



Electoral Training and Education: The Case of the Centre for Continuous Electoral Training in Moldova

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1. The Centre for Continuous Electoral Training's beginnings (2009–2012)

2009 parliamentary elections

Members of the 2011–2016 Central Electoral Commission (CEC) of the Republic of Moldova were under pressure to find a formula to increase the efficiency of the electoral process following the two previous electoral years of 2009–2010, when the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) was forced to cede power. The ousting of the PCRM occurred despite the fact that the party had won 60 out of 101 seats in the 5 April parliamentary elections and 48 seats in the 29 July 2009 parliamentary elections (E-democracy n.d.a). The transfer of power followed a political conflict between the PCRM and the 'liberal' opposition; the latter managed to block the appointment of Moldova's President following the 5 April 2009 parliamentary elections, and then immediately called for a snap election on 29 July 2009. Consequently, the announcement of the preliminary election results triggered mass protests on 6 April 2009. While the youth-led protests were initially peaceful, they degenerated into violence and vandalism of the presidential residence and parliament buildings the following day (E-democracy n.d.b). As a result, law enforcement officials resorted to escalated and excessive measures to subdue the crowds and restore public order (Spiegel 2009).

Working group

Given these destabilizing events, the CEC had to make a sustained and concentrated effort to increase the transparency of and public confidence in the electoral process and to encourage higher levels of voter participation. The then-CEC Chairperson, Dr Iurie Ciocan, and the

CEC management team recognized the need for professionally trained electoral officials as part of the above-mentioned formula. Under his leadership, a working group comprising representatives of all interested electoral stakeholders was assembled. The working group endeavour culminated with a concept document for the centre. Dr Ciocan and his team, during a two-year period, led a vigorous lobbying effort to gain the backing of international partners and to persuade members of parliament (MPs) and government bodies to amend the Electoral Code—for example, by highlighting issues and recommendations in national and international electoral observation mission reports from 2009 (see OSCE/ODIHR 2009: 29; CEC 2017: 124). As a result, the Parliament of Moldova amended its electoral statutes to require that the country’s Central Election Commission establish the Centre for Continuous Electoral Training (Centrul de Instruire Continuă în Domeniul Electoral, CICDE) (for its legal basis see Box 2).

To be sufficiently responsive in addressing changing needs as its mandate and functions incrementally expanded, the CICDE’s organizational structure had to be kept as uncomplicated as possible to obviate the need for any major restructuring. As a result, the CICDE was established as a separate organization from the CEC.

The ‘Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters’, adopted by the Venice Commission in October 2002, includes several conditions for implementing the core five principles underlying Europe’s electoral heritage. Under ‘procedural safeguards’ the Code emphasizes that: ‘members of electoral commissions have to receive standardised training at all levels of the election administration. Such training should also be made available to members of commissions appointed by political parties’ (European Commission for Democracy through Law 2002; also see CICDE 2015a: 10). The Code’s emphasis on professionalization provided a strong rationale for establishing a separate organization dedicated to training. The function of professionalization would gradually be expanded to include other key actors in the electoral process.

Although Moldova’s temporary election staff (numbering over 20,000) are not a structural part of the CEC, they effectively—and crucially—serve as the Commission’s trained operational capacity during voting events. Moldova’s 2010 Electoral Code required that all members of district electoral councils (DECs) and precinct electoral bureaus (PEBs) appointed under the Code must have, from the 2014 elections onwards, an appropriate certificate of competency from the CICDE (see Box 1).

Box 1. Core operational partners

In planning and conducting elections, the CEC is directly assisted by DECs, PEBs and local authorities. These bodies participate directly in the planning and conduct of elections in Moldova. DECs oversee and coordinate the conduct of elections within electoral districts as determined by the CEC, while PEBs are the local bodies within electoral districts that carry out polling duties. These groups were the main beneficiaries of the newly founded CICDE due to the initial requirement that DECs and PEBs be certified. In fulfilling their roles, DECs and PEBs have a broad and comprehensive range of responsibilities, as set out in the Electoral Code.

