

Guide for Applicants and Frequently Asked Questions



MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND DIGITALISATION
OF REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

EDIH



E-GOVERNANCE AGENCY



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Implemented by

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
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What is this Guide About

Disclaimer:

This document aims to guide you through the process of the “Moldovan National Pre-Selection Process”, which aims to identify and select respective candidates (individual or consortia), suitable to apply for a Call for Proposal for European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH) in Moldova, to be launched by the European Commission in 2025, funded under the Digital Europe Programme (DEP). The guide gives answers to the most frequently asked questions related to this process. It is provided by the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization of Moldova and the eGovernance Agency.

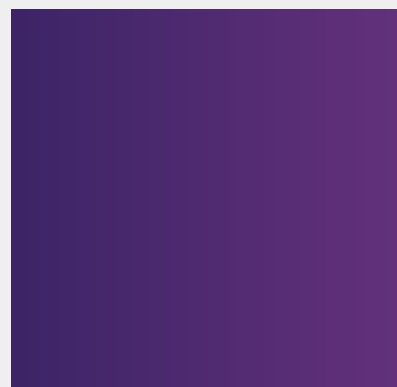
It does not replace **official documents** of the European Commission.

For specific questions, please contact:

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National Contact Point, Digital
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1. What are European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs)?

For many years the European Commission (EC) has been supporting different approaches on how to best connect the worlds of research, innovation and technology with the world of business, e.g. by fostering the use of public technology infrastructure and researchers for SMEs. As one result of this evolution the Digital Innovation Hub concept was launched in 2016 to support businesses in adopting digital technologies and innovations, these DIHs started with a wide variety of methods and organizational forms. European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH) are the further development of this concept. EDIHs are established after a rigorous evaluation process that ensures they possess the necessary expertise and resources. One key aspect of this evaluation focuses on achieving a balanced regional spread across respective countries and Europe (as part of an EU- and Associated-countries wide EDIH network).

A European Digital Innovation Hub aims to support the digital transformation of companies (especially SMEs and small Mid-caps¹) and /or public sector organizations on a large scale. It consists of one or more organizations working together and complementing each other's expertise.

An EDIH should serve a defined geographical area, providing support to customers within an area that allows clients to visit the EDIH within a reasonable travelling time (i.e. approximately around 2 hours travel time one way). Each EDIH must therefore have a geographical focus. ²

Each EDIH should provide services in the following areas:

- ✓ **Test before invest:** providing facilities, infrastructure and support to enable companies to test digital technologies in order to make an informed decision about investments in digital technologies.
- ✓ **Skills and training:** providing services and offers to upskill the clients' existing labor force, as well as to increase the overall competencies in companies and / or public sector organizations and establish a strategic perspective in leading company positions with regard to digital transformation.

[1] According to the EU Commission definition, a „Small Mid-cap“ is an enterprise with up to 499 employees (see FAQ: European Digital Innovation Hubs: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/faq-european-digital-innovation-hubs>)

[2] For more information see the Work Programme: <https://european-digital-innovation-hubs.ec.europa.eu/knowledge-hub/guidance-documents/edih-work-programme-2021-2023>

- ✓ **Support to find investment:** helping companies to find sources of funding for their digital transformation investments as well as for new digital services and business models.
- ✓ **Networking and access to innovation ecosystems:** to establish a network of support in its area as well as to build and provide access to relevant innovation ecosystems. The EDIH will need to establish a regional network and be part of a Europe-wide network, also to provide a one-stop-shop for customers. This explicitly includes networking with other EDIHs as well as other projects funded by the Digital Europe Programme (DEP).

An EDIH does not need to be operational with the full set of services from the start. However, it is expected that the full set of services and complementary infrastructure will be available during the first **18 months** of operation of the EDIH.

Each EDIH should address one or more of these technologies / thematic areas:

- ✓ **High Performance Computing**
- ✓ **Cyber security**
- ✓ **Artificial Intelligence**
- ✓ **Advanced Digital Skills**

Each EDIH should provide services based on a specific focus/expertise, which will support the local private and public sector with their digital and green transformation. This specialization can be strengthened over time and should take advantage of existing local competencies in this area. Services should be provided on an open, transparent, and non-discriminatory basis. Each EDIH should act as an access point to the European Network of EDIHs, helping local companies and/or public actors to get support from other EDIHs when the required competences are outside the competence of the local EDIH, thus ensuring that each stakeholder receives the necessary support wherever it is available in Europe. Conversely, each EDIH should support the companies and public actors from other regions and countries introduced by other EDIHs who need their expertise.

