

## Concept of an informational portal on the opportunities offered by Moldova external trade agreements for MSMEs

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# I. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a vital role in driving economic growth, job creation, and innovation in Moldova. In 2021, there were approximately 59.4 thousand small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), constituting around 98.4% of the total number of enterprises. The number of employees in MSMEs represent 59.1% of the total number of employees across all enterprises. The sales revenue generated by MSMEs during this period totalled 37.6% of the total sales revenue in the overall economy<sup>1</sup>. These enterprises contribute significantly to employment, exports, and overall economic development. However, MSMEs often face various challenges in accessing crucial information and resources that are essential for their success and competitiveness in domestic and international markets. In recognition of these challenges, the development of an informational portal specifically tailored for MSMEs has emerged as a strategic imperative.

## 1.2 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this concept document is to outline the key aspects of a trade informational portal for MSMEs in Moldova. The portal aims to address the informational gaps and provide a centralized platform for MSMEs to access comprehensive and up-to-date trade-related information, resources, and tools. By offering a user-friendly interface and relevant content, the portal will empower MSMEs to make informed business decisions, expand their market reach, and enhance their competitiveness.

This concept document covers the analysis, design, and implementation of the informational portal. It provides an overview of the challenges faced by MSMEs in accessing trade-related information, highlights the benefits and objectives of the portal, discusses its content, design, and user experience, and outlines strategies for promotion, governance, and sustainability. The document also includes an implementation roadmap, setting the stage for the successful development and launch of the portal.

## 1.3 The Need for an Informational Portal

Recognizing the challenges faced by MSMEs, there is a pressing need to develop a trade informational portal that serves as a one-stop resource hub for trade-related information. Following the desk review report prepared by the Advanced cross-river capacities for trade (AdTrade) project, implemented by UNDP and financed by Sweden and United Kingdom, one of the major recommendations was to establish a Centralized Trade Information Portal. Creating a centralized trade information portal can significantly improve the accessibility and usability of information resources. This portal can serve as a one-stop platform, providing comprehensive and up-to-date information on trade agreements, market access conditions, sector-specific data, relevant reports, as well as reliable information with respect to customs legislation, customs regimes and destinations, declaration, classification and origin of goods, permits, and the rules for border crossing concerning goods and transportation units. The portal should be user-

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<sup>1</sup> [https://statistica.gov.md/ro/activitatea-intreprinderilor-mici-si-mijlocii-in-anul-2021-9557\\_59645.html](https://statistica.gov.md/ro/activitatea-intreprinderilor-mici-si-mijlocii-in-anul-2021-9557_59645.html)

friendly, searchable, and available in multiple languages to cater to the needs of different stakeholders, including businesses from both banks of Nistru, researchers, and policymakers.

The portal will bridge the information gap and provide MSMEs with a comprehensive platform to access relevant data, market intelligence, regulatory updates, and practical tools. By consolidating and organizing these resources, the portal will streamline information retrieval, reduce search costs, and empower MSMEs to make informed decisions and capitalize on market opportunities.

## II. Challenges Faced by MSMEs in Exploiting Trade Opportunities

### 2.1 Identification of Barriers and Limitations for MSMEs

Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises play a vital role in the economic development of Moldova. However, despite the opportunities presented by Moldova's external trade agreements, MSMEs face various challenges in fully exploiting these trade opportunities. It is crucial to identify and understand these barriers and limitations to effectively address them and support the growth and internationalization of MSMEs.

#### 2.1.1 Financial Barriers

One of the primary challenges faced by MSMEs is the lack of financial resources. Many MSMEs struggle to access adequate funding to invest in technology, machinery, research and development, and market expansion. Limited financial capacity hinders their ability to compete in international markets and take advantage of the opportunities offered by free trade agreements.

#### 2.1.2 Regulatory and Administrative Barriers

MSMEs often encounter regulatory and administrative complexities when participating in international trade. These barriers include challenging customs procedures, complex documentation requirements, and compliance with trade regulations and standards. Navigating through these processes can be challenging for MSMEs, particularly those with limited resources and expertise.

#### 2.1.3 Limited Market Knowledge and Market Entry Barriers

Expanding into new markets requires a solid understanding of market dynamics, consumer preferences, and competition. Many MSMEs lack market intelligence and face difficulties in conducting market research, identifying potential customers, and establishing distribution channels. Market entry barriers such as language barriers, cultural differences, and the lack of networks and connections further impede MSMEs' ability to access and penetrate new markets.

#### 2.1.4 Limited Technological Capabilities

In the rapidly evolving global trade landscape, technology plays a critical role in facilitating trade and enabling businesses to compete effectively. However, many MSMEs in Moldova struggle with limited technological capabilities. Outdated infrastructure, insufficient digital skills, and a lack of access to information and communication

technologies hinder their ability to leverage technology for market expansion, efficient supply chain management, and e-commerce.

