intersection of Vasile Stroiescu and Calea Bălțului streets in the Soroca municipality”, carried out in 2019, is one of the implemented infrastructure activities (Report 2017-2019, 2019). The aim of the project was to involve the inhabitants of the area in improving public space for leisure purposes, as well as stimulating social interactions, and shaping the landscape of “Pitaciok”, a square that is of special importance to the Roma community living in the area. After carrying out all planned activities, the infrastructure of the area improved by an increase in the surface of paved roads but also in arranged green areas, better quality of sidewalks and city lighting, new public transport stops and street furniture. On the other hand, when it comes to the social sphere, a local initiative group was created on the occasion of this project. It consists of members of the local authorities, people involved in revitalisation, as well as inhabitants of the area, including representatives of the Roma minority. At the programme implementation stage, it was also possible to improve children’s safety, mainly due to training in road traffic regulations in the kindergarten located in the area. However, the greatest success of the project is the development of an understanding between ethnic groups and the creation of space for a common dialogue. Activities, the basis of which was public participation, have brought visible results and led to an improvement in social relations in the revitalisation area.

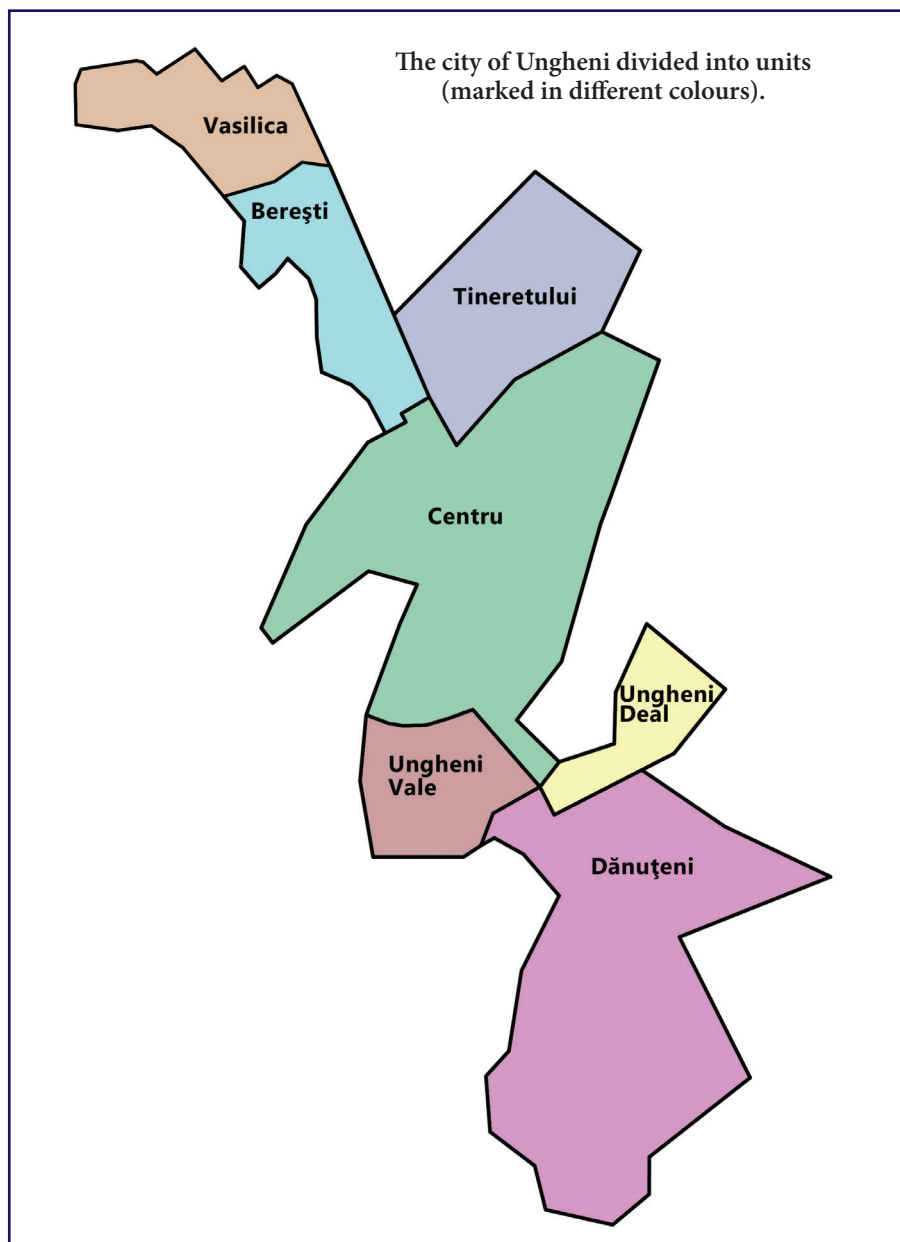
5.3. Ungheni

Ungheni is a city located in the central part of the country, on the border with Romania, which runs along the Prut River. It is administratively part of the Regional Development Agency Centre and serves as the capital of the Ungheni district.

Compared to other Moldavian cities, Ungheni lost relatively few inhabitants after 1989, despite this, its population dropped by as much as 19%. However, in recent years, a slight increase in the population has been noticed. In 2019, the city counted 38,300 inhabitants. Despite relatively young inhabitants (compared to other Moldavian cities), attention should be paid to the

aging trend, which requires an appropriate urban policy and adaptation of public spaces.

Figure 9. Division of the city of Ungheni into the urban units for the purpose of the delimitation analysis



Source: *Programul de revitalizare urbana a mun. Ungheni 2019-2021*, 2019, p. 8.

Due to its border location, the city is considered an important strategic point. In addition, Ungheni is known for one of the largest carpet factories in the country, the products of which are mainly exported abroad. Most residents are largely focused on agriculture, which translates into a relatively low economic productivity and low salaries in the city and the district.

The Ungheni revitalisation programme (*Programul de revitalizare urbana a mun. Ungheni 2019-2021*, Programul Ungheni) was prepared in 2019. In the first stage, the city was divided into seven urban units: (1) Dănuțeni (9,280 inhabitants, 4.50 km²); (2) Tineretului (12,620 and 1.45 km², respectively); (3) Ungheni Vale (2,264 and 1.42 km²); (4) Vasilica (1,976 and 1.26 km²); (5) Ungheni Deal (2,254 and 0.73 km²); (6) Berești (3,870 and 1.10 km²); (7) Centru (6,336 and 5.97 km²). The Figure above shows the division of the city into the units.

The delimitation of the crisis area was carried out on the basis of the indicator analysis related to the social, economic, environmental, technical as well as spatial and functional spheres by comparison of the designated urban units. As a result of the diagnosis, three crisis areas were selected, corresponding to the Polish degraded area. Then, after a thorough analysis done by a group of specialists representing various sectors, unit 3, Ungheni-Vale, was chosen as the revitalisation area intended for revitalisation activities. The high social potential of this area was the reason for choosing it. For it was found that the local inhabitants formed a strong local community and could become active stakeholders in the revitalisation process.

Moreover, an important potential of the area are also the youth centre and the Border Guard Centre, the latter is a well-known university attended by students from all over the country. It should be stated that the area has a unique urban layout as the district was designed by the architect Gustav Eiffel. However, due to its location on the bank of the Prut River, it is in a high flood risk zone.

The comprehensive revitalisation programme consists of ten projects to be implemented in 2019-2021, the effect of which will be reduction of negative phenomena occurring in the area.

The infrastructural project "Social commitment for improving living conditions in Ungheni", carried out during one year, from May 2018 to May 2019 (Report 2017-2019, 2019), is one of the already implemented activities. The aim of this pilot project was to improve the infrastructure and living conditions by creating a space for rest and recreation. It took place in the public space between four multi-storey residential buildings and consisted in its renovation with the participation of the residents.

Figure 10. Local community consultation meetings on the pilot activities in Ugheni



Source: *Raport privind Revitalizarea Urbană în Republica Moldova 2017-2019*, 2019, p. 20.

In addition to extensive consultations that were carried out during the project, an association of residents was formed, which should deal with the future management of the renovated space. The implemented project is a good example of building up a revitalisation process based on public participation. Approximately 200 residents took part in the consultations, and 400 inhabitants in all activities related to the project, for example in the arrangement of sidewalks. On the basis of the agreement worked out during the meetings, the creation of the “Casa Moderna” association was initiated. Such actions, based on a dialogue, together with actions changing the environment, give residents satisfaction as well as strengthen the sense of community, which in the future may help to prevent spatial degradation.

In 2018, the pilot project improved the infrastructure and the area technical conditions. As a result, new green and recreational areas were created, access roads to the blocks of flats were brought, a parking lot and new sidewalks were built, a playground and an outdoor gym were arranged. In addition, lighting and street furniture were installed, and trees and shrubs were planted. It was then that an association of residents was formed, which began to regularly organise meetings for the local community and deal further with the revalorised space. As part of the activities, a neighbourhood Christmas meeting was organised.

The pilot project was continued with activities carried out in 2019, which were also largely based on the local community involvement. The main objective of this stage was to improve the conditions of early education in the revitalisation area in the Ungheni Vale district. The works were focused on the renovation of the kindergarten building, but carried out with the participation of the local community. A citizens' committee was created and urban planning workshops were conducted. The latter helped to learn about the residents' expectations and familiarise them with the planning processes. Further plans for the kindergarten, the development of which will contribute to the creation of new jobs, were also discussed. The residents were also involved in renovation works. In addition, they participated in educational meetings on the revitalisation process and activities that may prevent the degradation of the public space in the future.

