

**ANNEX VI**  
**FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT**

## **1. Description**

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- 1.1. Name of beneficiary of grant contract: Partnerships for Every Child (Parteneriate pentru Fiecare Copil)
- 1.2. Name and title of the Contact person: Mrs. Stela Grigoras, Director
- 1.3. Name of partners in the Action:
- 1.4. Title of the Action: Developing Short Break Foster Care Service for Children with Disabilities in the Republic of Moldova
- 1.5. Contract number: 2011/254-449
- 1.6. Start date and end date of the reporting period: 25 May 2011- 23 November 2012
- 1.7. Target country(ies) or region(s): Republic of Moldova
- 1.8. Final beneficiaries &/or target groups<sup>1</sup> (if different) (including numbers of women and men):
- 20 children with disabilities living in biological families and with foster carers in Chisinau and Orhei will be supported to be placed with short- break foster carers.
  - 30 parents and carers of children with disabilities who will benefit from respite;
  - 5 staff in the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family and Ministry of Finance will be supported to see the benefits of the new model;
  - 20 staff from 2 local authorities will strategically plan and test a new model of care;
  - 18 members of Gate Keeping Commissions will be supported to fulfil their obligations regarding placement of children in foster care services;
  - 4 finance specialists from the 2 region will be supported to cost for new services;
  - 10 journalists will be trained to understand the issues of children with disabilities;
  - Around 15,000 children with disabilities living in families at risk of losing parental care, who will benefit indirectly by nationwide policy change; general public who will be educated to support the new services
- 1.9. Country(ies) in which the activities take place (if different from 1.7):

## **2. Assessment of implementation of Action activities**

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### 2.1. Executive summary of the Action

The *Developing Short Break Foster Care Service for Children with Disabilities in the Republic of Moldova Project* (May 2011 to November 2012) has been implemented by Partnerships for Every Child (P4EC), funded with a 197,669€ grant from the European Commission-EIDHR and additional P4EC resources. The project's overall objective was to increase the ability of the social protection system of Moldova to address the rights of children with disabilities to quality family based social care as observed with respect to the UNCRC articles 3, 9, and 18. The purpose of the project was:

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<sup>1</sup> "Target groups" are the groups/entities who will be directly positively affected by the project at the Project Purpose level, and "final beneficiaries" are those who will benefit from the project in the long term at the level of the society or sector at large.

development of a Short Break Foster Care model for children with disabilities; pilot testing of the model in 2 regions; and integration of the model into local level service provisions and national level policy debate. This was undertaken through key strategies: building the capacity of local authorities (LA) to develop and deliver the model; strengthen national child care system and to improve social policies; and effective communication and advocacy campaigning.

Targeted outcomes included: increased capacity to ensure the rights of children with disabilities to quality family-based care; shifting in professional and public attitudes towards supporting children with disabilities and their families to prevent family separation using short-term substitute family based care as opposed to residential care; and national support for models of short break foster care for children with disabilities and promotion nationwide replication.

The project managed to develop, pilot and integrate a short break foster care model for children with disabilities in the service delivery in the two target regions of Moldova, as well as to include this new model in the national policy development process, reaching a political commitment for this short-break foster care to be replicated nationally. The project also opened the issue of children with disabilities and disability rights more fully in the national level policy debate.

36 children benefitted from short break foster placement;  
11 additional children and their parents were in the matching process with short-break providers at the end of the project;  
36 parents benefitted from respite time;  
48 sessions with children and parents were held as part of the matching process;  
79 parents benefitted from informational sessions and support;  
27 foster carers were approved and received training in short break foster care;  
4 additional foster care providers are in the process of evaluation;  
Foster care regulations and standards of care were reviewed to incorporate new type of placement;  
Financial norms developed and presented to the national government;  
Short-break foster care is fully operational, sustained from local authorities' budgets and institutionally sustainable.

## 2.2. Activities and results

**Key Activities** of the project included:

### **Activity 1**

**Develop, negotiate and sign collaboration agreements with partner local authorities and establish local steering groups.**

At the beginning of the project implementation the project team carried out activities to ensure appropriate political, institutional and management arrangements.

A range of initial meetings were organised to launch the project and build political support to the new service amongst local authorities followed up by developing, negotiating and signing the agreements of collaboration with Orhei and Chisinau local authorities. The agreements contained main principles and values for the proposed collaboration, roles and responsibilities of each party for the implementation of short-break foster care, plans to ensure service's sustainability.

Local steering groups were established to govern the implementation process, to ensure transparency, participation, ownership and sustainability of the project work. The project team reported, on a quarterly basis, the achievements, as well as obstacles and lessons learned in the implementation process. This activity ensured the implementation of the project according to local needs and priorities, and in full participation with local level decision-makers and professionals.

### **Activity 2**

## **Review of short-break foster care models in other countries and an in-depth analysis of the situation of children with disabilities in Moldova.**

Terms of Reference were developed in collaboration with project local authorities' partners and International Foster Care Organisation (IFCO), specialising on foster care and other type of alternative care for children. IFCO was contracted to undertake the survey; they also agreed to provide technical assistance throughout the project life, including their contribution into the development and provision of capacity building of the local teams, development of the concept of short-break foster care, development of the communication strategy. The findings from the survey have guided the thinking process behind the concept of the service and built commitment of the local partners to the implementation.

Although not foreseen in the original plan, an in-depth analysis of the situation of children with disabilities was necessary to be carried out in order to inform the development of the concept of short-break foster care placement in line with real needs of children with disabilities and their parents in both project sites. The joint teams made of project staff and partner local authorities have designed methodology for the assessment of children with disabilities and their families in relation to their needs for family support type services, including short-break foster care placements. Qualitative methods were applied such as interviews and focus groups with children and parents, specialists and foster carers. 308 children with disabilities and their parents (316), 32 specialists and 24 foster carers from Orhei and Chisinau participated in the assessment. This activity informed the further development of the concept of new services and helped the local authorities to acknowledge the needs of children with disabilities and their parents and shape various types of support provided to them in parallel with short-break foster care.

### **Activity 3**

#### **Development of the pilot model concept, regulations and standards for short break foster care in Moldova, in consultation with families, children, care providers, professionals and local decision makers**

The concept of the short-break foster care was developed in collaboration with the local authorities' teams on the basis of the survey into models of short-break foster care and the assessment of children with disabilities and their families. The development process included many meetings between the project staff and the local authorities, which culminated in a workshop with the participation of the IFCO experts and consultation with 24 children with disabilities (in 3 focus groups), potential beneficiaries of the new model, who validated the model.