## 2.2 Analysis of Gaps in Accessing Trade-Related Information

Access to accurate and up-to-date trade-related information is crucial for MSMEs to make informed business decisions, identify market opportunities, and comply with trade regulations. However, MSMEs in Moldova often face gaps in accessing trade-related information, which hinder their ability to fully exploit the benefits of trade agreements.

### 2.2.1 Fragmented Information Sources

Trade-related information is scattered across various sources, including government agencies, business support associations, international organizations, and private entities. MSMEs find it challenging to navigate through these sources, resulting in fragmented and disjointed information. This fragmentation hampers their ability to obtain a comprehensive understanding of trade regulations, market entry requirements, tariff schedules, and trade statistics.

### 2.2.2 Language and Accessibility Barriers

Language barriers pose a significant challenge for MSMEs in accessing trade-related information. Many official trade documents, regulations, and reports are published in languages other than their native language, making it difficult for MSMEs to interpret and utilize the information effectively. Moreover, the accessibility of trade information is limited, particularly for MSMEs in remote areas with limited internet connectivity. Overcoming language barriers and ensuring the accessibility of trade information through translation services, multilingual resources, and offline access options can help MSMEs overcome these challenges and access vital trade information.

### 2.2.3 Lack of Tailored and User-Friendly Information

MSMEs often require information that is specific to their industry, products, and target markets. However, the available trade-related information may not cater to their specific needs, making it difficult to find relevant and actionable insights. Additionally, the information may not be presented in a user-friendly format, making it challenging for MSMEs to interpret and apply the information to their business strategies.

## 2.3 Assessment of Capacity-Building Needs for MSMEs

To address the challenges faced by MSMEs in exploiting trade opportunities, it is essential to assess their capacity-building needs. By identifying the areas where MSMEs require support and resources, targeted interventions can be designed to enhance their capabilities and competitiveness.

### 2.3.1 Training and Skills Development

Many MSMEs lack the necessary knowledge and skills to engage in international trade effectively. Capacity-building programmes that focus on trade-related topics such as export procedures, market research, international marketing, and digital skills can empower MSMEs with the tools and expertise needed to seize trade opportunities.

### 2.3.2 Access to Finance and Funding

Enhancing access to finance and funding options is crucial to address the financial barriers faced by MSMEs. This includes facilitating access to affordable credit, promoting alternative financing mechanisms, and providing targeted financial support for MSMEs' trade-related activities.

### 2.3.3 Support in Market Intelligence and Market Entry Strategies

MSMEs would benefit from assistance in market intelligence and market entry strategies. This can include providing access to market research reports, organizing trade missions and business matchmaking events, and offering mentorship programs to guide MSMEs through the process of entering new markets.

### 2.3.4 Technology Adoption and Digital Transformation

Supporting MSMEs in adopting technology and embracing digital transformation is vital in today's global trade environment. Capacity-building initiatives should focus on providing MSMEs with the necessary infrastructure, training in digital skills, and access to technology tools and platforms to enhance their competitiveness and efficiency.

By understanding the barriers and limitations faced by MSMEs and assessing their capacity-building needs, appropriate measures and support mechanisms can be put in place to empower MSMEs to fully exploit the trade opportunities offered by Moldova's external trade agreements. In the next section, we will explore the objectives of the proposed informational portal and how it aims to address these challenges and needs of MSMEs effectively.

## III. Objectives of the Informational Portal

The main objectives of the informational portal for MSMEs are multilayered and aim to address the specific needs and challenges faced by MSMEs in accessing trade-related information. The following objectives have been identified:

### 3.1 The Goals and Objectives of the Portal

The primary goal of the informational portal is to provide a comprehensive and user-friendly platform that facilitates MSMEs' access to trade-related information and resources. The objectives of the portal include:

#### 3.1.1 Enhancing Access to Trade Information

One of the primary objectives of the portal is to improve MSMEs' access to trade-related information. This includes trade agreements, regulations, guidelines, export procedures, customs requirements, tariff schedules, and trade statistics. The portal will consolidate information from various sources, such as government agencies, trade promotion organizations, and business support associations, and present it in a structured and easily navigable format, ensuring that MSMEs can find the information they need efficiently. This will help them stay updated on the latest trade developments, market trends, and regulatory changes.

#### 3.1.2 Supporting Informed Decision-Making

The portal aims to empower MSMEs with the knowledge and insights necessary for informed decision-making. It will provide comprehensive and up-to-date information on

market opportunities, market research reports and potential export destinations, trade financing options, and relevant trade support services. By equipping MSMEs with accurate and timely information, the portal will enable them to make informed decisions regarding market entry, pricing strategies, logistics, and international trade compliance. This will enhance their competitiveness and increase their chances of successful participation in international markets.