The project implemented in Ungheni was not only an undertaking combining activities in various crisis spheres, but also a financially integrated project. It was co-financed by three institutions: the Solidarity Foundation in Moldova, the City Hall of Ungheni and the Global Environment Fund (GEF).

5.4. Edineț

Edineț is a city located in the northern part of Moldova, about 40 km south of the border with Ukraine and about 200 km north of the country's capital, Chișinău. The city, under the Regional Development Agency North, and the district centre, with a steady number of inhabitants (18,000), ranks among the middle-sized cities in Moldova. However, due to low fertility rate in recent years, the depopulation phenomenon should be expected. A significant increase in the post-working age population is also forecasted, which will have to be taken into account in the municipal policy, including the spatial planning policy.

The region is marked by agricultural production with a predominance of low-productivity economic activities, which translates into relatively low wages. Moreover, one of other main problems is bad infrastructure, causing, among others, lack of security. The city is characterised by bad road infrastructure, in-

sufficient street lighting and a low level of road safety. The lack of speed limiters is a particular threat in the vicinity of institutions where children or the elderly may be present. Such challenges were identified at the stage of diagnosing the city, which was taken into account in the subsequent stages of preparing the revitalisation programme, *Program de Revitalizare Urbană. Municipiul Edineț 2019* (Program Edineț, 2019).

The development of the programme began with the division of the city into the units following the districts used by the local social assistance. In this way, five comparative units were determined: (1) Centru (number of inhabitants: 6,522, area 1.32 km²); (2) Komarova (4,942 and 2.6 km², respectively); (3) Mendeleev (3,135 and 1.6 km²); (4) Dumbravei (1,751 and 1.5 km²); (5) Veche (1,692 and 1.5 km²). The division of the city into the units is presented in the Figure 1. To determine the revitalisation area, social, economic, environmental as well as spatial and functional indicators were used, with a significant predominance of the latter. Technical indicators were omitted in the study due to the lack of data or the irrelevance of the indicators. The analysis of the indicators led to the identification of a degraded area, which included three units: Dumbravei, Veche and Mendeleev. Then, in accordance with the Guidelines (MARDE, 2019), field study visits were organised to identify the revitalisation area. They were attended by a working team, consisting of specialists from the City Hall, representatives of the police and the social welfare department. The purpose, apart from the crisis verification, was to identify human resources and social potential of the area. As a result, unit 3, Mendeleev, was selected for the revitalisation area. There, apart from the identified negative phenomena from various spheres, the area featured the greatest potential, as several schools and kindergartens, and active non-governmental organisations conduct their activities in the area.

Further works on the development of the programme, its strategic part, including the vision, goals and range of specific activities, were carried out in a participatory manner. A particularly important role was played by the Advisory Committee, which was composed of 12 people, including the area residents, teachers and students, and members of a non-governmental organisation.

The undertaken activities included a pilot project, “The importance of the Vasile Alecsandri public garden for the city of Edineț in the context of climate change”, which was implemented from the beginning of May 2018 to the end of May 2019 (Report 2017-2019, 2019). The project focused on the modernisation, restoration and protection of the landscape in a public park with the involvement of the local community. The activities were to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of the revitalisation area inhabitants.

The place of intervention was indicated by non-governmental organisations and educational institutions, at the stage of preparation of the revitalisation programme, as a part of the revitalisation area with high investment potential.

From the beginning of the process, the important role of the local community was emphasised, therefore a survey on the park arrangement and on-site consultation meetings were carried out. Cleaning and greening works were performed, and a better lighting system and new equipment were installed in the recreation and sports area. A space for outdoor cultural activities was

Figure 11. Consultations on the arrangement of the Vasile Alecsandri Park in Edineț



Source: *Raport privind Revitalizarea Urbană în Republica Moldova 2017-2019*, 2019, p. 26.

also created. The works were accompanied by an information campaign for the residents, increasing their knowledge about park arrangements, spatial planning and the revitalisation process. Children and adolescents were also involved in the process during drawing workshops. The workshop participants could propose the park equipment and their visions of its further development.

It was decided to implement the revitalisation process with a particularly high participation of residents, therefore the pilot activities were aimed at developing lasting contact with all stakeholders of the process. Although the initial activities were not very well received, thanks to regular work based on the will to understand social needs, it was possible to significantly improve contact with the area inhabitants. Patience and persistence in action were recognised by the process organisers as key to the successful implementation of the revitalisation programme.

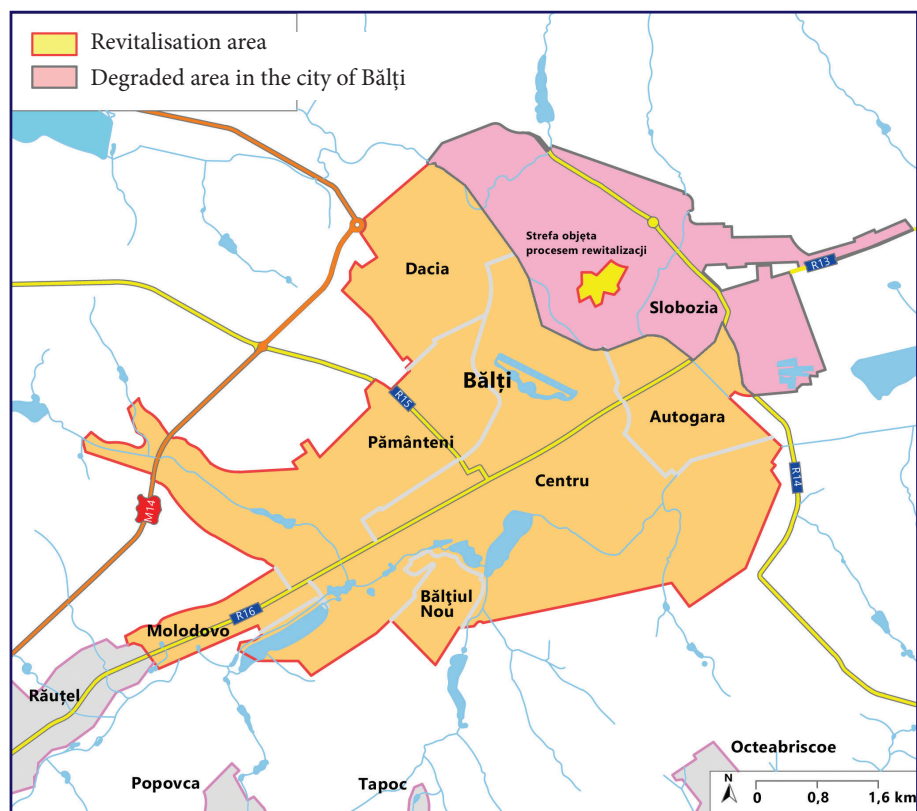
The pilot project was continued in 2019. The main objective was to improve social relations by creating opportunities for spending free time together, increasing access and security to public spaces and institutions, and promoting a healthy lifestyle. Infrastructural works were carried out to improve the condition of the local stadium and to develop the space next to the kindergarten, both facilities located in the revitalisation area. Thanks to the interventions, the quality of infrastructure improved, as well as the activity of the local community. Consultation meetings were organised, groups of residents responsible for voluntary cleaning works were created. There were also creative workshops for children, parents and volunteers. As a result of the pilot project, there has been a noticeable deepening of neighbourly relations, which should translate into a long-term cooperation and a sense of belonging to the local community.

5.5. Bălți

Bălți is located in the northern part of the country. It is Moldova's second largest city and one of the five cities with a special status. With a population of almost 147,000, it aspires to be the "northern capital". It is a very important administrative and economic centre as well as a communication hub connecting the most important places in the country. It belongs to the Regional Development Agency North.

Historically, the city was known for the production of tobacco, as well as the cultivation of vines and fruit. Currently, the economy is focused on food processing and the production of agricultural machinery. The population, after a significant increase in the second half of the 20th century and a slight decrease in the 1990s, seems to be quite stable for last twenty years.

Figure 12. The revitalisation area in Bălți against the background of a degraded area and other urban units



Source: *Programul de revitalizare urbană al Municipiului Bălți Etapa I (2019-2021)*, 2019, p. 29.

Work on the revitalisation programme, *Programul de revitalizare urbană al Municipiului Bălți Etapa I (2019-2021)* (Programul Bălți, 2019), began with the division of the city into urban units. As a result of this analytical work, seven units were designated: (1) Centru (population 36,960, area 15.5 km²); (2) Autogara (21,970 and 2.74 km², respectively); (3) Dacia (32,370 and 3.72 km²); (4) Slobozia (17,800 and 9.86 km²); (5) Pământenii (30,430 and 7.1 km²); (6) Molodovo (1,880 and 1.42 km²); (7) Bălțiul Nou (5,100 and 1.09 km²) (for spatial distribution of units, see the Figure 2).

Then, an analysis of social, economic, environmental, infrastructural and functional factors was carried out. After a multi-stage selection process, which also took into account consultations, supported by Polish experts, among others, it was decided to focus the activities on the section of unit

no 4, Slobozia, where housing estates, the A.I. Cuza public school, being the centre of the area, as well as different public institutions and green areas are located. The revitalisation area is presented in the Figure above. This area was selected due to its strategic, central location in the degraded area and the greatest concentration of people living in multi-storey blocks of flats. Public institutions are also concentrated in this area, including four educational institutions and a health clinic. Vast green areas, which constitute about 10% of the area, as well as the economic potential of unused public spaces are also an important potential. For the organisers of the revitalisation process, the social potential is also particularly important: the area is known for its local leaders who can contribute to the revitalisation and the involvement of residents.