The short-break foster care placement was designed to be delivered to any children with disabilities looked after in their families from a couple of hours per day till 30 days per year, in exceptional cases when parents need intensive medical treatment/interventions 45 days per year may be granted. The concept was built based on the following principles: the biological family of the child is the key actor in planning the placement and the family should be empowered to play this role; the matching of the child's needs and foster carer's competences should be done more carefully with active participation of the child and their parents, paying particular attention to the assessment of the needs of the child, daily programme and nutrition; the training programme for short-break foster carers is followed by an initial training in foster care and focuses on meeting the needs of the child with disabilities placed in short-break foster care; short-break foster carers should be preferably recruited from the social network of the child and the family and from the same community.

In November 2012, the IFCO experts assessed the results of the piloting of the developed model. According to the team of experts the model developed in Moldova corresponds to the local needs of children with disabilities and their families, takes into account local possibilities and brought about innovations that are useful to share with Western countries. The elements that was regarded as very useful is the encouragement of collaborative/friendship relationships between the parents of the child with disabilities and the short-break foster care, in order to maximise the support offered to the family and the child and ensure continuity of care of the child in biological and short-break foster care families.

On the basis of the developed concept and results of piloting in 2 regions, the foster care regulations and standards were reviewed to include the short-break type of placement by the project team and the representatives of the Child and Family Protection Department of the MLSPF. These revised documents are to be approved by the government in early 2013. The financing of this type of services is also part of the revised regulation, where the short-break foster care will be remunerated on an hourly basis, or on the basis of number of days worked. The project team have advocated for the funding norms to be revised by the MLSPF and the Ministry of Finance. This is also one of the recommendations of the foster care assessment commissioned by UNICEF in 2012. The revision of funding norms for foster care is likely to take place in 2013, as agreed by the MLSPF.

#### **Activity 4**

##### **Development and provision of a capacity building programme to the local authorities in Chisinau and Orhei to recruit, carry out social work assessment, train, approve, support and monitor short-break foster carers. Provide on-going capacity building to foster care teams and short break carers.**

The project developed appropriate methodologies and built the capacity of the local authority actors to implement them in the process of preparation of short-break foster carers. The capacities of the two local authorities was built by means of provision of formal and informal initial and follow-up training opportunities, as well as by developing a model of professional supervision and monitoring of the professionals involved in the implementation of the model.

Training curriculum and training materials were developed for foster care teams (representatives of the Child Protection Directorate in Chisinau and Social Assistance and Family Protection Directorate in Orhei), for potential short-break foster carers, gate-keeping commissions tasked with approval and matching of foster carers.

The training delivered to the foster care teams (2 social workers in each team), specialists in child rights protection and family, heads of community social services in Chisinau and Orhei focused on skills to advertise for the new service in their communities, recruit potential carers, provide social worker assessment to applicant, prepare the applicant for approval by the gate-keeping commissions, provide initial and on-going training to short-break foster carers and monitor and support children, their families and short break foster carers.

A special attention was placed on the development and provision of a specialised training program focused on understanding of various types of disabilities and of ways of caring of children with disabilities in families and in short-break foster care. The training programme was developed by the project team, supported by experts with experience in different aspects of disabilities and child care and with involvement of child care practitioners from Orhei and Chisinau local authorities. The program contains broad information on 11 topics, including Power Point presentations for the trainers and handouts for the participants at the training. Child protection issues, so that the carers provide the best safe and secure environment for children, were also addressed in the training programme.

The training programme (training curriculum and materials) were presented to MLSPF for consideration to be nationally approved as part of the national foster care curriculum.

The following trainings were organised so far for the implementation teams:

A 2-day initial training for 12 members of the 2 implementation teams held on 10-11 November 2011, in Chisinau with the participation of the IFCO expert. The training event aimed at modelling Short Break Foster Care in the Republic of Moldova through analysis of the international experience and ways of adjusting to the local context. The applied foster care service methodology included: recruitment of applicants, foster care training, child assessment, preparing the child for placement, matching the child with the foster care family, preparing biological children of the foster carer for the placement of a child, specifics of the work and communication with children in placement, individual care plan, placement monitoring, working with the biological family of the child in placement – was discussed within the training.

A 3-day follow-up training for 22 participants, including 12 members of the implementation teams and 10 decision-makers (2 heads of Directorates, main specialists) and other professionals (managers

of community social assistance service, psychologists), held on 27-29 December 2011 in Chisinau. The topics proposed to participants were: early intervention for children with disabilities, family relationships in the context of short-break foster care provision, UN guidelines on alternative care for children, child participation in the context of service development and provision. The findings of the qualitative research on needs assessment of the children with disabilities and their families were presented at the training.

A 2 day-follow up training provided by an expert from IFCO to 22 people from the 2 local authorities, on 26-27 of January 2012, held in Chisinau. The training programme focused on the following aspects: recruitment and training of applicants; specifics of the assessment of the child with disabilities to be placed in respite care; matching the child with the foster care family; methods of preparing the child for placement; preparing the biological parents to accept the respite placement; preparing biological children of the foster carer for the placement of a child with disability with them; specifics of the work with children in placement and communication with children in placement; development and implementation of the individual care plan for the child while in placement; placement monitoring; specifics and methods of communicating with the biological family while the child is in placement, working with the biological family of the child in placement, between placements.

A 5-day study visit of 8 practitioners to Saint Petersburg on 13-18 of February 2012 was organised. The visit included formal training sessions, meeting service providers offering short-break foster care to children with disabilities, carers and families. The visit covered the following topics: service concept and structure, roles, responsibilities and competences of the staff, service methodology (recruitment and training of applicants, information campaigns, and assessment of the applicants, matching between the foster carer and the child, approval of the foster carers, support and monitoring of placements).

1– day training for the members of the gate keeping commissions was delivered in Orhei and Chisinau to build their capacity in the working with cases of children proposed for short break placement at the beginning of May, 2012.

5-day (35 hours) specialized training on short-break foster care was delivered to 20 people from both pilot regions (foster care providers and applicants to become short-break foster carers) on 4-8 of June 2012.