An EDIHs should be active in networking with other EDIHs in Moldova and other countries, sharing best practices and specialist knowledge, connecting companies with others in their value chain, and seeking synergies with innovators and early adopters. Given the European nature and networking character of EDIHs it is of outmost importance that EDIHs in Moldova are able to communicate in English.

Each EDIH should make available the relevant experimentation facilities related to its specialization.



SMEs, small mid-caps, and the public sector will be able to test the proposed technologies, including where relevant their environmental impact, and the feasibility of applying these technologies to their business before investing further in them.

EDIHs should maintain structured long-term relationships with the relevant local actors like regional authorities, industrial clusters, SME associations, business and regional development agencies, incubators, accelerators, chambers of commerce.



2. Where can I find additional information about the EDIHs?

For further information, kindly refer to the publicly available information on the website of the European Commission. Inter alia, but not limited to:

-  [European Digital Innovation Hubs Network](#)
-  [Knowledge Hub of the Digital Transformation Accelerator](#)
-  [Frequently Asked Questions, European Digital Innovation Hubs](#)
-  [EDIH Work Programme](#)
-  [EDIH Call for Proposals](#)

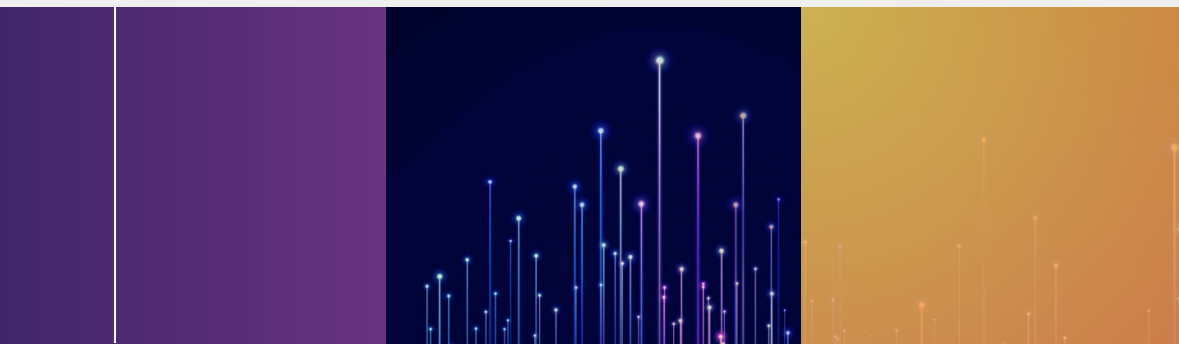
3. What is the objective and procedure of the Moldovan National Pre-Selection Process?

The ultimate goal of the Digital Europe Programme (in this context) is to establish European Digital Innovation Hubs in Moldova to best support the digital transformation of enterprises and/or public sector organizations in Moldova.

To achieve this, and to extend the network of existing EDIHs in the EU to candidate countries such as Moldova, the European Commission plans to launch a Call for Proposals (CfP) in 2025. The basis for such a CfP will be restricted to a national shortlist of eligible Moldovan entities (individual or consortia), which will be communicated to the European Commission by the Government of Moldova upon finalizing the national preselection and evaluation process.

In order to create this shortlist in an inclusive and transparent manner, the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization (MEDD) and e-Governance Agency (hereafter eGA), as the delegated state entity for the Digital Europe Programme, is launching the Moldovan National Pre-Selection Process (NPSP) to identify and select the respective candidates (individual or consortia). The conditions of the competition will be made public on MEDD and eGA websites and during the official launch event that is going to be organized in January 2025. The announcement about the official launch event will also be posted on these websites: <https://mded.gov.md>, <https://egov.md>, <https://dep.mded.gov.md/>.