The selected revitalisation area, characterised by a high concentration of population, was considered the most important for the further development of the district and the surrounding area. It was decided to focus the revitalisation activities on the most vulnerable social groups: children, adolescents and the elderly, and on the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, social integration and improvement of safety, especially in these groups. The local gymnasium, after modernisation works, improved conditions and the creation of new functions, was to be the centre of the planned changes. It was also assumed that the activities would be implemented with the greatest possible participation of the local community.

The pilot project “Social interaction – a new dimension of early education in the revitalisation area in Bălți” (Report 2017-2019, 2019) was carried out in 2018. It focused on the modernisation of the A.I. Cuza public school. The aim was to create a space for community and to provide access to high-quality educational services for the area residents. The programme included a major renovation of sanitary installations, providing an access to the building for people with reduced mobility, equipping the school grounds with street furniture and tools for conducting classes in ecological education.

At the same time, activities improving infrastructure were also to help social integration by creating conditions for spending time for all, regardless of their age or restrictions related to mobility. An important element of the project was the creation of the Local Initiative Group, who provided information, carried out consultations and initiated civic activities. The group consisted of 18 people. In order to learn about the residents’ expectations, they interviewed about 150 students and 200 parents who identified the revitalisation needs. The group’s involvement significantly contributed to the increase in civic participation in the revitalisation area.

The pilot action, continued in 2019, was, in turn, aimed at activating the local community through education carried out by the early education centre, adjacent to the A.I. Cuza school. There, the heating installations were modernised, which led to an increase in energy efficiency and improved the technical conditions of the facility. The social dimension of the intervention was the stimulation of dialogue, mutual trust and respect, as well as activities aimed at building a civil society. Another goal was to develop a lasting partnership between the school, families and local community, which was achieved through educational activities in which over 250 families participated. It also

Figure 13. Educational activities for different age groups carried out as part of the pilot project in Bălți



Source: *Raport privind Revitalizarea Urbană în Republica Moldova 2017-2019*, 2019, p. 46.

led to an increase in interest in activities carried out in the revitalisation area, as well as to a promotion of the public participation idea.

As a result of the pilot activities, the transformations of the public buildings and public spaces made them accessible to all ages and social groups. In turn, due to the “soft” activities, the integration of the area inhabitants increased, thanks to the inclusion of a large number of different stakeholder groups.

5.6. Cimişlia

Cimişlia is located in the southern part of the country on the Cogîlnic River, 74 km south of Chişinău, close to other significant urban centres, such as Comrat (30 km) and Căuşeni (57 km). The city lies at the crossroads of important national roads: from Chişinău to Bolgrad or Giurgiuleşti, and from Tiraspol to Leova. It is also situated close to a railway junction for freight transport.

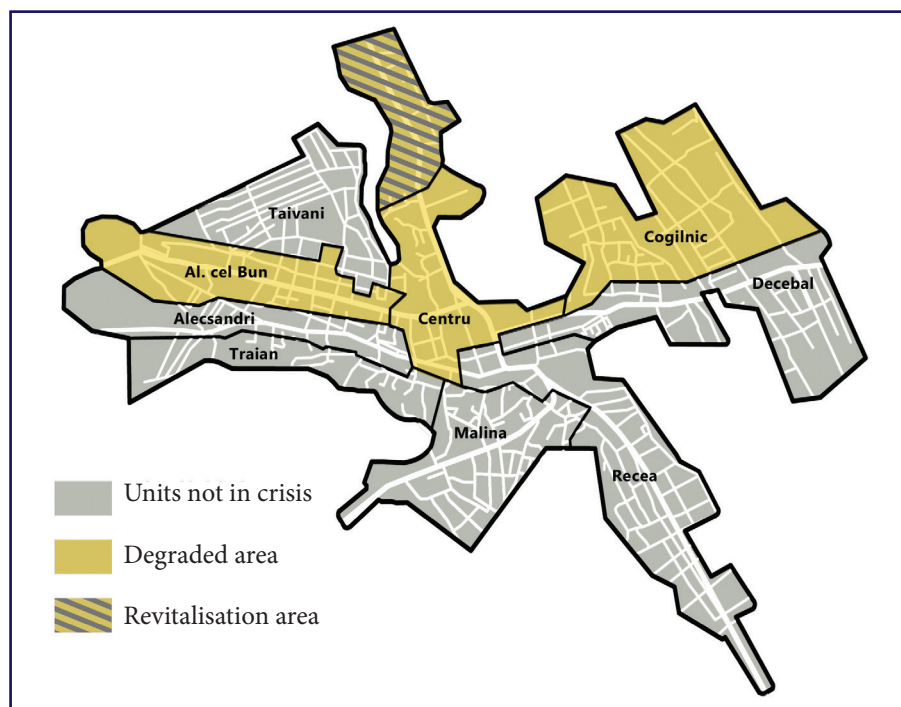
The city, which is under the Regional Development Agency South, acts as the administrative centre for the district, and also manages three smaller towns: Bogdanovca Nouă, Bogdanovca Veche and Dimitrovca. As in other Moldavian cities, its characteristic feature is a decline in the population since the 1990s. Currently, the number of inhabitants is around 12,600. The economy of the city and the region is primarily related to the agro-industrial sector, mainly the production of agricultural products, including meat, dairy and fruit industries, grain, and winemaking.

In 2018, the city started developing the revitalisation programme, *Programul de Revitalizare Urbană a oraşului Cimişlia 2019-2021* (Programul Cimişlia, 2019). As there was no official division into administrative districts in Cimişlia, the circuits served by the respective health centres were used as urban units for the delimitation analysis. In this way, nine units were designated: (1) Traian (population 774, area 0.72 km²); (2) Alecsandri (1,321 and 0.80 km², respectively); (3) Alexandru cel Bun (1,401 and 0.79 km²); (4) Taivani (1,868 and 0.99 km²); (5) Raspberry (1,433 and 1.09 km²); (6) Centru (2,197 and 1.38 km²); (7) Recea (1,284 and 1.41 km²); (8) Decebal (1,169 and 1.12 km²); (9) Cogîlnic (1,195 and 1.53 km²). The spatial division into units is presented in the Figure 3.

Although the delimitation analysis included the study of all spheres, i.e. social, economic, environmental, spatial and functional, and technical, it focused on the social sphere, for which five indicators were used. One or two indicators were used to examine other spheres. After the quantitative analysis, the selection of the revitalisation area was performed in two stages. First, the degraded area, consisting of three units: Centru, Cogîlnic and Alexandru cel

Bun (marked in yellow in the Figure below), was identified. Then the Steering Committee conducted a qualitative analysis during field visits, from June to July 2018. Due to the scale of negative phenomena on one hand, and the potential on the other, the northern part of the Centru (6 unit), i.e. the area around the Vocational School, was chosen as the revitalisation area (marked with diagonal lines in the Figure below).

Figure 14. Degraded and revitalisation areas designated under the revitalisation programme of Cimişlia



Source: *Programul de Revitalizare Urbană a oraşului Cimişlia 2019-2021*, 2019, p. 20.

Although the revitalisation area is located on the outskirts of the city, at the Giurgiuleşti – Chişinău route, due to the Vocational School it plays an important social and economic role for the entire city. At the same time, the area inhabitants have limited access to infrastructure and public facilities located in the centre. The negative social phenomena existing here are accompanied by environmental and infrastructural problems.

The implemented activities include the pilot project “Improving the social climate by promoting tolerance and social integration” (Report 2017-2019, 2019). This project, which had a visible impact on the social sphere, was aimed at

promoting inclusive attitudes among the area children and inhabitants through activities conducted in the city park and sports field. The activities included the restoration of the “Childhood Square” Park, and then cultural actions in the renovated public space, including, among others, theatrical performances and classes during the so-called summer school. The inhabitants of the area were involved in cleaning and planting works. A total of 100 trees were planted. The local community also took part in construction works, creating a mini-football field, tennis court and the stands.

Figure 15. Spatial distribution of planned activities under the second pilot project in Cimişlii



Source: Sidor V., 2020, *Model – Prezentare RU Cimişlia*, materials from the training “Support for public administration in Moldova in sustainable urban development through the effective implementation of urban development programmes and projects”

In 2019, another pilot project: “Urban revitalisation of the Vocational School area in the city of Cimişlia” (Report 2017-2019, 2019) was implemented. Its aim was to improve the quality of life of the revitalisation area inhabitants. The intervention concerned the improvement of the surrounding public infrastructure (for spatial planning, see the Figure 15). As in the previous year, the local community was also involved in the project. The renovation works were accompanied by social and cultural activities promoting the area. The scope of the project was developed during consultation meetings in order to meet the needs of the area inhabitants. As a result, a playground for children,

interactive spaces for residents of all ages: a tennis table, chess, and a fitness field were created. The area was equipped with benches, lanterns, flower pots, greenery (including 200 trees) was planted and a road was renovated. The project also took into account the needs of people with disabilities. Moreover, a space for organising social and cultural events was arranged and two large events were organised: Eco Moto Fest and the “Miorița” International Fair. During the project, two local civic initiatives of the residents and students of the Vocational School were also carried out.

Figure 16. Results of the second pilot project: playground for children and the “Eco Moto Fest” festival in Cimișlia



Source: *Raport privind Revitalizarea Urbană în Republica Moldova 2017-2019*, 2019, p. 36.

5.7. Drochia

Drochia is a city in the northern part of the country and the administrative centre of the district. It is located 174 km north of the capital, Chişinău, in a region served by the Regional Development Agency North. It owes its development to the railway that was built at the end of the 19th century. Drochia became a city only in 1973.