2 meetings of the Working Group working on the development of the specialized training were held on 20 June and 19-20 September 2012.

5-days training course was delivered to 20 current short-break foster carers and applicants on 29 October-2 November 2012 and was well received by the participants.

As a result of this capacity building activities the local implementation teams acquired necessary knowledge and confidence to pursue with the development of the service, professionally recruit, assess, train, and monitoring foster carers.

## **Activity 5**

### **Recruitment of potential short-break foster carers and placements of children with disabilities**

As result of the publicity campaign launched in January, 2012, 27 applicants for the position of foster carers in Orhei and Chisinau were recruited and received a 5-day initial training in the period of 9-25<sup>th</sup> of April, 2012 and 5-day specialised training on 29 October-2 November 2012 . 27 short-break foster carers were approved by the local gate-keeping commissions as foster carers for short-break placements. Other 4 foster carers were being assessed at the end of the project and were envisioned to become foster carers at the end of December.

In order to identify potential beneficiaries of short-break placements, 11 informative meetings were held in both regions, with the parents who have children with disabilities: 8 meetings in Chisinau, with 49 parents, and 3 meetings in Orhei, with 30 parents. Simultaneously, 2 meetings were held with representatives of NGOs and day-care centers providing services to children with disabilities, with 11 representatives. These meetings confirmed the high level of resistance among parents caring for

children with disabilities, especially in Chisinau municipality. They needed time to be persuaded that in short-break foster care their child will be treated so as to meet his/her needs just as well, as they are met in the biological family. A strategy to overcome this situation was to create self-support groups in regions, involving foster carers and parents raising children with disabilities, so that they can share their concerns, experiences and learning.

During the course of the project 36 children (from 36 families) benefitted from short-break foster placements, 18 children in each project site; these children and their families continue to receive services after the end of the project. 11 additional children and their parents were in the process of being matched with respite providers at the time of the project ending who were to start benefiting from short-break foster care in December 2012. All-in-total 48 sessions with children and parents were held as part of the pre-placement matching process.

### **Activity 6**

#### **Development of case monitoring tools and activities to incorporate the model into existing monitoring and evaluation frameworks of the local authorities**

The model of professional supervision was designed for both project sites. The supervisors were identified from within the local authorities' teams that received formal training and coaching to provide supervision and monitoring of short-break foster care placements.

The project team supported the local authorities to develop an M&E framework to be used for monitoring and evaluation of all types of foster care placements. An agenda for short-break foster carers was designed, printed out and disseminated amongst practitioners and foster carers to be used as a tool to monitor short-break placements and to supervise the work of the specialists that are in charge to ensure positive placements. The agenda was developed in such a way that can be also used for other type of foster care placements, such as emergency, short-term and long-term placements. The agenda is also used as an educational tool for foster carers and parents of children with disabilities benefiting from short-break foster care placements, as it contains useful information and advises for care of children with different types of disabilities.

The project sites' teams were also encouraged to apply mixed M&E methods, using qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups and case- studies and quantitative methods in order to obtain reach data regarding outcomes for children in foster care.

### **Activity 7**

#### **Work with local finance departments to ensure budget allocation for respite care services. Promotion of budget mechanisms and recommendations for adequate short-break foster care resourcing**

The project worked closely with partner local authorities to ensure that the new model of care is mainstreamed into the service provision at local level. The local authorities' obligations to provide financial and institutional sustainability were included into the agreements signed at the beginning of the project. These obligations were included into the budget for social services for 2013.

The issue on financing the Foster Care Service, especially in case of short break placement, was discussed during a number of meetings with the representatives of the MLSPF: head and deputy head of Remuneration Policy Directorate, head and deputy head of Family and Child Rights Protection Directorate and head of Labour Relations and Social Partnership Directorate. The decision taken was that in case of employing the foster carer for the period less than one month, which is specific for short break placements, the foster carer's remuneration is paid in line with the number of working days or hours, according to the norms stipulated by the Government Decision no.426 of 26.04.2006 „On approving the mode of average salary calculation”.

As regarding the indemnity for a child placed in short break care the amount is similar with the one stipulated at the moment for the child with disability\* – 325 lei (250 lei x 1,3) = 325 lei; indemnity for

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\* In case of placement in the foster care service of the child with disability the indemnities: unique at placement, monthly for caring and annually for clothes and shoes and hygienic and sanitary products will be increased by 30 %

child caring for one day constitutes 21 lei, if the child has a disability – 27,3 lei: (21 lei/day x 1,3) = 27,3 lei.

At the same time, it should be mentioned that taking into consideration the specific of children (children with special needs) which will be placed in short-break care, during the meetings with the representatives of the MLSPF the issues about increasing the salaries of foster carers were discussed. Proposals were developed for increments to the basic salary of the foster carer for intensity of work and individual and specific character of activity. These proposals will be presented to the Ministry of Finance for examining at the same time as the revised framework Foster Care Regulations

P4EC will continue to work closely with the MLSPF and other stakeholders to influence changes in funding norms for children in foster care, including fees for carers.

## **Activity 9**

### **Development and launching of a communication campaign aimed at addressing public awareness needs, discouraging institutionalization, and increasing the visibility of children with disabilities and their families; training programs for media professionals to increase awareness and commitment to children's rights issues within the media specialities; building a support group of opinion leaders – service beneficiaries, voluntary sector representatives, local and central level decision-makers**

A communication plan in line with EU requirements and guidelines was developed by the project team and consulted with local authorities and the MLSPF aiming to shift public preferences from residential care towards family-based care for children with disabilities, including short-break foster care models which are designed to support the biological family and prevent family breakdown and separation of children with disabilities. The communication plan included a wide range of activities, starting with informational meetings in communities, TV and radio programmes, video and audio clips, and written materials. The target groups were: general public, children and adults; decision makers, professionals, social assistants, foster carers and service providers; children with disabilities and their parents (potential beneficiaries). Key messages of the campaign were: “Discover your heart, we are with you, we go ahead together” and “Building partnerships for every child”.

In order to benefit from a large informational support, the project team trained a group of journalists, representatives of different mass-media institutions, which become a support group for the campaign.

