

# EXTERNAL EVALUATION – SHORT REPORT

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## **Strengthening the analytic capacities in the field of animal health**

Country | Region: Republic of Moldova

Project No.: 2014.2491.0-95.300  
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Executing Agency: Government of the Republic of Moldova  
Implementing Partner: Centrul Republican de Diagnostica Veterinaria - National Centre for Animal Diagnostics (CRDV)

PTB | Working Group: 9.31 Europe and the CIS  
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## List of abbreviations

ANSA	Agenția Națională pentru Siguranța Alimentelor National Agency for Food Safety
CRDV	Centrul Republican de Diagnostica Veterinaria National Centre for Animal Diagnostics
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
ISO/IEC	International Organisation for Standardisation/ International Electrotechnical Commission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIE	International Organisation of Animal Health
QI	quality infrastructure
QM	quality management

## 1. Project Description

Moldova is the poorest country in Europe. The collapse of the ancient Soviet Union had plunged the country in the 90's in great economic distress. Since the early 2000s it has started a process of recovery and made significant progress in reducing poverty and promoting inclusive growth, driven by consumption and fuelled by remittances. As the internal market is very small, trade is extremely important to Moldova's economy. Moldova's Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the EU represents an important potential for its future development as long as EUs import and regulatory requirements can be fulfilled. Although the European integration process has to a certain extend anchored the Government's policy reform agenda, Moldova seems to be stuck in the middle of an erratic transformation process. Ideological polarization runs through the entire society and hampers the unfolding of its potential and structural reforms. Because of the diversified trade relations, the QI-sector faces the challenge to achieve compliance with different standard systems, which implies a lot of pressure implement a profound change process. In the area of food safety this process takes place in the context of the Moldovan laboratory reform, which is strongly influenced by the DCFTA action plan. It relates directly to CRDV (Centrul Republican de Diagnostica Veterinaria, National Centre for Animal Diagnostics) with its two departments on food safety and animal health. The Republic of Moldova had committed to the EU to work according to the quality standard EN ISO/IEC 17025:2005 and to have CRDV internationally accredited in its test methods. The limited capacity of CDRV's animal health department to operate along these requirements had been identified as the core problem to be addressed through the PTB project.

Against this backdrop, PTB was commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in 2014 to implement the project "Strengthen the analytical capacities in the field of animal health". As the project is approaching its end (26.04.2018) an external evaluation was realised in February 2018 in order to the revise results achieved, identify relevant learning points and make recommendations for the partner institution, PTB and an eventual follow-up project.

## 2. Assessment of the project

Regarding the status of the change process the OECD DAC-criteria relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability were assessed and acknowledged a good performance of the project with an overall rating of 1.9.

## 2.1 Status of the change process

### Relevance

For the criterion *relevance* the following aspects were assessed:

- alignment with policies and strategies of the partner countries
- attention to the policies and needs of the partner institutions
- coverage of the needs of the target group
- orientation along international development goals and
- accordance with German government development orientations

The evaluation showed that the project was implemented in complete alignment with existing strategic orientations of the Republic of Moldova, including the National Development Strategy, the Action Plan of the Republic of Moldova to Implement the DCFTA, the National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development and the Food Safety Strategy. With respect to the policies and needs of the partner institutions to documents have to be mentioned as point of reference: Development strategy of the laboratory system in the food and feed chain for the Republic of Moldova for the period 2013 – 2015 and ANSA's Multi-Annual National Control Plan 2016-2020. Furthermore, the necessary attention to the policies and needs of the partner institutions were mainly backed-up by the interviews held during the evaluation process. Additionally, it shall be reminded that the partner institutions are organisations of the public sector, which implies that their activities are guided by existing government orientations. The coverage of the needs of the target group was insofar assured as all QI-services targeted during the implementation could either be related production and trade or consumer protection. Through its contents the project was directly connected to several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as expressed in the Agenda 2030. Key concepts to be mentioned here are sustainable economic growth and industrialisation, responsible consumption and production, resilient infrastructure, global partnerships for sustainable development. When allowing for more extensive impact chains, a number of additional SDGs will be contributed to in the areas of health, employment and income generation. With respect to its technical contents, the project follows the orientations of the BMZ sector concept "Quality infrastructure".