Like many other Moldavian cities, Drochia specialises in the food industry, including the production of cheese and butter, as well as sugar at the Sudzucker Moldova plant on the outskirts. In addition, building materials are produced here. The negative social phenomena include depopulation and aging of the society. In recent years, its population has stabilised and amounts to approximately 17,400 people.

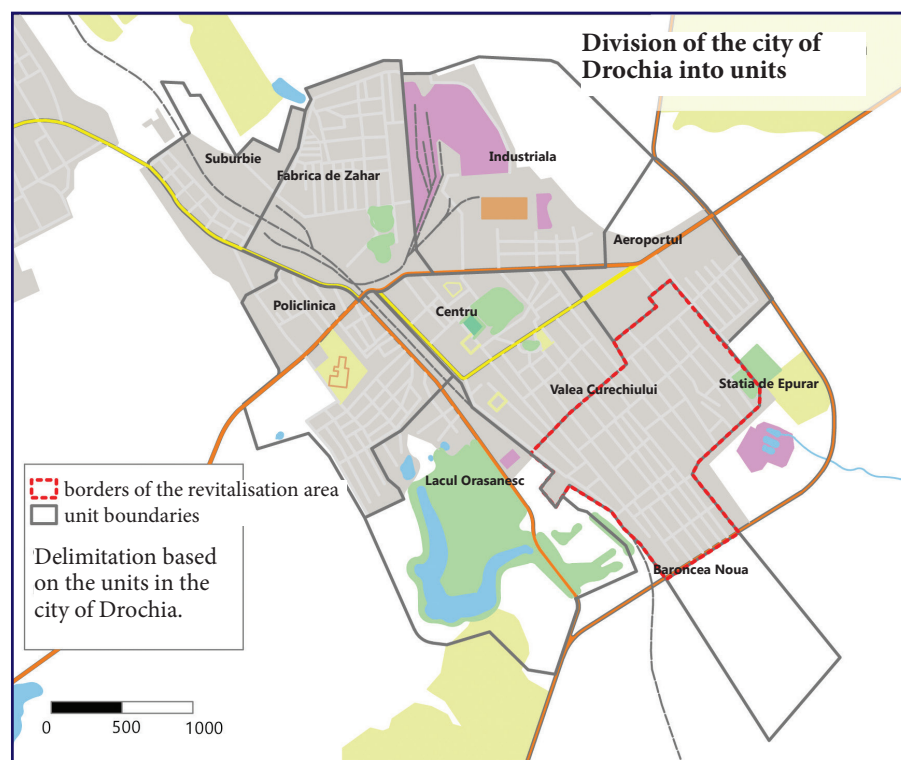
Drochia started the revitalisation process later than other pilot cities, in May 2019. However, the revitalisation programme, *Program de revitalizare urbană a oraşului Drochia 2020-2022* (Program Drochia, 2019) was developed and adopted at the end of that year.

Work on the programme began with the division of the city into urban units, which were then assessed for negative phenomena from various spheres. In total, ten units were designated: (1) Suburbie (population 618, area 0.57 km²); (2) Fabrica de zahăr (3,080 and 1.26 km², respectively); (3) Industrială (1,300 and 1.99 km²); (4) Centru (4,600 and 170 km²); (5) Policlinica (1,800 and 1.27 km²); (6) Lacul Orăşenesc (1,360 and 1.88 km²); (7) Valea Curechiului (4,500 and 1.46 km²); (8) Zona Aeroportului (3,100 and 0.95 km²); (9) Staţia de epurare (0.74 km²); (10) Zona nelocuibilă Baroncea nouă (0.59 km²). The latter two units as uninhabited were excluded from the further delimitation diagnosis. The spatial distribution of urban units made for the delimitation analysis is presented in the Figure below.

The delimitation diagnosis concerned all spheres, i.e. social, economic, environmental, spatial and functional, and technical, with a clear predominance of the number of indicators related to social problems. On the basis of the analysis, a degraded area was identified, consisting of four units: Suburbie, Industrială, Policlinica and Valea Curechiului. The Steering Committee together with the representatives of the Regional Development Agency accompanied by facilitators carried out a series of field visits in order to conduct a qualitative analysis. As a result of the visits and discussions with residents, it was decided that unit no. 7 would be selected for the revitalisation area.

The Valea Curechiului area is marked by an increased number of negative social phenomena, accompanied by economic, environmental, spatial and

Figure 17. Division of the city of Drochia into urban units made for the needs of the revitalisation programme



Source: *Program de revitalizare urbană a oraşului Drochia 2020-2022*, 2019, p. 12.

functional, and technical problems. The area is poorly developed in terms of infrastructure, there are neglected public spaces, including empty, abandoned one-story buildings. The road infrastructure is in poor condition, too, and over 90% of households are not connected to the sewage system. There is a lack of recreational spaces. At the same time, the area is of great importance due to the presence of public institutions that play an important role in the development of the entire city and can become partners in revitalisation activities. There are Ştefan cel Mare High School, the EIT “Martisor”, a pedagogical counselling centre for children, and a mother centre “Ariadna”. Local leaders who may be important stakeholders in the revitalisation process were also identified. Unused public spaces, which, after restoration, could be used as recreational areas and playgrounds, were also considered as the area potential.

The urban revitalisation programme was developed in a participatory manner with the involvement of the Advisory Committee, which was a co-organiser of consultation meetings.

Figure 18. Public space in the revitalisation area in Drochia, subjected to intervention under the pilot project



Source: Perescu E., 2020 *Prezentare RU Drochia*, materials from the training “Support for public administration in Moldova in sustainable urban development through the effective implementation of urban development programmes and projects”.

In 2020, the first project, entitled “Promoting an active lifestyle and community interaction by creating leisure opportunities in the Valea Curechiului revitalisation area in Drochia” (Perescu, 2020) was successfully implemented. The project converting an unused, neglected public space was aimed at increasing the attractiveness of the revitalisation area, as well as the living standard of the inhabitants by creating various possibilities of spending free time. As a result, 77,000 m² were restored and new functions were introduced. A space for interaction, recreation and organisation of cultural and sports events was created. The new space increased the attractiveness of this area also in terms of economy. A revival of trade and services, and strengthening of public-private partnerships can contribute to a better capitalisation of urban space. The project had also an impact on the social sphere, as the inhabitants got engaged in cleaning the area and planting vegetation. In the years 2020-2022, it is planned to continue the revitalisation activities, e.g. by using as a tool a newly created local budget.

6

6. ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES OF SELECTED MOLDAVIAN MUNICIPALITIES FOR THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DEVELOPED REVITALISATION MODEL

6.1. Challenges in the field of city development – the revitalisation perspective

Conducting revitalisation activities, as well as many other projects related to regional and local development, is influenced by specific conditions in a given country and region. They include, among others, political, economic, legal and environmental conditions. This section describes the challenges that Moldavian cities face in the context of the revitalisation policy currently being introduced as an element of the regional and local development.

Recent decades have been a time of profound changes in Moldova, aimed at creating the foundations of a state of law based on a market economy, conducting a modern regional policy, including urban policy, taking into account the principles of sustainable development. Historical, economic and cultural conditions have been and still are a major challenge – they have been categorised and analysed in documents prepared by international experts, such as *New Urban Agenda of the Republic of Moldova. National Report* (HABITAT III, 2016).

The diagnosed problems included, first of all, the outdated, inherited from the previous political system, highly centralised institutional and legal system, which translates into the low efficiency of public administration. As a result, an attempt was made to introduce a system based on a new approach to regional development. The main goal was to create a polycentric and sustainable urban network that would unlock the potential of the cities as engines for the economic growth and employment. Changes in the administrative and strategic documents that have become necessary aimed at decentralisation of the state administrative system. On the occasion of the conducted analyses, it was found

that the low efficiency of local self-governments is also caused by financial deficits, small size of the cities and limited management skills. Local authorities fail to create attractive land for investors, which makes raising funds difficult.

The reform based on the *Strategia Națională de Descentralizare Strategy* (National Decentralization Strategy) (Strategia, 2012), followed by the *Strategia Privind Reformă Administrației Publice Pentru Anii 2016-2020* (Administrative Reform Strategy 2016-2020) (Strategia, 2016) started in 2012. The adopted decentralisation strategy aimed to improve the management of the local budget and the delegation of administrative powers to local authorities. However, the decentralisation process is slowing down, and despite the policy pursued, a significant concentration of resources in Moldova's largest cities is still visible. Medium and small-sized cities are marked by a low degree of independence, slow growth or even regression and marginalisation in relation to the largest cities. Therefore, the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and the Environment set as the goal introducing systemic measures for the cities and regions with economic potential, defined in *Strategia Națională de Dezvoltare Regională 2016-2020* (Regional Development Strategy 2016-2020) (MDRC, 2015), and focusing on development of the so-called "growth poles". The development of these selected urban centres is to become a driving force for the development of entire regions, leading to a territorially balanced development of the country by restoring social and economic functions to medium-sized cities. The document *The Law on Regional Development in the Republic of Moldova* (The Law, 2006), which assumes a constant support for local administration by strengthening its financial, institutional and human potential, also serves to strengthen the autonomy of local administration.

In order to stimulate regional development, an important element of which is urban policy, including revitalisation, in accordance with the principles developed by the MARDE, it is extremely important to implement mechanisms that would allow Moldavian local self-governments to effectively plan, implement and monitor strategic and operational programmes and projects. That requires the local authorities to have appropriate management competences in financial, technical and legal matters. Such mechanisms introduced at the local level could significantly affect the development of urban areas and contribute to the reduction of unfavourable social, economic, infrastructural and environmental phenomena as well as their further sustainable and harmonious development.

