



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Job title:	National Consultants on ESCO (European Classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) Occupational Mapping and Interoperability
Duty Station:	Republic of Moldova, Chisinau
Reference to the project:	Promoting agricultural development and quality employment for the most vulnerable
Contract type:	Individual Contract (IC)
Assignment type:	National Consultant
Contract duration:	April – August, 2026
Expected workload:	40 working days/per Consultant (up to 3 Consultants)
Indicative starting date:	April 6 th , 2026

1. BACKGROUND

Amid Moldova’s rapidly evolving socio-economic landscape, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) is undertaking an ambitious and systemic reform process. Persistent structural challenges continue to shape the labour market: labour force participation remains low (44.5% among people aged 15+), and youth, women with childcare responsibilities, returning migrants, people with disabilities, rural residents, and refugees face significant and persistent barriers to employment. These vulnerabilities are compounded by limited institutional capacity—fragmented information systems, weak interoperability across platforms, insufficient analytical tools, and uneven capabilities for evidence-based planning and monitoring.

Through the project “Promoting Agricultural Development and Quality Employment for the Most Vulnerable” funded by the EU, (hereinafter ‘the Project’), UNDP supports the MLSP and the National Employment Agency (NEA) in strengthening labour market governance and modernization. In line with the Project’s digital transformation agenda, a central component of this support focuses on strengthening labour market intelligence through the digitalisation and harmonization of occupational and labour market data, the updating of territorial labour market profiles, and the enhancement of analytical capacity at both national and district levels. These efforts aim to ensure interoperability across labour market and social protection information systems and to progressively align national data structures with European standards, including the European Classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO), in preparation for future integration with the EURES framework.

The Project aims to strengthen institutional and digital governance systems that support increased labour market participation and the modernization of agricultural service delivery for vulnerable rural populations in Moldova, with a particular focus on hard-to-employ individuals and farmers.

The Project targets two interrelated Outcomes:

As part of Outcome 1, people, especially the most vulnerable, benefit from more accessible and integrated employment social protection services enabled by digitally re-engineered institutional frameworks.

As part of Outcome 2, farmers across Moldova, including smallholders and underrepresented groups, gain better access to efficient, inclusive, and transparent agricultural services through strengthened institutional and digital systems.

Digital transformation lies at the core of the Project. The Project contributes to the development of the future Labour Market Information System (LMIS) in close coordination with the “Digital Transformation of Social Protection” project, ensuring alignment of data architecture, interoperability pathways, and information flows across platforms within a unified government-wide digital ecosystem. Within this transformation, alignment of the national Classification of Occupations of the Republic of Moldova (CORM) with the ESCO constitutes an important enabling reform. This

alignment supports high-quality labour market intelligence, interoperability across systems, and Moldova’s gradual alignment with EU standards, including future participation in EU labour mobility mechanisms.¹

EU Labour Market Integration: ESCO and EURES Framework

The EU Growth Plan for Moldova (2025–2027)—€1.9 billion in loans and grants—aims to accelerate economic development, drive structural reforms, and advance Moldova’s EU accession trajectory. The Government’s accompanying Reform Agenda outlines priority areas including employment, digital infrastructure, economic governance, social capital, and the green transition. These priorities are strongly aligned with UNDP’s support to the modernization of MLSP and NEA.

The alignment of CORM with ESCO is directly linked to Moldova’s EU accession trajectory and preparations under Chapter 2 (Free Movement of Workers). Regulation (EU) 2016/589 on a European network of employment services (EURES) establishes the obligation to use a common European classification system for occupations, skills, competences, and qualifications in order to enable cross-border exchange of job vacancies, job applications, and labour market data.²

Under the Regulation, EU Member States—and candidate countries aligning with the EU acquis—are required either to adopt ESCO directly or to map their national classifications to ESCO using structured mapping tables compatible with the EURES Common IT Platform. This requires not only semantic alignment, but also adherence to technical standards, formats, and interoperability principles defined at EU level.

In this context, the assignment contributes to Moldova’s preparedness for EU integration by ensuring that national occupational data structures are compatible with ESCO and future EURES requirements, while also supporting national policy-making, public employment services, and digital system integration, including LMIS and labour market analytics.

2. OBJECTIVE AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The Project seeks to contract three national consultants (hereinafter “the Consultants”) to carry out the detailed CORM–ESCO mapping and the technical structuring and validation of mapping outputs in line with EU interoperability and EURES technical standards.

