



**The Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme of Moldova
GEF SGP**

**Regulation on the organisation and functioning of the
National Steering Committee**

March 2026

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Acronyms:

NSC – National Steering Committee

NC – National Coordinator of the GEF Small Grants Programme

CPMT – Central SGP Programme Management Team

GEF – Global Environment Facility

SGP – Small Grants Programme

GEF SGP – Small Grants Programme of the Global Environment Facility

OP8 – Operational Phase 8 of the GEF Small Grants Programme

CPS – Country Programme Strategy

TAG – Technical Advisory Group

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

1. General provisions

- 1.1. The National Steering Committee (NSC) is the main decision-making body of the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP) at national level. The role of the NSC is to ensure the strategic leadership, overall oversight and coherence of the implementation of the Country Programme, in line with the objectives of the GEF and the relevant national priorities.
- 1.2. The NSC provides strategic guidance and programmatic direction for the GEF SGP, ensuring that the programme remains relevant to the needs of local communities, civil society organisations and vulnerable groups, while contributing to the achievement of the GEF's overall environmental objectives.
- 1.3. The NSC operates in full compliance with the following normative documents, which constitute its reference framework:
 - GEF SGP Operational Guide for the current operational phase (OP8);
 - GEF SGP Project Document for OP8;
 - Country Programme Strategy (CPS);
 - Terms of reference for NSC (TOR OP8);
 - These Regulations.
- 1.4. In the event of discrepancies or inconsistencies between the provisions of this Regulation and the GEF SGP global documents, the provisions of the global documents shall prevail.
- 1.5. The NSC operates on the principles of transparency, impartiality, inclusive participation, accountability, ethics, gender balance, representativeness and consensus-based decision-making.

2. NSC Role, Functions, and Responsibilities

- 2.1. The NSC has overall responsibility to guide, supervise and support the implementation of the GEF SGPat national level, ensuring the strategic, technical and operational quality of the programme.
- 2.2. In carrying out its mandate, the NSC shall exercise the following main functions:
 1. Provides overall strategic guidance for the GEF SGP Country Programme, including for the development, implementation, monitoring and regular review of the Country Programme Strategy (CPS), so that it remains aligned with GEF priorities and the national context;
 2. Reviews, evaluates and approves project concepts, project proposals and GEF SGP grants, ensuring compliance with the Operational Guide, CPS and participatory, democratic, impartial and transparent procedures;
 3. Ensure the technical and substantial quality of SGP grants, including the adequacy of the proposed approaches, the technical feasibility, sustainability of the results and the administrative and financial capacity of the beneficiary organisations;

4. Monitors the implementation of approved projects, and, where appropriate, participates in monitoring and evaluation visits in the field;
5. It connects the results, lessons learned and good practices of the SGP with relevant policies, strategies and initiatives at local, national, regional and global level;
6. Supports the development of strategic partnerships and the mobilisation of financial and non-financial resources, both at project and programme level;
7. Supports the processes of scaling, replicating and integrating SGP results into public policies, national programmes and initiatives of other donors;
8. It ensures compliance with UN ethical standards, including rules on conflict of interest, confidentiality and impartiality of decision-making.
9. Supports other aspects of the implementation of the programme at national level, in line with the SGP Project Document for the relevant operational phase.

2.3. The NSC acts as a strategic and supervisory body and has no legal or fiduciary responsibility for the management of GEF SGP funds or the direct implementation of projects.

3. NSC Composition

3.1. The NSC is usually made up of 7 to 12 volunteer members, the exact number being established according to the national context and the needs of the Country Programme.

3.2. The majority of NSC members must come from the non-governmental sector, including representatives of civil society organisations, NGOs, community-based organisations, academic and research institutions, women's groups, young people, as well as independent experts. Members of the NSC may also be representatives of other donors, whose support objectives in the Republic of Moldova align with the objectives of the GEF SGP set out in the CPS.

3.3. The institutional members of the NSC are:

- The UNDP Resident Representative or his/her delegate;
- GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP) or its designee.

3.4. In general, only one government representative (GEF Operational Focal Point or Political Focal Point) is required as an institutional member. Depending on the circumstances, additional government representatives such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, the Ministry of Energy and/or other relevant members may be considered, while ensuring the majority of members is from civil society.

3.5. Government members should hold positions relevant to the work of the SGP and at a level at which they can contribute to both strategic and technical discussions, in particular the evaluation and approval of proposals.

3.6. Institutional members shall liaise between the GEF SGP and governmental and UN structures, contributing to policy coherence and the integration of SGP results into relevant national processes.