By contrast, the 2010 Code did not spell out in detail the functions of the CICDE or stipulate its structure except to state that it would be a ‘subdivision’ or ‘subsidiary’ of the CEC of the Republic of Moldova (Moldova 2010), wording which ultimately created a series of financial, structural and legal obstacles and led to two regulatory challenges for the CEC during the first months after amending the Electoral Code. Both of these challenges hampered the CEC’s ability to organize and develop the training centre. The first focused on

the legality of the formation of the CICDE. One of the former members of the CEC sought an opinion from the Prosecutor General's Office as to whether the CEC acted legally when it decided to form the CICDE as a separate, but subsidiary, organization. The Prosecutor General's Office issued an opinion in the negative, deciding that this act was beyond the mandate of the CEC. The CEC managed to resolve the issue by seeking an opinion from the Parliamentary Legal Commission on the same issue and received a countervailing response to the effect that the CEC had acted legally—that is, within the intent and bounds of the Electoral Code that promulgated the concept of the CICDE.

The second challenge was a recruiting delay due to the Law on Remuneration of Civil Servants, which was passed by Parliament and published on 31 March 2012, immediately following the election of President Nicolae Timofti (which had brought to an end a nearly four-year (2009–2012) constitutional crisis, during which the fractured Parliament had been unable to elect a president). The purpose of the law was to improve the remuneration system for civil servants, but it also had the unintended effect of decreasing the salaries of CEC members to the level of those of other government employees. Promulgated by the President on 5 April 2012, the Law on Remuneration of Civil Servants enabled the CEC to move forward with its recruitment plan for new staff based on a strategic plan that was adopted in late 2011 (part of which covered the establishment of the training centre) (CEC 2011a), including the recruitment of a CICDE director at an albeit modest salary.

Once these two challenges were legally resolved, the CEC's next step was to move beyond conceptualization and begin implementing practical steps to operationalize the CICDE before the 2014 national elections. To achieve this, a multifaceted methodology was used involving structured interviews and informal discussions with CEC board members, staff and key external stakeholders; a desk audit of relevant documentation, including the Electoral Code, the CICDE Concept Paper and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) progress reports; and finally the use of findings from the Post-Election Review Workshop conducted in Chisinau in December 2010. After completing this process, the CEC approved the mandate of the CICDE in the Regulation on the CICDE by decision No. 1030 of 9 December 2011 (CEC 2011b).

A question often asked was, why didn't the preceding Training, Civic Education and Secretariat branch of the CEC take on these functions? Simply put, this branch did not have adequate staff or sufficient specialized training expertise to take on these functions. The branch's focus was oriented mainly on the Secretariat and civic education, with normally only a coordinating role in relation to training. The delivery of training on a continual basis required a separate unit or organization that had the required mandate, staff and expertise. While this CEC branch had only six staff members, who were later accredited as Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) facilitators, insufficient staffing meant that they were overburdened with Secretariat, information and civic education tasks. It was therefore in their interest to create a separate organization solely dedicated to training and curriculum development.

Another reason why a dedicated training centre was mostly welcomed by CEC members was its serving as an additional source of income: the Law on Public Servants didn't allow persons engaged in public service to have additional income, except for research or pedagogical work. Public servants could be legitimately paid for the provision of any extra training services—from designing to delivery and monitoring. The expanded financial resources offered by the training centre provided a solid means to develop curriculum and programmes for the CICDE.

