

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Assignment: Team of Two International Experts on Digital Platform Regulation

Duty Station: Chisinau, Republic of Moldova (with home-based work)

Project reference: Strengthening Democratic Resilience in Moldova (EDMITE III)

Contract type: Individual Contract (IC)

Duration of assignment: March-July 2026 (Up to 10 working days per expert (including 5 mission days in Chisinau)

A. Background:

The UNDP's "Strengthening Democratic Resilience in Moldova" project aims to fortify Moldova's democratic processes against internal and external threats such as cyber operations, information manipulation, and illicit political financing. Running from August 2024 to December 2028, the project focuses on three main areas: improving oversight of political finance, strengthening electoral institutions to withstand cyber and information threats, and deepening civic engagement to foster an informed and inclusive electorate.

This assignment directly supports these goals by addressing acute vulnerabilities in the digital information space. The Republic of Moldova, like many democracies, faces significant challenges from foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), which increasingly exploits online platforms. [Recent analysis](#) highlights several key structural risks. It is noted that Moldova's digital information environment is fragmented, digital and social media technologies are highly exploitable for malicious purposes, and content moderation policies from global platforms are often inconsistent and lax. A critical vulnerability is the existence of significant gaps in media and Internet regulations, where the mandate of national regulatory bodies does not adequately cover the online sphere. This regulatory gap allows disinformation and FIMI to spread with minimal accountability, posing a direct threat to electoral integrity and national security. These challenges are globally recognized, with a recent Report of the Secretary-General noting that elections are increasingly marred by "the spread of misleading or false information" (A/80/277, para 33).

This work is also directly aligned with Moldova's national reform priorities as part of its EU accession process. The government's 'Roadmap on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions' (approved by [Gov. Decision 276/2025](#)) prioritizes measures to 'counter disinformation, information manipulation, and foreign interference in an electoral context' (Objective 2), including aligning with the EU Regulation on transparency and targeting of political advertising (Action 1.2).

As Moldova advances on its EU accession path, aligning its digital regulatory framework with European standards, such as the Digital Services Act (DSA), is both a necessity and an opportunity. There is an urgent need for expert, comparative analysis to help Moldovan stakeholders (government, parliament, regulators, and civil society) understand the available options and design a regulatory model that is effective, compliant with international human rights standards (particularly freedom of expression), and tailored to Moldova's specific context. This consultancy is designed to provide that high-level, specialized guidance.

In this context, UNDP seeks to hire two international consultants to contribute to strengthening Moldova's national policy discourse and legislative/regulatory options on digital platform regulation, drawing from comparative international and European experience and best practices, in a high-threat FIMI context and EU Integration.

B. Scope of work and expected outputs:

The International Experts will be responsible for the following activities:

- Review of Moldova's current legal and institutional framework related to media, telecommunications, and information security (including the Audiovisual Council, SIS, Center for Strategic Communication), as well

as the newly adopted roadmaps (Gov. Decisions 275/2025 and 276/2025). Analyse recent studies and relevant reports on Moldova's information environment and its vulnerabilities to FIMI.

- Review a range of international and European standards and models for digital platform regulation (including, but not limited to, the EU DSA/DMA, UK Online Safety Bill, etc.), identifying key principles, implementation mechanisms, and lessons learned.
- Conduct intensive, high-level consultations with key stakeholders. For the scope of the assignment a minimum of 10 consultation activities is envisaged, these may include:
 - Government (e.g., Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization)
 - Parliament (e.g., Committee for Culture, Education, Research, Youth, Sport and Mass-media, Committee for National Security, Defense and Public Order, Judicial Committee for Appointments and Immunities)
 - Regulatory bodies (e.g., Audiovisual Council (CA), National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications (ANRCETI), The Agency for Cyber Security, National Digital Transformation Council and Cyber Security Coordinating Council.
 - Security & Information Service (SIS) and Center for Strategic Communication (CSCCD)
 - Central Electoral Commission (CEC)
 - Civil society organizations, media freedom watchdogs, and fact-checking groups
 - Media associations and independent-media outlets
- Based on the results of the review and consultations draft a description of models for digital platform regulation that is effective, compliant with international human rights standards (particularly freedom of expression), and tailored to Moldova's specific context. The suggested models (at least 2) that shall cover the strengths and weaknesses of each of the proposed approach/scenario drawing from comparative international and European experience and best practices. These will be formulated into a Preliminary Regulatory Options Paper.
- Organize and facilitate participatory workshops to present comparative models and discuss potential regulatory pathways for Moldova. For the scope of the assignment a minimum of 10 consultation activities is envisaged. Both experts will participate in the same meetings/consultations.
- Following the submission of the preliminary paper and participatory workshops, incorporate feedback from UNDP and stakeholders. Develop a concise, high-quality Final Regulatory Options Paper (approx. 10 pages) that describes a set of concrete, prioritized, and actionable legislative and/or regulatory options for Moldovan policymakers to consider, ensuring alignment with EU standards and protection of freedom of expression, while balancing the need to counter FIMI risks with objectives for digital economic growth and innovation.