3.7. All other members of the NSC shall participate in a personal capacity, on a voluntary basis, and may not appoint alternate representatives in their absence.

3.8. NSC non-governmental members must have solid credibility and relevant experience in working with CSOs, CBs, NGOs and communities, so that they can genuinely represent their needs and interests. Strong representation of civil society, based on technical and practical expertise, is essential to keep the SGP aligned with its mandate to support local communities and organisations.

3.9. The composition of the NSC shall reflect, as far as possible, relevant expertise for the GEF focal areas (biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, forests, chemicals and waste), as well as for cross-cutting themes such as gender, social inclusion, monitoring and assessment, and knowledge management.

3.10. The NSC shall appoint from among its members:

- a focal point for gender equality, responsible for promoting gender mainstreaming in the work of the NSC;
- where appropriate, a focal point for youth and/or vulnerable people, to strengthen the inclusion of these groups in the decision-making process.

4. Selection and appointment of NSC members

4.1. The selection of NSC members shall be led by the UNDP Country Office, with the support of the National Coordinator (NC), in close consultation with the SGP Central Programme Management Team (CPMT) and a wide circle of stakeholders, in a transparent, participatory and inclusive manner.

4.2. For both the formation of new and existing NSCs, the nomination and selection of non-governmental members of the NSC shall be carried out in a transparent manner, through broad consultation, as far as possible, with stakeholders. Unless the CPMT grants a derogation depending on the national context, an open call for the nomination of NSC members will be organised, based on clear selection criteria and a transparent process.

4.3. The announcement of the call for nominations will be published on the UNDP and/or GEF SGP websites and will be disseminated through the relevant social media channels, mailing lists of CSO networks and partners, as well as other relevant communication platforms.

4.4. The existing NSC (if a NSC is already constituted) shall review the nominations received and propose to the UNDP Resident Representative a recommended composition, taking into account individual competences, the overall balance of the committee and the need for diverse representation on thematic components.

4.5. The UNDP Resident Representative, in consultation with the NC, will review and approve the list recommended by new NSC members, which is then sent to the CPMT for review.

4.6. In the absence of a constituted NSC, the NC will carry out the initial analysis of the nominations received, will send the summary of the files received and the primary documents to the analysis group consisting of at least three UNDP representatives with relevant experience, will submit the nominations and recommendations formulated, and will subsequently submit the recommended composition to the UNDP Resident Representative.

4.7. Appointments and updates of NSC members are subject to review and approval by the Regional Focal Point (RFP) of the SGP CPMT, with the final approval of the Global Manager of the GEF SGP.

4.8. The UNDP Resident Representative issues the letters of appointment on behalf of the GEF SGP.

4.9. Information on the composition of the NSC, mandates and contact details shall be recorded and updated in the GEF SGP Global Database.

5. Term of service, renewal and rotation

5.1. The NSC members shall be appointed for a term of three (3) years, with the possibility of a single consecutive renewal, unless approved by the Global SGP Manager on an exceptional basis.

5.2. After the completion of two consecutive terms, a break of at least one full term (3 years) is recommended before the person can return as a member of the NSC, even in a new capacity. Inviting new members is a solid and healthy policy that brings new ideas and expertise to the implementation of programs.

5.3. The rotation of NSC members is recommended to be planned gradually, targeting approximately 25% of the NSC membership in a given year, in order to avoid drastic changes in the list of members at a given time, and to ensure institutional continuity.

5.4. The NC, after due consultation with other members of the NSC in good standing, including the UNDP Resident Representative, may recommend the change of a member of the NSC if it becomes apparent that their participation does not contribute to the programme. A member of the NSC who does not attend three consecutive meetings, without invoking a valid reason, may be proposed for change, and may not be considered for rotation or renewal. The final decision is approved by the SGP Global Manager, and the letter to the member leaving the NSC must be signed by the UNDP Resident Representative.

6. Conflict of interest, ethics and impartiality

6.1. Objectivity, transparency and credibility of the NSC are essential for the success of the GEF SGP. All NSC members must comply with UN ethical standards.

6.2. In accordance with the UN rules on ethical conduct, all members of the NSC must declare any current or potential conflict of interest in relation to concepts or proposals under consideration.

6.3. Each NSC member shall sign a Declaration of Conflict of Interest:

- at the time of appointment;

- before each NSC meeting in which projects are analyzed and approved.