Eventually, the CEC members agreed that the CICDE take on several functions in a staged process as it developed its own expertise and expanded its operations. These functions included the following:

1. *To develop, update and adapt electoral training programmes.* Curriculum and training materials based on adult learning principles and a comprehensive training needs analysis, and following all CEC legal instructions, national electoral procedures and international electoral standards.
2. *To provide ongoing operational training* to CEC members and staff, as well as DEC and PEB members.
3. *To conduct training-of-trainers courses to cascade electoral training.*
4. *To conduct training needs analysis and develop training plans* for the CEC and other specified groups—for example, journalists, judges, local public authorities, police, political party representatives, school pupils and teachers, and university students.
5. *To provide training to local and international election observers* on the political context, electoral process and procedures in Moldova. Being the only centre in the region with BRIDGE facilitators, the CICDE could deliver modular professional programmes to international audiences.
6. *To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of electoral training* to further refine training content and delivery, including review and accreditation of training material developed by other organizations.
7. *To conduct research into best practices in electoral management.*
8. *To act as a repository and clearing house for specialist knowledge and materials.*

The original CICDE Concept Paper also proposed that the CICDE include a Civil Society and Political Empowerment of Marginalized Persons desk, and an Alternate Dispute Resolution department. While commendable in intention, the incorporation of these functions would have gone beyond matters of training. Strictly speaking, these functions are rather a facet of electoral management, to be guided by the CEC and other appropriate bodies. Instead of taking on a legal mandate to promote equality and diversity, the CICDE's affirmation of and support for equality and diversity instead took the form of tailored electoral empowerment programmes geared towards women, young people and linguistic minorities. The CICDE's primary focus is therefore electoral training and education for specified target groups, and this overlaps, but does not replace, the civic education responsibilities of the CEC.

With regard to playing its part within alternative dispute resolution (that is, between political parties), the CICDE saw an opportunity to partner with the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), a specialized organization dedicated to training and certifying judges and prosecutors. The CICDE and NIJ partnership conducts training programmes for judges before every electoral event.

Another proposal suggested that the CEC Media Centre, instituted previously in 2008, be placed in the CICDE. This proposal failed to attract support given that the Centre served as a direct function in the CEC's public outreach (election information) operations. The CICDE did, however, go on to provide specialized training for the media concerning election reporting.

While the CICDE staff has grown over time, the initial structure consisted of two main departments reporting to the Director through a Deputy Director, a Corporate Services Support Unit and a small Executive Support Unit for the Director.

The CICDE's beginnings—findings and lessons

The utilization of the CEC's existing human resources, such as its politically appointed members, was crucial. They were able to pitch the benefits of a training centre to the parties that nominated them, garnering a cross-party consensus for electoral reform.

By building partnerships and coalitions with national and international electoral organizations at an early stage, the working group was able to advance the proposed centre's profile domestically.

In Moldova, as in other countries, passing a law requires a tremendous effort. As a result, support should be offered to both the policymakers and the legislative staff who assist with legal drafting. The latter are then better able to become advocates for the reforms, as appropriate.

Where politicians are reluctant to establish new electoral training institutions, it doesn't mean that the idea isn't sound, but it may indicate a wariness on the part of the political class as a whole. Perceptions of the win-win benefits will change according to how fluid—volatile, even—the political climate becomes. Therefore, the need for lobbying, advocacy and broader development partnerships becomes more important.

2. First years of operations (2013–2014)

At the conceptual stage it was difficult to estimate how many staff the CICDE would require to be at full capacity, as no comprehensive analysis of training needs for target groups had been undertaken. However, it was reasonable to assume that during the start-up phase, the CICDE would require at least one director, two deputy directors, three training specialists, one policy officer, two corporate support staff and one executive support officer—therefore a total of 10 staff, many of whom were to be recruited from existing management and training positions in the CEC. However, after negotiations with the CEC (management, finance and training/education personnel), the Ministry of Finance approved only one training specialist and no executive support officer, making a total staff of seven.

Another obstacle during this period was a lack of earmarked and firmly committed funding from the Government of Moldova for the CICDE's founding in 2011, despite the timely submission of the budget. Therefore, a director could not be hired immediately after the Electoral Code was amended. One year later, in December 2012, at the recommendation of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the first CICDE director was proposed and approved by the CEC. Further obstacles included bureaucratic constraints, the organization's unclear statute, uncompetitive salaries and a short stint—of only three months—for the first appointed director. Also, the status of subdivision/subsidiary (of the CEC, under the Electoral Code, as mentioned above) was too inflexible for running a highly dynamic and responsive training organization.