### Effectiveness

The criterion *effectiveness* assesses whether the goals of the development measure have been achieved or are likely to be achieved during the defined implementation period. The objective was formulated as follows: "*The Republican Center for Veterinarian Diagnostic (CRDV/ Centrul Republican de Diagnostica Veterinara) animal health laboratory performs testing in the field of animal health according to requirements of the international standard ISO/IEC 17025*". Two indicators had been defined to follow-up on the achievement:

- Implementation of an accreditation pre-audit according to ISO/IEC 17025 with a scope of at least 9 internationally accepted testing methods in the field of animal health by an internationally recognized accreditation body.
- No critical non-conformities shown during an accreditation pre-audit

Furthermore, a series of output indicators (not detailed here) were linked to contribute to the fulfillment of the achievement of the project objective. Based on the mere results of its indicators, the project's effectiveness is considered to have achieved a good level (rating 2,3), as one of the two indicators was entirely fulfilled and the second to 66%. It must be pointed out, that the quality level of achievement (*successful accreditation pre-audit according to ISO/IEC 17025*) was even surpassed, as 5 testing methods could be fully accredited.

### Impact

The criterion *Impact* assesses the extent to which the project is contributing to achieving the intended overarching results. With respect to measuring its contribution to *impact*, it was still too early to expect visible quantitative effects in the prolonged impact chain. Evaluating the soundness and the plausibility of the impact hypotheses and their linkage to the undertaken activities, the conclusion could be drawn that a successful contribution can be expected (rating 2,0). Two counterproductive effects were prejudicial regarding the cause-effect motion of the chain and thus did not allow for a better rating: the originally

intended testing scope of 9 methods (see Effectiveness) could not be completed as originally intended and the composition of the methods accredited does not allow to fully test certain relevant diseases.

#### Efficiency

Within this DAC-criterion the evaluation assessed the economic efficiency of the project structure and its management approach, the appropriateness of the chosen delivery modes, its cooperation performance as well as possible transaction costs for the partners deriving from the project interventions. Apart from the highly efficient long-distance coordination from HQs, the project had displayed very good management in the use and composition of its modes of delivery, particularly through shaping a highly effective continuous coaching process by two intermediate technical key experts. Though sharing a steering structure with a parallel GIZ project might have brought certain efficiency gains, the existing interface of the two projects could not be sufficiently exploited to favour the criterion. The *efficiency* level of the project was assessed to be between very good and good (rating 1,5).

#### Sustainability

The DAC-criterion *Sustainability* checks on the durability of achieved changes. The conceptual set-up and the roll-out of the project were fully aligned toward the criterion of *sustainability*. Although its strict focus on technical matters had made the project less vulnerable to political influences and existing intra- and interinstitutional tensions in CRDV's environment, it was the politically made choice of the final accreditation scope made by the Moldovan authorities (see comments under the criterion *impact*) which influenced negatively the assessment of the criterion *sustainability*. Furthermore, there exists a concrete risk that future funding to assure 17025 requirements, audits and reaccreditation might not be available (in time). Sustainability is also tied to „practice“, meaning that the effective use of CRDV for surveillance through its supervisory institution is a crucial element in assuring the durability of changes. Under these circumstances the criterion was rated 2,7 (satisfactory).

## 2.2 Success factors for the observed results and change processes

With respect to the successful management of the implementation process, the factors *strategy*, *cooperation*, *steering*, *processes* and *learning/innovation* have been assessed. The assessment compares the initial potential for the development of each one of these factors (e.g. enabling environment and institutional conditions to fully develop an effective cooperation strategy) with what the project was able to achieve through its management performance. Gaps of 20% allowing actions for improvement were registered with the factors *strategy* and *processes*, while the original potential for the factor *steering* has been entirely implemented. With respect to *cooperation* and *learning&innovation*, the project was even able to expand beyond the originally given potential and thus create new reference situations for the partner institution.

#### Strategy

The technically clearly structured, and contents and process related approach of the original project concept had offered an important potential to contribute effectively to an impact chain targeting the access of animal food exports to the European market. However, along the implementation process the Moldovan side had begun to reduce the quantity and the composition of testing methods necessary for that purpose, leading to the accreditation of a scope only partially responding to the targeted animal diseases. At the same time, the roll-out of the implementation strategy had to face a series of challenges which affected at some stage all of the assessed management criteria unfavourably (e.g.: ambiguous leadership situation within CRDV; hampered mobilisation of existing knowhow on ISO 17025; lack of adequate support by the supervisory authority; etc.). The implementation strategy was only kept on target because of the project coordination's ability to navigate intelligently through most of the emerging hindrances and unfavourable working conditions.



## Cooperation

The PTB project found itself in a rather difficult starting situation with a low cooperation potential - both with and within CRDV as well as with respect to ANSA, the supervisory authority. Nevertheless, the PTB-team was able to gradually foster cooperation on the technical and middle management level through a flexible coaching approach led by the two intermediate key experts. With respect to external cooperation, the targeted and initially as promising regarded synergies with the technically closely related GIZ-led project could not be activated. On the other hand, projects of the technically neighbouring donor community (particularly EU and World Bank) not only expressed their highest respect for the achievements realised under difficult conditions but were able to profit from the PTB project's flexibility to back up some of their own activities when they were not able to comply in time with the provision of equipment because of procedural complications.