The project organised two training events in collaboration with the Centre for Journalistic Investigations in November 2011 and February 2012 for a group of 10 journalists reflecting the issues related to the care and protection of children with disabilities. The events aimed at strengthening their capacities to understand and objectively reflect issues related to children with disabilities, promoting good models of family and community based care. Professionals, decision-makers, parents and carers, as well as children with special needs participated as opinion leaders, informing the journalists about their views regarding the issues related to the care for children with disabilities.

Informational meetings were held for professionals working in child care and child protection in the 2 regions. These events aimed at achieving support to the new services and participate in dissemination of information that would facilitate recruitment of potential applicants for short-break foster care. As a result of these activities and other informal meetings the project identified a pool of strong opinion leaders that include professionals, parents and carers; these people participate in the informational meetings carried out by the foster care teams in their offices and in communities.

The project has developed 1 video and 1 audio clips promoting foster care that were broadcasted at on national TV and radio stations. The products were approved by the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova. Decision-makers, specialists, parents and foster providers participated in 4 television and radio shows. 18 meetings for public awareness reached 186 people and 9 informational sessions reached 79 parents.

The project also used products developed by EveryChild in Moldova (TV and radio clips, radio and video films) promoting community-based social services, including foster service and safe de-institutionalisation of children, and produced, in collaboration with Teleradio Moldova a range of TV and radio programmes related to child care.

## **Activity 10**

### **Evaluation of the results of the piloting of short-break foster care model**

The evaluation of the short-break foster care models piloted in Chisinau and Orhei has been undertaken by the expert of the IFCO in November 2013. According to the ToR developed for this missions, the expert looked into the foster care methodology that was adapted to incorporate the new type of placement. The expert have carried out a number of interviews with different project stakeholders, starting with children and families beneficiaries of the new services, social workers, specialists at local level and finishing with decision makers. The expert undertook visits to family homes of children with disabilities and of the short0break foster carers.

The main findings of the evaluation are: (1) the new model of short-break foster care represents an efficient form of specialised family support offered to families with children with disabilities with an aim to prevent the psychological burnout of the parents, family-child separation and institutionalisation of children with complex disabilities; (2) the development of the short-break foster care model in Moldova was based soundly on international practice and local needs of children with disabilities and their families and communities, as well as cultural and ethnical peculiarities; (3) the methodology developed for the provision of short-break foster care placement is grounded into existing practices in foster care provision and incorporated institutionally and financially into child care service provision at local level; (4) the methodology was developed on the sound evidence base regarding the needs, attitudes and behaviours of children with disabilities and their parents, families; (5) the methodology, if respected by the service providers, will ensure meeting the needs of children and their parents, as well as protecting children from neglect, violence and exploitation while in placements; (5) the model incorporates many innovative elements that needs to be shared at the international level, such as the specialised training programme for short-break foster carers, short-break foster carer's agenda which is used for monitoring of children while in placements and for carers/parents education in providing an improved care to the children with disabilities, focus on building relationships between the parent and short-break foster care, so that to maximise support to the parents and ensure continuum of care between family and foster care.

Key recommendations: (1) promote the revised regulations, standards of care and funding norms for government approval; (2) promote the specialised training programme for the approval of the MLSPF and to become part of the National Foster Care Curriculum; (3) provide on-going support to Orhei and Chisinau local authorities to mainstream the new service, respect the methodology and ensure the quality in service provision; (4) promote short-break foster care for national replication, by providing capacity building opportunities to local authorities and service providers.

## **Activity 11**

### **Facilitate involvement of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family; develop recommendations for revision of policy, standards and regulations such that the short-break form of foster care is fully defined and incorporated into the government framework.**

At the begging of the project the project team ensured the full support of the MLSPF and devised a strategy of involving the line Ministry in project activities and main decisions. The project team managed to build positive relationships with the representatives of the Child and Family Protection Department of the MLSPF, involving them in quarterly project planning and reporting meetings, in the events organised at regional level (meetings of local steering groups) and national level events (international and national conferences, project final conference).

The project team in collaboration with the Ministry have reviewed the national regulations and standards for foster care, in order to incorporate short-break foster care. These revised documents were presented to the Ministry and are to be approved by the government in early 2013.

## **Activity 12**

### **National Foster Care Conference**

A National Conference "Partnerships in delivering foster care" took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2012 in Chisinau. Policy and decision-makers, practitioners, including 110 foster care-givers and 60 specialists in child and family protection from all regions of the Republic of Moldova participated at

the event. In parallel, a children's conference was organized, involving 45 children placed in foster care. The conference presented a unique opportunity offered by the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova for the nationwide dissemination of the projects achievements and lessons learned.

The adult conference focused on different aspects of foster care development in Moldova, such as methodology of the short-break foster care for children with disabilities living with parents, communication between carers and children in foster care delivery, child participation and involvement of children in monitoring and evaluation of foster care. There were international plenary speakers presenting relevant experience from the USA and Russia at the conference, that added up to the credibility of the new service for children with disabilities. There were also presentations made by Moldovan national and local authorities on different aspects of foster care development and delivery.

Foster carers and specialists had opportunities to listen to interesting plenary speeches, participate at a number of useful workshops related to different aspects of their work and present their views and recommendations to the policy and decision-makers at project final conference.

The children's conference had an aim to promote child participation in policy and practice development; it also had an intention to evaluate the outcomes of children in foster care. The children had the opportunities to meet other children with similar care experience, to share successes, problems and their wishes, by means of different interactive activities. At the end of the event they came up with a number of suggestions for the service improvement, that were presented to the decision-makers, specialists, foster carers in the project final conference.

### **Activity 13**

#### **Project final conference**

The project final conference was organised in the afternoon of the 19<sup>th</sup> of November with an aim to report on project implementation by the project team and partners, to present the results of the project final evaluation and to present recommendations from the children, foster carers and professionals that participated at the National Foster Care Conference. The conference was chaired by the head of the Child and Family Protection Directorate of the MLSPF. Welcoming speeches were given by honourable guests - the MLSPF Minister and the Ambassador of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova.

Amongst main recommendations presented by children in foster care were: (1) adults should strictly follow the procedures for the child's placement in foster care, so that the children are properly informed about the exact reasons for their placement, period of placement, and what will happen to them after the placement; (2) authorities should increase the salaries of foster carers, as well as payments for the child's support, because their needs are big and the expenses much exceed the amount they are given by the authorities; (3) children should be involved more often and more actively into trainings, conferences, so that they are given opportunity to express their views and actively participate in community life; (4) the society should be informed about children in difficulty, more fostering families should be recruited, to give warmth and love to life-beaten children; (5) should help children in foster care to establish a youth-in-care network that will help children and young people with care experience to communicate and support each other.