Each LOT (Assignment) consists of mapping of three (3) CORM chapters (including the related occupations). The final allocation of chapters among consultants will be determined at a later stage, following an initial inception phase. This decision will be made internally by the project team, in coordination with the International Lead Occupational Classification Consultant (hereinafter “the Lead Int. Consultant”) and in close consultation with the beneficiary, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

The assignment builds on the diagnostic analysis and the methodological framework for CORM–ESCO alignment developed by the International Lead Occupational Classification Consultant. Using this agreed methodological foundation, the Consultants will first develop a comprehensive and justified mapping between CORM and ESCO occupations. Upon completion and internal acceptance of this mapping, the Consultants will proceed with the technical structuring, validation, and alignment of the mapping outputs in line with EU interoperability requirements and EURES technical standards.

More specifically, the Consultants’ key responsibilities will include:

- 1. Developing a comprehensive, justified, and machine-readable CORM–ESCO mapping, allowing for one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, and non-aligned relationships, in accordance with the agreed methodology.*

¹ Alignment of CORM with ESCO is primarily linked to Chapter 2 (Free Movement of Workers) of the EU acquis, as it supports the EURES framework and cross-border labour mobility through interoperable occupational data. At the same time, ESCO alignment also contributes to Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) by strengthening labour market intelligence and public employment services.

²EUR-Lex: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/589/oj/eng>

Note: Regulation (EU) 2016/589 establishes the requirement for interoperability and automated matching of labour market data through the EURES framework, while allowing the use of national classifications provided that they are compatible with ESCO. In line with EU practice and the technical standards applicable to the EURES Common IT Platform, such compatibility can only be ensured through a structured, justified, and machine-readable mapping that reflects the different levels of granularity and semantic scope of national classifications and ESCO. In developing the CORM–ESCO mapping, the Consultants shall apply an evidence-based and rule-driven approach to determine the appropriate type of relationship for each occupational code. The mapping shall explicitly allow for different types of relationships, including one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, and non-aligned cases, reflecting differences in structure, level of detail, and occupational scope between CORM and ESCO Occupations. For each CORM code, the Consultants shall assess the semantic scope and definition of the occupation and identify the corresponding ESCO occupation(s) that best reflects its content. Where a CORM occupation encompasses multiple distinct occupational profiles in ESCO, a one-to-many relationship shall be applied. Where several CORM occupations correspond to a single ESCO occupation, a many-to-one relationship shall be applied. Where no suitable ESCO occupation exists, the case shall be documented as non-aligned, with a concise justification provided. All mapping decisions shall be transparently documented and justified to ensure consistency, and future updatability of the mapping results, and to support their use in labour market analysis, digital systems, and future EURES-related interoperability.

The deliverable 1 from each LOT will include:

- i) chapter specific mapping tables for the assigned CORM occupational codes to corresponding ESCO Occupations, explicitly allowing for one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, and non-aligned relationships, in order to reflect differences in structure, level of detail, and occupational scope between the national classification and ESCO;
- ii) clear identification, for each chapter specific CORM code, of the corresponding ESCO occupation code(s), the type of relationship applied, and a concise justification explaining the semantic and methodological rationale for the mapping decision;
- iii) structuring of the mapping outputs in a machine-readable format of chapter specific codes (e.g. structured Excel), aligned with the logic and structure of the EURES Countries Mapping Tables and compatible with automated processing and future integration into labour market information systems, including the Labour Market Information System (LMIS) and the Labour Market Data Warehouse; and
- iv) application of consistent coding conventions, version references, and metadata elements to ensure transparency, traceability, and future updatability of the mapping.

The deliverable will include annexes documenting non-aligned occupations, key national specificities, and methodological notes required to support consistent interpretation and reuse of the mapping across analytical, statistical, and digital use cases.

The deliverable will be prepared in Romanian and delivered primarily in Excel format, with an accompanying chapter specific explanatory note in Word format summarising the mapping logic and key methodological considerations. The expected length of the explanatory note is approximately 10–15 pages, excluding annexes.