C. Expected Deliverables and Timeframe:

The assignment will be implemented by two International Experts working jointly and in close coordination throughout the entire duration of the contract. Both experts are expected to participate together in all consultations, meetings, and participatory workshops, and to ensure coherence and consistency across analytical work, stakeholder engagement, and the development of regulatory options. While the work will be carried out collaboratively, each consultant's contract will include responsibility for one specific deliverable only. Accordingly, each deliverable will be awarded to one expert, who will hold primary contractual responsibility for its timely completion and quality, in close coordination with the other expert to ensure overall consistency across deliverables.

| Key deliverables | Working Days | Min Days Present in Moldova | Tentative timeframe |
|--|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| LOT 1. Preliminary Regulatory Options Paper: A comprehensive paper (approx. | 10 WD | | 30 March 2026 |

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| 10-15 pages) summarizing the desk review, mission findings, and draft regulatory options. This deliverable includes the 2 days of home-based prep and the 5-day mission. | | 5 | |
| LOT 2. Final Regulatory Options Paper: The final, polished report (approx. 10-15 pages) incorporating feedback and presenting the finalized, actionable legislative/regulatory options. | 10 WD | 5 | 15 April 2026 |
| Total Working Days | 20 WD (10 WD per consultant) | 10 WD (5WD per consultant) | |

D. Institutional Arrangements:

Level of effort: The timeframe for the work of the Consultants is planned for the period March 2026 – July 2026. Each Consultant is expected to work up to 10 working days.

Management and supervision: The consultants will report to the Project Manager with technical oversight by the Chief Technical Advisor.

Access: The UNDP will provide the Consultants with the necessary access, information and materials for the fulfilment of the tasks envisaged. All deliverables shall be approved by the UNDP Chief Technical Advisor.

Communications: All communications and documentation related to the assignment will be in English.

E. Financial arrangements:

The financial proposal shall specify a total lump sum amount, calculated based on professional fee per working day only, and payment terms around specific and measurable (qualitative and quantitative) deliverables. Payment will be made upon the successful completion of the tasks assigned and submission of the assessment reports. Payments are based upon output, i.e. upon delivery of the services specified in the TOR. To assist the requesting unit in the comparison of financial proposals the financial proposal shall include a breakdown of this lump sum amount (including fee, taxes, communication costs, and number of anticipated working days).

F. Duty Travel:

The Consultant is expected to perform his/her duties remotely and in Chisinau (5 days remotely and 5 days in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova). All official travel required under this assignment will be arranged and covered by the project, in accordance with UNDP's travel policies and procedures. This includes compliance with applicable travel entitlements, modalities for booking, and reimbursement provisions.

The consultant will report to the UNDP Project Manager. The UNDP project team will provide logistical support for the mission in Chisinau, including organizing stakeholder meetings. UNDP will also make available relevant background materials, the support of a national legal expert, and professional Romanian-English interpretation for all official meetings during the mission. All deliverables shall be submitted in English.

The below table presents a provisional agenda of the expected travel/mission period, the final dates will be agreed on and approved with the Project Manager.

| Mission nr. | Related deliverable | Mission purpose | Est. days in the Republic of Moldova | Provisional travel period |
|-------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Lot 1 | <p>Deliverable 1:</p> <p>Preliminary Regulatory Options Paper: A comprehensive paper (approx. 10-15 pages) summarizing the desk review, mission findings, and draft regulatory options. This deliverable includes the 2 days of home-based prep and the 5-day mission.</p> | <p>Conduct in-depth consultations with key stakeholders. This will facilitate a joint analysis of the Moldova's current legal and institutional framework related to media, telecommunications, and information security. For the scope of the assignment, at least 5 consultation activities are envisaged. Stakeholders shall include, but are not limited to, Government (e.g., Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization); Parliament (e.g., Committee on Media, Committee on National Security, Committee on Law); Regulatory bodies (e.g., Audiovisual Council (CA), National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications; the Agency for Cyber Security, National Digital Transformation Council and Cyber Security Coordinating Council; Security & Information Service and Center for Strategic Communication; Central Electoral Commission (CEC); Civil society organizations, media freedom watchdogs, and fact-checking groups; Media associations and independent-media outlets and international partners.</p> | 5 | March 2026 |
| Lot 2 | Deliverable 2: | Conduct in-depth consultations with key | | |