Amongst main recommendations of the foster carers were: (1) foster carers are able to provide a range of foster care placements, but they need more support, training and communication to increase their skills and knowledge; (2) children in foster care have complex developmental needs and meeting these needs require an improved assistance that also depends on the size of the allowance each child receive from the state, which are very low and doesn't cover the basic children's needs; the national authority should revise the existing norms for children's better allowances and salaries of the foster carers; (3) foster carers want to be part of a professional body that promotes foster care development in Moldova and they recommend that National Foster Care Association is established and all interested people have access to join the organisation; this will allow Moldovan foster carers and children to communicate with similar associations in other countries.

Amongst main recommendations of the practitioners involved in foster care were: (1) local authorities should continue diversification of different types of placements in foster care, placing a

special emphasis on short-break foster care as a means of prevention of child-family separation and family support; (2) foster carers need an improved training programme and financial motivation for the challenging work that they do with children without parental who have multiple complex needs; (3) there is a need for stronger consolidation of efforts in foster care and creation of a professional body to join foster carers, practitioners, academia, children in foster care, and other stakeholders in foster care, in a National Foster care Association; (4) local and national authorities should improve the way children and their parents are involved in foster care delivery.

## **Activity 14**

### **Project final evaluation**

The project evaluation was carried in November 2012 out in line with ToR developed by the project team. The purpose of the final project evaluation was to carry out a thorough analysis of the activities, outputs and outcomes related to three areas of impact: direct child and family, capacity and systems. The review employed qualitative methodology to look at outcome and impact questions and participatory approaches to the process, data collection, analysis and expansion of lessons and recommendations. The evaluation was presented at the final project conference on November 19, 2012.

## **Activity 15**

### **Project book**

The project team developed the project book which includes all the outputs developed by the project, such as short-break foster care international overview, assessment of need of children with disabilities and their parents, short-break foster care concept and methodology, communication strategy, training programme, etc.

#### 2.3. Activities that have not taken place

Please outline any activity and/or publications foreseen in the contract, that have not taken place, explaining the reasons for these

#### 2.4. What is your assessment of the results of the Action? Include observations on the performance and the achievement of outputs, outcomes, impact and risks in relation to specific and overall objectives, and whether the Action has had any unforeseen positive or negative results. (Please quantify where possible; refer to Logframe Indicators).

The project has been an ambitious undertaking in a very limited timeframe and challenging environment. It was not an easy pilot project to develop or implement. The model faced challenges related to public attitude and mentality, as well as fears of both birth families and foster providers, as well as doubt on the behalf of professionals and officials. As described in the themes emerging in the project final evaluation, the project has had substantial and sustainable changes in the lives of children with disabilities and their families. It has been supported nationally, regionally and locally and is at a pivotal point for replication at the national level. Moldova shows will and readiness for replication. Evaluation data supports the attribution of positive outcomes and impact directly to the project interventions. Capacity building has equipped professionals and foster care providers alike with the language, skills and strength to provide care for this particularly vulnerable population within Moldovan society. Perhaps most importantly, the attitudes and behaviors of professionals, media outlets, professionals and even the public in general is beginning to open toward acceptance of people with disability. There is a clear sense of what services are needed in communities to more fully support children with disabilities. The government, at the local, regional and national level show incredible will to change the provision of services to all children, focusing on the best interest of the child and family care that prevents institutionalization and keeps families strong and united.

The project managed to develop, pilot and integrate a short break foster care model for children with disabilities in two target regions of Moldova, as well as to open the issue of children with disabilities and disability rights more fully in the national level policy debate. In doing so the project built the

capacity of the 2 local authorities to develop and deliver innovative and sustainable models of care for children with disabilities and their families.

36 children benefitted from short break foster placement;  
11 additional children and their parents are in the matching process with short-break providers;  
36 parents benefitted from respite time;  
48 sessions with children and parents were held as part of the matching process;  
79 parents benefitted from informational sessions;  
27 foster carers were approved and received training in short break care;  
4 additional foster care providers are in the process of evaluation.

The project achieved its outcomes and impact of capacity building activities on social work professional practice and the capacity of foster care providers to care for children with disabilities.

Local foster care regulations revised to incorporate short-break and approved by the councils;  
27 short-break foster carers were recruited and trained;  
22 social work specialists were trained;  
18 members of Gatekeeping commissions in 2 regions were trained in short-break foster care  
6 specialists were trained as trainers – becoming a national training resource;  
8 practitioners & decision makers participated in a study tour in St. Petersburg, Russia;  
Curriculum and support materials were produced for the 35 hour speciality training.

The project strengthened the national child care system and improved social policies to address prevention of family separation and protection of children with disabilities, implemented an effective communication and advocacy campaign, ensuring better coverage of the gaps in the needs of children with disabilities and increase public awareness.

National, regional and local government were fully engaged in the project process;  
National regulations and standards of care were revised to incorporate short-break care;  
Proposals for revised financial norms developed with MLSPF and Ministry of Finance;  
10 journalists were trained in disability issues and participated in the campaign;  
1 radio and 1 video were produced;  
Specialists, parents and foster providers participated in 4 television and radio shows;  
18 meetings for public awareness reached 186 people;  
9 informational sessions reached 79 parents;  
6 informational sessions reached 24 people representing NGOs.

2.5. What has been the outcome on both the final beneficiaries &/or target group (if different) and the situation in the target country or target region which the Action addressed?

**In terms of direct beneficiary outcomes the project reached 36 children through the development of a model of short-break foster care.** Across all cases, it was reported that this was the first time these families caring for children with disabilities received any kind of service. They also reported complete satisfaction with the short break model and the support they received from the foster carers, social workers and from each other.