Nevertheless, the Electoral Code's stipulation of a certification role for the CICDE and the prior learning of the CEC (and international partners' willingness to share knowledge resources) were the basic points of departure for making inroads. The birth of the new organization generated a lot of interest and enthusiasm among people with positive energy and a willingness to learn. Training practices in the initial founding of the organization facilitated the identification of various competent and able individuals—some with BRIDGE accreditation—for personnel recruitment.

Operational training

Despite having a complex and broad-ranging set of responsibilities, DEC members are in practice appointed only 50 days—PEB members, 20 days—prior to an election. This leaves little time for training, particularly as training is one of many preparatory activities that must

take place between the appointment of DEC and PEB members and election day. Indeed, some DEC members received only a single day of training, whereas the CEC's aim was to have three to four days' modular training on various electoral topics, leading to certification as electoral officers with the requisite skills and experience. Moreover, while the CEC serves as Moldova's largest employer, for the temporary electoral assignments, it exercises little say over the selection and suitability requirements for its employees. This situation is made more complicated by the fact that Moldova's Electoral Code is regularly amended between elections (the Electoral Code is one of the most frequently amended legislative documents in the country); as a result, DEC and PEB training for a previous election cannot serve as a comprehensive reference for future training.

Under these circumstances the performance of DECs and PEBs was understandably suboptimal given the necessity to rapidly learn a broad range of skills and acquire a substantial body of knowledge in a very limited time frame.

The CICDE addressed this problem by training and certifying electoral workers on a continual basis in the three years preceding an election event, leaving a reserve of already trained and accredited people at the ready for potential DEC and PEB nomination during elections. This modification was made in response to the insight that it was more effective to train officials immediately after an election rather than shortly before an election, when time was limited. This was all the more helpful where the CEC had insufficient time or staff resources to refresh or verify the effectiveness of training. In the end over 40,000 members of electoral management bodies at the central, district and local levels (and other participants in the electoral process) were trained in the first three years after the CICDE's founding.

Training material

In the past, electoral training materials were of a high standard (in 2008–2011 the CEC worked with the Council of Europe, the UNDP and IFES) but not sufficiently standardized. Given the number of different organizations involved in pre-electoral training (and the aforementioned time constraints), this meant that training across Moldova lacked consistency. Different DEC and PEB members were trained on different electoral matters depending on which organization did the training and what aspects their training material focused on. Logistical and funding constraints also meant that it was impossible for all suitable potential DEC or PEB members to be instructed and utilized.

With the CICDE in place, a common curriculum, along with training manuals, was able to rectify this problem. After each election cycle, a specialized working group is created to revise all the electoral procedures and supporting legislation, enabling the customization and updating of materials for all audiences. At the same time, the CICDE continues to enable delivery of additional professional development training by the aforementioned international partners. An excellent example of this external training is the Council of Europe's 'Action Plan to support the early elections in Moldova' in 2010 and the electoral trainings provided by IFES. Another is the joint Train-the-Trainers for PEBs seminar conducted by DEC chairpersons run by IFES and the Council of Europe, which was used as a basis for a CICDE training-of-trainers module.

BRIDGE training modules served as another available training resource in forming the basis of an excellent CICDE curriculum.¹ Both IFES and the UNDP became implementing partners. BRIDGE is widely recognized as one of the most comprehensive electoral training packages available (Staino 2009). While not all BRIDGE modules had been translated into Romanian or Russian, as was noted by the second BRIDGE mission, 'the curriculum (resources) and methodology (activities and pedagogy) can easily be adapted for operational training and professional development training' (Azatyan and Christensen 2010: 48).

