

Moldova Program Summary

Moldova has struggled to liberalize its economy and implement a functioning democracy since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The country's leaders hold ambitious goals for the future, hoping to lift Moldovans from poverty through European Union accession, market diversification and improving the business climate to create jobs and attract badly-needed investment. Political reform has also become an urgent priority as the parliament's failure to elect a president has forced the country to hold three parliamentary elections since April 2009, the most recent on November 28, 2010.

In April 2010, the International Republican Institute (IRI) launched a governance program to help the government build its capacity to deliver reform, legislate effectively and enhance communications with Moldovan citizens. IRI has actively supported Moldovan political parties since 1998, helping them build competitive organizations and produce substantive issue-based campaign messages that resonate with the public. IRI's two programs encompass five key components: Elections support, democratic governance, political party strengthen, public opinion research and women's political participation.

Elections Support

IRI supports free, competitive elections, assisting parties in campaign techniques, message development, get-out-the-vote and training election observers and party lawyers. IRI trained more than 1,500 election observers during the July 2009 election cycle and 1,720 more for the November 2010 parliamentary elections, leaving citizens better informed of their electoral rights and able to serve as observers in their country. In advance of the local elections in June 2011, IRI worked with parties to develop strong platforms and messages that resonate with voters, conducted numerous trainings on door-to-door campaigning and other voter outreach techniques, and again trained party poll-watchers.

Democratic Governance

IRI's democratic governance program equips legislative and executive branch staff with the skills necessary to efficiently manage their responsibilities, improve government services and draft policies responsive to citizen needs. IRI sent an advisor to train communications staff in the prime minister's office and is currently developing a training manual that will be distributed to communications staff in both the executive and legislative branches. IRI has also facilitated two parliamentary exchanges with Lithuanian parliamentarians to train parliamentary staff on the drafting and implementation of European Union-standard legislation.

In spring 2011, IRI entered the early stages of an ambitious customer service project aimed at vital public institutions that have long failed to adequately serve Moldovan citizens. Utilizing public opinion surveys, focus groups and expert analysis, IRI has targeted Moldova's customs service first and is developing a training program for staff at this institution. IRI also plans to target law enforcement, health institutions and various registry offices. IRI hopes that this project will help these institutions reduce corruption and provide more efficient and effective services to the Moldovan people.

Political Party Strengthening

IRI assists Moldovan political parties in building their organizations, communicating effectively with citizens and developing strong nationwide structures to better expand their organizations and deliver substantive messages to voters. IRI has worked extensively with all the major political parties on message development, fundraising, regional branch management and strategic planning. With the 2011 election season at an end, IRI is currently focusing on training newly-elected officials at the local level in office management, constituent communications and budgeting, and is working with parties to update their strategic plans.

Public Opinion Research

Public opinion polling has long been a critical aspect of IRI's programming in Moldova. Timely polling data enables Moldova's leaders to identify citizen priorities, appropriately manage expectations and better inform the electorate of their progress, all vital elements to maintaining public support as reforms move forward. IRI also utilizes polling data to inform parties of public opinion on a variety of policies and issues, feedback on their performance and areas for reform.

Women's Political Participation

For years, IRI has helped parties build and strengthen women's organizations to develop female leaders within party structures. IRI conducts training schools for party women's organizations every summer and also works closely with female elected officials both locally and in the national government. IRI conducted an in-depth female candidate development program aimed at nurturing a select group of viable local candidates for the local elections in 2011. IRI saw eight of these women achieve office. With IRI's support, women's organizations have proven a useful tool for increasing female participation in the political process and helping women attain more active leadership roles and positions on party electoral lists.