The main challenges faced by Moldavian medium-sized and small cities concern, above all, demographic problems: low fertility, migration of economically active people to larger cities, mainly the capital, and abroad, as well as the aging of the population. These trends have had an impact on

the urbanisation processes, and on their sustainable development. The cities' decline in the population results in many problems, such as the appearance of empty spaces and facilities that are expensive to maintain, degradation of urban space or decline in social capital breaking city development. It is worth noting, however, that although the negative demographic trends in Moldavian small and medium-sized cities are very clear, there are some localities where the depopulation phenomenon has been stopped, for example in Ungheni, where since 2008 even a small population growth has been recorded.

Negative phenomena in the social sphere translate into the economic sphere. This is especially true for smaller cities. In Moldova, there is a noticeable development polarisation, with the concentration of financial flows and investments in the capital and the marginalisation of other areas, especially medium-sized cities. In recent years, a very strong dominance of large cities has been particularly noticeable. In 2018, 54.1% of the value of country industrial production was generated in Chişinău. In 2014, more than 65% of enterprises were registered in the capital region, while only 11.85% in the North, 14.56% in the Centre, 5.14% in the South and 2.52% in TAU Gagauzia Regions.

High unemployment rates and lack of jobs mean that smaller cities are unable to provide employment to their inhabitants, and, as a result, they lose their function as economic centres for the surrounding rural areas. Poverty and unemployment or lack of economic activity are particularly noticeable in the revitalisation areas of the cities that have joined the revitalisation pilot programme. In one of them, Sorooca, the average salary is MDL 4,500, which is about 38% lower than the national average (MDL 7,256). In addition, there is also a very low, 28.6%, ratio of jobs created by the private sector to the total number of the city working-age inhabitants.

It should be noted, however, that the economic challenges are also related to the economic situation of the entire country, which is one of the poorest in Europe and has a rather unstable economy. The financial sector is also not considered to be stable enough for large investments. Hence, an extremely important initiative is the state intervention in the form of the National Regional Development Fund amounting to 1% of GDP in 2020, as a way to finance investment projects. It should be added that, according to its rules, urban projects in the field of cohesion, i.e. revitalisation projects, will receive 40% of the total amount. The first call for the projects, included in revitalisation programmes, is to take place in 2021.

Neglects in the field of broadly understood infrastructure, causing a crisis in the spatial, functional, environmental and technical spheres, are among the most difficult challenges faced by Moldavian cities losing their economic

and social functions. Many years of neglect, going back to the period of the country's collapse after the systemic change, require very important financial efforts, but also, in the face of the decentralisation reform, adequate human resources, staff with high skills in preparing, managing and implementing municipal programmes and projects.

The identified infrastructural challenges include mainly transport and mobility problems, such as: lack of public transport, poor condition of road infrastructure and time to commute to work, which is often located in another town. Increased traffic on transit roads has also a negative impact on the environment. Traffic jams, the increase of which has been observed in recent years, may prove to be a key factor in the development of cities in the future. Effective planning of road infrastructure, and thus preventing congestion will translate into an increase in the quality of residents' lives, as well as in a reduction in low emissions. The expansion and promotion of public transport remains a significant challenge in this context. Public transport, which was inefficient after the change of the political system, was replaced by private minibuses, offering low quality services. The problem noticed in the cities that have started to implement revitalisation policies is also the lack of the bus stops, pedestrian sidewalks, roads for cyclists, street lighting, benches and litter bins. Solutions improving infrastructure and public transport are one of the most urgent tasks.

In addition to the above-described environmental problems related to road traffic, progressing climate change, including severe droughts, floods and hail, are a huge challenge for the natural environment of cities. At the central level, the state authorities have taken measures to reduce these phenomena, i.e. decisions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve risk management. In the local context, cities should also strive to reduce gas emissions and introduce ecological solutions. For mitigating climate change actions aimed at the development of neglected public areas, wastelands and transforming them into green areas, parks and recreational areas should be taken. These activities should also include tree plantings, as well as creating conditions for encouraging outdoor activities by building playgrounds, outdoor gyms, etc.

Water quality also requires improvement, by introducing modern solutions to replace old systems, including in particular the modernisation and expansion of water and sewage systems and the construction of sewage treatment plants. That should be one of the priorities of the urban policy and, in particular, revitalisation policies, as such deficiencies were diagnosed in the revitalisation areas. Additionally, the efficiency of housing construction, which is manifested in the building insulation system, among others, is also a very important aspect of the city ecology.

Finally, the last of the major challenges identified in cities across the country is housing and basic public services. Housing-related issues are also one of the most important aspects of revitalisation, as decent living conditions for the inhabitants of the crisis areas are a necessary condition to counteract the processes of social degradation. In recent years, there has been a shift from public to private housing, with 370 apartments per 1,000 people in Moldova, which is well below the EU average. Despite the increase in housing investment in recent years, the quality of living conditions and access to housing are still very limited. Their improvement requires the intervention of cities, which, by expanding technical infrastructure, will systematically provide adequate services to residential buildings. Despite the fact that in recent years a slow development of infrastructure networks has been noticed, in 2018 only 54.7% of flats in the North Region had access to the sewage system (65.1% in the Centre, 70.8% in the South, 95.2% in Chişinău). Only 45.1% of the apartments in the North Region (65.3% in the Centre, 84.8% in the South and 95% in Chişinău) had access to hot water. *Strategiei de alimentare cu apă şi sanitaţie 2014-2028* (Water Supply and Sanitary Facility Strategy 2014-2028) (Strategiei, 2014) includes current requirements for improving the efficiency of water supply and sanitation systems.

Table 8. The most important challenges of Moldavian cities

Area	Identified challenges	Important issues in the face of challenges
Demographic problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – population decline – migration to the largest cities and abroad – aging of the population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Chişinău – managing the influx of inhabitants, avoiding the deterioration of living conditions due to overpopulation – other cities – improvement of living conditions, providing residents with job opportunities and self-development, creating elderly-friendly cities
Mobility and public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – traffic congestion – increase in the number of cars – extended commuting time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – improvement of the quality of public roads – arrangement of the streets and sidewalks – increase of the quality of passenger transport by public transport – reducing car use in cities by ensuring efficient public transport

Environment and sustainable development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – increase of toxic waters – climate change – increase in the number of cars – low efficiency of buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – endowment with wastewater treatment systems – increase of water supply and sewerage system – extension of green spaces – functional development of public space, taking into account natural conditions – educating the public on an ecological lifestyle
Urban economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – insufficient power of municipal institutions (manifesting in housing market, job offers) – migration to bigger cities – lack of integration of the urban economy into national development policy – dominance of large cities – uneven housing development – marginalisation of small and medium-sized cities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – increase of gross domestic product – increase of the value of manufactured production, number of employees, productivity, activity rate and employment rate of the population – creating a friendly investment environment by introducing appropriate regulations for investors – job creation and vocational training opportunities – Chişinău – managing the influx of inhabitants in order to ensure decent working and living conditions
Housing and basic services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – low availability of housing for young people (inefficient credit system) – poor living conditions – low quality of technical infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – increase of the degree of coverage with water supply and sewerage system – endowment with public lighting – carrying out an inventory of residential buildings for the delimitation purpose – control of developers' activities in order to avoid the lack of access to technical infrastructure – Chişinău – preventing the emergence of low quality settlements

Source: based on data from National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova and *Programului Național de dezvoltare a oraşelor-poli de creştere în Republica Moldova (2021-2027)* (Programului, 2020).

As regards the quality of basic services provided, one of the major challenges is ensuring permanent access to healthy drinking water, sustainable energy and transport services, as well as access to sewage and adequate sanitation. Edineț, where only 45% of the area is connected to the sewerage system, is an example a city with a low level of public services. The sewage network does not meet the legal requirements, as according to the law, the minimum coverage should be 70%. Moreover, only half of the streets are illuminated (according to the regulations it should be 60% at least). The city also has no approved solid waste disposal sites. In many households, the requirements for access to basic services are not met and buildings, in general, are not adapted to the needs of people with disabilities.

It must be said that in recent years, Moldova has made a visible progress in identifying challenges related to urban development, and in the context of urban regeneration – the needs of the crisis areas, as well as in formulating appropriate strategies and regulations. Thanks to the support of foreign specialists, it was possible to prepare appropriate formal guidelines, but their implementation requires time and specific changes at all administrative levels, which results in a slow pace of introducing new solutions and achieving the intended effects.

The Table above summarises the described challenges related to the development of cities and the tasks faced by the local authorities of Moldavian cities wishing to pursue a modern urban policy, including the one based on revitalisation processes.

6.2. The cities' institutional and human resources and the challenges related to the revitalisation process

Revitalisation is a complex process that requires a comprehensive approach and integrated, territorially focused actions for the benefit of the local community, space and economy. Counteracting degradation processes in crisis areas involves knowledge and competences in disciplines, such as town planning, architecture, spatial planning, sociology, administration, management and economics. Therefore, the development and effective implementation of revitalisation programmes and projects requires appropriate preparation of local governments – existence of efficient mechanisms, resources and competent staff enabling this type of activity. The assessment of the institutional capacities of Moldavian cities as entities conducting a modern and effective development and revitalisation policy was the subject of a diagnostic study carried out in 2020, which was based on the analysis of an extensive desk research as well as a survey of local government representatives (Tomczyk, 2020). The aim of

the diagnosis was to define the strengths and weaknesses of the cities in the context of development challenges and their active urban policy, including in particular revitalisation policy. On the basis of the study, it can be concluded that, although Moldavian cities show significant deficits in terms of institutional and human resources, they already have the systemic foundations on which they can continue to develop effectively.