### 3.1.3 Facilitating Networking and Collaboration

Another objective of the portal is to foster networking and collaboration among MSMEs. The portal will provide a platform for MSMEs to connect, share experiences, and form partnerships. It will feature interactive forums, discussion boards, and networking tools that enable MSMEs to engage with each other, exchange knowledge, and seek advice from industry experts and trade support organizations. This collaborative environment will promote learning, facilitate the sharing of best practices, and create opportunities for joint ventures, business partnerships, and supplier-buyer linkages. By facilitating networking and collaboration, the portal aims to strengthen the MSME ecosystem and enhance the collective capacity of MSMEs to capitalize on trade opportunities.

## 3.2 Target Audience and User Needs Assessment

To ensure the portal's relevance and effectiveness, a comprehensive assessment of the target audience's needs is essential. The portal primarily targets MSMEs in Moldova that are interested in exploring and expanding their international trade activities. This includes MSMEs from diverse sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, services, and crafts. The portal will also cater to different types of MSMEs, including exporters and those seeking information on potential trade partners and market opportunities.

A thorough user needs assessment will be conducted to understand the specific information requirements and challenges faced by MSMEs. This assessment will involve engaging with MSMEs through survey and if possible individual interviews. The feedback received will help identify the key information gaps, the preferred format and language of information delivery, and the specific functionalities that MSMEs expect from the portal. This user-centric approach will ensure that the portal is tailored to meet the needs of its target audience, enhancing its usability and relevance.

A dedicated questionnaire to collect the required information is presented in the annex no.1 of the concept paper.

## 3.3 Key Features and Functionalities of the Portal

To fulfil its objectives, the informational portal will incorporate a range of key features and functionalities that serve to the needs of MSMEs. These features include:

### 3.3.1 Interactive Tools and Resources

The portal will feature interactive tools and resources that enable MSMEs to conduct market research, assess their export readiness, and evaluate potential trade partners. These tools may include market entry guides, export cost calculators, trade opportunity databases, and trade agreement summaries. MSMEs will be able to access these resources directly through the portal, allowing them to make informed decisions and effectively navigate the complexities of international trade.



### 3.3.2 User-Friendly Interface and Navigation

The portal will prioritize user-friendliness and ease of navigation. It will have an intuitive interface with clear categorization and search functionalities that enable MSMEs to quickly find the information they need. The portal will be designed to be accessible on various devices, including desktop computers, laptops, tablets, and smartphones, ensuring that MSMEs can access trade-related information anytime, anywhere.

### 3.3.3 Multi-language Support

Recognizing the diverse language preferences of MSMEs, the portal will provide content in multiple languages, including Romanian, Russian, and English. This will enable a wider audience to benefit from the portal and ensure that language barriers do not hinder MSMEs' access to critical trade information.

By defining clear goals and objectives, understanding the target audience's needs, and incorporating key features and functionalities, the informational portal aims to become an invaluable resource for MSMEs in Moldova, empowering them to harness the opportunities offered by Moldova's external trade agreements and enhance their international competitiveness.

## IV. Design and Structure of the Informational Portal

The design and structure of an informational portal play a crucial role in ensuring a seamless user experience and facilitating easy access to trade-related information for MSMEs. This section focuses on the key aspects of the design and structure, including user-centric design principles, navigation and search functionalities, and organization of content categories and resources. By implementing these elements effectively, the informational portal can become a valuable tool for MSMEs in exploring the opportunities offered by Moldova's external trade agreements.

### 4.1 User-centric Design Principles for an Intuitive Interface

User-centric design is at the core of creating an intuitive and user-friendly interface for the informational portal. The design process should prioritize the needs, preferences, and behaviours of the target audience, ensuring that the portal is easily navigable and information is presented in a clear and organized manner. Some key principles to consider are:

#### 4.1.1 Consistency and Familiarity

Maintaining consistency in design elements, such as layout, typography, colour schemes, and icons, ensures that users can easily navigate the portal and find information without confusion. Familiar design patterns, such as using standard navigation menus, breadcrumb trails, and clickable logos, provide a sense of familiarity and enhance usability.

#### 4.1.2 Clear Information Hierarchy

Presenting information in a structured and hierarchical manner helps users understand the organization of content and find what they are looking for quickly. Employing visual indications, such as headings, subheadings, bullet points, and typography variations,



helps to differentiate between different levels of information and guides users through the portal seamlessly.