Human resources and office facilities

Skilled CEC members and staff were available to lead the process of establishing the CICDE, including five CEC specialists who had been accredited as BRIDGE facilitators. This ensured that skilled electoral trainers were available to support the CICDE before recruiting its own staff. During the CICDE's first year, it was dependent on pro bono volunteers, since funding and compensation were significantly lower than those offered by other international organizations. Another early challenge was physical space and basic equipment (information and communications technology (ICT), office furniture). Here, donations from the UNDP and IFES were invaluable—as was team spirit and informal style.

The CICDE's first years of operations—findings and lessons

While establishing the CICDE was a complex logistical task, there were several favourable conditions for doing so: the support of the CEC management; dedicated staff; available BRIDGE training materials; and technical, advisory and financial support from the international community.

Nevertheless, a keen awareness of the CICDE's legal status was central to avoiding regulatory and budgetary gaps that could hamper the organization's work, processes and relationships with stakeholders.

The ability to respond to a changing mandate in a shifting political landscape played a key role in the CICDE's success in serving its mission. Such organizations are best served by a degree of independence, flexibility in making decisions and an adaptable and receptive character for considering new ideas and priorities when confronted with changing needs on an iterative/cyclical basis.

The CICDE was designed to have a purely technical role in working with parties that was to be independent of the sometimes difficult and politically loaded relations between the CEC and political parties. Since the wider political state of affairs is often in flux, electoral officials must be trained by an institution that is professional and apolitical.

The acknowledgment that training curricula had to be updated on a continuous basis with accurate, up-to-date electoral information was due to the CICDE's specialized mandate and capacity to update materials ahead of every election.

3. Development and expansion (2014–2019)

As discussed, the CICDE was tasked with training and certifying *all* of Moldova's 20,000 temporary electoral workers over three years—with a permanent staff complement of seven! (For comparison, the CEC had a permanent staff of 40.) This was an enormous logistical hurdle and, in the view of the political parties represented in the Parliament, overambitious. After a year of activities, at the proposal of Liberal Party MPs and in anticipation of the 2014 elections, the Parliament voted to amend the Electoral Code and cancel the mandatory CICDE training and certification of all electoral workers. Instead, the CICDE, upon request, was obligated to deliver all types of training to stakeholders. (The MPs' decision was due to the lack of human capital political parties faced a year in advance of the 2014 parliamentary elections. According to article 30(10) of the Electoral Code, 70 per cent of the members of the lower-level electoral commissions are proposed by the political parties represented in the Parliament. Therefore, MPs were daunted by the challenge of recruiting, training, certifying and retaining fully 7,000 people.) Nonetheless, the workload was unaffected in the short term; by the time the Code was amended an impressive number of people had been trained. In the first two years the CICDE had trained more than 40,000 people (CICDE n.d.), and while its long-term plans had to be revised, the organization's brand had gained credibility and acceptance.

Apart from the BRIDGE training, most employees were trained in accordance with their field of specialization, including training in financial operations, procurement, communication and training of trainers. The CICDE had no orientation training that all newly employed staff or interns had to undergo, a gap that was filled in 2014.

At this point, beyond the day-to-day management of the organization's core logistical functions, the main urgency was the promotion and advocacy of the CICDE at the national and international levels, with a view to seeking partnerships and funding.

Budgeting and financing

The structure and size of the CICDE's budget have changed over the years. Whereas in 2013 the CICDE's budget was entirely supported by the state budget and amounted to MDL 4.7 million, or approximately USD 376,000 (CICDE 2014), the state contribution decreased in the following two years (due to the removal of mandatory certification of DEC and PEB members), while the share of international donor support increased from 39 per cent in 2014 to 60 per cent in 2015. The nearly 50 per cent decrease in state contributions compared with the 2013 budget also reflected the volatility of the state budget, which affected all public funding, and was due to the political, economic and social crises induced by an infamous banking fraud (Wikipedia n.d.) of roughly USD 1 billion (Transparency International 2016). These developments negatively impacted every organization that depended on the state budget. The CICDE's budget sustainability, planned services and institutional development activities were put at risk and became crucially dependent on external sources of funding during the budgetary crisis (CICDE 2015a: 21). In response, from 2016 onwards, the CICDE increased its operations as well as diversified its programmes and activities with the support of its international partners, while at the same time continuing to negotiate with the government and the CEC for additional domestic funding. Only in 2019 did the CICDE manage to increase its state funding to (up to) MLD 2.1 million (USD 0.12 million) (CEC 2018)—still well under half the 2013 figure.