2. *Ensuring that the mapping outputs are compatible with EU interoperability standards and aligned with the logic and structure of the EURES Countries Mapping Tables, according to Article 3 of the Commission Implementing Decision (EU)2018/1021;*³

Note: In order to ensure compatibility with EU interoperability standards and alignment with the logic and structure of the EURES Countries Mapping Tables, the Consultant shall apply the technical and data exchange requirements established under the EURES framework, including those set out in Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1021. The Consultant shall structure the CORM–ESCO mapping outputs in a standardised, machine-readable format that enables automated processing and future data exchange. This includes defining unique identifiers for national occupational codes, referencing the corresponding ESCO occupation identifiers, and clearly specifying the type of relationship between national and ESCO codes (one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, or non-aligned). The mapping table shall follow the logic of the [EURES Countries Mapping Tables](#) by ensuring that each national occupational code is linked to ESCO using transparent and reproducible rules, supported by concise justifications where

³ Technical standards and formats necessary for the operation of the EURES Common IT Platform https://esco.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-07/en_Technical%20standards%20and%20formats%20necessary%20for%20the%20operation%20of%20the%20EURES%20Common%20IT%20Platform.pdf

required. The structure of the output shall allow for future updates, version control, and integration into labour market information systems and the EURES Common IT Platform without the need for reprocessing or manual interpretation. In addition, the Consultant shall verify that the mapping outputs comply with interoperability principles applicable to EURES, including consistency of coding, semantic coherence of occupational definitions, and compatibility with EU-defined data exchange formats. Any deviations or national specificities shall be clearly documented to ensure transparency and facilitate future alignment or revision.⁴

The deliverable 2 from each LOT will include:

- i) in partnership with the Lead Int. Consultant, prepare chapter specific validation materials and participate in 2 validation sessions, including summary documentation of the CORM–ESCO key alignment decisions, identified non-aligned cases, and implications for labour market analysis, NEA operations, and digital systems; participate in validation workshops/consultations with relevant stakeholders; and support the Lead Int. Consultant in incorporating the agreed validation feedback into the final version of the CORM–ESCO mapping and the related technical and methodological documentation;
- ii) alignment of the chapter specific mapping tables with the structure and logic of the EURES Countries Mapping Tables, including required fields, column structure, and metadata elements necessary for automated processing and future integration with the EURES Common IT Platform;
- iii) verification of the machine-readability of the chapter specific mapping outputs and their suitability for use in digital systems, including the Labour Market Information System (LMIS) and the Labour Market Data Warehouse; and
- iv) documentation of any chapter specific technical assumptions, constraints, or national specificities applied in order to ensure transparency, traceability, and future reuse of the mapping outputs.

The deliverables will be prepared primarily in structured Excel format, accompanied by a concise explanatory note in Word format summarising the applied EU interoperability standards, alignment with EURES requirements, and key technical considerations. The expected length of the explanatory note is approximately 8–12 pages, excluding annexes.

Note: The CORM is structured into 10 major groups, 40 sub-major groups, 127 minor groups, and 433 unit groups, covering approximately 5,600 occupations across all sectors of economic and social activity. In addition to the nine main occupational chapters, CORM includes Chapter 10 dedicated to the Armed Forces, ensuring full national coverage of recognized occupations. The classification is aligned with international standards (ISCO-08), allowing for statistical comparability and functional use in labour market analysis and employment services.

Given the volume and complexity of CORM, the mapping and alignment with ESCO will be implemented through a parallel work approach of the three consultants.

Each consultant will be responsible for the mapping and analysis of three (3) CORM chapters (including the related occupations), enabling efficient progress while maintaining quality and consistency. **The final allocation of chapters among consultants will be determined at a later stage, following an initial inception phase. This decision will be made internally by the project team, in coordination with the Lead Int. Consultant and in close consultation with the beneficiary, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.** During the inception phase, the Lead Int. Consultant will ensure methodological alignment, clarify mapping criteria, and establish common workflows and quality assurance mechanisms. This phased approach allows the team to build a shared understanding of the methodology and objectives before assigning specific chapters, thereby ensuring coherence and consistency across the overall mapping exercise.

3. KEY ACTIVITIES, DELIVERABLES AND TENTATIVE TIMETABLE

Lot#	Key activities and deliverables	Tentative timetable
Lot 1	Deliverable 1: Comprehensive and Justified CORM–ESCO Mapping for Interoperable Use for 3 chapter out of 9 from Classification of Occupations of the Republic of Moldova	By May 30 th , 2026 10 WDs
	Deliverable 2: CORM–ESCO Mapping Outputs Aligned with EU Interoperability and EURES Standards for 3 chapters out of 9 from Classification of Occupations of the Republic of Moldova	By July 20 th , 2026 30 WDs

⁴ EUR-Lex https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2018/1021/oj/eng