#### 4.1.3 Accessibility Considerations

Ensuring that the portal is accessible to all users, including those with disabilities, is a crucial aspect of user-centric design. This involves adhering to accessibility guidelines, such as providing alternative text for images, implementing keyboard navigation support, and ensuring proper colour contrast for readability.

### 4.2 Navigation and Search Functionalities

Efficient navigation and search functionalities are essential for users to locate specific information within the portal. The design of these features should prioritize simplicity, ease of use, and quick access to relevant content. Key considerations for navigation and search functionalities include:

#### 4.2.1 Clear Menu Structure

Designing a clear and intuitive menu structure is vital for users to navigate through different sections and categories of the portal. The menu should be prominently displayed, preferably at the top of the page, and organized logically to reflect the content hierarchy. Dropdown menus or expandable menus can be used to accommodate subcategories and provide a compact view.

#### 4.2.2 Search Bar and Advanced Search Options

The inclusion of a search bar prominently positioned on the portal allows users to enter keywords and quickly find specific information. Advanced search options, such as filtering by category, date, or relevance, can further refine search results and assist users in finding the most relevant content.

#### 4.2.3 Breadcrumb Trails

Implementing breadcrumb trails, typically displayed near the top of the page, helps users understand their current location within the portal's content hierarchy. It provides a clear pathway for users to backtrack or navigate to higher-level categories, improving their overall navigation experience.

#### 4.2.4 Sitemap and Site Index

Including a sitemap or site index provides an overview of the portal's content structure and assists users in quickly locating specific sections or resources. It serves as a visual representation of the entire portal and can be accessed through a dedicated page or a link in the footer.

## V. Content Development and Integration

Developing an effective Trade Informational Portal (TIP) requires identification of relevant information resources and the integration of trade-related data from various sources. By implementing these proposals, the portal can provide comprehensive and up-to-date information, empowering MSMEs to navigate the trade landscape successfully and make informed decisions.

## 5.1 Content outline for the portal

Based on identified goal and objectives of the TIP, below is a suggested content outline for the portal:

### 5.1.1 Home Page

- Overview of the portal's purpose and features
- Latest trade news and updates
- Quick access to key resources and tools

The Home Page of the Trade Informational Portal serves as the main entry point for users, providing a comprehensive overview of the portal's purpose and features. It is designed to be informative, user-friendly, and visually engaging, offering quick access to key resources and tools.

The Home Page starts with a concise description of the portal's purpose, emphasizing its role in providing comprehensive and up-to-date trade-related information. It highlights the value it offers to MSMEs by empowering them to navigate the trade landscape successfully and make informed decisions.

The latest trade news and updates section on the Home Page keeps users informed about the dynamic trade environment, ensuring they stay up to date with the latest developments. It provides a snapshot of the most recent trade-related news, policy changes, and upcoming events, encouraging regular engagement with the portal.

To facilitate easy access to key resources and tools, the Home Page offers quick links to important sections of the portal. These links provide shortcuts to commonly searched topics, essential documents, and relevant external websites related to trade and business. Users can quickly find and access the information they need without navigating through multiple pages.

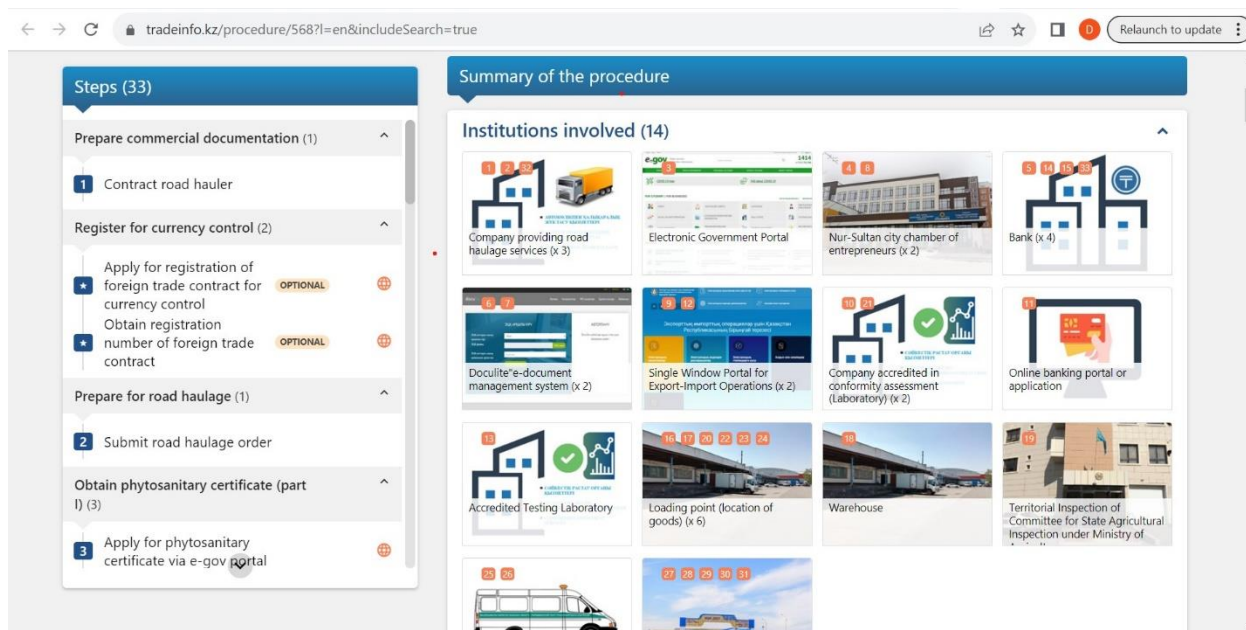
The user-friendly design of the Home Page focuses on clear and concise information presentation, utilizing visually appealing layouts and intuitive navigation. It ensures accessibility and responsiveness, allowing users to browse the portal seamlessly from various devices.