**Capacity building activities have had a tremendous impact on changing attitudes of professionals, care providers, the general public, media outlets and authorities.** The increased alliances between NGOs and providers, local governments, community social workers, care providers and families will endure into the future and these connections are important community capacities that have been built out of this project. Improved social policies to address prevention of family separation

and protection of children with disabilities have resulted from the work of this demonstration project. The project has built buy-in from all levels of professionals and government; this has resulted in will, which in turn has resulted in recommendations at the policy level. Professionals, including trained and licensed foster care providers have increased capacity to develop and deliver innovative models of care for children with disabilities and their families as a result of this project. Social workers also have an improved understanding of children with disabilities in relation to the international guiding documents (UNCRC and UNGACC), as well as the frameworks such as the Moldovan Strategy for Integration of People with Disability. Foster care providers who have been involved in the training and capacity building of the project have an increased understanding of disability, including demonstrating the ability to describe various types of disability. They also have increased awareness of their own limitations. The combination of practical, consistent and on-going support from project staff with theoretical training, workshops, exchanges and presentations is felt to be an extremely effective method of increasing the capacity of workers.

**The project registered considerable impact on project stakeholders and partnerships.** The short-break care model has been integrated into the existing foster care service models in the two target regions, being fully accepted by local commissions, child protection leadership, and department managers and specialists as part of the foster care service package offered. Local authorities in the two target regions have accepted short-break foster care models within the existing policy frameworks and have ensured that the models meet the requirements outline by the policies (both national and regional).

The regional foster care teams have fully accepted responsibility for current and future implementation of short-break model as part of their teams' responsibilities and service attributes. Professional foster care teams at the regional level in the two target regions have the capacity and skills necessary to continue to implement the short-break model, including foster carer training, case monitoring and supervision.

The project brought together a wide range of stakeholders and succeeded in building of a common agenda – this was evidenced in the success of the final project conference, which brought over 200 stakeholders together including parents, care providers, professionals, government and the donor community – all speaking a common language for children and families with disability. National and regional stakeholders describe the need for a legislation base, legal methodology, and minimum standards that guides practice at the regional / local level from the national level (education & family support were two areas particularly mentioned).

The project and reform in general is still challenged by mentalities and lack of public awareness. Stakeholders were excited about the changes over the past year but also expressed the need for on-going public education and awareness around disability issues. The project is implemented in a very complex context. Many of the on-going challenges identified by professions and families alike are also those extremely difficult to resolve including, poverty, migration, and unemployment. The project built tremendous momentum in reform of services for children with disabilities and their families. This momentum will carry forward.

- 2.6. Please list all materials (and no. of copies) produced during the Action on whatever format (please enclose a copy of each item, except if you have already done so in the past).

*Please state how the items produced are being distributed and to whom.*

Needs assessment of children with disabilities and their families – printed in-house, distributed to 200 people, participants at the project national conferences.

Carer's Agenda (foster carers and parents) – 1000 copies, distributed to Chisinau and Orhei local authorities.

- 2.7. Please list all contracts (works, supplies, services) above 10.000€ awarded for the implementation of the action since the last interim report if any or during the reporting

period, giving for each contract the amount, the award procedure followed and the name of the contractor.

- 2.8. Describe if the Action will continue after the support from the European Union has ended. Are there any follow up activities envisaged? What will ensure the sustainability of the Action?

P4EC intends to provide further technical support to Orhei and Chisinau to ensure full institutional and financial sustainability of the developed models of care. The project will also support sharing expertise between the 2 local authorities and new once embarking on the development of the short-break foster care model. P4EC has obtained a donor support to promote the replication of short-break foster care to 5 new regions in 2013-2014.

P4EC will continue to work with the MLSPF to ensure that revised foster care regulations and standards are approved by the government, as well as to maintain the government's commitment to revise the national financial norms for foster care services.

- 2.9. Explain how the Action has mainstreamed cross-cutting issues such as promotion of human rights<sup>2</sup>, gender equality<sup>3</sup>, democracy, good governance, children's rights and indigenous peoples, environmental sustainability<sup>4</sup> and combating HIV/AIDS (if there is a strong prevalence in the target country/region).<sup>5</sup>

The project aimed at ensuring the rights of children with disabilities to qualitative family and community care through development of short-break foster care as means of family support and preservation. In doing so, the project supported the duty bearers – national and local authorities - to improve their governance in the area of children's rights and children's services. The project has supported the local authorities to mainstream child participation in service design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in order to foster democratic development of the local governance, basing their policy and service development on the needs and rights of their beneficiaries.

The project achieves its planned outcomes by sharing information and expertise through research, training, meetings, workshops, conferences, campaigning, and awareness-raising activities. These activities had no direct negative environmental impacts. However, they were supported by publications, printed training and communication materials. The project developed a check-list that was used when ordering or printing materials in-house in large quantities (>100 copies) to minimize the impact that this has on the environment. EveryChild encouraged the same culture with partners, associates and other project stakeholders.

- 2.10. How and by whom have the activities been monitored / evaluated? Please summarise the results of the feedback received, including from the beneficiaries.

The project manager had the responsibility to undertake regular monitoring and evaluation activities, constantly seeking the opinions of project stakeholders, including children and families, on project implementation issues. The project also undertook an external final evaluation, according to the Terms of Reference developed in collaboration with project stakeholders.

The key review question was: to what extent has the project achieved its intended results and is causing changes in the lives of children and their families who benefited from the developed model, and how can these changes be attributed to the project intervention?

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<sup>2</sup> Including those of people with disabilities. For more information, see "Guidance note on disability and development" at [http://ec.europa.eu/development/body/publications/docs/Disability\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/development/body/publications/docs/Disability_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.iiav.nl/epublications/2004/toolkit\\_on\\_mainstreaming\\_gender\\_equality.pdf](http://www.iiav.nl/epublications/2004/toolkit_on_mainstreaming_gender_equality.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Guidelines for environmental integration are available at: <http://www.environment-integration.eu/>

<sup>5</sup> To refer to EC Guidelines on gender equality, disabilities...

A number of sub-questions were also explored as part of the evaluation: What was the progress in terms of outcomes and outputs for children with disabilities and their parents that are benefiting from short-break foster care placements in the project regions? How sustainable are the outcomes being achieved? What are the potential threats to sustainability? Does the developed service contribute to the prevention of family separation of children with disabilities? What are the main elements that contribute to the quality of the developed service? What was the impact of the capacity building programme delivered to the local authority staff in terms of the quality of the services provided to children and families? What was the level of collaboration/involvement of local governmental actors in tackling the new type of placement and their level of accountability for the implementation of the service? Have the professionals and the wider society become better aware of and started to better understand the problems of families with children with disabilities as a result of the project activities? What has worked well, what has not? What challenges and obstacles were identified in the implementation process? Which activities, strategies, processes are leading to the desired outcomes and outputs (effectiveness)? What new learning as a result of this project has been identified, and what are the recommendations for any changes in order to improve the project delivery?