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| | <p>Final Regulatory Options Paper: The final, polished report (approx. 10-15 pages) incorporating feedback and presenting the finalized, actionable legislative/regulatory options.</p> | <p>stakeholders. This will facilitate a joint analysis of the Moldova's current legal and institutional framework related to media, telecommunications, and information security. For the scope of the assignment, at least 5 consultation activities are envisaged. Stakeholders shall include, but are not limited to, Government (e.g., Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization); Parliament (e.g., Committee on Media, Committee on National Security, Committee on Law); Regulatory bodies (e.g., Audiovisual Council (CA), National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications; the Agency for Cyber Security, National Digital Transformation Council and Cyber Security Coordinating Council; Security & Information Service and Center for Strategic Communication; Central Electoral Commission (CEC); Civil society organizations, media freedom watchdogs, and fact-checking groups; Media associations and independent-media outlets and international partners.</p> | 5 | March 2026 |
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G. Confidentiality:

Materials provided to the IC and all proceedings within the contract shall be regarded as confidential, both during and after the contract. Violation of confidentiality requirements may result in immediate termination of contract. This obligation of confidentiality shall survive the termination of the contract.

H. Qualifications and skills required:

Education:

- Advanced university degree (Master's or PhD) in Law, Public Policy, International Relations, Media & Communications, or a related field.
- Additional professional training, certifications, or academic work in digital policy, internet governance, or the regulation of online platforms is an asset.

- **Experience:**

- At least 10 years of senior-level professional experience in digital policy, internet governance, or the regulation of online platforms.
- Proven track record of drafting or providing direct advisory services to governments, parliaments, or regulatory bodies on digital legislation at least 3 (three) assignments.
- Demonstrable experience working with or providing expert analysis on European regulatory frameworks, particularly the EU Digital Services Act (DSA) and its implementation - at least 3 (three) assignments.
- Experience working with international organizations (e.g., EU, Council of Europe, OSCE, UN) on issues of platform regulation, media freedom, or countering disinformation - at least 3 (three) assignments.

- **Knowledge & Skills:**

- Expert knowledge of international and European standards governing freedom of expression and digital rights.
- Strong analytical skills and ability to transform complex legal/technical concepts into clear, actionable policy options.
- Familiarity with the media and political context of Eastern Europe or post-Soviet countries.
- Excellent communication, presentation, and interpersonal skills.
- Fluency in written and spoken English is mandatory. Knowledge of Romanian or Russian is an advantage.

- **Personal Qualities**

- Strong professional credibility, impartiality, and political neutrality, demonstrated through internationally recognized professional contributions (e.g., publications, policy documents, expert participation in international forums).
- High cultural and institutional sensitivity, with the ability to work effectively in complex political environments and diverse cultural contexts, particularly relevant to Moldova and the broader Eastern European region.
- Proactive, results-oriented, and capable of managing multiple tasks under tight timelines.
- Excellent interpersonal skills, with the ability to build trust, foster dialogue, and support collaborative decision-making among diverse stakeholders.

O. Documents to Be Included When Submitting the Proposals

Interested individual consultants must submit the following documents/ information to demonstrate their qualifications:

- Duly accomplished Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability using the template provided by UNDP;
- Proposal (Motivation Letter): explaining why they are the most suitable for the work including previous experience in similar Projects (please provide brief information on each of the above qualifications, item by item, including information, links/copies of documents for similar comprehensive studies);
- CV and at least 3 references.
- Financial Proposal that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price, supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template provided. If an Offeror is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the Offeror must indicate at this point, and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.

Important notice: The applicants who have the statute of Government Official / Public Servant prior to appointment will be asked to submit the following documentation:

- a no-objection letter in respect of the applicant received from the Government, and;
- the applicant is certified in writing by the Government to be on official leave without pay for the entire duration of the Individual Contract.

Candidates should bid on both LOTs announced, the selection of the lot awarded to each selected candidate shall be done in line with the rules set forth below.