Additionally, the Home Page acknowledges the diverse user base by providing language options - RO, EN and RU.

### 5.1.2 Export Procedures

- Products
- Procedures
- Institutions
- Law and Norms
- Forms and Documents

The Export Procedures page shall list and sequences all procedures that apply to a export operation. Bellow is a screen shot o similar portal developed by UN institutions:



The result of commodity-specific query in the trade information portal leads to a search results page that explains where to start, where to go next, and what will be the final output. The page:

- Lists all the procedures that must be completed so that goods can be cleared through customs.
- Orders the procedures according to the sequence through which they must be completed. For instance, a Certificate of Conformity or a Veterinary certificate may be required before clearing the goods through customs, etc.)

In order to address the full reality faced by the trader wishing to complete a specific export operation, the Moldova TIP shall capture information on four categories of procedures covering both pre-clearance and clearance processes:

- Preliminary/initial registrations: an individual or business often needs to be registered in order to subsequently be able to apply for licenses and permits. This may involve verifications such as warehouse or farm inspections. Usually, registrations only need to be done once by each entity.
- Licenses: several industries are regulated and firms (individual enterprises or corporations) wishing to trade in these industries need to be issued with licenses before they are authorized to do so and obtain the needed permits. In some instances, licenses must be renewed annually;
- Permits: permits are the authorizations that must accompany a consignment before clearance procedures can begin. Examples include phytosanitary or veterinary certificates, certificates of origin, certificates of compliance, etc. These procedures must be completed for each trade operation or for each consignment;
- Customs clearance and border procedures: these include all procedures that are required for the consignment to be cleared through Customs and pass the border at the exit or entry point. This includes submitting a Customs declaration,

applicable border inspections, cargo sealing, etc. As with permits, these may be required for every new trade operation.

Understanding in which categories the procedures fall into is crucial to explain the order with which they must be completed, especially to someone trading a commodity (or service) for the first time.

#### *Describing the procedures step-by-step*

For each procedure that appears on the above-mentioned search result page, a clear menu text indicates who must complete the procedure and include clear and concise explanations of its purpose.

Then, for each procedure, the TIP shall provide a list of the steps needed to complete the procedure. Indeed, procedures are made of one or more steps. A step is defined here as “any necessary interaction between the user and the administration (or a private actor providing a necessary service, such as a notary) to achieve an operation.”

#### *Detailing each step (contacts, requirements, result, etc)*

For each step of each procedure, the Moldova TIP shall indicate:

- The necessary contact information including name of institution, precise addresses, phone numbers, websites, emails, etc (“where to go”)
- The documents required including the downloadable forms and documentary evidence (“what to bring”)
- The costs: precise details on the fees and payments required including means of payment (“how much does it cost and how to pay?”)
- The results to be expected (“what will I get?”)
- Reference to the legal basis justifying all elements of the steps such as the requirements and the fees (“what is the legal basis?”)
- The time frame to complete the step (“how long does it take?”)
- The ways of submitting complaints and recourse (“who to complain to in case of a problem?”)

#### 5.1.3 Export Facilitation Repository

- Identification of potential export destinations
- Market research reports and analysis
- Emerging market trends and opportunities
- Information on market entry requirements and regulations
- Trade agreements (TA), including guidelines for utilizing TA
- Trade statistics and market trends
- Data visualization tools for easy analysis

The Market Opportunities page is a valuable resource for businesses seeking new export destinations. It provides a wealth of information on potential export markets, helping businesses identify attractive opportunities. Users can access market research reports and analysis, gaining insights into market dynamics, consumer behavior, and competitive

landscapes. The page also highlights emerging market trends and opportunities, empowering businesses to adapt their strategies and capitalize on new growth prospects.