The analysis of the structure of the institutional and organisational system at the local level leads to the conclusion that the functioning of local government consists mainly in managing the territory under its authority through the coordination of infrastructure works, financial management and social policy. For this reason, its activities have so far been limited and focused mainly on maintaining the existing structures. Organisational structures lack departments responsible, in particular, for development policy (development planning, project preparation and implementation, fundraising, etc.), though there are positions, whose responsibility are to coordinate the strategic planning processes, public procurement and legal issues. Therefore, it can be concluded that the existing structures already have the base for future departments that could systematically deal with local development and revitalisation policy. It is very positive that the representatives of the examined cities consider their organisational structures to be strong and efficient. The biggest problems with the organisational structure were identified in Edineţ, where the unsatisfactory condition of the units responsible for collecting and analysing strategic data, monitoring the compliance of the planned budget with strategic plans and bad managing financial liquidity, monitoring progress in the implementation of strategic activities, risk assessment, including forecasts of revenues and expenses, as well as monitoring the implementation of tasks related to the local development strategy, were declared.

At the same time, it should be noted that the existing structures are marked by relatively low organisational stability, as there are problems with finding and maintain employees. Staff shortages may constitute a significant obstacle to the effective fulfilment of the local government functions, including, in particular, the pursuit of a long-term development or revitalisation policy.

Cities feel relatively confident in terms of human resource management and organisational culture. They seem quite well prepared for new tasks in the context of the emerging urban policy. Local government units systematically collect and analyse data, which should be considered a great advantage in the strategic and development context. On the other hand, the weaknesses of local administration concern financial management and control systems as well as the lack of procedures and persons responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

It can be generally concluded that middle and small Moldovan cities have already created the foundations for a systemic and long-term local development policy. They have strategic documents prepared, first of all, development strategies with procedures for their updating, a set of planned projects or activities with a defined budget. The revitalisation programmes and operational plans in an annual and long-term perspective are elements of the policy of most of the analysed cities.

The Moldavian cities have already some experience in implementing projects. So far, the Regional Development Agencies, i.e. the regional level, were responsible for the project implementation. The greatest strength of local governments is their participation in regional projects, but some of them also took part in international projects. The weakness of the surveyed local self-governments is the limited experience of employees in large investment projects carried out independently by self-governments, which results from the previous national policy. Employees involved in the implementation of development projects declare experience in strategic planning, financial management and public procurement, as well as technical knowledge. They are less competent in collecting and analysing data needed to create and interpret urban programmes and projects. The competences of local government employees are assessed lower by the representatives of the Regional Development Agencies, which cooperate with the cities on a daily basis. In their opinion, apart from the general shortage of resources, local governments lack qualified staff, and the officials working there do not have specific skills, e.g. related to writing offers, executing orders or conducting procurements, and especially monitoring and evaluation of programmes or projects. They are better at creating and implementing projects, as well as using financial resources.

6.3. Institutional and HR capacities of the National Urban Revitalisation Network

A systemic bases for revitalisation, carried out in Moldova since 2017, which have been accompanied by activities, described in detail in Chapter 5, contributed to the creation of an informal network of the cities – participants of the pilot actions. The experience gained during the development of revitalisation programmes and the implementation of revitalisation projects encouraged the cities to continue their activities within a more organised network. The meeting of the General Assembly of the National Urban Revitalisation Network (NURN) was held in October 2020. It was attended by the founding cities, as well as potential new members who signed the Memorandum and

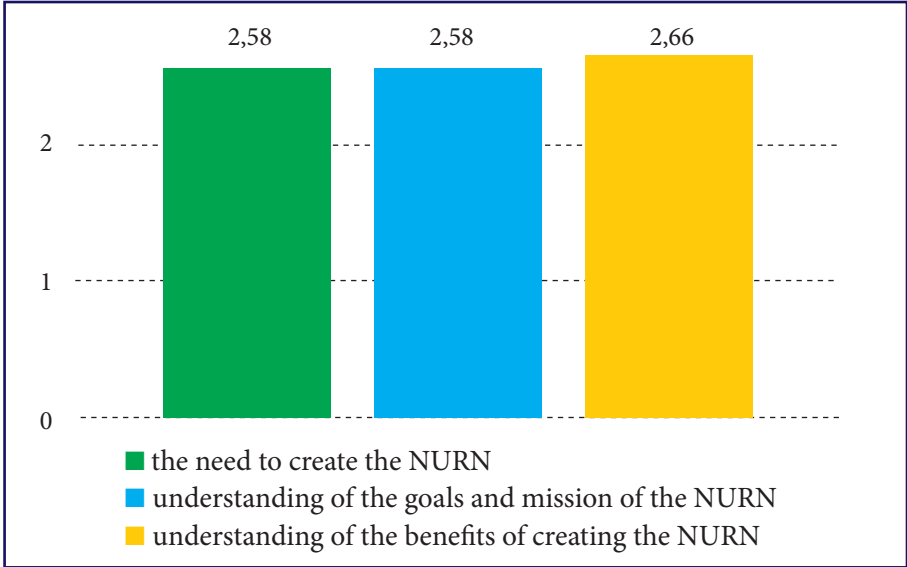
the Membership Declaration. At the end of 2020, the NURN consisted of 12 cities: Bălți, Căușeni, Ceadir-Lunga, Cimișlia, Drochia, Edineț, Ialoveni, Ocnița, Rezina, Soroca, Strășeni, Ungheni. The network that is currently being created plays a pioneering role in Moldova, being the first grassroot organisation that brings Moldavian cities together. Therefore, it can be assumed that the solutions developed and the revitalisation activities undertaken by the NURN will be of a model character for other cities in the country. For this reason, the member cities are extremely important in the context of strengthening the potential of urban settlements, conducting a coherent development policy at the regional level, as well as the development of democracy and civil society.

In the context of the role of this pioneering organisation, which aims, among others, at promoting a unified approach to revitalisation process as an important element of the national and regional development policy, as well as at sharing respective knowledge with other Moldavian cities, the founding members' institutional and HR capacities are very important. Their potential as the spokesmen for revitalisation determines not only the further development of their organisation, but also the position of revitalisation in Moldova. A diagnosis of the NURN members' capacities was held in a form of a study. It included an existing data analysis, as well as a self-assessment survey (with a scale of evaluation from 0 to 3, where the latter is the highest rating) accompanied with interviews conducted in 2020 (Jadach-Sepiolo, Tomczyk, 2020).

The representatives of the NURN cities are marked by high human and social capital, as they are motivated to create and develop their organisation. They understand well the NURN idea and priorities, as well as the benefits of belonging to the network. Most members want to play an active role in the organisation. They would like to organise the activities, inform about the network activities, promote it, raise funds or initiate other activities. The most important obstacle to the efficient organisation functioning is insufficient social capital of the members, issues related to cooperation and partnership. Other potential difficulties may be the lack of permanent financing or possible problems resulting from cooperation and relations with external partners. A detailed assessment of human capital of network members is presented in the Figure below.

The members of the network are employees of municipal offices who are responsible for revitalisation activities carried out as part of the pilot projects. They actively participated, with the support of facilitators, and local and Polish experts, in developing revitalisation programmes, designating degraded and revitalisation areas, conducting social consultations, planning activities, their description and implementation. That is why all members have extensive

Figure 19. Member city representatives' reception of the idea of NURN



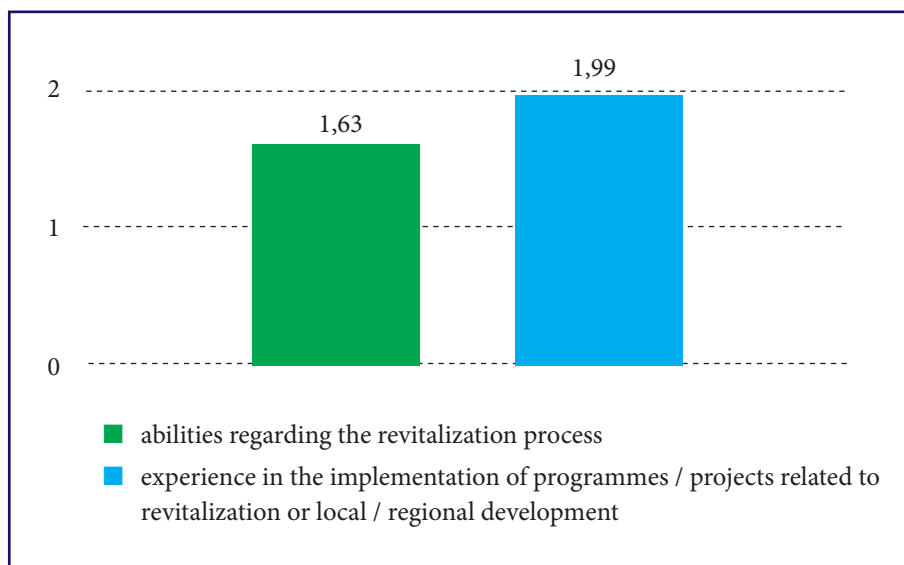
Source: based on Jadach-Sepiolo, Tomczyk, 2020, p. 8.

operational experience in managing revitalisation projects or programmes. They all participated in the implementation of the revitalisation programme or local or regional development strategy. Their competences related to the broadly understood revitalisation processes, and in particular their experience in stimulating the social and economic development of the cities, are slightly less developed. It is probably related to the fact that they have been involved in revitalisation for a short time and have only implemented 1-2 projects, so they do not have developed yet competences regarding the entire process, especially interventions stimulating the social and economic development of the revitalisation areas. In the context of the institutional potential, the representatives of the cities are certainly valuable staff who have already gained some experience in the field of revitalisation and can further develop it on their own, preferably with some advisory support from local or foreign experts.

