

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2024

ITALIAN AGENCY
FOR DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION

AICS KYIV

# SUMMARY



CUAMM


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# AICS HEADQUARTERS IN KYIV
# IDENTITY CARD

**Full name:** Italian Agency for Development Cooperation – Regional Headquarters in Kyiv
**Year of establishment:** 2023
**Countries of competence:** Ukraine and Moldova

**Mission:** to coordinate, implement, and monitor the interventions of the Italian Cooperation in Ukraine and Moldova, responding to the consequences of the armed aggression against Ukraine and promoting sustainable development, resilience, and social protection.

**Priority areas of intervention:**

- Emergency and Humanitarian Assistance
- Health and Social Protection
- Energy Security and Green Transition
- Education and Social Cohesion
- Humanitarian Demining
- Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality
- Institutional Support and Governance Strengthening

**Operating modes:**

- Collaboration with Italian, internationaland local NGOs
- Partnerships with international organizations (e.g., UN agencies, ICRC, EBRD)
- Bilateral and multi-sectoral programmes
- Humanitarian assistance and medium- to long-term development initiatives

**Active portfolio (2024):** €252 million
**Staff:** 18 people
**Location:** Kyiv (with frequent missions throughout Ukraine and Moldova)

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ITALIAN AGENCY


Presentazione Sede
Regionale AICS Kiev
Pietro Pipi





# OVERVIEW

In 2023, in response to the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine and the deterioration of humanitarian and institutional conditions in the region, the **Italian Agency for Development Cooperation** (AICS) established its **Regional Headquarters in Kyiv**, with territorial competence over Ukraine and Moldova. This decision marked a significant shift in Italy's approach to the crisis, ensuring a direct presence on the ground and enabling swift, multisectoral interventions. In a short time, Italy has positioned itself among the leading European donors in terms of volume, speed, and diversity of instruments deployed, with over **€500 million** allocated to the region since the onset of the war. In 2024 alone, the active portfolio managed by the AICS Kyiv office amounts to **€252 million**, encompassing **17 ongoing or approved initiatives**.

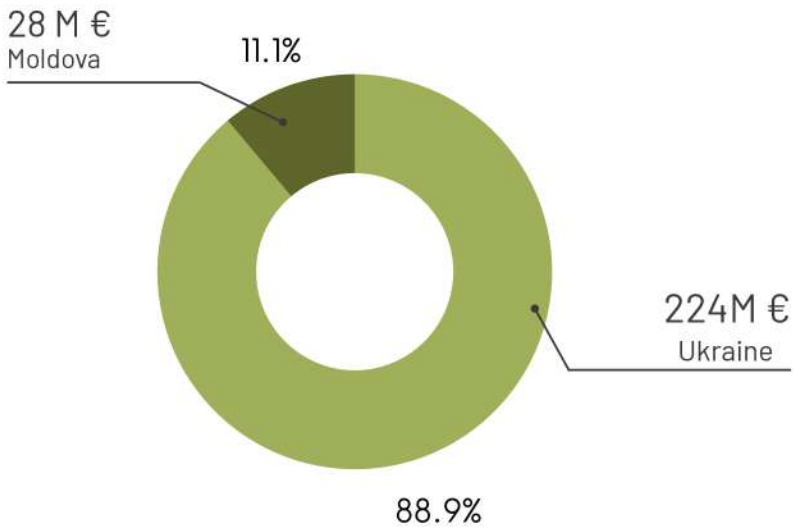



*Chart 1. Distribution by country of financial resources 2024*

The allocated resources are distributed across **emergency humanitarian assistance** (€95 million), **development programmes** (€57 million), and **soft loans** (€100 million), confirming the shift toward a more structured and long-term cooperation model. AICS's engagement has been consolidated along two strategic lines—**emergency response and development**—addressing both the immediate needs arising from the conflict and the broader goals of reconstruction and territorial transformation.






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IIn the humanitarian field, Italian-funded initiatives have provided **immediate support to the most vulnerable communities affected by the conflict**. At the same time, efforts in Ukraine have been intensified in key sectors for the country's recovery, including **energy**, **health**, **demining**, **cultural heritage protection**, and **institutional strengthening**. Italy's intervention has adopted an integrated approach, addressing both urgent needs—such as the rehabilitation of critical energy infrastructure—and structural priorities, such as restoring the country's agri-food potential.

