



FACT SHEET MOLDOVA

Risk Mitigation in Weapons and Ammunitions Logistics – Austrian Activities within the Framework of the OSCE

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

The primary responsibility for stockpile management of conventional ammunition rests with the State holding the ammunition; it should guarantee both national defence and the security of the population. Inadequate stockpile management presents inherent hazards to both the civilian population and the depot personnel and poses the risk of illicit proliferation and serious environmental damage. Such deficiencies usually entail both a national socio-economic impact and cross-border consequences. Particularly at risk in this respect are conflict-affected regions and states as well as regions in post-conflict situations. In response, the UN, the OSCE, the EU and NATO have taken various commitments and efforts at both the normative and the operational levels to offer states advice and assistance mitigating the risk and supporting the establishment of sustainable weapons and ammunition management on request.

FACT BOX

National territory: 33,843 km²
Population: 3,550,852 (2017)
Official language: Romanian
Capital: Chisinau (532,513)
Form of government: parliamentary republic
Religions: Orthodox 90.1%, other Christian churches 2.6%, others 0.1%
Gross Domestic Product: USD 11.2 billion (2020)
Currency: 1 Moldovan Leu (MDL) = 100 Bani
Defence expenditures: USD 44.5 million (2020),
Share of GDP: 0.4%
Total strength: 5,150 (active service), 58,000 (reserve), 900 (paramilitary)
Troops abroad: Central African Republic UN MINUS-CA 3, Mali EU EUTM 3, Serbia NATO KFOR 3, UN UNMIK 1, Southern Sudan UN UNMISS 5 (2021)
International troops in the country: Russian Federation 1,500 (incl. 400 peacekeepers), Ukraine 10 (Joint Peacekeeping Force) (2018)

BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF THE ENGAGEMENT

After Moldova activated the OSCE assistance mechanism in 2006 and 2008 for small arms and light weapons as well as conventional ammunition, the OSCE established a comprehensive assistance programme. The OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova is in charge for the overall coordination with the Ministry of Defence, whereas the project implementation is supported by interested OSCE participating States financially or in-kind-on-site through so-called *experts on mission*. More specifically, this concerns the following measures: infrastructure measures in the five existing storage sites, destruction of surplus ammunition, advice, education and training for the implementation of international standards and best practices, support in the area of norm-setting on the strategic level and the establishment of necessary organisational structures. Austria, together with Switzerland, Germany, Canada and Sweden, has taken over the part of training and advising for ammunition and weapons logistics with a focus on ammunition.



PRINCIPLES FOR THE ENGAGEMENT OF THE AUSTRIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

- Mandate within the politico-military dimension of the OSCE
- Implementation according to the OSCE assistance mechanism
- Long-term engagement (three-to-four-year phases)
- National ownership of the Republic of Moldova, tailored and needs-based approach

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PREVIOUS ACTIVITIES AND OUTLOOK 2022/2024

2010 – 2013: Assessment visits, workshops, project implementation plan with defined milestones.

2013: Official takeover of project implementation under Swiss and Austrian co-project management; Austria focuses on ammunition and weapons logistics including visual inspection of ammunition and chemical testing of propellant powder.

2014: Project start; implementation of the first round of basic training in ammunition storage management (*moderating*), advice with regard to the establishment of a training structure within the Moldovan Ministry of Defence, including the selection of personnel.

2015: Second round of basic training in ammunition storage management (*mentoring*), start of the visual inspection of ammunition training (*moderating*).

2016: *Monitoring* of the basic training in ammunition storage management conducted by Moldovan instructors; *mentoring* of the training in visual inspections of ammunition and stability testing of propellants. Expert meeting with the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

2017: Finalization of the basic training and hand-over to the Moldovan authorities; donation of a Chemical Laboratory (ChemLab) level 1 for stability testing of propellants, monitoring of the training in visual inspections of ammunition and stability testing of propellants.

2018: Takeover of the project lead by Austria; monitoring of the training in visual inspections of ammunition and stability testing of propellants; secondment of a politico-military officer to the OSCE Mission.

2019: Continuation of education and training activities with a focus on the introduction of the level 1 chemical laboratory (ChemLab) and the establishment of a level 2 ChemLab; provision of training in the field of ammunition conservation and weapons logistics.

2020/2021: Due to the pandemic, there was a delay in further implementation steps; nevertheless, a couple of activities took place. Continuation of the secondment of a senior officer to the OSCE Mission.

2022/2024: Implementation of 2020/21 postponed activities, extended specialised training in ammunition logistics in MDA and AUT as well as further mentoring.

CHALLENGES AND SENSITIVITIES

- The fragile political situation, the protracted conflict regarding Transnistria, the unstable situation in the region, especially since the beginning of the Ukraine Crises in 2014 and the escalation of the situation in February 2022.
- The large number of (international) actors in the country (including the EU, NATO, the OSCE, the UNDP, the USA, Germany, the ICRC)
- The lack of financial and human capacities within the national structures as well as the rapid turnover of personnel
- Highly technical and at the same time politically sensitive nature of the whole topic as weapons and ammunition are key factors in national security and defence capabilities

OBJECTIVES OF AUSTRIA AND IN PARTICULAR OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE/AUSTRIAN ARMED FORCES

Contribution to stability and risk reduction in the regional neighbourhood as well as to the strengthening of the role of the OSCE as stated in the Regional Policies of the Austrian MoD:

- supporting the establishment of sustainable and reliable institutions and structures,
- Implementing an accompanied knowledge transfer to the region
- supporting the introduction of international standards and best practices,
- advising in the course of operational and technical implementation,
- ensuring the return flow of experience and know-how to the relevant structures of the Austrian Armed Forces,
- providing the necessary capacities within the Austrian Armed Forces to cope with the international demand for cooperation and assistance programmes in the field of weapons and ammunition storage management.



Stability testing of propellants

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE/AUSTRIAN ARMED FORCES

Project steering at the strategic level is carried out by the Military Policy Division, project implementation is realised by the Armed Forces Logistics School/International Capacities Building Section, supported temporarily and need-based by other experts of the Armed Forces' Capability Pool for mission-related special tasks in accordance with the Austrian security strategy, these experts work in different divisions and commands (e.g. the Armed Forces Logistics School, ammunition depots, the Armament and Defence Technology Agency); with its expertise, the Institute for Peace Support and Conflict Management supports the dissemination of information to the public interested in security policy.