Evaluation Method:

Individual consultants will be **assessed** based on the following methodology:

Minimum qualification criteria:

- Advanced university degree (Master's or PhD) in Law, Public Policy, International Relations, Media & Communications, or a related field.
- At least 10 years of senior-level professional experience in digital policy, internet governance, or the regulation of online platforms.

Candidates who meet the minimum qualification and eligibility criteria may be shortlisted and invited to participate in an interview as part of the evaluation process. The interview will be used to further assess candidates' technical competencies, relevant experience, and suitability for the assignment. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

Cumulative analysis

The award of the contract shall be made to the individual consultant whose offer has been evaluated and determined as:

- a) responsive/ compliant/ acceptable, and
- b) having received the highest score out of a pre-determined set of weighted technical and financial criteria specific to the solicitation.

* Technical Criteria weight – 60% (300 pts);

* Financial Criteria weight – 40% (200 pts).

Only candidates obtaining a minimum of 210 points would be considered for the Financial Evaluation.

| Criteria | Scoring | Maximum achievable points |
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| Technical Evaluation | | |
| Academic Qualifications (30 pts) | | |
| Advanced university degree (Master's or PhD) in Law, Public Policy, International Relations, Media & Communications, or a related field. | Master's degree 20 pts; PhD – 25 pts | 30pts |
| Additional professional training, certifications, or academic work in digital policy, internet governance, or the regulation of online platforms is an asset. | 5 pts | |
| Technical Expertise (required experience and knowledge for assessment (up to 150 pts) | | |
| At least 10 years of senior-level professional experience in digital policy, internet governance, or the regulation of online platforms. | 10 years – 50 pts., each additional year – 5 pt. up to 60 pts. | 150pts |
| Proven track record of drafting or providing direct advisory services to governments, parliaments, or regulatory bodies on digital legislation - at least 3 (three) assignments | 3 assignments – 15 pts, each additional assignment 5 pts., up to 30pts. | |
| Demonstrable experience working with or providing expert analysis on European regulatory frameworks, particularly the EU Digital Services Act (DSA) and its implementation – at least 3 (three) assignments. | 3 assignments – 15 pts, each additional assignment 5 pts., up to 30pts. | |

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| Experience working with international organizations (e.g., EU, Council of Europe, OSCE, UN) on issues of platform regulation, media freedom, or countering disinformation - at least 3 (three) assignments | 3 assignments – 15 pts., each additional assignment 5 pts., up to 30 pts. | |
| Total Technical Score | | 180 |
| Interview evaluation criteria (up to 90 pts) | | |
| Proven professional experience in digital policy, internet governance, or the regulation of online platforms. 10 years – 10 pts., each additional year – 2 pt. up to 20 pts. | | 20 |
| Proven experience in drafting or providing direct advisory services to governments, parliaments, or regulatory bodies on digital legislation. 3 assignments – 15pts, each additional assignment 5pts., up to 30pts. | | 30 |
| Demonstrable experience working with or providing expert analysis on European regulatory frameworks, particularly the EU Digital Services Act (DSA) and its implementation. 3 assignments – 10pts, each additional assignment 5 pts., up to 20pts. | | 20 |
| Proven experience related to the media and political context of Eastern Europe or post-Soviet countries. 3 assignments – 10pts, each additional assignment 5 pts., up to 20pts. | | 20 |
| Expert knowledge of international and European standards governing freedom of expression and digital rights (10 pts) | | 10 |
| Familiarity with the media and political context of Eastern Europe or post-Soviet countries. (10 pts) | | 10 |
| Fluency in written and spoken English is mandatory. Knowledge of Romanian or Russian is an advantage. English 5pts, Romanian – 3pts, Russian – 2pts | | 10 |
| Total Interview score | | 120 |
| Financial Evaluation | | |
| Evaluation of submitted financial offers will be done based on the following formula: <u>S = Fmin / F * 200</u> | | |
| S – score received on financial evaluation; Fmin – the lowest financial offer out of all the submitted offers qualified over the technical evaluation round; F – financial offer under consideration | | 200 |
| Total Technical, Interview and Financial Score | | 500 |

Winning candidates

Following the evaluation process, contracts will be awarded to the two highest-ranked candidates. The candidate who obtains the highest overall score will be awarded the contract for LOT 2 – Final Regulatory Options Paper, while the candidate ranked second will be awarded the contract for LOT 1 – Preliminary Regulatory Options Paper. Each consultant will be contracted separately and will be contractually responsible for the deliverable assigned to their respective LOT.

This TOR is approved by: Victoria Muntean, Cluster Lead

Signature:

Date: