



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Job title:	EVRF Evidence-based Policy Advisor
Duty Station:	Republic of Moldova, Chisinau
Reference to the project:	Accelerating a Just Energy Transition in the Republic of Moldova
Contract type:	Individual Contract
Assignment type:	National Consultant
Contract duration:	August - December 2026
Expected workload:	60 working days
Indicative starting date:	August 2026

1. BACKGROUND

The Republic of Moldova continues to face socio-economic challenges linked to energy affordability, rising living costs, and external shocks affecting the energy sector. In this context, ensuring effective and well-targeted support to vulnerable households remains a key policy priority, alongside broader efforts to strengthen fiscal sustainability and support a gradual transition toward a more resilient energy system.

In response to the energy crisis, the Government of the Republic of Moldova, with support from UNDP and development partners, established the Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund (EVRF) in 2022, as an evidence-based mechanism to compensate households for increases in energy tariffs. The EVRF provides targeted support for heating, natural gas, and electricity costs, with the objective of reducing energy poverty and mitigating the impact of price shocks on vulnerable populations.

Since its launch, the EVRF has reached a large share of households, supporting over 895,000 households in the 2022-2023 heating season, 792,000 households in 2023-2024, and 719,000 households in 2024-2025. In the 2025-2026 heating season, the number of beneficiary households further decreased to approximately 621,000, reflecting ongoing efforts to improve targeting and align support more closely with actual vulnerability levels.

Across the first three heating seasons covered by the EVRF (2022-2025), the overall energy poverty rate is estimated to have declined by 10.6 percentage points. Energy compensations have also contributed to improvements in monetary poverty indicators among beneficiaries, with effects extending beyond the heating season.

As the EVRF evolves, the focus is increasingly placed on strengthening the accuracy and consistency of targeting, improving data quality and system performance, and enhancing the efficiency of operational processes. These efforts are essential to ensure that support is directed to those most in need, while maintaining adequate coverage and contributing to the fiscal sustainability of the mechanism.

In parallel, the transition to cash-based compensation and the continued development of digital systems supporting the EVRF require further strengthening of data management processes, system functionalities, and coordination across relevant modules and institutions. Ensuring the reliability and coherence of data flows, as well as the effective operationalization of targeting mechanisms, is critical for the effective implementation and continuous improvement of the Fund.

The “Accelerating a Just Energy Transition in the Republic of Moldova” (JET) project financed by the Government of Italy, through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), supports the Government’s efforts to ensure that the transition to a sustainable energy system is socially inclusive and economically balanced. A key component of the project focuses on addressing energy vulnerability through the EVRF, including support to its operational and institutional development. In this context, the project contributes to improving the Fund’s design, data systems, and implementation processes, with a focus on ensuring that compensation mechanisms remain transparent, efficient, and based on reliable data.

Within this framework, UNDP provides technical and policy support to national authorities, in particular the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, to strengthen the design, targeting and fiscal sustainability of the EVRF. As the Government considers the parameters of future compensation cycles, additional policy advisory support is required to model alternative targeting scenarios, assess their distributional and budgetary implications, and translate available evidence into policy options for senior-level decision-making. Complementary support is also required to strengthen the monitoring and optimisation of related social assistance programmes and institutionalise the EVRF mobile registration surge capacity mechanism.

2. OBJECTIVE AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

In this context, UNDP seeks to engage an EVRF Evidence-based Policy Advisor (hereinafter - the Consultant) to provide analytical and advisory support to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection in reviewing and recalibrating the Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund following the 2025-2026 heating season.

The assignment will focus on the development and assessment of policy options for the 2026-2027 EVRF framework, including scenario modelling, targeting parameters, distributional implications, fiscal sustainability and alignment with broader social protection reforms. The Consultant will translate validated administrative data, technical findings and updated energy tariff and budgetary information into actionable policy recommendations for MLSP leadership.

The assignment will also support the policy-level monitoring and optimisation of the “Ajutor Social” programme and the institutionalisation of the EVRF mobile registration surge capacity mechanism.

The assignment will not include the technical assessment of targeting implementation within EVIS, the review of EVIS or AIS eSocial functionalities and data processes, the assessment of system interoperability, or the functional validation of digital modules, which are covered under separate technical support arrangements.

The expected outputs of the assignment are:

- strategic presentations, analytical models and policy briefs outlining alternative targeting scenarios and their fiscal and distributional implications for the 2026-2027 EVRF framework;
- an operational lessons-learned report and an institutionalised Standard Operating Procedure documenting the coordination and management of EVRF mobile registration teams; and
- capacity-building workshops and methodological guidance supporting the autonomous application of the developed policy analysis and surge capacity management approaches by relevant MLSP personnel.

The Consultant will work in close collaboration with the UNDP Moldova Policy Specialist, who will provide substantive guidance, contribute to the review of outputs, and support their validation.

The Consultant will operate under the technical coordination of the relevant UNDP project team, who will oversee administrative, planning, and coordination aspects of the assignment. The Consultant will work closely with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and will liaise with other relevant departments, technical teams, and stakeholders, as required, to ensure the quality and relevance of outputs.

To ensure institutional continuity and sustainability of the assignment, the Consultant shall, throughout the entire duration of the contract and upon its completion, transfer to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection all analytical products, datasets, working files, calculation models, formulas, methodologies, assumptions, algorithms, documentation, and other materials developed or used in the course of the assignment. The

Consultant shall ensure that all analytical tools and models are fully documented and accompanied by methodological guidance, enabling the Ministry to independently update, maintain, replicate and further develop the analyses and policy modelling after the completion of the assignment. No proprietary restrictions shall prevent the Ministry from using, modifying or further developing the outputs produced under this assignment.

3. KEY ACTIVITIES, DELIVERABLES AND TENTATIVE TIMETABLE

Key activities and deliverables	Tentative timetable
Activity 1: Data modelling and policy recommendations for the 2026-2027 EVRF targeting framework Conduct simulations of at least three alternative energy compensation distribution scenarios using validated administrative datasets and parameters made available by MLSP. Each scenario shall include a detailed assessment of the expected number of beneficiary households, inclusion and exclusion errors, fiscal impact, distributional effects across population groups, and sensitivity analysis based on alternative eligibility thresholds and compensation parameters. Model policy options based on projected EVRF budgetary allocations for the 2026-2027 heating season, incorporating alternative vulnerability categories, eligibility thresholds and compensation parameters. Assess the distributional and fiscal implications of each option and formulate evidence-based recommendations for consideration by MLSP leadership. The activity will not include an assessment of the technical implementation of the targeting mechanism within EVIS or AIS eSocial.	
Deliverable 1.1: Presentation to MLSP leadership outlining at least three validated options for the EVRF targeting mechanism, supported by scenario modelling.	by 1 October 1 WD
Deliverable 1.2: Formula-driven analytical models for the EVRF targeting mechanism. <i>Note: All analytical models shall be submitted in editable format together with complete calculation formulas, metadata, assumptions, user instructions and technical documentation sufficient for independent use and future updates by MLSP, complemented by a capacity-building workshop with the Department of Policies for Low-Income Families and a methodological guidance note in PDF format explaining the assumptions, formulas and procedures required to update and apply the targeting models independently.</i>	by 1 October 10 WDs
Activity 2: Refinement of the 2026-2027 EVRF targeting framework based on updated energy tariffs Update and recalibrate the preferred policy scenarios developed under Activity 1 based on the latest energy tariffs, confirmed budgetary allocations and other relevant policy parameters. Assess the fiscal affordability, beneficiary coverage and distributional implications of the revised options and present final policy recommendations to MLSP leadership.	
Deliverable 2.1: Updated presentation to MLSP leadership providing refined EVRF targeting options based on current energy tariffs and final budgetary parameters.	by 1 November 1 WD
Deliverable 2.2: Formula-driven analytical models options for the EVRF targeting mechanism, adjusted to tariffs. <i>Note: All analytical models shall be submitted in editable format together with complete calculation formulas, metadata, assumptions, user instructions and technical documentation sufficient for independent use and future updates by MLSP, complemented by a capacity-building workshop with the Department of Policies for Low-Income Families</i>	by 1 November 10 WDs