The results of the NPSP will be made publicly available on the aforementioned website, three working days after the European Commission receives the shortlist. Shortlisted consortia will be informed prior to the notification to the European Commission. **Only shortlisted candidates will be eligible to take part in the European Commission's call for proposals.**



4. What is in it for my entity/my consortium?

Financial support

The European Commission will provide funding for the Moldovan EDIHs in the form of grants. The Grant Agreements are foreseen to be signed following the Commission's evaluation and notification of beneficiaries. The funding by the EC for the EDIHs in Moldova will cover **50%** of the total budget of the EDIHs project.

The 50% of the EC funding must be matched with **50% of the Applicant's financial contribution** (individual or consortia). These 50% of the Applicant can, for example, be obtained from the state budget, from sponsorships (from international donors) or it can be own funds or even a mixture of funding sources. It is important to mention that the availability of the 50% of the total budget does not need to be proven by the Applicant, from the very start of the grant period with the EC, but just with the first reporting, 18 months after the start of the grant.

While there is no lower or upper limit set by Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization (MEDD) and/or the EC on the budget for each respective EDIH, it is presumed that the EDIHs in Moldova might have a total budget (50% EC / 50% own funds) in the – INDICATIVE – range between 400.000 EUR and 1.000.000 EUR. A survey during the Stakeholder Forum in Madrid (November 2019) estimated the following cost distribution: 50-75% in personnel costs, 10 - 25% in equipment and 5 -10 % in travel costs. All these numbers are to be seen as INDICATIVE. Each Applicant is strongly encouraged to do own calculations for the required budget and distribution of resources.

The **MEDD will issue letters of recommendation to the shortlisted candidates** to support their cause in attracting funding from the international and private sector community.

An **EDIH must have a not-for-profit objective**; if a commercial company is part of an EDIH, it should declare that for the activities covered by the EC's grant, all money earned by or donated to it will be used to pursue EDIH's objectives and to keep EDIH operational. If earnings are part of the financing plan, these should be reinvested in EDIH. The earnings can be part of the plan to co-finance the non-EU 50% of the budget.

Non-financial support

For support measures during the NPSP phase, please check paragraph 8.

MEDD and eGA, in partnership with the German Development Cooperation, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH will provide technical assistance measures (capacity building) for **shortlisted applicants** as well as for selected EDIHs in Moldova. This will include networking activities with existing EDIHs, assistance in the preparation and signing of a Grant Agreement for the selected EDIHs.

50%



5. Are there any limitations towards the sector, topic, or technological focus of the proposed EDIH?

NO, the NPSP is designed to be sector- and technology-agnostic, therefore MEDD and eGA will welcome all constructive applications from any sector, topic, or technological focus.

It shall be noted that in the EU a technology focus has been set on High-Performance Computing, Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity, and Advanced Digital Skills. At least one of these should be addressed; additional focus areas may also be addressed.

For an overview of the operating EDIHs and their technology and sector focus, kindly refer to the [EDIH catalogue \(see filters\)](#).

Given the networking nature of EDIHs, interested parties are strongly encouraged to reach out to operating EDIHs to discuss their ideas for their respective Moldovan EDIH.



6. What support measures are available for interested parties during the NPSP?

In order to support applicants in this process, certain support services will be offered:

(A) Info & Q&A Sessions

Following the launch event in January 2025, additional “Info & Q&A” webinars will be offered. The exact time and dates of the “Info & Q&A” webinars will be announced on the websites mentioned at pnt. 3. The “Info and Q&A” webinar will offer interested parties the opportunity to address open points and clarify open questions directly with the MEDD, eGA and GIZ teams.

(B) Expert Consultation Sessions

After the official launch event in January 2025, individual consultation sessions will be also offered to the applicants. Applicants will have the opportunity to receive guidance on specific sections of the application form. The feedback provided will not focus on the specific content or idea of specific / individual applications. The consultation sessions will be held in English. Applicants will indicate the topics to be discussed with the expert team to be able to prepare and advise effectively.

(C) Showcasing Webinars

Starting with the first quarter of 2025, showcasing webinars will be organized to offer the potential applicants the possibility to learn about EDIHs from other countries as well as input from the European Commission’s “Digital Transformation Accelerator”, being the knowledge platform for EDIHs. The exact dates and time of the sessions will be announced on the websites mentioned at pnt.3. The session will be held in English. Interpretation services will be ensured.

Participation in the launch event, the Info & Q&A Sessions, Expert Consultation Sessions and/or the showcasing webinars is neither mandatory to be selected, nor will it, under any circumstances, automatically lead to the application being selected.

7. What kind of organizations can apply for the NPSP?

List of potential organizations running an EDIH individually or as part of a consortium, include, but are not limited to,

- Research and/or Technology Organizations (RTOs)
- Technology and/or Innovation Centers
- Science, Technology and/or Innovation Parks
- Entrepreneurship Support Organisations (Incubators, Accelerators, Investors, etc.)
- Business Support Organizations (Chambers of Commerce, Sectoral Associations, NGO, etc.)
- Innovative companies / private Technology Providers, cutting edge technology focused Small and Medium sized enterprises (SMEs)
- Development Agencies and Organizations (Economic, Regional, SME, Industrial and/or Technological Development)
- Technological Development, Research and/or Innovation Foundations
- Universities/faculties and/or university/faculty-based research centers
- Vocational Training Institutes
- Industrial Clusters, IT-related associations/companies
- Public or private funding/finance organizations.

Although proposals from both individual entities and consortia are eligible, applying as a consortium is often more effective for meeting the diverse objectives of EDIHs. A consortium can pool a wider range of expertise, resources, and networks, creating a more robust support system for digital transformation and aligning with successful practices demonstrated by other EDIHs across Europe.

8. What is the foreseen timeline for the NPSP and what happens afterwards?

The call for applications under the National Pre-Selection Process opens on **22.01.2025**. The Deadline for submitting applications is **31.03.2025, 23:59:59 hours (local time)**.

During this period, a range of support services are available to applicants (see section 6).

After the NPSP phase, submitted applications will be evaluated and the most promising applications will be selected for a shortlist, which will then be submitted by the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization of Moldova to the European Commission Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT) (see point 12).

For the **shortlisted candidates**, DG CONNECT will open a Call for Proposals in TBC Qx/2025 (indicative). This CfP will remain **open for a period of approx. 8 - 10 weeks**, during which applicants will be able to prepare and submit their proposal. The final proposals will be sent directly to DG CONNECT, not to the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization of Moldova. DG CONNECT will solely be responsible for evaluating and selecting the winning proposals. The total available budget will be distributed according to the budgets indicated in the proposals to DG CONNECT. The budget / grant dispersion will be handled by DG CONNECT, with which the selected candidates will sign a Grant Agreement.

In addition to the financial support by the EC, selected EDIHs may receive various support measures for the design, development and operation of their EDIH (see point 4).

Proposals that do not qualify for funding under the Digital Europe Programme, but are ranked above the threshold (**10 points** and above), will receive – by the EC - a so-called **Seal of Excellence (SoE)**, and will be encouraged to use this SoE to acquire funding from other sources (e.g. international donor community, etc.).

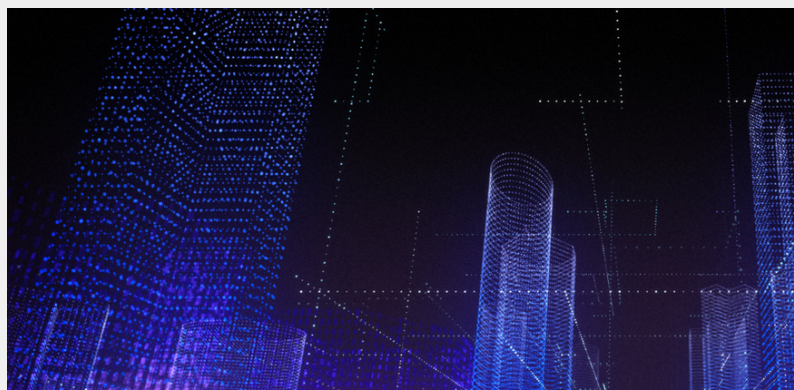
IMPORTANT!

Kindly refrain from contacting DG CONNECT during the NPSP phase. All questions are encouraged to be addressed during: Info and Q&A sessions, Expert consultations or by sending an email to:

Dorina Harea

dorina.harea@egov.md

National Contact Point, Digital
Europe Programme



9. How to apply?

The call for applications under the National Pre-Selection Process opens on **22.01.2025** and closes on **31.03.2025, 23:59:59** hours (local time). During this period, applicants can submit their applications via the [Online Submission Form](#) that can be downloaded from [here](#) and submit the filled in version by the established deadline.