The page is an important resource for businesses seeking to enter new markets. It offers detailed information on market entry requirements and regulations, helping businesses navigate the complexities of different markets. Users can access sector-specific data and market analysis reports, gaining a deeper understanding of the market dynamics and opportunities.

The page also contains information on trade agreements. It offers a detailed overview of the trade agreements that Moldova has entered into, including provisions, benefits, and obligations. Users can explore the specific terms and conditions of each trade agreement, gaining valuable insights into the opportunities and advantages they offer. The page also provides detailed guidelines on how businesses can effectively utilize these trade agreements to expand their international trade activities.

Finally, the page provides trade statistics and market trends, enabling businesses to analyze market dynamics and make informed decisions. Data visualization tools are also available, allowing users to analyze and interpret trade statistics easily.

#### 5.1.4 Export Financing Options

- Overview of trade financing solutions
- Information on export credit, guarantees, and insurance
- Access to financial institutions and support programs

The Export Financing Options page offers businesses an overview of various trade financing solutions available to support their international trade activities. Users can explore different financing options such as export credit, guarantees, and insurance, understanding how these mechanisms can mitigate financial risks. The page also provides information on financial institutions and support programs that offer trade financing services. By accessing this page, businesses can identify suitable financing options and ensure the smooth flow of their trade transactions.

#### 5.1.5 Export Support Services

- Directory of trade support organizations and agencies
- Guidance on trade-related certifications and standards
- Information on trade missions, exhibitions, and training programs

The Export Support Services page serves as a directory of trade support organizations and agencies. Businesses can access information on various support services available, such as trade-related certifications and standards. The page also provides details on trade missions, exhibitions, and training programs that can enhance businesses' knowledge and skills in international trade. By utilizing the resources and services highlighted on this page, businesses can benefit from valuable support to expand their trade activities.

#### 5.1.6 Interactive Forums and Networking Tools

- Industry-specific forums for discussions and knowledge exchange
- Business matchmaking platform for potential partnerships

- Supplier-buyer linkages and collaboration opportunities
- Online networking events and webinars
- Expert-led Q&A sessions and best practice sharing

The Interactive Forums and Networking Tools page provides a dynamic platform for businesses to engage in discussions and knowledge exchange. Users can participate in industry-specific forums, sharing insights and experiences with fellow professionals. The page also offers a business matchmaking platform, facilitating potential partnerships and collaborations. Users can explore supplier-buyer linkages and find opportunities for joint ventures. Online networking events and webinars, as well as expert-led Q&A sessions and best practice sharing, further enhance the collaborative environment of this page.

#### 5.1.7 Language and User Preferences

- Option to select preferred language for content
- Customizable user profiles and preferences

The Language and User Preferences page allows users to customize their portal experience. Users can select their preferred language for content, ensuring they can access information in their language of choice. The page also offers customizable user profiles and preferences, allowing users to personalize their portal settings and receive tailored recommendations based on their interests and needs. This page enhances the user experience, ensuring that the portal caters to individual preferences and requirements.

### 5.2 Data Aggregation and Validation

It is important that the Portal aggregates trade-related data from various sources, including government databases, international trade organizations, statistical agencies, and market research companies. It will need to establish data partnerships with relevant stakeholders to access reliable and updated datasets. Regularly review and update the integrated data to reflect any changes or revisions.

### 5.3 Customization and Personalization

TIP will offer customization and personalization options to MSMEs, allowing them to filter and customize trade-related data based on their specific interests, sectors, or target markets. It will enable users to set preferences, receive tailored recommendations, and create personalized dashboards to track key indicators and market trends. This customization feature enhances the user experience and ensures that the portal provides relevant and targeted information to each user.

### 5.4 Data Integration with Other Portals

TIP recognizes the importance of seamless access to trade-related information across different platforms. As part of its commitment to providing comprehensive resources to MSMEs, the portal will integrate trade-related data with other portals, such as <https://trade.gov.md>, ensuring a cohesive and interconnected information ecosystem.

The integration with other portals allows users to access a wider range of trade-related resources and services. By leveraging the existing infrastructure and functionalities of established platforms, TIP enhances its capabilities and offers a seamless user



experience. Users can navigate between different portals effortlessly, accessing complementary information and tools that further support their trade endeavours.

## VI. Promotion and Outreach Strategies

Promoting and creating awareness about the trade informational portal on the opportunities offered by Moldova's external trade agreements for MSMEs is essential to ensure its visibility and maximize its impact. Concrete proposals for effective promotion and outreach strategies include conducting awareness campaigns and implementing marketing initiatives, as well as fostering collaboration with key stakeholders and industry associations.