The delivery of the CICDE's training programmes depended almost entirely on the performance and professionalism of the trainers. The trainers were not part of the permanent structure of the CICDE due to the budget limitations set by the Ministry of Finance, but were instead contracted on demand during the pre-election period or based on specific projects.

Training delivery system

Since its formation, the CICDE has been developing a network of trainers delivering a maximum of four training-of-trainers courses per year. The process of selecting CICDE trainers is based on several methods developed over time: (a) an open competition is held up to four times in a non-electoral year; (b) during training sessions, the trainers identify potential trainers based on predetermined criteria; (c) during public outreach at universities or schools, CICDE staff recruit students, teachers and academics; and (d) the CEC also offers a pool of qualified trainers for discrete activities outside its main work. Ultimately the CICDE uses every opportunity to attract talent.

The delivery of training offered by the CICDE extended to e-learning in 2014 as an alternative or a complement to face-to-face training. During late 2014 and through 2015, the CICDE team created a multimedia communication and training platform aimed at DEC, PEBs and other electoral stakeholders. With the support of the UNDP, the CICDE managed to create and launch its first 13 online courses in 2014 (see the e-learning pages of the CICDE website), to be updated on a yearly basis and before any electoral event.

From the beginning, the CEC and the CICDE have undertaken to advance gender-inclusive practices in electoral management and processes. Achievements in this area include (a) the sex-disaggregated collection and analysis of data on electoral candidates, voters,

electoral staff, elected officials and beneficiaries of electoral training; (b) gender mainstreaming within the CEC's and CICDE's strategic plans for 2015–2019; (c) gender mainstreaming within CICDE training materials; and (d) the development of an in-house pool of trainers with expertise in gender equality.

Policy and research capability

Under the budgetary and workload constraints we have outlined, and thus being heavily oriented towards operations, the CEC was not at first equipped to conduct applied research—as initially envisaged—into the most effective forms of electoral training and electoral management. This was also a subject area that was not addressed by any educational institution in Moldova. The CICDE was only able to adopt its research function beginning in 2017 with the publication of a policy brief on electoral integrity (CICDE 2017). Since 2018 the CICDE has been engaged in a research project with International IDEA on political party funding—the ‘Level Up: Political Finance with Integrity’ project. In the long term it is envisioned that conducting research will become a greater focus for the CICDE, especially if staff time can be dedicated to this area.

Electoral and civic education

In 2015 the CICDE started implementing civic education and informational outreach campaigns to meet an existing demand in Moldovan civil society. The first programmes launched by the CICDE team were a dedicated effort to reach out to specific groups of voters—young people, women, citizens from the Autonomous Region of Gagauzia and representatives of linguistic minorities. Methods included art and music, and training on, for example, ICT, management and public speaking. Education through gaming and live interaction proved to be a great innovation for attracting the interest of young people. One of the first interactive civic education courses developed by the CICDE was called ‘The Democracy Umbrella’. It was implemented in schools targeting at least 1,000 pupils most of whom were first-time voters in all 35 districts of Moldova (CICDE 2015b).

Another innovative approach to educating men and women about equal opportunities in elections was a training programme called ‘We conduct together!’, inaugurated in May 2015. This was a three-day training course on emotional intelligence (and techniques of influence) for future leaders. The goal of the event was also to prove the power of education and to show that leadership has no gender. At the end of the course 25 diplomats, electoral officials and business persons were, for one night, transformed into orchestra conductors during an open-air concert.