Lot 2	Deliverable 1: Comprehensive and Justified CORM–ESCO Mapping for Interoperable Use for 3 chapter out of 9 from Classification of Occupations of the Republic of Moldova	By May 30th, 2026 10 WDs
	Deliverable 2: CORM–ESCO Mapping Outputs Aligned with EU Interoperability and EURES Standards for 3 chapters out of 9 from Classification of Occupations of the Republic of Moldova	By July 20th, 2026 30 WDs
Lot 3	Deliverable 1: Comprehensive and Justified CORM–ESCO Mapping for Interoperable Use for 3 chapter out of 9 from Classification of Occupations of the Republic of Moldova	By May 30th, 2026 10 WDs
	Deliverable 2: CORM–ESCO Mapping Outputs Aligned with EU Interoperability and EURES Standards for 3 chapters out of 9 from Classification of Occupations of the Republic of Moldova	By July 20th, 2026 30 WDs

Note:

Each Candidate shall submit a financial offer for all 3 lots, by submitting the same financial offer for LOT1, LOT 2, LOT 3. The final allocation of chapters among consultants will be determined at a later stage, following an initial inception phase.

Deliverables and the final timeline can be amended or specified for the purpose of the assignment.

All deliverables should be agreed with UNDP and be provided in electronic copy.

Payment will be made upon the successful completion of the tasks assigned.

4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The timeframe for the Consultants’ assignment is April, 6th 2026 – August, 20th 2026. During this period, each of the three Consultants is expected to work a total of 40 working days (part-time consultancy). The Consultants will perform duties under home-based arrangements.

The Consultants will report to the UNDP Moldova Project Manager and to the Programme Specialist who will be responsible for supervising the Consultants’ performance and will work under the technical guidance of the Lead Int. Consultant. All deliverables shall be coordinated with UNDP, MLSP, and NEA. Where relevant, sectoral institutions and social partners may be consulted to ensure the accuracy and applicability of the sector specific occupations.

For the duration of the assignment, the Project will provide the Consultants with all necessary information and materials required for the fulfilment of tasks. All deliverables and documentation related to the assignment will be prepared in Romanian and/or English, as agreed in advance with the Project Manager.

The Consultants will work in close coordination with the teams of both the Digital Transformation of Social Protection and the Project, which include international and national specialists such as the Chief technical advisor to the MLSP and other relevant team members. In particular, the Consultants shall work closely with the Project’s technical team to ensure coherence between reengineered NEA business processes, data flows, and the ESCO-aligned occupational framework. This includes providing guidance on how ESCO-related structures can support automated matching of job vacancies and jobseekers’ profiles, improved analytics, and interoperability with other national systems, including the Labour Market Data Warehouse and social protection information systems.

5. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Payments will be disbursed in tranches upon submission and validation of deliverables (certifying that the services have been satisfactorily performed).

Travel

No Travel is envisaged under current assignment.

6. QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS REQUIRED

Academic Qualifications:

- University degree (or higher) in economics, social science, statistics, data science, public policy, public administration, or other relevant fields.

Experience and knowledge:

- At least 1 previous assignment demonstrating experience in working with occupational and skills classifications (e.g. ISCO, national occupational classifications, skills taxonomies, development of occupational profiles, National Qualifications Frameworks), including practical involvement in classification, mapping, or alignment exercises applying semantic relationship analysis.
- At least 3 prior assignments involving data structuring, classification, or mapping exercises;
- Knowledge on the national legislation (of several EU countries comparable with the Republic of Moldova) in the area of skills and occupations development proven by at least 1 previous assignment in this area.
- Previous experience within UNDP, UN Agencies and/or other international organization(s)/development partners will be considered an advantage.

Competencies:

- Ability to work collaboratively with cross-functional teams.
- Ability to perform and deliver expected results in a fast-paced working environment.
- Strong sense of initiative and ability to work independently.
- Demonstrated interpersonal skills, as well as the ability to communicate effectively and build meaningful partnerships with all stakeholders.
- Fluency in Romanian (verbal and written) is a must.
- Working knowledge of English is required.

Personal qualities:

- Responsibility, flexibility and punctuality, ability to meet deadlines and prioritize multiple tasks.
- Proven commitment to the core values of the United Nations, in particular respecting differences of culture, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, language, age, HIV status, disability, and sexual orientation, or other status.