### 6.1 Awareness Campaigns

To raise awareness about the informational portal, the following proposals can be implemented:

#### 6.1.1 Multi-channel Marketing

Utilize a multi-channel marketing approach to reach a wide range of MSMEs and stakeholders. Leverage online platforms, social media channels, and targeted digital advertising to reach the target audience effectively. Develop engaging and informative content, including articles, infographics, and videos, to showcase the benefits of the portal. Utilize search engine optimization (SEO) techniques to improve the portal's visibility in search results.

#### 6.1.2 Webinars and Workshops

Organize webinars and workshops to introduce MSMEs to the informational portal and its functionalities. Collaborate with experts, business support organizations, and government agencies to deliver informative sessions on trade opportunities, market insights, and the benefits of utilizing the portal. Provide interactive sessions where participants can ask questions, receive guidance, and gain hands-on experience with the portal.

#### 6.1.3 Participation in Trade Events

Participate in trade events, exhibitions, and conferences related to MSMEs and international trade. Set up a dedicated booth or information kiosk to showcase the portal and its features. Distribute promotional materials such as brochures, flyers, and business cards to create awareness among attendees. Engage with visitors, answer their queries, and demonstrate how the portal can support their trade activities.

#### 6.1.4 Partnerships with Business Support Organizations

Establish partnerships with business support organizations, such as chambers of commerce, associations of producers, and industry networks. Collaborate with these organizations to disseminate information about the portal to their member base through newsletters, website banners, and dedicated email campaigns.

### 6.2 Collaboration with Key Stakeholders

Collaborating with key stakeholders is crucial to enhancing the reach and effectiveness of the informational portal. The following proposals can be implemented:



### 6.2.1 Partnership Agreements

Establish formal partnership agreements with government agencies and business support organisations. Define the roles and responsibilities of each partner in promoting and supporting the TIP. Leverage these partnerships to access their networks, resources, and communication channels for the dissemination of information and promotional activities.

### 6.2.2 Guest Contributions and Thought Leadership

Invite experts, industry leaders, and practitioners to contribute guest articles, case studies, or thought leadership pieces to the portal. These contributions not only enrich the content but also enhance the credibility and visibility of the Trade Information Portal.

### 6.2.3 Industry-Specific Campaigns

Develop industry-specific campaigns targeting key sectors or industries within the MSME landscape. Customize the messaging and content of the promotional materials to address the specific needs and interests of these sectors. Collaborate with industry associations, conduct sector-specific webinars, and offer tailored resources to demonstrate the portal's relevance and benefits for each industry.

### 6.2.4 Training and Support Programs

Develop training and support programs that help MSMEs effectively utilize the portal. Offer training sessions, workshops, and tutorials to guide MSMEs in leveraging the portal's features and functionalities. Develop user guides, video tutorials, and FAQs to facilitate self-learning and troubleshooting. Provide dedicated support channels, such as email or live chat, to address user inquiries and provide assistance.

## VII. Implementation Roadmap

To ensure a successful implementation of the informational portal on the opportunities offered by Moldova's external trade agreements for MSMEs, a well-defined implementation roadmap is crucial. This section presents is providing a comprehensive roadmap that includes a phased approach for portal development and launch, milestones, timelines, and resource requirements, as well as strategies for testing, feedback, and iterative improvements.

### 7.1 Phased Approach for Portal Development and Launch

To manage the development and launch of the portal effectively, the following phased approach is proposed:

#### 7.1.1 Phase 1: Planning and Requirements Gathering

Conduct thorough market research and analysis to understand the needs of the target audience. Develop user personas and conduct user need assessment to gain insights into their preferences and expectations. Based on the findings, update the content of the TIP presented in the current Concept at the section 5.1.

#### 7.1.2 Phase 2: Develop the ToR, lunch competition and select the service provider

During this phase, the focus is on developing the Terms of Reference for the portal development project, launching a competition to identify potential service provider, and selecting the most suitable provider to carry out the development work. Organize a kick-off meeting with the selected service provider to establish clear communication channels and project expectations, as well as set a close collaboration with the service provider throughout the project to ensure effective coordination, regular progress updates, and timely resolution of any issues or challenges.

### 7.1.3 Phase 3: Design and Development

In this phase, the focus is on development of the portal, adhering to user-centric design principles and best practices. Create wireframes and prototypes to visualize the portal's structure, layout, and user interface. Collaborate with web designers and developers to build an intuitive and visually appealing portal. Develop a content management system to facilitate content creation, publishing, and management. Implementation of indexing, navigation and search functionalities that allow users to easily find relevant information is essential. Ensure mobile responsiveness to accommodate users accessing the portal from various devices.