Applications submitted by any other means than the Online Submission Form will not be considered eligible.

The **Online Submission Form** needs to be completed with the basic identification information of the applicants. Meaning, the (lead) applicant needs to indicate its official name as an organisation (name of lead consortia partner in case of consortium), short and long name of the proposed European Digital Innovation Hub, as well as e-mail addresses of the main contact person, which will be used for official communication.

The **Online Submission Forms** needs to be complemented with the upload of relevant documents, namely the **Application Form (English version)**, and **signed Partnership Agreement**.

The Submission Form will include:

-  Application Form
-  Partnership Agreement (if applying via a consortium)

All sections have instructions concerning the format and size in which they need to be submitted.

The Application Form is limited to **12 pages** (A4, Arial, 11pt, single spaces), needs to be submitted as a **PDF document** and cannot be larger than **2 MB**.

Signed Partnership Agreement needs to be submitted as a **PDF document**, with a maximum size of **2 MB**. **Both handwritten and digital signatures are accepted**, and either form of signature will be considered valid for the submission.

All sections of the **Online Submission Form** are **mandatory**. The information provided should be up to date, truthful, complete, as well as consistent and should allow for a complete evaluation of the application.

For each submitted application, the single applicant or respectively the lead applicant of a consortium, acts as the main contact. It is the responsibility of the (lead) applicant to ensure the timely submission of the proposals. Submissions of proposals can only be made by a representative of the lead applicant to avoid duplicate submissions.

A proposal can only be submitted once. Any modifications of the proposals after the submission are not possible and will not be taken into account. We thus advise applicants to thoroughly review their application and use the checklist in the application form before submission.

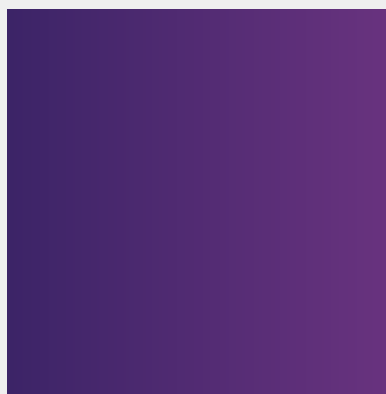
10. How to apply?

Applicants and consortia partners can only be part of one consortium. Consortium coordinators are responsible for proving this through a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or Partnership Agreement with all participating members.

In case a member is part of two consortia, only one application will be chosen for evaluation. MEDD and eGA will prioritize the application that best adheres to the selection criteria and best aligns with the project's objectives.

11. What happens if I do not submit my application within the deadline?

Applications received after the deadline will not be accepted. We strongly encourage applicants not to wait until the last minute to submit their applications. Failure to meet the submission deadline for any reason, including extenuating circumstances, will result in the application being rejected.



12. How will the applications be evaluated?

The evaluation process is transparent, fair, and equal for all participants. For this Call for applications under the NPSP, each application goes through several checks, namely (a) **administrative and initial eligibility check** and (b) **quality check**, both described below.

The administrative and initial eligibility check will be made by MEDD and eGA and the independent group of evaluators/experts and will comprise the following aspects:

- ✓ Eligibility of the applying institutions (see point 7)
- ✓ Accuracy of the application
- ✓ Completion of the requirements for documents submission (see point 9)

The quality check is performed by a group of two (2) independent evaluators. In addition, MEDD and eGA will nominate one (1) internal evaluators. All together they will form the Evaluation Committee.

The maximum score of each subsection is up to **5 points**. Each application will be evaluated according to three (3) main sections, with a total of 10 sub-sections / criterion:

RELEVANCE

- ✓ Objectives
- ✓ Contribution to regional and/or national objectives policies and strategies (Synergies)
- ✓ Co-financing concept.