7. DOCUMENTS TO BE INCLUDED WHEN SUBMITTING THE PROPOSALS

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

- Offeror’s letter to UNDP confirming interest and availability for the individual contractor (IC) assignment, incorporating Financial Proposal in Annex 2

Upload the signed version of the filled in Offeror’s letter to UNDP confirming interest and availability for the individual contractor (IC) assignment. Annex 2 to the Offeror’s letter, incorporating the Financial Proposal, shall be filled in mandatorily and includes the detailed breakdown of costs supporting the all-inclusive financial proposal.

The Financial Proposal shall be additionally submitted directly in the system. Please ensure there are no mathematical errors and that amounts from Offeror’s Letter to UNDP Confirming Interest and Availability match with your offer in the system.

- Personal updated CV and at least three (3) the most recent professional references of previous supervisors.

Important notice: applicants who have the statute of Government official / public servant will be asked to submit the following documentation:

- a no-objection letter in respect of the applicant received from the Government, and;
- certification in writing by the employer to be on official leave without pay for the entire duration of the individual contract.

8. EVALUATION

Initially, individual consultants will be short-listed based on the following minimum qualification criteria:

- University degree (or higher) in economics, social science, statistics, data science, public policy, public administration, or other relevant fields.
- At least 1 previous assignment demonstrating experience in working with occupational and skills classifications (e.g. ISCO, national occupational classifications, skills taxonomies, development of occupational profiles, National Qualifications Frameworks), including practical involvement in classification, mapping, or alignment exercises applying semantic relationship analysis.
- Good knowledge of written and spoken English.
- Citizen of the Republic of Moldova.

The short-listed individual consultants will be further evaluated based on the following methodology:

Cumulative analysis

The award of the contract shall be made to the individual consultant whose offer has been evaluated / 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 for the Technical Evaluation shall be considered for the Financial Evaluation.

Criteria	Scoring	Points obtainable
Technical		
University degree (or higher) in economics, social science, statistics, data science, public policy, public administration, or other relevant fields.	<i>Bachelor's degree – 30 pts. Master's degree – 40 pts. PhD degree – 50 pts.</i>	50
At least 1 previous assignment demonstrating experience in working with occupational and skills classifications (e.g. ISCO, national occupational classifications, skills taxonomies, development of occupational profiles, National Qualifications Frameworks), including practical involvement in classification, mapping, or alignment exercises applying semantic relationship analysis.	<i>1 assignment – 30 pts. each additional assignment – 30 pts. up to a maximum of 90 pts.</i>	90
At least 3 prior assignments involving data structuring, classification, or mapping exercises.	<i>3 assignments – 40 pts., each additional assignment – 10 pts., up to a maximum of 60 pts.</i>	60
Knowledge on the national legislation (of several EU countries comparable with the Republic of Moldova) in the area of skills and occupations development proven by at least 1 previous assignment in this area.	<i>1 assignment – 20 pts., each additional assignment – 20 pts., up to a maximum of 60 pts.</i>	60
Previous experience within UNDP, UN Agencies and/or other international organization(s)/development partners will be considered an advantage.	<i>Yes/No- 10 pts</i>	10
Good knowledge of written and spoken English. Please, specify in CV the level of your knowledge of English	<i>Working knowledge / intermediate – up to 15 pts, advanced – up to 25 pts</i>	25

<p>Belonging to the group(s) under-represented in the UN Moldova and/or the area of assignment*</p> <p><i>* Under-represented group in the area of assignment (law enforcement) are women. Under-represented groups in UN Moldova are persons with disabilities, LGBTI, ethnic and linguistic minorities, especially ethnic Gagauzians, Bulgarians, Roma, Jews, people of African descent, people living with HIV, religious minorities, especially Muslim women, refugees and other non-citizens. Please specify in CV, in case you belong to the group(s) under-represented in the UN Moldova and/or the area of assignment.</i></p>	<p>(No – 0 pts., to one group – 2.5 pts., to two or more groups – 5 pts.)</p>	<p>5</p>
<p>Total Technical Scoring</p>		<p>300</p>
<p><u>Financial</u></p>		
<p>Evaluation of submitted financial offers will be done based on the following formula: $S = F_{min} / F * 200$ (<i>S – score received on financial evaluation</i>); Fmin – the lowest financial offer out of all the submitted offers qualified over the technical evaluation round (<i>F – financial offer under consideration</i>)</p>		<p>200</p>

Winning candidates

Following the evaluation process, contracts will be awarded to the three highest-ranked (technical scoring + financial scoring) candidates. Each consultant will be contracted separately and will be contractually responsible for the deliverable assigned to their respective chapter specific deliverables.