6.4. A conflict of interest may involve a number of circumstances, including but not limited to:

- (i) the presence of relatives or family members affiliated to the project proposal;
- (ii) a financial or personal interest in the applicant organisation;
- (iii) political, reputational and/or other ethical considerations.

6.5. Members in a situation of conflict of interest are obliged to declare this fact and to withdraw from discussions and decisions regarding the respective project. The NC will collect the declarations of conflict of interest, and will keep them in the program archive.

7. NSC meetings and decision-making

7.1. The NSC shall meet at least twice a year or whenever necessary for the fulfilment of its mandate.

7.2. NSC meetings may be organized:

- in formal format (offline or online) — mandatory for meetings with the analysis of projects;
- in ad hoc format, through email exchange, for non-decision-making issues or "no objections" procedures.

7.3. The convening of the meeting is sent by the NC by email at least 7 calendar days before the date of the meeting and will include, as the case may be:

- the proposed agenda;
- the format of the meeting, with the mention of the address or link to the online session;
- documents relevant to the examination;
- project proposals and supporting materials.

7.4. The official communication shall be carried out in Romanian or, if necessary, in English. The minutes are drawn up in English according to the requirements of the GEF SGP; if necessary they can be translated into Romanian. In case of divergences, the English version prevails.

7.5. The members of the NSC who cannot participate in the meeting of the NSC may send by email to the NC the opinions, comments and evaluation forms, as the case may be. These will be presented at the meeting by the NC. The opinions submitted after the meeting shall not be taken into account.

7.6. The NSC usually takes decisions by consensus, promoting constructive dialogue and the active participation of all members. Formal voting is only used exceptionally.

7.7. In order to ensure a fair and balanced decision-making process, the participation of the majority of the members of the TNC is necessary, with adequate representation of non-governmental and governmental members.

7.8. In order to facilitate the meetings, the NSC may appoint a Chairperson(s) of the meetings:

- (i) either one of the most involved members, for a fixed period, but a maximum term of 3 years

(ii) either by rotation between members to enhance the participation of each member. If the Chair is a representative of the Government, it is recommended to co-chair with a member of civil society to promote civil society leadership and CSO-Government collaboration, which are institutional objectives of the SGP.

7.9. All meetings shall be documented in the Minutes of the NSC meeting, which shall be prepared by the NC within a maximum of 15 days from the date of the meeting and shall be signed by all NSC members present at the meeting.

7.10. The project approval list, which will contain information about the project, the amount requested, the decision to approve, reject or request additional information, must be signed at the meeting (or within a maximum of 3 days after it).

7.11. No SGP project may be implemented at national level without the approval of the NSC, except for planning grants, the approval of which may be delegated to the NC as appropriate (see OP8 SGP Operational Guide for details).

7.12. From an operational point of view, NSC decisions are considered final, provided that they are in line with the SGP Operational Guide, the SGP Project Document for the current GEF Operational Phase and the Country Programme Strategy, including co-financing partnerships with bilateral donors, if any.

7.13. The project proposals approved by the NSC will be forwarded to the UNDP Resident Representative for the signing of the Grant Agreements.

7.14. After signing the Grant Agreements, the selected project proposals will be placed on the GEF SGP programme page on the UNDP and/or GEF SGP websites. The details of the evaluation will be considered confidential and will not be disclosed by the members of the NSC to the applicants or to the general public.

7.15. Further details on the assessment procedure, assessment and approval steps are set out in Annex 1. Procedures for the evaluation and approval of GEF SGP projects, part of the given Regulation.

8. Technical Advisory Group

8.1. The NSC may set up a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) composed of volunteer experts, acting as a technical sub-committee, providing analysis of proposals, expertise in specific programmatic areas and support in the development of partnerships relevant to the GEF SGP.

8.2. The composition of the TAG shall reflect the multisectoral approach of the SGP and include a balanced mix of experts from civil society, academia, the public and private sectors, selected according to the thematic and technical needs of the Programme.

8.3. The TAG shall provide independent technical expertise, support for project evaluation and guidance in focal areas of the GEF SGP, in particular in cases requiring in-depth technical analysis.

8.4. TAG experts may participate in the meetings of the NSC in an advisory capacity, at the invitation of at least two members of the NSC.

8.5. The members of the TAG shall be proposed by the NC and approved by the NSC.

8.6. The members of the TAG shall participate on a voluntary basis, and shall respect the same principles of conflict of interest, ethics and impartiality set out in Section 6 of these Regulations.

9. Role of the National Coordinator

9.1. The National Coordinator (NC) participates in the activity of the NSC as an ex-officio member, taking part in deliberations, but without the right to vote in the project approval process.