IMPLEMENTATION

- ✓ Maturity and foreseen activities/services
- ✓ Implementation plan and efficient use of resources
- ✓ Capacity to carry out the proposed work

IMPACT

- ✓ Expected deliverables, outcomes and long-term impacts
- ✓ Dissemination and communication
- ✓ Competitiveness and benefits for the local innovation eco-system
- ✓ Environmental sustainability and contribution to European Green Deal goals

The evaluators will score each sub-section on a scale from **0 to 5**:

0 = Proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information

1 = Poor – criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses

2 = Fair – proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses

3 = Sufficient – proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present

4 = Good – proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present

5 = Excellent – proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Each member of the **Evaluation Committee** will complete an **Individual Evaluation Form** for each application. The final score for each application will be calculated as an average of the individual assessments provided by the evaluators. Each proposal will be assessed by at least **2 independent** evaluators individually and **1 evaluator** from either MEDD or eGA.

All applications that reach the score **80%** and more will be included in the shortlist.

13. Complaints

Applicants are kindly requested to take into consideration that the evaluations are run by qualified trained experts, and there is no interference in their assessment. Therefore, complaints related to the results of the evaluation will not be considered other than the possible mistakes in the evaluation of the first automatic eligibility criteria.

After the official announcement about the shortlisted applications, applicants can submit their complaints within **three (3) working days**. The Evaluation Committee will review the complaint in **max. seven (7) calendar days** from its receipt. If more time is required to assess the complaint, the Evaluation Committee will inform the applicant by email. Anonymous complaints as well as complaints with incomplete information will not be reviewed.

Nevertheless, if after receiving the results of one of the evaluation phases (when foreseen), the applicant considers that a breach has been committed, they may address their complaint. To do so, please write your complaint in English and send it by email to **dorina.harea@egov.md**, including the following information:

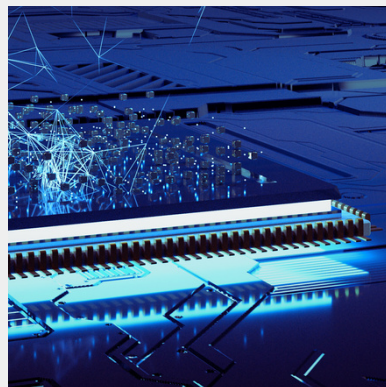
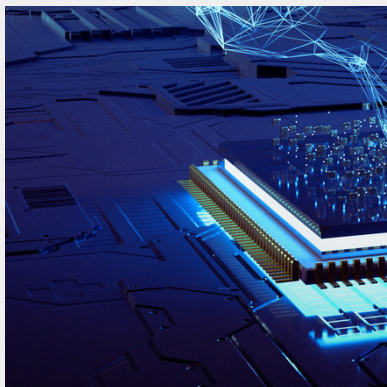
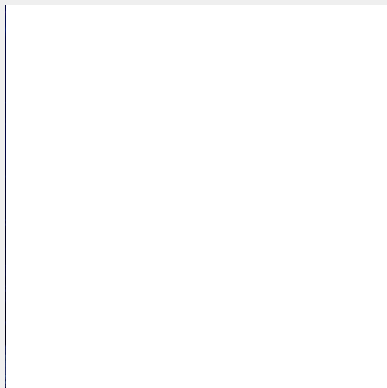
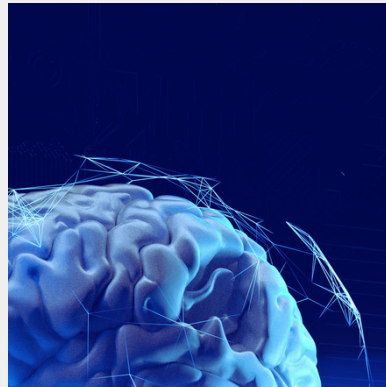
1. Contact details (including email address where to send the reply to)
2. The subject of the complaint
3. Information and evidence regarding the alleged breach

14. Final provisions

Any matters not covered by this Guide will be governed by the national legislation of the Republic of Moldova. Any Intellectual Property Rights will remain the applicants' property.

Personal data will be protected in line with **Law 133/2011**. Providing personal data is voluntary, although it is necessary in order to participate in the Call for Proposals under the NPSP. Without providing your data, it is not possible to contact you and evaluate the application.

MEDD might cancel the Call for proposals at any time, change its provisions or extend it. In such a case, MEDD and eGA will post the information on their websites to make all applicants aware about such changes.



Thank You



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<https://dep.mded.gov.md/>