### 7.1.4 Phase 4: Content Creation and Integration

In this phase, prioritize content creation and integration based on the identified information needs of MSMEs. Identify relevant information resources, such as trade agreements, market reports, export-import regulations, and trade statistics. Develop high-quality and informative content, including articles, guides, case studies, and videos, that address the specific challenges and opportunities faced by MSMEs. Integrate the content into the portal's structure, ensuring seamless navigation and cross-referencing between different resources.

### 7.1.5 Phase 5: Testing and Quality Assurance

Testing and quality assurance are critical to ensure that the portal functions smoothly and provides a seamless user experience. Create automation test scripts that will check entire portal navigation. Conduct rigorous manual testing across different browsers, devices, and operating systems to identify and fix any bugs or technical issues. Test the portal's performance, including page loading speed and responsiveness. Setup two different environments: UAT (user acceptance testing) and PROD (production). Create migration / synchronization scripts that will allow content migration between environments. Engage users to participate in beta testing and provide feedback on usability, content relevance, and functionality. Incorporate user feedback to refine and improve the portal before the final launch.

### 7.1.6 Phase 6: Launch and Initial Promotion

Once the portal is thoroughly tested and refined, plan for its official launch. Develop a comprehensive marketing and promotion strategy to create awareness and drive traffic to the portal. Coordinate with key stakeholders, such as government agencies, trade organizations, and industry associations, to support the launch and promote the portal among their networks. Monitor the portal's performance and user engagement during the initial launch phase to gather insights and make necessary adjustments.

## 7.2 Milestones, Timelines, and Resource Requirements

To ensure effective project management, define clear milestones, timelines, and resource requirements for each phase of the implementation roadmap. Set realistic timelines for each phase, considering the complexity of tasks, resource availability, and dependencies. Allocate necessary resources, including human resources, budget, technology infrastructure, and content development capabilities.

Example Milestones:

- Milestone 1: Completion of Planning and Requirements Gathering Phase - 2 weeks
- Milestone 2: Completion of Design and Development Phase - 20 weeks
- Milestone 3: Completion of Content Creation and Integration Phase - 8 weeks
- Milestone 4: Completion of Testing and Quality Assurance Phase - 8 weeks
- Milestone 5: Launch and Initial Promotion - 2 weeks

## 7.3 Testing, Feedback, and Iterative Improvements

Continuous testing, feedback collection, and iterative improvements are essential to enhance the portal's functionality, usability, and content relevance. Establish a feedback mechanism, such as surveys, user ratings, or contact forms, to gather user feedback on their experience with the portal. Regularly monitor user engagement metrics, such as page views, time on site, and conversion rates, to assess the portal's performance. Setup observability tools that will allow real-time portal monitoring (ex. requests per second, page response codes count, exception logging, hardware usage, etc). Analyze user feedback and usage data to identify areas for improvement and implement iterative updates to address user needs and preferences.

## VIII Conclusion

In conclusion, this concept document on information portal has outlined the key components and considerations for the development of an informational portal on the opportunities offered by Moldova's external trade agreements for MSMEs. The document has explored the challenges faced by MSMEs in exploiting trade opportunities, identified the objectives of the portal, discussed the design and structure, content development and integration, promotion and outreach strategies, including the implementation roadmap.

Throughout the analysis, it has become evident that MSMEs face various barriers and limitations in accessing trade-related information. These include limited awareness, lack of resources, and difficulties in navigating complex trade agreements. Therefore, the development of an informational portal specifically tailored to the needs of MSMEs is crucial in addressing these challenges.

The objectives of the portal are to provide MSMEs with comprehensive and easily accessible information on trade opportunities, facilitate their understanding of trade agreements, and empower them to take advantage of these opportunities. By offering user-centric design principles, intuitive navigation and search functionalities, and

organized content categories, the portal aims to create a seamless and user-friendly experience for its target audience.

The content development and integration process will involve identifying relevant information resources, mapping them to the specific needs of MSMEs, and integrating trade-related data from various sources. This comprehensive approach ensures that the portal delivers accurate, up-to-date, and relevant information to assist MSMEs in their decision-making processes.

To maximize the impact and reach of the portal, effective promotion and outreach strategies are essential. Awareness campaigns and marketing initiatives will be conducted to ensure that MSMEs are informed about the portal's existence and benefits. Collaboration with key stakeholders, including government agencies and business support organisations, will further enhance the visibility and credibility of the portal.

The implementation roadmap provides a phased approach for portal development and launch, including milestones. This structured approach ensures efficient project management and enables the timely completion of each development phase. Testing, feedback, and iterative improvements will be integral to refining the portal's functionality, usability, and content relevance, ensuring that it continuously meets the evolving needs of its users.