The year 2015 also saw the creation of a Political and Electoral Management Master's Programme, a joint effort of the CICDE and the Moldova State University's Faculty of International Relations, Political and Administrative Sciences. This two-year programme was designed for people with a strong track record in civic participation who were looking to deepen their electoral knowledge and practice.

2016–2019 strategic plan

Between August 2013, when the CICDE started its operations, and the end of 2015, the CICDE team was overwhelmed with the day-to-day activities (electoral training, communications and civic education) connected with the November 2014 parliamentary elections and the June 2015 local elections. It then paused to review its operations and processes and to establish goals for the future. With the next regular parliamentary elections planned for 2018 and regular local elections in 2019, the CICDE had about two years to focus on improving and developing its services.

November 2015 provided a strategic planning opportunity, as the CEC had shortly before completed its own 2016–2019 strategic plan. The purpose of the plan was to provide a

framework for further development of the services offered by the CICDE and to develop the CICDE as an organization with the capacities, staff, internal processes and procedures to successfully implement and manage change. The strategic goals outlined in the plan included providing diverse and innovative training services in participatory democracy both nationally and internationally (goal 1), becoming a reference research centre at the national and international level (goal 2), developing the CICDE as a recognized brand and raising public awareness of participatory democracy (goal 3) and attracting and retaining a professional motivated team and trainers working in an enabling environment.

The CICDE team developed the plan with the support of the UNDP (CICDE 2015a). The plan was made fully consistent with the CEC's 2016–2019 strategic plan, as well as the CICDE 2016–2019 communications strategy.

International Association of Women in Electoral Management

The CEC and CICDE initiated the International Association of Women in Electoral Management (WEM-International) in 2015. The aim of the association is to advocate for full participation of women in electoral management bodies (EMBs), particularly in senior management positions, as well as to inspire and empower women through networking, sharing of innovative and best practices, raising awareness, providing education and training, and equipping EMBs with tools and techniques to enable representative and gender-sensitive EMBs.

In the course of 2015–2016 an international working group was set up to establish the association in a participatory manner. Participants represented national EMBs (including from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Kosovo,² Moldova and Romania), prominent international electoral stakeholders (IFES, International IDEA, the European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES) and the Organization of Arab Electoral Management Bodies (ArabEMBs)) and development partners (UNDP, UN Women, Council of Europe). Following a June 2016 meeting in Chisinau, activities began at the CICDE Secretariat, and formal registration of WEM-International was completed in April 2018, with the electoral commissions of Georgia, Latvia, Moldova and Romania as founding members. The brand identity and website of WEM-International were developed in 2016, with the latter being transferred for management and maintenance to the CICDE (see ECES n.d.).

Conclusion

As of January 2019, 50,000 individuals had received CICDE services. A training delivery system had been established involving more than 107 trained trainers and training coordinators, who had organized and delivered general and specific training on relevant topics. No fewer than 16 types of targeted and tailor-made training programmes had been designed. Some 456 training courses had been conducted covering the overall electoral process, relevant procedures and the roles and responsibilities of EMBs. New training programmes—for example, for police officers—were introduced and successfully conducted.

In the run-up to the February 2019 parliamentary elections, a new pool of trainers was created. Also, for the third time since 2013, the CICDE and the CEC jointly organized and managed an information hotline which received around 9,000 calls from DEC and PEB members, operators, journalists and, above all, voters. The CICDE had, since early 2016, provided training services to the EMBs of Albania, Romania and Ukraine. The CICDE continues to advocate for the creation of permanent regional DEC, as well as mandatory training and certification of DEC and PEB members.

