

Moldovan government launches concept of local public administration reform



The government proposes tripling the incentive for localities that choose to amalgamate and setting a minimum threshold of 3,000 inhabitants for mayoralities, in order to consolidate local administrations and accelerate investments in infrastructure. After more months of discussions and consultations, during which the opinions of local elected officials and citizens were heard, Secretary General of the Government Alexei Buzu today presented the Concept of Local Public Administration Reform.

The reform is proposed in a context in which the current administrative fragmentation no longer allows many localities to develop at the level expected by citizens. At present, over 87 per cent of Moldova's mayoralities have fewer than 3,000 inhabitants. Only 53 mayoralities have more than 5,000 inhabitants, 63 have between 3,000 and 5,000 inhabitants and 776 have fewer than 3,000 inhabitants.

Excessive fragmentation of local public administration does not bring modernization and produces increasingly large differences between communities. Stronger mayoralities manage to modernize localities more quickly, while many small mayoralities lag behind in basic infrastructure and essential public services.

The data show that 34 per cent of Moldova's households do not have access to water and sewerage, and among them, 8 out of 10 households without running water and 77 per cent of households without sewerage are located in localities with small mayoralities. At the same time, small mayoralities have low own revenues, about 11 per cent of the budget, while 50–60 per cent of resources come from the state budget.

Another effect of fragmentation is the more pronounced depopulation of small localities. In the last 10 years, these settlements have recorded a population decrease of 32.7 per cent, twice the national average. At the same time, 80.5 per cent of small mayoralities do not have staff specialized in projects' management, which reduces their capacity to attract external funds and implement major investments.

Administrative fragmentation also generates high operating costs. A small mayorality spends, on average, about 30 per cent of its budget on administrative costs, while larger mayoralities have better financial capacity and can direct more resources toward

development projects. In addition, only 9.1 per cent of small mayoralties provide most services in digital format.

The reform concept proposes a clear set of solutions to address these problems. First, the government will continue to support voluntary amalgamation and will triple the investment incentive in infrastructure granted to localities that choose to unite. Thus, the amount of support will increase from 1,000 to 3,000 lei per inhabitant. The total estimated cost of the incentive package for the period 2026–2030 is 6.491 billion lei.

At the same time, the reform is based on a clear principle: the village remains and local identity is preserved. The names of localities, communities and traditions do not disappear. Residents will continue to have a direct link with the administration through the mayor's representative in the locality, so that the needs of each community are heard and taken into account.

A minimum threshold of 3,000 inhabitants for mayoralties is also proposed. By creating larger local public administrations, communities will be able to provide better services, will have the capacity and specialists to access external funds and implement major projects, and will have more financial resources to meet local needs.

To improve citizens' access to services, CUPS (Public Service Provision Centers) may be opened in the buildings of former mayoralties, and through a one-stop shop, more than 600 public services, including in digital format, will be available. The reform thus aims to reduce bureaucracy, unnecessary travel and time costs for citizens.

The concept also provides for strengthening regional cooperation for joint administration. The transition from 32 districts (raioane) to 10 has the goal of accelerating regional development, with a focus on major projects and inter-communal development. The new structures will be able to manage projects of major interest, such as regional roads, hospitals and waste management.

For Taraclia district, a solution adapted to the specifics of the region is proposed, given that approximately 65.6 per cent of the population is of Bulgarian ethnicity. The concept provides for transforming Taraclia into a level II municipality, so that local identity is preserved and, at the same time, a more efficient and stronger administration is ensured.

For informing citizens and local authorities, the platform www.primariiputernice.gov.md has also been launched, which brings together useful information about the local public administration reform and practical tools for communities. In addition, two interactive tools can be accessed here – the amalgamation simulator and the mayoralties' budget.

The reform concept does not represent a final decision, but the basis for a new stage of public consultations. In recent months, the government has held discussions with more than 4,500 local elected officials and citizens, and the proposals formulated during these consultations formed the basis of the document presented.