<i>and a methodological guidance note in PDF format explaining the assumptions, formulas and procedures required to update and apply the targeting models independently.</i>	
Activity 3: Policy analysis and optimisation of the “Ajutor Social” programme Assess the coverage, targeting performance, adequacy and socio-economic effects of the “Ajutor Social” programme using available and validated administrative and survey data. Review relevant policy parameters and performance indicators, identify opportunities for improved targeting and programme effectiveness, and formulate policy recommendations aligned with national social protection objectives and fiscal sustainability considerations.	
Deliverable 3: Policy analysis report, accompanied by formula-driven analytical models, assessing the coverage, targeting and adequacy of the “Ajutor Social” programme and presenting recommendations for its optimization.	by 20 November 15 WDs
Activity 4: Coordination and institutionalisation of the EVRF mobile registration surge capacity mechanism Support MLSP in planning, coordinating and monitoring the deployment of EVRF mobile registration teams, with a focus on territorial coverage, accessibility, allocation of assignments and documentation of operational lessons. Assess the effectiveness of the deployment approach and develop a Standard Operating Procedure to institutionalise the mobile registration surge capacity mechanism for use during future compensation cycles or other crisis-response operations. Conduct a capacity-building session for relevant MLSP personnel.	
Deliverable 4.1: Operational report on the coordination and impact of the EVRF mobile registration teams.	by 15 December 8 WDs
Deliverable 4.2: SOP for EVRF surge capacity management developed and capacity-building workshop with the Department of Policies for Low-Income Families conducted. <i><u>Note:</u> The SOP shall include roles and responsibilities, operational workflows, activation criteria, reporting templates, monitoring indicators, quality assurance measures, risk mitigation procedures and mechanisms for periodic review and update.</i>	by 15 December 15 WDs

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

4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Consultant will be engaged on a part-time basis over the duration of the assignment and will work in close collaboration with the UNDP Moldova Policy Specialist, who will provide substantive guidance, support the review of outputs, and contribute to their validation.

The Consultant will operate under the technical coordination of the relevant UNDP project team, who will oversee administrative, planning, and coordination aspects of the assignment.

Throughout the implementation of the assignment, the Consultant shall work under the functional supervision of the designated representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection with regard to the planning, implementation and delivery of all assignment-related activities and outputs. The Consultant will also liaise with other relevant departments, technical teams, and stakeholders involved in the implementation and development of the EVRF, as appropriate, to support coordination and ensure the quality and relevance of outputs.

Prior to their submission to UNDP, all deliverables shall be reviewed and coordinated with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. The Consultant shall address the comments and recommendations provided by MLSP and revise the deliverables accordingly. Following MLSP's confirmation that the deliverables are

technically satisfactory, they shall be submitted to UNDP for review and final acceptance in accordance with UNDP procedures.

All communications and documentation related to the assignment will be in Romanian and/or English.

5. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

The financial proposal shall specify a total lump sum amount, and payment terms around specific and measurable (qualitative and quantitative) deliverables (i.e. whether payments fall in instalments or upon completion of the entire contract). The indicated number of working days is for planning and evaluation purposes only and does not constitute a basis for payment. Payments are based upon output, i.e. upon delivery of the services specified in the TOR.

In order to assist the requesting unit in the comparison of financial proposals, the financial proposal will include a breakdown of this lump sum amount (including the daily fee, taxes, and number of anticipated working days). Payments will be disbursed upon submission and validation of deliverables by the UNDP Project Manager and Policy Specialist (certifying that the services have been satisfactorily performed).

No travel is envisaged in the framework of the current assignment.

6. QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS REQUIRED

Academic Qualifications:

- University degree (Master's level or higher) in economics, public policy, engineering, social policy, statistics, development studies or another relevant field.

Experience and knowledge:

- At least 2 years of relevant professional experience in policy analysis, quantitative modelling, programme evaluation, social protection, public policy advisory support or related areas.
- Experience in developing policy options, analytical models, fiscal or distributional assessments, and evidence-based recommendations, preferably within public administration or social protection.
- Experience in social protection, energy affordability, poverty analysis, employment, child protection or related policy areas.
- Familiarity with the Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund, "Ajutor Social" or similar social benefit programmes will be considered an advantage.
- Previous experience within UNDP or other international organizations will be considered an advantage.