The detailed results of the experience in the field of revitalisation are presented in the Figure below.

On the other hand, when it comes to organisational and management competences of the cities' representatives, it must be stated that they require greater support, especially in creating and managing the organisational structure. They have better knowledge about the network creation and functioning, project / programme management, and they are the best in the area of human

Figure 20. Knowledge and experience in the field of revitalisation and local / regional development of the member cities' representatives



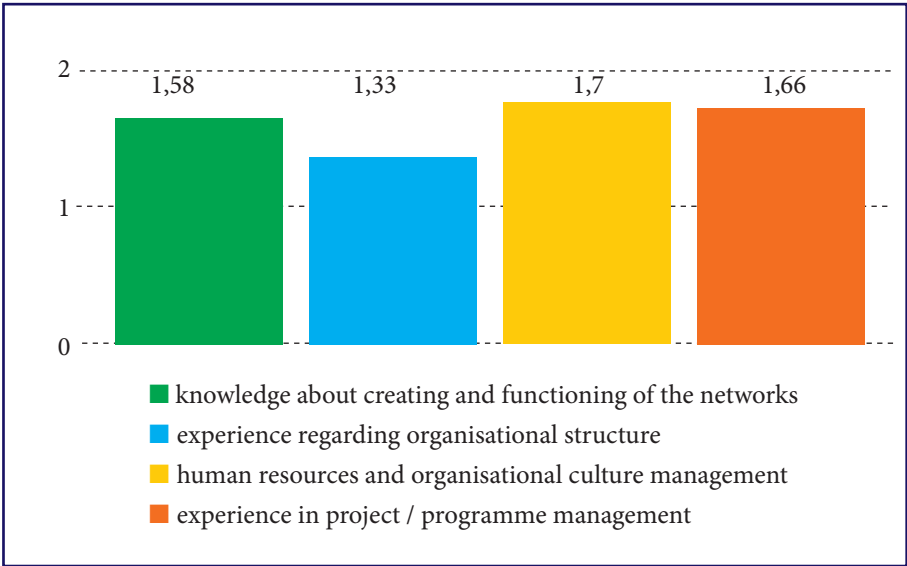
Source: based on Jadach-Sepiolo, Tomczyk, 2020, p. 13.

resource management. They also have a lot of experience in cooperation with non-governmental organisations.

Finally, when it comes to soft skills, they are worse than other research areas. The network members, however, declare high communication skills, with the exception of English. Competences related to knowledge sharing, promotion and promotional activities, which are important in the context of the NURN objectives, are assessed quite well. The weakest, which may be surprising regarding the representatives' experiences in the creation and implementation of revitalisation programmes, are their competences related to public participation and social inclusion. Perhaps the low scores declared by the respondents are related to the experience gained in this area, getting to know the difficulties resulting from inclusive activities and, therefore, understanding the challenges they entail. The details on the soft competences of the member cities' representatives are presented in the Figure below.

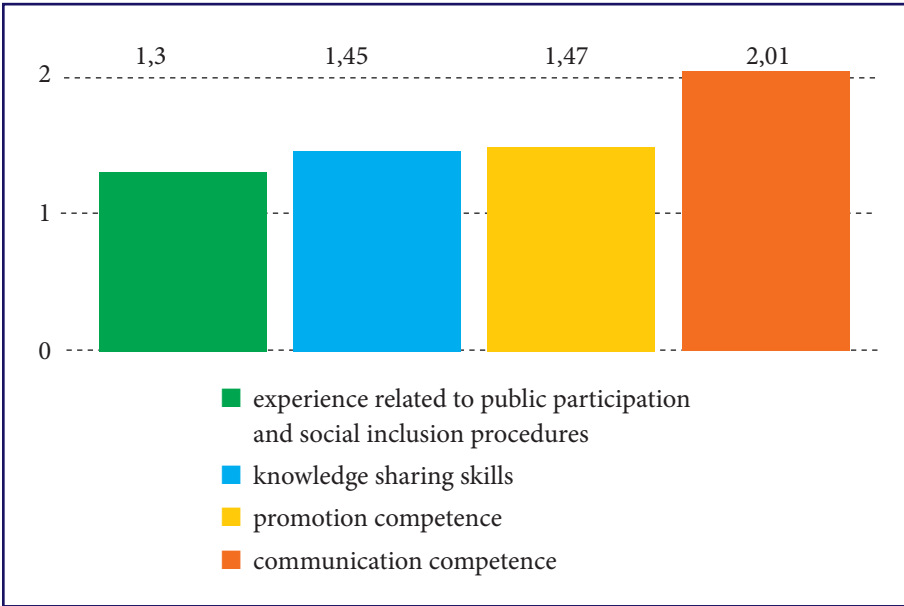
The analysis of the institutional potential of local governments confirms the lack of special offices / departments dealing with development policy. On the other hand, the presence of development strategies as well as other important documents such as urban revitalisation programmes and operational documents prove that modern development policy has already been initiated in

Figure 21. Organisational and managerial competences of the member city’s representatives



Source: based on Jadach-Sepiolo, Tomczyk, 2020, p. 9.

Figure 22. The NURN representatives’ soft skills



Source: based on Jadach-Sepiolo, Tomczyk, 2020, p. 9.

these cities. Importantly, the city representatives have already some experience in implementing larger projects, mainly of a regional nature. The local administration representatives declare that they are relatively confident in their skills related to human resource management and organisational culture. Weaker competences that require further development are related to the ineffective or even non-existent financial management and control system, the lack of procedures and persons responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

It can be noticed that in Moldova, thanks to a new approach to the development regional policy, not only the foundations of urban and revitalisation policies, but even the conditions for building a partnership focused on revitalisation issues have been created. This is reflected in setting up a network focusing on revitalisation issues by the pilot cities. The member cities understand the idea of the NURN, its main goals, and they want to play an active role in it. That proves high human capital of the network members, thanks to which it is possible to create a thriving organisation. The interviews conducted (Jadach-Sepiolo, Tomczyk, 2020) show that the members of the network are specialists in various complementary fields, often including management staff. In order to ensure the permanent and effective functioning of the network, it is necessary to strengthen further the institutional and human capacities, as well as the social capital of its members. The role of human and social capital in the possible success or failure of the emerging organisation may be crucial in view of the existing legal and financial limitations resulting from Moldavian conditions.

When treating the reports cited (Tomczyk, 2020; Jadach-Sepiolo, Tomczyk, 2020) as the basis for diagnosing the institutional capacities of Moldavian cities as leader of revitalisation process, one should be aware of the limitations of these studies. They concerned only a small group of cities. Nevertheless, the obtained results, combined with the analysis of the changing situation of Moldavian cities and the analysis of various existing data, constitute a good starting point for understanding the condition and institutional needs of Moldavian cities in terms of their ability to carry out revitalisation activities.



7

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This publication, summarising the Moldavian experiences in the field of urban regeneration, aimed to describe and analyse the revitalisation model created in this country, which was developed with the support of Polish experts. Described in Chapter 6.1. demographic, economic, infrastructural and environmental challenges faced by Moldavian medium-sized and small cities, and the resulting loss of their social and economic functions mean that the country urgently needs to lay the foundations for a modern regional development policy with revitalisation understood as a comprehensively planned and systematic process of equalising development differences occurring in cities as one of its main components. Poland, as a country with several years of experience in this area, ensured an adequate transfer of knowledge.

Continuous support since 2017 enabled to use the system developed and tested in Poland, which significantly shortened the entire process of creating the foundations of a new public policy and allowed to avoid mistakes and traps. This support is provided by the Polish Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy as part of the Polish development aid conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

It is a great success that the legal framework of the system in a form of a government document – the *Guidelines* (MARDE, 2019) – has already been developed and adopted by the Moldavian authorities. Thus, revitalisation as a set of actions that fits in the paradigm of sustainable development has become a component of the regional development policy, an important element of urban development in Moldova. At the national level, its legal and implementation framework was elaborated. The implementation rules were specified in an operational document, *Guide to urban revitalization to the cities of the Republic of Moldova*, containing practical instructions for developing revitalisation programmes and conducting regeneration processes in cities (Ryś et al., 2020).

It can be concluded that the Moldavian revitalisation model shows great similarities to the Polish system. From the Polish legal order, the following

components were transferred: basic terminology, including the definition of revitalisation, comprehensive diagnosis aimed at designating a degraded and revitalisation area, programme structure, rules for conducting revitalisation activities of an integrated nature, importance of social participation, among others.

The transferred knowledge and experience were adjusted to the needs reported by local experts from the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment and the Solidarity Fund in Moldova. Thus, when preparing the documents, the local Moldavian conditions were taken into account. They were related not only to a different legal and administrative system and possibilities of financing revitalisation projects, but also to the specificity of local cities, which in the vast majority are small, for Polish conditions, with a still visible legacy from the previous political system, and a turbulent period of transformation featuring huge challenges. The created system is characterised by a less rigorous approach to the programme development and less detailed documentation. It results from a shorter time horizon of activities and a less complex financing system, as well as from the initial stage of revitalisation in Moldova. Despite these differences, the analysis carried out leads to the conclusion that the procedure is based on similar principles, and the manner of preparation and implementation of revitalisation activities are similar as well.