In **Moldova**, activities have focused on **supporting public services** under strain due to the influx of refugees and on **strengthening the energy sector** and **institutional capacities** during a time of significant geopolitical change. Additional initiatives have supported a fair and sustainable energy transition, with particular attention to the needs of the most vulnerable groups.

In both countries, AICS promotes an approach rooted in **localization**, **ownership**, and **support for the path toward European integration**, combining emergency response with long-term development. The year 2024 marked a phase of consolidation and transition, in which the Italian Cooperation further established itself as a key partner for the social, economic, and institutional recovery of the region.

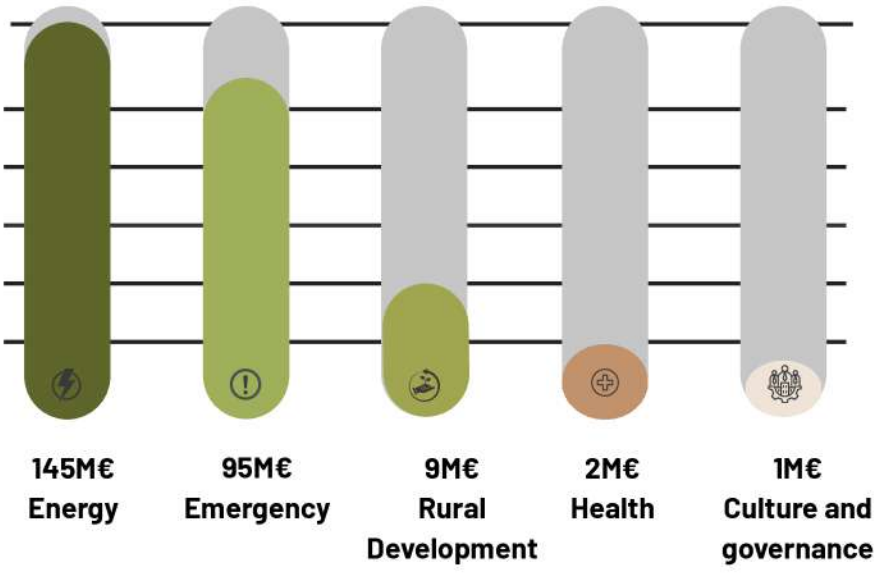



*Chart 2.Financial resources breakdown - sectors - 2024*

# COUNTRIES OF COMPETENCE

In 2025, **Ukraine** enters its **fourth year of war**. The operational context remains extremely unstable: attacks continue to hit the country daily, particularly in the eastern, southern, and northeastern regions, making medium-term strategic planning extremely challenging. According to the latest Humanitarian Response Plan by OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), **12.7 million people**—around **36% of the population**—are in need of assistance. A**reas along the front line**, cities near active hostilities, and temporarily occupied territories remain the most exposed, with **limited humanitarian access** and **highly precarious living conditions**. The consequences of the conflict are both widespread and profound. In addition to the destruction of critical infrastructure—schools, hospitals, water and energy networks—there are the less visible but equally devastating effects of **trauma**, **loss**, and **daily uncertainty**. On the economic and social front, inflation, tax increases, and soaring energy costs are putting **millions of households** under severe pressure, especially the most vulnerable. Even in many urban areas far from the front lines, access to basic services is compromised due to the severely diminished administrative capacity of local authorities. At the same time, however, signs of recovery are emerging at the local level. National and local authorities, civil society organizations, and communities are launching new initiatives: from reopening schools in safe environments to rehabilitating water systems, from mine clearance operations to early economic recovery efforts in newly regained areas. In response to this complex reality, the international humanitarian response—including Italy's—is increasingly evolving toward integrated and transformative approaches that combine emergency assistance with local development programming. There is growing emphasis on **localization of aid**, **public institution strengthening**, and o**perational flexibility**.

The **Republic of Moldova**, although not directly involved in the conflict, continues to experience significant social, demographic, and energy-related repercussions. With over **127,000 Ukrainian refugees** currently on its territory (UNHCR), Moldova plays a key role in the regional response. Nonetheless, it faces considerable challenges: internal balance is strained by pressure on public services, heavy energy dependence on Russia, and ongoing tensions with the separatist region of Transnistria. However, the country's path toward European integration, along with sustained political and financial support from the international community, is helping reinforce Moldova's institutional response and overall stability.