Competencies:

- Demonstrated understanding of evidence-based policymaking, social protection programme design and the use of quantitative analysis to inform policy decisions.
- Ability to interpret complex datasets and translate findings into actionable, evidence-based policy recommendations.
- Proven ability to perform disaggregated data analysis to identify specific trends and outcomes for vulnerable groups (e.g., women, the elderly, persons with disabilities), applying an intersectional perspective to ensure inclusive programming.
- Strong analytical skills and ability to synthesize information into clear and concise outputs.
- Demonstrated interpersonal skills, as well as the ability to communicate effectively and build relationships across multi-disciplinary teams.

Language requirements

- Fluency in Romanian is required.
- Good command 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.

The UNDP Moldova is committed to workforce diversity. Women, persons with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic or religious minorities, persons living with HIV, as well as refugees and other noncitizens legally entitled to work in the Republic of Moldova, are particularly encouraged to apply.

7. DOCUMENTS TO BE INCLUDED WHEN SUBMITTING THE PROPOSALS

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

- Signed and filled-in Offeror's letter to UNDP confirming interest and availability for the individual contractor (IC) assignment, incorporating Financial proposal in Annex 2 (in USD), which shall be filled in mandatorily and includes the detailed breakdown of costs supporting the all-inclusive financial proposal.
- CV and at least 3 references.
- Motivation statement indicating the position applying for, 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);
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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 (Master's level or higher) in economics, data engineering, computer engineering, statistics, social policy, public policy, development studies or another relevant field.
- At least 2 years of relevant professional experience in policy analysis, quantitative modelling, programme evaluation, social protection, public policy advisory support or related areas.
- Citizenship 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.

Winning candidate

The winning candidate will be the candidate who has accumulated the highest aggregated score (technical scoring + financial scoring).

Criteria	Scoring	Points obtainable
<u>Technical Evaluation</u>		
University degree (Master's level or higher) in economics, engineering, statistics, social policy, public policy, development studies or another relevant field	<i>Bachelor's degree - 20 pts. Master's degree - 30 pts.</i>	30
At least 2 years of relevant professional experience in policy analysis, quantitative modelling, programme evaluation, social protection, public policy advisory support or related areas	<i>2 years - 40 pts., each additional year of experience - 10 pts. up to a maximum of 60 pts</i>	60
Experience in developing policy options, analytical models, fiscal or distributional assessments, and evidence-based recommendations, preferably within public administration or social protection	<i>1 assignment or up to 1 year - 15 pts, 2 assignments or 2 years - 30 pts, 3 or more assignments or ≥ 3 years - 45 pts</i>	45
Experience in social protection, energy affordability, poverty analysis, employment, child protection or related policy areas	<i>no experience - 0 pts, 1 assignment or up to 1 year - 15 pts, 2 assignments or 2 years - 30 pts, 3 or more assignments or ≥ 3 years - 45 pts.</i>	45
Familiarity with the Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund, "Ajutor Social" or similar social benefit programmes will be considered an advantage	<i>no experience - 0 pts, moderate exposure (e.g. contribution to 1 assignment or < 1 year) - 20 pts, strong experience (e.g. involvement in 1 - 2 assignments or up to 2 years) - 40 pts.</i>	40
Proven experience of interpreting complex datasets and translating findings into actionable, evidence-based policy recommendations	<i>no experience - 0 pts, 1 assignment or up to 1 year - 15 pts, 2 or more assignments or ≥ 2 years - 30 pts.</i>	30

Previous experience within an UNDP Project and/or other international organization(s) will be considered an advantage	<i>each assignment - 10 pts. up to a maximum of 20 pts.</i>	20
Belonging to the group(s) under-represented in the UN Moldova and/or the area of assignment* <i>* 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>	<i>No – 0 pts., to one group – 5 pts., to two or more groups – 10 pts.</i>	10
Fluency in Romanian (mandatory) and good command of English	<i>each language – 10 pts</i>	20
Total Technical Scoring		300

<u>Financial</u>	
Evaluation of submitted financial offers will be done based on the following formula: $S = F_{min} / F * 200$ (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