## Steering structure

The culture of dialogue, co-responsibility and participatory management was not very much developed in the given transformational Moldavian context, where hierarchical thinking, conduct and control continue to be powerful patterns of social behaviour. Specific intra and interinstitutional tensions (CRDV/ANSA) lowered the cooperation potential even further. Under these circumstance, the possibility to share a steering structure together with the GIZ project appeared as an instrument able to challenge the initial low steering potential. At the end it was the consistent and persistent application of the already mentioned participatory roll-out approach of the PTB-team which created steering capacity and involvement at the middle management and staff level, exploring and surpassing in time the initial cooperation potential. In contrast, the shared steering committee did not develop according to the original expectations.

## Processes

The intervention started operations under a rather favourable achievement potential with respect to the development of processes, as both CRDV and ANSA had some experience with international technical cooperation. At the same time, PTB projects can usually rely on methodologically and instrumentally sound knowledge regarding steering and support processes. Targeting accreditation meant to follow a clear technical capacity development path accompanied by specific trainings, proficiency tests and audits. While the technical core processes related to accreditation were practically fully exploited, some potential remained unexplored within the development of steering and support processes, e.g. in terms of planning, process management, M&E and knowledge management. The institutional environment had not favoured systematic development of process competencies linked to these management fields.

## Learning and innovation

The initial potential for this success factor was rather low as CRDV had no established learning culture, nor used the institution systematic tools to foster knowledge development consistently. Continuous and targeted capacity development as well as process advisory were new approaches for the institution, and credibility needed to be build up in time. Against this backdrop, the quality and the character of the project's working modes were oriented toward shared intra-institutional learning and outside exposure through participation in international proficiency tests, external trainings and exchange with foreign QI expertise. Particularly the exposure to external expertise had an important impact on motivation and technical understanding of many CRDV collaborators. The initial potential was thus fully achieved, and even pushed beyond its original limitation.

### 3. Learning processes and learning experience

The genesis of the project and the prolonged appraisal process had produced first indications that the implementation could encounter significant obstacles. Under these circumstances the consideration of a predetermined breaking point within the project concept might have been useful and could have been discussed with BMZ before or even after commissioning the development initiative. Although PTB projects have a high degree of technicality, the need for training in soft skills, entrepreneurial and certain process competencies often becomes evident. This is particularly tangible in

transformation countries where deficits in the above-mentioned areas are frequently observed and can eventually slow down the technical implementation process. Additional capacity building in these fields should thus be considered from the start.

The shared appraisal with GIZ and the definition of both projects with an important interface in contents and partners represented a valuable opportunity to achieve higher impact. When preparing the commissions, the creation of an overarching program set-up integrating both initiatives was for some reason not an option. It might be useful in future similar circumstances of “closeness” to go beyond the general expressions of synergies articulated in the commissions and define subsequently further details of collaboration in any kind of additional protocol.

#### 4. Recommendations

- Although a follow-up project is not foreseen, the mission team suggests to consider a timely limited and focussed further engagement, in order to finalize the accreditation scope originally intended. This proposal has to be seen in the light of a series of animal diseases which are currently not only threatening the Republic of Moldova but the entire European Union. CRDV has advanced decisively in its preparation for the remaining accreditation process and a series of selected follow-up activities would contribute substantially to improve impact and sustainability.
- A more fluent relationship and better communication between the supervisory authority ANSA and CRDV is crucial to orient and accompany CRDV's future development. ANSA's support is needed in order to complete the testing methods required. CRDV lab specialists should be included more frequently in general technical discussions to strengthen ANSA's dialogues with government when strategic decisions are at stake with regard to food safety issues. ANSA needs to be aware that CRDV requires adequate financing in order to comply with its task. This includes maintaining the accreditation in time and safeguarding the traceability of equipment.
- To increase CRDV's performance, it is suggested to implement a quality management (QM) with one supervisory Quality Assurance Manager for all departments, increase the uniformity of the QM manual and to adapt its QM system to the new ISO/EU 17025:2017. In order to facilitate and harmonise the validation of test methods, it is proposed to organise the QM documentation along parameter groups and analysis techniques. It is also suggested to implement multi-test methods by flexible scope (PCR for bacteriological and virus parameters; ELISA test systems). This requires to strengthen the technical competencies of the staff through advanced hands-on training for new Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) techniques. Furthermore, the introduction of a Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) in the animal health department would help to organise the processes. Expand CRDV's engagement in international lab networking regarding OIE and EU-reference laboratories could impact favourably on the institution's development.