In both countries, the crisis has exposed long-standing **structural vulnerabilities that predate the war**: depopulation of rural areas, weak healthcare systems, territorial disparities, and delays in reforms. In this fragile yet continuously evolving context, the **AICS Regional Office in Kyiv operates with a multidimensional approach that combines humanitarian assistance and development action**. The protection of civilians, the strengthening of local communities, and the coordination between national and international actors are the guiding principles of Italy's engagement in the region.



# UKRAINE

**Capital:** Kyiv
**Population:** approximately 35 million
(2025 estimate, including internal and international mobility)
**Area:** 603,628 km²
**Form of Government:** semi-presidential republic
**EU Status:** Candidate country since 2022
**General Context:** since 2022, Ukraine has been facing a full-scale armed conflict that has triggered a severe humanitarian crisis and significantly undermined the country's economic and social stability. The war continues to heavily impact the eastern, southern, and northeastern regions, with frequent attacks on civilian infrastructure
**People in need (OCHA):** 12.7 million (36% of the population)
**Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** over 3.6 million
**Refugees abroad:** approximately 6 million
**Main Critical Issues:** imited access to basic services; deteriorating infrastructure; high inflation; widespread impoverishment



# MOLDOVA

**Capital:** Chișinău
**Population:** approximately 2.5 million
**Area:** 33,846 km²
**Form of Government:** Parliamentary republic
**EU Status:** Candidate country since 2022
**General Context:** although not directly involved in the conflict in Ukraine, Moldova continues to suffer its indirect consequences. The influx of refugees, ongoing geopolitical tensions with the Transnistrian region, and persistent energy vulnerability further challenge a country already affected by significant internal imbalances
**Ukrainian Refugees Present:** over 127,000
**Main Critical Issues:** pressure on public services; energy dependence on Russia; territorial inequalities; depopulation of rural areas

# INTERNATIONAL AND ITALIAN COOPERATION

Since the full-scale invasion of February 2022, Ukraine has become a central focus of the international cooperation agenda, attracting substantial engagement from states, multilateral organizations, humanitarian agencies, and actors from both the private and civil sectors. From the earliest days of the conflict, the international community mobilized a swift response to support the affected population, ensure the continuity of essential public services, strengthen the resilience of Ukraine's institutional framework, and accompany the country on its path toward reconstruction and European integration.

**The Role of the European Union in Ukraine**

The European Union is Ukraine's main political and financial partner. Through the "EU Solidarity with Ukraine" initiative, the EU had mobilized over €139 billion as of March 2025 in military, macro-financial, humanitarian, and reconstruction assistance. The EU's support operates across several key dimensions: (i) Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) to maintain the economic stability and spending capacity of the Ukrainian state; (ii) Reconstruction support, primarily through the €50 billion Ukraine Facility (2024–2027), designed to promote economic recovery, reforms, and EU accession; (iii) European integration, with an accelerated path toward legislative and institutional alignment. The EU's approach is rooted in the principle of "Build Back Better", aiming for a recovery that is sustainable, digital, green, and inclusive. Coordination among Member States also takes place through "Team Europe" initiatives, which promote joint programming and co-financing to strengthen the coherence and visibility of the European response.

**Multilateral Action and International Conferences: URC Rome 2025**

Alongside the EU, United Nations agencies—including UNDP, WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, and WFP—as well as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and European Investment Bank (EIB), are actively engaged in Ukraine. At the political and coordination level, a series of international conferences—Lugano (2022), London (2023), and Berlin (2024)—have shaped the priorities for Ukraine's recovery, with a shared commitment by international partners to support a government-led, transparent, reform-oriented, and participatory reconstruction process. The upcoming **Ukraine Recovery Conference** (URC), scheduled to take place in **Rome in 2025**, will represent a key moment to reaffirm Italy's central role in the reconstruction process and in the coordination of international support.




**From Emergency to Reconstruction: an integrated approach to Cooperation**

Between 2022 and 2023, the international response focused primarily on humanitarian assistance and emergency relief, including large-scale evacuation operations, the distribution of essential goods, and support for protection, health, and education in crisis settings. From 2024 onwards, the development and reconstruction components have progressively gained momentum, with growing attention to institutional resilience, the restoration of critical civilian infrastructure, social cohesion, and the strengthening of local governance. Shared priorities among partners include: (i) rehabilitation of the energy sector and green transition; (ii) strengthening of the health and psychosocial support systems; (iii) restoration of education and school infrastructure; (iv) human security and humanitarian demining; (v) support for public reforms, particularly in justice, public administration, gender equality, and decentralization.