9.2. The NC usually convenes the NSC and fulfills its role as its Secretariat. In the context with NSC, NC is responsible, among other things, for:

- convening and organizing NSC meetings;
- facilitating communication between NSC members;
- reporting on the progress of the programme;
- providing information on the flow of concepts and project proposals received;
- providing information on approved and implementing SGP projects;
- preparation, archiving and transmission of minutes;
- uploading the relevant documents to the global GEF SGP database;
- project management in accordance with UNDP Standard Operating Procedures.

10. Final provisions

10.1. The main document regulating the activity of the NSC is this Regulation.

10.2. This Regulation shall enter into force on the date of approval by the NSC and shall be subject to final approval by the Global Manager of the GEF SGP.

10.3. The Regulation may be revised whenever necessary to reflect updates to the GEF SGP Operational Guide, Project Document or TOR. Updates can be made by the NC based on the decision of the NSC or on the recommendation of the Global Manager GEF SGP. The Regulation must be updated within one month of the NSC's decision or SGP Global recommendation.

10.4. If disputes arise among NSC members and other stakeholders regarding the specific stipulations and consequences of these terms of reference, the final right of interpretation belongs to the Global Manager of the GEF SGP and the UNDP Permanent Representative in Moldova.

11. Interpretation of this document and dispute resolution

11.1. In the event of any uncertainty, divergence of interpretation or disputes regarding the provisions and application of this Regulation, the final right of interpretation lies with the Global Manager of the GEF SGP Programme and the UNDP Resident Representative in the Republic of Moldova.

Annex 1. Procedures for the evaluation and approval of GEF SGP projects

1. General principles

1.1. The evaluation and approval of GEF SGP projects is one of the key responsibilities of the NSC and is the main mechanism through which the Country Programme ensures the relevance, quality and impact of its interventions at local and national level.

1.2. The evaluation process is designed to select projects that demonstrably contribute to the GEF's overall environmental objectives, are aligned with the Country Programme Strategy (CPS) and respond to the real needs of communities.

1.3. Assessment and decision-making shall be based on the principles of transparency, impartiality, fair competition, participation, accountability and consensus, in accordance with the GEF SGP Operational Guide.

1.4. As a general rule, the NSC does not consider proposals submitted by organizations of active members of the NSC. A CSO can submit projects after the associate member has completed his or her mandate. In exceptional cases, with the approval of the Global SGP Manager, proposals from CSOs with members in the NSC may be accepted for evaluation.

1.5. The process of evaluating project proposals will not last more than 2 months from the date of receipt of them.

2. General flow of the evaluation process

2.1. The process of evaluation and approval of GEF SGP projects shall normally include the following successive steps:

- submission of project concepts, as the case may be;
- preliminary analysis of project concepts, as appropriate;
- awarding planning grants, as appropriate;
- submission of complete project proposals;
- verification of administrative compliance and eligibility;
- technical and strategic assessment;
- the deliberation and decision of the NSC;
- final review and final approval;

- fixing the decisions on the approval of the projects in the minutes, signed by the members of the NSC present at the meeting;
- communication of decisions and archiving of documentation.

3. Project concepts

3.1. The submission of the project concept is not mandatory. It is an option offered by the GEF SGP, and it is up to the applicant. The description of the project idea should not exceed 1-2 pages.

3.2. Project concepts are a preliminary and synthetic presentation of the intervention idea proposed by an eligible applicant and are intended to assess, at an early stage, its relevance to the SGP GEF.

3.3. Project concepts are submitted to the GEF SGP office through the channels established by the NC and are officially registered on the date of receipt.

3.4. The NC shall analyse the project concepts in order to verify:

- eligibility of the applicant;
- alignment with GEF focal areas;
- consistency with CPS;
- relevance to the needs of the communities concerned.

3.5. The NC may request the support of one or more members of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for a preliminary technical analysis. If there is no TAG, the NC may request the support of one or more members of the NSC.

3.6. The result of the concept analysis shall be communicated to the applicant in writing, including recommendations for the development of the full proposal or justification for the non-acceptance of the concept.

4. Planning grants

4.1. Planning grants are a tool to support organisations with limited capacity to develop robust and competitive project proposals.

4.2. The approval of planning grants may be delegated to the National Coordinator, in accordance with the OP8 Operational Guide, with the information of the NSC.

4.3. Planning grants may cover, but are not limited to:

- community consultations and participatory workshops;
- technical assistance for the preparation of the proposal;
- initial assessments and definition of indicators;

- development of monitoring and evaluation plans.