The evaluation used a participatory approach for the development of the purpose, questions and tools, as well as for the data collection, analysis and expansion of lessons and recommendations. Stakeholders included national and local government, staff members and leadership of P4eC, foster care professionals from the target regions, foster care providers, and birth families of children with special needs. Results of the evaluation were disseminated at a national conference on November 19, 2012, attended by over 200 of the above stakeholders. An external consultant provided leadership to the project team and led the evaluation process.

The approach was qualitative, taking a learning perspective. Strategies for evaluation were results-based keeping a keen focus on the project casual framework (flow of inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes), resulting impact of outcomes, and testing for attribution and assumptions. The involvement of the project team was seen as an opportunity to share reflections on project successes and challenges. The reliability of the evaluation methodology and collected data can be attributed mainly to the use of qualitative tools that had the ability to gather rich data from the range of stakeholders. Limitations and challenges to review stemmed from the cross-cutting nature of the project aimed at both piloting of a particular model, changing of public attitudes and systems reform in an extremely limited timeframe (18 months).

In order to capture as full a picture of the project's impact, explore questions of attribution, sustainability and replication, as well as to ensure a variable range of data, a number of different tools were used, including meetings, interviews, focus groups and discussions. All were held in Romanian, the official language in Moldova. The tools were designed to: allow for flexibility, provide for in-depth examination of the dynamic realities, allow quality questions to be explored, explore perceptions and changes in attitude, and result in a realistic "snap shot" of the pilot model.

The following methods and tools were used in the evaluation: Team meetings for team development, review planning, execution of the evaluation, elaboration of findings and recommendations and preparation of the final conference; Document review of both internal and external documents related to the project, disability rights and to child welfare in Moldova; Case Examples & Home Visits to birth and foster families in each of the two target regions; Informal Focus Groups two focus groups were organized in each of the target regions: one with respite foster care providers and one with the foster care specialist team; Interviews: semi-structured interviews with key national and regional government partners, informal interviews with project staff, interviews with birth families and foster carers as part of the home visit.

The project evaluation looked at three core project impact areas for the purpose of organization of evaluation questions, development of tools and data collection, and analysis. The final evaluation report followed the same core areas for presentation purposes: Child and Family Direct Impact, Capacity Impact & Systems Impact.

### **Child and Family Impact**

All birth families described serious economic difficulties as the biggest challenge facing their family. This theme emerged as well from interviews with officials, focus groups with specialists and site visits. Economic challenges are deeply affecting many families in Moldova. The care for a child with disabilities is an additional burden: all families visited were single women; employment opportunities were limited to null due to the need to be at home with their child; and social welfare benefits, when/if received, were not enough to meet the families' basic needs.

The connection to a support service seems to be empowering some families and they feel supported to maintaining family stability. Their empowerment is reflected in comments regarding being active participants in decisions around care, advocacy for services and education of their children, and pride in child accomplishments and success in parenting. Important and supportive connections were being developed between parents and short break care providers.

No parent expressed regret or concern in regard to having their child at home, or expressed thoughts of institutionalizing their child. However everyone expressed the need for on-going support services, most importantly financial or material support. Generally families did not report connecting with other families with children with special needs in a formal way. They did not report to attend support groups; rather they described informal relationships that they had developed with friends, neighbours or other family members that also had children with disabilities. This was described as a tremendous support. It seemed to be more typical for families in urban settings to make these connections. Social isolation seemed to be more acute in rural settings.

Across all cases this was the first time that these families caring for children with disabilities have received any kind of service. They reported complete satisfaction with the short break model, however were also deeply affected by the lack of services (social, therapeutic, educational and family support) in their communities. This includes services such as access to basic education, availability and access to equipment, and environmental supports such as accessibility adaptations in homes. Families did report increased knowledge of where to turn to for help, and an improved perception of the resources and support available through local authorities. They reported satisfaction with the support provided by social workers and felt that the care providers were extremely professional. It mattered to the families that the care provider be accessible. For families with children with physical disabilities, accessing and negotiating transportation was an issue. In rural areas, a sense of trust came from knowing that the care provider was a known and trustworthy person from the same community. In rural areas transportation issues make the need for care providers in the same communities as the families of utmost importance.

#### **Participant Quotations**

*"When I first heard, I could not believe that this would be for me. No one ever offered me any help before. It has been life changing"* Parent Beneficiary

*"She is becoming like a mother to me – when I need something or have a question or just need someone to talk to I call her. It's much more than a break for me – it's someone who cares"* Parent Beneficiary

*"I would never leave my grandchildren to an institution, but it helps that now there is someone to help take care of them. It is so hard alone"* Grandparent Beneficiary

*"It does not matter what my neighbors say, these are children and they need our care – all children need our care regardless of their abilities"* Professional Foster Carer

#### **Capacity Impact**

Partners expressed the importance of the practical capacity building aspects, described as the combination of training, experiential exchanges, workshops, discussions, meetings and professional support at all levels – having "someone to call on when we have questions about what to do". This has included P4EC's role in supporting legislative policy development and advocacy for policy change at the national level.

Partners stated that there have been significant changes in attitudes and mentalities. This has been supported through the holistic capacity building approach and the combination of practical and theoretical support, as well as partnership models of advocacy and public awareness at all levels.

Regions and local authorities feel that their “voices” are an important part of the dialogue and are proud of their successes. They stand ready to share their experience with other regions. The officials and specialists strongly believe in the model that has been piloted and see it as their own. They show great pride in the work their region is accomplishing. This sense of ownership is vital to both sustainability and replication.

#### **Participant Quotations**

*“We were not sure it would work, we realized quickly that all of us needed to understand better disabilities and equal rights for all children and we needed to move forward together with professionals, and parents, and the general public”* Staff of P4eC

*“Capacity building and training, but not just training, practical experience has been perhaps the most important contribution of this project. Our professionals, including social workers, specialists, and foster parents are better able to provide services to families with children with disabilities”* Social Assistance and Family Protection Directorate Orhei

#### **System impact**

Models have been adapted at the regional level for regional context, particularly urban and rural differentiations. They are in following with UNCRC, UNGACC and the National Strategies for Child Welfare Reform and Integration of People with Disabilities. Regions are proud of the models developed.