**International Cooperation in Moldova: a shared commitment to development, reform, and European Integration**

The European Union is Moldova's main partner and largest donor, with sustained financial support for reform, resilience, and the country's path toward EU integration. In October 2024, a €1.8 billion Growth Plan for 2025–2027 was adopted, anchored in a Reform and Growth Facility aimed at revitalizing Moldova's economy, accelerating reforms, and promoting convergence with European standards. Between 2021 and 2024, through the NDICI – Global Europe instrument, the EU mobilized over €430 million in grants, particularly to support energy security and protect the most vulnerable from rising costs. The EU also continues to back justice reforms, the green transition, and regulatory alignment with the EU acquis. Through the Economic & Investment Plan (EIP), the EU has mobilized an additional €1.6 billion since 2021 to improve energy efficiency in schools and hospitals, modernize the railway system, and promote investments in renewable energy and sustainable resource management.

UN agencies are active in Moldova to protect vulnerable groups, promote gender equality, and support institutional resilience in line with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. Numerous other multilateral actors contribute with technical, financial, and political assistance.

**The positioning of the Italian Cooperation**

Italy's development cooperation presence in Ukraine took shape in the very first weeks following the Russian invasion, with the rapid activation of a structured humanitarian and financial response. Even before the opening of the AICS Regional Office in Kyiv, Italy had already mobilized over **€150 million** through direct budget support to the Ukrainian state and contributions to major international organizations operating in the country, such as OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and the Italian Red Cross (FICROSS). Simultaneously, Italy launched an initial emergency response initiative with 14 Italian CSOs, ensuring immediate field operations. Overall, 2022 marked an extraordinary mobilization phase, with over **90 tonnes of humanitarian goods** delivered via the UNHRD Base in Brindisi, and a clear positioning of Italy within the European response framework under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

This timely response quickly evolved into a structured and recognized institutional presence, culminating in the **opening of the AICS office in Kyiv in the second half of 2023**. Since then, Italian Cooperation has progressively strengthened its strategic profile within the multilateral system, becoming an integral part of the international humanitarian and development coordination architecture. AICS actively participates in key Sectoral Working Groups and is engaged in coordination clusters for international cooperation heads (Head of Cooperation meetings). The Kyiv office is particularly active in working groups on health, protection, energy, education, gender, agriculture, demining, decentralization, transport, and logistics. This institutional positioning enables Italy not only to contribute to defining sectoral and territorial priorities within the humanitarian response, but also to promote an Italian approach grounded in localization, co-design, and sustainability. The **active participation of Italian Cooperation in coordination mechanisms** strengthens Italy's role as a credible actor, capable of combining operational capacity with strategic vision, and ensures full alignment of Italian interventions with the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the main frameworks for Ukraine's sustainable recovery.

In Moldova, too, Italian Cooperation activated a swift response from the first weeks of the invasion, supporting both local institutions and communities indirectly affected by the conflict. The initial response focused on assistance to Ukrainian refugees in transit and reception, as well as to vulnerable segments of the local population, through multilateral channels and in partnership with UNHCR, UNICEF, and other local actors. Over time, Italy expanded its engagement with targeted interventions to strengthen social cohesion and public services, particularly in the protection, health, and energy sectors.



# SECTORS OF INTERVENTION

## EMERGENCY

### MULTISECTORAL

**Integrated responses to a complex crisis: a multi-sectoral approach**

The war in Ukraine has triggered one of the most complex and protracted humanitarian crises in recent European history. According to the latest Humanitarian Needs Overview by OCHA, over 12.7 million people—more than one-third of Ukraine's population—are in need of assistance.