The CICDE's development and expansion—findings and lessons

Personnel with forward-minded, strategic and inclusive thinking are crucial to staying fresh, competitive and responsive to future needs. The next generation of managers, trainers and

team members should be continually mentored and empowered in public service via their duties in electoral training. This necessitates a professional workplace that fosters a culture of appreciation and a sense of community among its members, as the CEC has promoted. When recognized and appreciated for their work, high-performing team players are retained and more receptive to managerial coaching.

The CICDE's workplace flexibility played a key role in attracting the right talent and enthusiasm for providing specialized expertise in elections, training and general management. Typically only private or non-profit bodies in Moldova offer workplace alternatives, but the CICDE offers its staff work-life balance through structured options such as unconventional hours (including part-time), micro-agility and location-based flexibility. This is particularly useful for retaining parents of young children. The key to the CICDE's success and continued relevance has been the organization's ongoing assessment and open culture for creative and innovative solutions that address new political, financial and operational challenges.

Box 2. Factsheet: The Centre for Continuous Electoral Training (Centrul de Instruire Continuă în Domeniul Electoral, CICDE) of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC)

The CICDE is an autonomous public institution under the CEC. It was established according to article 26 of the Electoral Code, introduced by Law No. 119 of 18 June 2010 on amending the Electoral Code, No. 1381-XIII of 21 November 1997 (Moldova 1997). The mandate of the CICDE is described in the Regulation on the CICDE under the CEC, approved by CEC decision No. 1030 of 9 December 2011.

The CICDE's mission is to provide training and education and to conduct research in order to empower citizens to conduct and participate in elections, thus strengthening public confidence in the democratic process. The CICDE's vision is an internationally recognized, modern and flexible institution offering the highest-quality electoral training, civic education, research and consultancy services. The main objective of the CICDE is to provide training on the best electoral practices to persons involved in the organization and conduct of elections in Moldova. Functions include capacity-building (operational training and professional development), electoral education and research.

The CICDE's permanent staff consists of the Training and Certification Department and the Logistics and Administration Department. CICDE personnel include seven full-time staff—one director, one chief accountant, one deputy director, one methodology developer, one legal specialist and two specialist coordinators—and experts hired based on service agreements. The Centre maintains a network of regional trainers who are involved in training activities throughout the electoral cycle.

The CICDE's main beneficiaries include representatives from the CEC, EMBs (DECs, PEBs), mass media, the courts, political parties, non-governmental organizations (including observer organizations), the academic community and the general public.

For more information about the CICDE visit its website at <<http://cicde.md/index.php?l=en>> or contact the CICDE directly by email (info@cicde.md).

Sources: CICDE website <<http://cicde.md/inex.php?l=en>>, accessed 15 February 2020; CICDE, *Planul strategic al Centrului de Instruire Continuă în Domeniul Electoral pentru anii 2016 - 2019* [Strategic Plan 2016–2019], November 2015a, <<http://cicde.md/index.php?pag=news&id=1180&rid=1213&l=en>> accessed on 15 February 2020.

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About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with the mission to advance democracy worldwide, as a universal human aspiration and enabler of sustainable development. We do this by supporting the building, strengthening and safeguarding of democratic political institutions and processes at all levels. Our vision is a world in which democratic processes, actors and institutions are inclusive and accountable and deliver sustainable development to all.

What do we do?

In our work we focus on three main impact areas: electoral processes; constitution-building processes; and political participation and representation. The themes of gender and inclusion, conflict sensitivity and sustainable development are mainstreamed across all our areas of work.

International IDEA provides analyses of global and regional democratic trends; produces comparative knowledge on democratic practices; offers technical assistance and capacity-building on reform to actors engaged in democratic processes; and convenes dialogue on issues relevant to the public debate on democracy and democracy building.

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Our headquarters are located in Stockholm, and we have regional and country offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and is accredited to European Union institutions.

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Endnotes

1. BRIDGE was developed in cooperation between IFES, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the Australian Electoral Commission, the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division and the UNDP. The CICDE's other international partners include the Governments of Canada, Norway and Sweden; and the Council of Europe.
2. References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).