4.4. The maximum amount, duration and rules for the use of planning grants shall be established in accordance with the GEF SGP Operational Guide for the current operational phase.

5. Full project proposals

5.1. Full project proposals shall be submitted under publicly announced calls, using the standard GEF SGP format, and shall include at least the following elements:

- detailed description of the intervention and activities;
- strategic justification, link to CPS and contribution to GEF indicators;
- detailed budget and sources of co-financing;
- the monitoring and evaluation plan;
- risk analysis and mitigation measures;
- approaching sustainability;
- gender mainstreaming and social inclusion.

5.2. The NC shall verify administrative compliance and may request further information or clarification before submitting proposals to the NSC. The applicant must send the additional information within a maximum of 7 calendar days after the NC request. In case of failure to submit the requested information within the deadlines, the incomplete proposals will be rejected, and the NC will send a message to the applicant.

5.3. The NC shall compile the list of applicant organisations with the total project budgets, and the related amounts requested for financing through the GEF SGP. The NC will submit the list to the UNDP Country Office for verification of the applicant's eligibility in terms¹ of the limits of application of the grant financing mechanism (the Low Value Grants mechanism declared by the GEF for grant agreements) within UNDP.

6. Evaluation criteria and methodology

6.1. The NSC shall evaluate the project proposals on the basis of a standard evaluation form, which reflects the requirements of the GEF SGP OP8. The form will consist of a list of evaluation criteria approved by the NSC, based on which the project proposals will be evaluated.

¹ According to the UNDP Operational Guide on LVG, Article 34, an entity can receive several separate grants within different projects, within a cumulative ceiling of US\$ 300,000 during the current UNDP programme period 2023-2027. The UNDP Business Unit is responsible for reviewing proposed grant awards under UNDP projects and confirming that the amount falls within the grant threshold allowed during the programme period. In order to receive more grants, the grant recipient must have delivered and reported the results agreed in the previous grant agreement, and the proposal for a new project must be approved by the selection committee.

6.2. The evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to:

- relevance to the GEF and CPS focal areas;
- contribution to global environmental objectives;
- the level of participation and benefit for communities;
- inclusion of vulnerable groups;
- the technical quality and feasibility of the project;
- sustainability of results;
- the institutional, administrative and financial capacity of the applicant;
- co-financing and partnerships;
- the quality of the monitoring and evaluation process.

6.3. Each criterion is evaluated by scoring, according to the approved evaluation criteria, and presented in the evaluation form.

7. The role of the Technical Advisory Group in the evaluation

7.1. The NSC may request the TAG to carry out detailed technical assessments for specific proposals, depending on the thematic area or complexity of the project.

7.2. TAG evaluations shall be consultative in nature and shall support the decision-making process of the NSC.

8. Deliberation and decision of the NSC

8.1. Each member of the NSC fills in the evaluation form for the analyzed projects, in strict compliance with the rules on conflict of interest.

8.2. The NSC discusses the results of the evaluation at the meetings and follows the adoption of decisions by consensus. The final score of the project proposal is a consensus agreed upon by the NSC members during the NSC meeting, following deliberations. The project proposal that receives at least 70% of the total number of points will be recommended for receiving the grant. The grants will be allocated according to the total available resources, but also on each priority of the GEF SGP programme separately. The allocation of resources will be made from the highest accumulated score to the lowest. Projects that remain outside the available budget, but have accumulated a passing score, may be recommended by the NSC to be placed on the reserve list.

8.3. If the scores awarded by the members of a proposal differ significantly, the project shall be subject to a detailed discussion. If consensus is not reached, the draft is returned for review and rediscussed at the next NSC meeting.

8.4. The NSC may decide:

- approval of the project;
- conditional approval, with the request for clarifications or revisions;
- rejection of the project.

8.4. The final revisions of the conditionally approved projects can be carried out through the "no objections" procedure, by exchange of emails, without the need for a formal meeting.

9. Minutes, documentation and transparency

9.1. The minutes of the NSC meetings shall be clear, detailed and comply with the GEF SGP standard model, including, where applicable:

- list of projects analyzed;
- NSC decision for each project;
- the conditions formulated (if any);
- Approved budgets

9.3. The minutes are confidential and are not disclosed to applicants or the public. Public information is limited to the list of approved projects, according to the GEF SGP rules.

9.4. The complete documentation of the evaluation process is kept by the NC and archived according to the requirements of the GEF SGP.