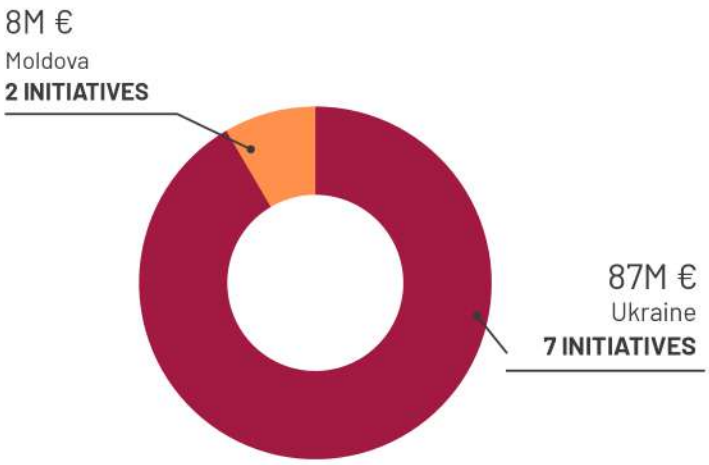



*Chart 3. Emergency 2024*

Needs are broad and cross-cutting, encompassing food security, access to water and healthcare, protection of the most vulnerable, social inclusion, and the restoration of essential public services. In this context, Italian Cooperation adopted an integrated approach, launching a series of **multisectoral interventions** as early as 2022, aimed not only at saving lives but also at rebuilding the country's social and institutional fabric. Three major initiatives implemented by civil society organizations (CSOs) form the backbone of this response.

The first major operation—marking the beginning of Italy's direct engagement in Ukraine—was the **Initial Emergency Initiative**, launched in 2022 with a budget of **€14 million**. This intervention involved **14 civil society organizations**, delivering life-saving assistance—including transportation, essential goods, healthcare, and protection services—to tens of thousands of people in the hardest-hit areas and main displacement hubs.




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The second initiative coordinated by AICS Kyiv—the **Emergency Initiative in Support of the Population Affected by the Conflict in Ukraine and Neighboring Countries**—involves **26 Italian, local, and international CSOs**, for a total of 100 organizations including partners and local counterparts, operating across 16 oblasts in Ukraine and in selected areas of Moldova. With a total budget of **€46.5 million**, the project aims to provide life-saving assistance and access to essential services in areas where the conflict has severely impacted infrastructure, communities, and social support networks.

The approach was designed to address the complex and diverse needs of the most vulnerable groups: displaced families, women, children, older persons, and individuals with disabilities or chronic illnesses. The initiative combines immediate assistance, the strengthening of essential services, and the protection of at-risk populations through an integrated and community-driven approach. The distribution of food parcels, hygiene kits, heating materials, and basic supplies reached over **100,000 people** during the most critical phases of winter and in contexts of sudden evacuation.

In parallel, the project has contributed to reinforcing the local health system by providing medicines and equipment to **80 health facilities**, deploying mobile clinics in remote villages, and delivering over **77,000 medical services**. More than **36,000 individuals**, particularly women and children, received psychosocial support, while nearly **1,700 professionals** were trained in the management of war-related trauma. Support for protection and education has represented another core pillar of the intervention. Over **20,000 children** took part in educational and extracurricular activities in safe spaces, while **234 schools** were either rehabilitated or provided with teaching materials. Targeted legal and psychological assistance services reached more than **1,200 women survivors of conflict-related violence**. In the area of humanitarian demining, **59 technical assessments** were conducted over more than **439 million square meters** of potentially contaminated land, while awareness-raising campaigns reached approximately 317,000 people, contributing to community safety and the future recovery of agricultural and civilian land. Finally, the project has invested in local capacity building: **491 volunteers** and community workers were trained to support aid distribution and needs assessment, making the response faster and more rooted in the territory.

Thanks to a wide network of actors and constant coordination with local authorities, the initiative has successfully adapted to an extremely dynamic and complex environment, delivering tangible support for the protection, relief, and dignity of those most affected by the war. The entire programme is grounded in strong integration with UN clusters, local authorities, and beneficiary communities, ensuring full alignment with the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and international standards for emergency response.

| SECTOR | UKRAINE € | MOLDOVA € | TOTAL BUDGET € |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Protection** | 5.7M | 1.2M | 7M |
| **Education** | 5.3M | 2.5M | 7.8M |
| **Emergency, distribution & transport** | 9M | 900K | 9.9M |
| **Demining** | 5.9M | // | 5.9M |
| **Health** | 10.6M | 1.7M | 12.3M |
| **WASH** | 1.4M | 500K | 1.9M |

As further confirmation of its commitment to adapting to the evolving crisis with increasingly targeted tools, AICS Kyiv launched a **new €23 million initiative** in early 2025, following its approval at the end of 2024. The E**mergency Initiative in Support of the Most Vulnerable Populations in the Regions of Ukraine Most Affected by the Conflict** is currently being implemented through a public call for proposals addressed to civil society organizations, published on 19 March 2025. The initiative specifically targets oblasts such as **Kharkiv**, **Donetsk**, **Kherson**, **Dnipro**, **Zaporizhzhia**, and **Mykolaiv**, where, according to OCHA, over 60% of the country's humanitarian needs are currently concentrated.