National, regional and local officials and professionals recognize the importance of support services for children with disabilities and acknowledge this major service gap. They showed a commitment to continued reform and improvement of service packages. They recognized the need for reform of the foster care provider remuneration system, and expressed commitment to continued reform in this area, to include respite foster care.

#### **Local and National Officials Quotations**

*“That Partnerships for Every Child has stood beside the Government of Moldova since our child protection reforms began has been very important and significant. The ground was prepared way ahead of this project, but the project has brought assistance to local authorities in a very practical and direct way, and more importantly it has brought publicity about children with disabilities and their families. The experience will allow us to replicate a proven successful model at the national level”* Mrs. Viorica Dumbraveanu, Head of the National Directorate for Child Protection

*“We intend to continue the model as part of our foster care services. Already the Commission has approved budget allocation for next year and we hope to increase the number of providers and placements with the same high quality as exemplified under this pilot project”* Svetlana Chifa, Head of Chisinau Directorate for Child Protection

#### **2.11. What has your organisation/partner learned from the Action and how has this learning been utilised and disseminated?**

The lessons expressed by the project team, partners and those observed by the evaluator included: (1) The placement is easier and smoother if the short-break family is from the same community as the beneficiary family, especially in rural settings. This proximity enables the building of a trusting relationship, a successful matching process easier, and children remain within their community and unstressed by major changes in their setting. (2) Capacity building of the social welfare workforce takes a holistic approach including training, technical assistance, empowerment of workers, and practical support, that is improving skills, changing attitudes and behaviours, and encouraging the development of local, innovative models for children with disabilities and their families. (3) Engagement of the media outlets, including increasing understanding and awareness within media, is a vital aspect of disabilities reform. Consistent messaging across print, television and radio is reaching diverse audiences in rural and urban areas, and helping to increase the visibility of disability issues in Moldova.

Key Recommendations from the final project evaluation were presented to the public, foster care providers, beneficiaries (including children and families), professionals, European Commission and

Government of Moldova during the final conference. They included: (1) Donors, P4EC and GOM should provide on-going support to pilot sites for implementation of the model, allowing for adaptation for lessons learned, and provide support for model demonstration in additional sites, giving particular attention to adaptations for rural and urban settings that allow for flexibility and innovation. (2) Partners should continue to build on momentum based in increased trust and open dialogue through the dissemination stories of success. Partners, including mass media outlets, should help families to tell their stories, raising continued awareness of disability issues continuing the momentum of changing public attitudes. (3) Partners, including new regions, should work to adapt the model for other target groups such as foster carers in need of short breaks from care giving. (4) Non-governmental partners need to advocate for and support the passing of revisions to policy, standards and promotion of methodology: including revisions to remuneration for care providers, development of support services for disabled peoples' and inclusive education mandates.

The project learning has been used by all project stakeholders for adjusting the current action and will be used for designing of future development interventions. The learning was disseminated at the National Foster Care Conference and final project conference. The learning will continue to be disseminated by P4EC in future actions, aiming at replication and scaling-up the project results.

### **3. Partners and other Co-operation**

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- 3.1. How do you assess the relationship between the formal partners of this Action (i.e. those partners which have signed a partnership statement)? Please provide specific information for each partner organisation.

EveryChild Moldova and Partnerships for Every Child started the project as partners. In March 2012 these 2 organisations merged and EveryChild Moldova was absorbed by Partnerships for EveryChild and the Contracting Authority has kindly agreed to amend the contract accordingly.

- 3.2. Is the partnership to continue? If so, how? If not, why?

The partnership between Partnership for Every Child and Every Child UK will continue in the future, in the framework of joint projects implemented in the child care area in Moldova.

- 3.3. How would you assess the relationship between your organisation and State authorities in the Action countries? How has this relationship affected the Action?

Partnerships for Every Child managed to build trustful and fruitful relationships with Orhei and Chisinau local authorities, which were the project associates. The relationships with local authorities led to a successful project implementation that resulted in short-break foster care being developed, tested and incorporated into local level service provision.

P4EC strengthened its relationships with national authorities such as MLSPF, Ministry of Finance, working on national level policy changes in this area. These relationships will continue after the project end; there are clear plans and commitments in place to promote national level legal and normative changes in foster care.

- 3.4. Where applicable, describe your relationship with any other organisations involved in implementing the Action:

- Associate(s) (if any)

See under 3.3

- Sub-contractor(s) (if any)
- Final Beneficiaries and Target groups

- Other third parties involved (including other donors, other government agencies or local government units, NGOs, etc)

The project built fruitful relationships with Keystone Human Services International, and the Day Care Centre for Children with Disabilities “Speranta” who acted as sources of additional expertise on children with disabilities.

P4EC developed good relationships with International Foster Care Organisation that agreed to provide technical support to the project team during the whole implementation phase.

- 3.5. Where applicable, outline any links and synergies you have developed with other actions.
- 3.6. If your organisation has received previous EU grants in view of strengthening the same target group, in how far has this Action been able to build upon/complement the previous one(s)? (List all previous relevant EU grants).

“Capacity building in social policy reform” Project, implemented in 2003-2006 aimed at launching the reform in childcare. First foster care pilots and regulations were developed by our organisation within this project. The current project was a logical continuation of the Tacis-funded project and moved into diversification and elaboration of different types of foster care placements in the Republic of Moldova.

- 3.7. How do you evaluate co-operation with the services of the Contracting Authority?

The co-operation was efficient, constructive and beneficial for the implementation of an ambitious project.

#### 4. Visibility

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How is the visibility of the EU contribution being ensured in the Action?

All materials, publications, audio and video clips, respected the EU visibility requirements stating the valuable contribution of the EU and having the EU logo. All project stakeholders, at all project events, have been kept informed about the EU contribution. The project team sought approval of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova for all publications, video and audio clips as well as major events such as national, international conferences. The project has benefited from the participation of the Ambassador and other representatives of the EU Delegation to all national level project events.

**The European Commission may wish to publicise the results of Actions. Do you have any objection to this report being published on the EuropeAid website? If so, please state your objections here.**

Name of the contact person for the Action: Stela Grigoras

Signature: .....Location: Chisinau, Moldova

Date report due: .....Date report sent: .....