While the basic principles of revitalisation processes, terminology and definitions are similar between the two countries, the functioning of the entire system is different due to local conditions. The Moldavian model assumes very close cooperation of the national, regional and local levels, inscribed in the revitalisation principles. Due to the still hierarchical structure of the administration, these activities would not be possible without taking into account vertical cooperation. At the national level, apart from initiating, developing and implementing the legal framework of the system, a financial framework was also created in the form of the National Regional Development Fund. The regional level, represented by the Regional Development Agencies, plays a double role: as a partner of cities, as well as a “regional branch” of the national revitalisation system, caring for the compliance of the developed programmes with the rules established at the national level.

In addition to creating the foundations of the revitalisation system in Moldova, understood as a modern urban policy, from 2018 pilot actions were also carried out. 19 cities, with the support of Polish and local advisors, developed revitalisation programmes from scratch. Some of them managed to implement pilot projects, too. The conducted activities allowed to test the developed system assumptions and confirmed their correctness. They also showed that the adopted rules are flexible enough to allow the creation of

individualised revitalisation programmes in line with local conditions. Local conditions, including the possibility of obtaining data, the presence of human resources and the analysis of local potentials, particularly influenced the designation of revitalisation areas. Another important aspect of urban regeneration, tested in the course of the pilot activities, was broad social participation and social inclusion. The Advisory Committees, consultant and opinion-forming bodies, participated in the preparation of the programmes. They often undertook active promotion of the programme, organised public consultations and conducted information campaigns. The great role ascribed to social inclusion in the Moldavian revitalisation model is also evidenced by various forms of public participation used by the organisers of the process during the planning and implementation of revitalisation projects. Effective involvement of the local community in these activities must be considered an undoubted success. The inhabitants of the area, from different age groups, took an active part in the planned projects during consultation meetings and workshops, during which they learned the basics of spatial planning in order to be able to comment on the proposed solutions or present their ideas. Such meetings were held in public institutions, as well as in the area that was to be revitalised. Projects aimed at improving the surrounding infrastructure, e.g. renovating neglected spaces like courtyards, creating an offer of free time, increasing green areas, were always accompanied by cultural and social activities. The analysis of these activities leads to the conclusion that they were mainly of activating (e.g. outdoor theatre, festivals) and educational nature. Many meetings concerned explaining and promoting the idea of revitalisation. What distinguishes the pilot activities is the participation of the local community in voluntary works as an element of the implemented project. Inhabitants did cleaning works, and, sometimes, also simple renovation works, they planted greenery and trees. In some cases, people who participated in consultations and voluntary works set up local action groups to manage and prevent degradation of the restored spaces after the end of the project. If these groups remain active, they will certainly prove the sustainability of the actions taken.

The analysed model of revitalisation in Moldova was therefore successfully developed and tested. At the national level, a legal framework was created, and, last year, also a framework for external financing in the form of the National Regional Development Fund, which gives cities the opportunity to implement more ambitious projects. Nevertheless, cities also have their own budgets at their disposal, some of them are already planning expenses for local initiatives, which were introduced during the pilot activities. They can also participate in competitions organised by the Solidarity Fund in Moldova. For example,

in 2021, the SF is organising a competition for social and economic projects implemented in revitalisation areas. Cities should still diversify the financing sources by involving private entities, preferably those operating in revitalisation areas or in their vicinity. So far, there are no projects that would be implemented and financed by local entrepreneurs. The unique organiser of the process is the city, supported by other public institutions, such as schools or kindergartens, so far the financing sources should be considered limited.

At the stage of revitalisation in Moldova, in addition to the need to build further a permanent financial framework, there is also a need to continue the revitalisation processes in order to solidify and develop the system. Actions should be taken to promote the idea of revitalisation as one of the key, proven and effective elements of regional development. Promotion of knowledge in this area lies within the competences of the central level, but also, and perhaps above all, should be carried out by the regional level, the Regional Development Agencies, as an intermediary between the national and local public administration. An important role in sharing knowledge on revitalisation could also be played by the pilot cities that have already gained some experience as the organisers of revitalisation processes. Furthermore, these cities foresee such a role for themselves within the currently created organisation: the National Urban Revitalisation Network.

In addition, it is worthwhile for the Moldavian cities that participated in the pilot programme to continue to implement revitalisation programmes updated on an ongoing basis for they have been prepared for a shorter, three-to-five-year perspectives. For these cities, having already experience in creating revitalisation policy, could create more extensive programmes, which would help in building long-term revitalisation processes while maintaining continuity between individual activities, as well as other dimensions of complementarity. That's why further expert support, focused on concrete problems or challenges, would be helpful.

Due to the short time of implementation of the revitalisation policy in Moldova, representatives of all levels of public administration should further expand their knowledge on urban regeneration, including good and tested practices, innovative solutions, and effective projects from other countries. The staff dealing with revitalisation still does not have internalised knowledge on this subject, but they have theoretical knowledge, understand the main assumptions related to the comprehensive, integrated nature of revitalisation activities and the role of public participation. Therefore, the organisers of the processes should continue to receive external support in the form of training or consultations. Study visits also seem to be useful, especially in selected foreign

small and medium-sized cities, losing their social and economic functions, which see revitalisation as a way to reverse these negative trends. Visits in the company of local and foreign experts should include face-to-face discussions with officials and other stakeholders.

Due to the Moldavian conditions, the determination and commitment of local governments in the process of developing and implementing regeneration measures are of key importance due to the still limited funding opportunities in Moldova. They should be accompanied by right preparation of employees. Presented in subchapters 6.2. and 6.3. the results of the study on the institutional and human resources indicate the existence of a competency gap of Moldavian staff in terms of knowledge and skills needed to conduct revitalisation processes. At the same time, it can be said that the foundations, on which one can build further local development and regeneration policy, have already been established. In the City Halls there are individual employees, but not yet departments or offices, assigned to strategic planning, public procurement and legal issues. In the cities with revitalisation programmes, there are employees responsible for this task. Strategic documents have already been developed, first of all, development strategies, and, in some cases, revitalisation programmes. City officials have also some experience in implementing projects, especially regional ones, which were though mainly implemented by the Regional Development Agencies.

The weakness of local governments is, on the other hand, little experience in implementing large investment projects carried out independently by the municipalities. Other diagnosed problems include insufficient number of employees, shortages and often staff changes, which may constitute a significant obstacle in the effective implementation of revitalisation processes. Problematic issues also concern competences related to financial management and control as well as the lack of procedures and persons responsible for monitoring and evaluation. The staff shortages and the competency gap were confirmed by the surveyed representatives of the Regional Development Agencies. Identified deficiencies must be supplemented as soon as possible with appropriate training for individual local governments. Trainings should be planned and conducted by local experts and representatives of the Regional Development Agency, who have appropriate knowledge of the legal and financial conditions that have a decisive impact on the functioning of Moldavian self-governments. Training and advisory support from Polish or, more broadly, foreign experts should concern system issues and promotion of good practices.

After working out a new approach to the development regional policy and laying the foundations for urban revitalisation policy, chosen Moldavian cities

implemented pilot activities, which resulted in the acquisition of knowledge and competence in the field of revitalisation by selected employees of the city offices. In this way, the added value of the pilot actions was the increase in the HR capacities of the organisers of revitalisation processes. Thanks to the involvement of the pilot cities' representatives, conditions were also created for building a partnership focused on revitalisation issues. The study of the institutional potential of local governments shows the great determination of the NURN members to build partnerships, as well as the willingness to actively participate in the network activities. The diagnosis of the created National Urban Revitalisation Network leads to the conclusion that in order to ensure a permanent and effective functioning of the network, it is necessary to strengthen the institutional and HR capacities of its members. The members, who are the city representatives participating in the pilot actions, have already some experience and knowledge in the area of urban regeneration and development policy. They also have some organisational and managerial competences, as well as some, though insufficient knowledge about the creation and functioning of the network. Their weaknesses lie in soft skills, especially those related to the promotion and sharing of knowledge, so these areas require a special support, due to the goals set by the network, and the willingness to promote the idea of revitalisation in Moldova. Despite the experience gained in developing revitalisation programmes and implementing some projects, the members should continue to increase their knowledge and strengthen their competences, especially in public participation and procedures related to social inclusion. The elimination of the competency gap should be facilitated by further training and advisory support conducted by local experts with the external support.

Summarising the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the development of the Moldavian model of revitalisation and the diagnosis of the institutional and HR capacities of Moldavian cities for the implementation of revitalisation processes, it must be stated that Moldova has already established legal, financial and revitalisation implementation rules. The pilot actions were also carried out, which allowed testing these principles and enabling the organisers of the process to acquire competences and first experiences. Further support for the staff dealing with revitalisation is still necessary. Training and consulting activities will allow the system to solidify and further develop, as well as to create Moldavian specialists with a high knowledge and competence. The support should focus on solving specific problems, introducing solutions that meet the needs. It should be conducted as much as possible by local experts and, over time, also by representatives of the pilot cities. Foreign and Polish experts

could act as leading experts, mentors, helping to solve system problems and providing good examples.

In this context, it also seems that in order to strengthen the existing institutional and human potentials in the revitalisation area, as well as to create a team of specialists in cities that do not have revitalisation programmes, yet, it is worth creating a systematic educational support, in the form of MA or postgraduate studies, or training courses in Moldova. Such support should be directed primarily to officials responsible for revitalisation in the respective cities and the Regional Development Agencies. It is estimated that, in the coming years, at least 150 new employees with the necessary skills in the revitalisation area will be needed at the Moldavian offices, Regional Development Agencies and non-governmental organisations.

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