The intervention is structured around two main funding lots: the first lot, amounting to **€15 million,** will finance actions in the sectors of protection, health, water and hygiene (WASH), food security, emergency response, and education. The second lot, amounting to **€6 million**, is specifically dedicated to humanitarian demining.

This initiative builds on the path laid out by the previous two multisectoral actions, while introducing an even stronger territorial focus and a renewed emphasis on the localization of the response.

The aim is not only to deliver humanitarian assistance, but also to help build a local system capable of responding quickly and effectively, by capitalizing on existing experience and reinforcing synergies between humanitarian actors, local authorities, and communities.



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MEDU



INTERSOS

## MINE ACTION

### Security as a starting point

After more than two years of war, Ukraine has become one of the most heavily mine- and explosive-contaminated countries in the world. According to UNDP estimates, over **20% of Ukrainian territory is potentially contaminated with unexploded ordnance** (UXO), including anti-personnel mines, remnants of war, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The most affected areas are located along the front lines in the Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Donetsk, and Kharkiv regions. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), over **1,400 civilian casualties** have been recorded due to mines and explosive remnants since the start of the war—including many farmers and children. In this context, mine action is a top priority to ensure the safe return of displaced persons, enable the resumption of agricultural activities, and support the recovery of the local economy. It is the first concrete step toward stability and reconstruction.

As part of its broader engagement, Italian Cooperation has chosen to act in this critical area, acknowledging the urgent need to mitigate the risks posed by widespread contamination. Through a **€1.5 million** contribution to **UNDP's Mine Action programme**, Italy supports clearance operations and the strengthening of national capacity for explosive risk management, with a specific focus on civilian safety and the protection of vulnerable communities.

The Italian funding is aimed at supporting a set of strategic interventions, including the implementation of land release operations—that is, the identification, mapping, and safe return of potentially contaminated areas—as well as the promotion of institutional capacity-building pathways, with the goal of enhancing the technical and regulatory competencies of responsible national authorities.




MISSIONE CALCUTTA



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**Multisectoral Programmes and Mine Action**
Within the broader framework of Italian initiatives, the multi-sectoral emergency programs have also included demining interventions. Dedicated funding components were allocated for demining activities: €3.6 million under the second initiative, and €6 million in the one launched in 2025 (pp. 12-13). These funds are assigned to mine risk education, rehabilitation, training, and non-technical surveys.

**Emergency in Moldova**
In Moldova, where the pressure of hosting refugees has put a strain on an already fragile health and social system, Italy has supported **two strategic initiatives in collaboration with UNHCR**.

The first, funded with **6 million euros**, aims to promote the socioeconomic inclusion of Ukrainian refugees in Moldova and Poland, improving access to education, work and essential services. According to UNHCR 2024 data, there are approximately 127,000 Ukrainian refugees permanently living in Moldova, of whom 59% are women and 46% are children. The program works on multiple levels: legal support, integration into school systems, access to healthcare and strengthening social cohesion.

The second initiative, supported with **2 million euros**, focuses on the protection of refugees and minorities in vulnerable situations, with particular attention to cases of gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse. In collaboration with local authorities, the project improved the monitoring of conditions in reception centers and strengthened psychosocial assistance and legal support services.

The **Emergency Initiative** also included Moldova as a geographical area of intervention with activities dedicated to protection, health, education, emergency, distribution and transport, and WASH (p.12) .

# ENERGY

**Energy for Resilience and Reconstruction: Italy's Commitment in Ukraine and Moldova**

***UKRAINE***

In the context of the ongoing war, energy is not only a resource—it is a target. Electrical and water infrastructure have been among the main objectives of attacks, with severe consequences for the civilian population.

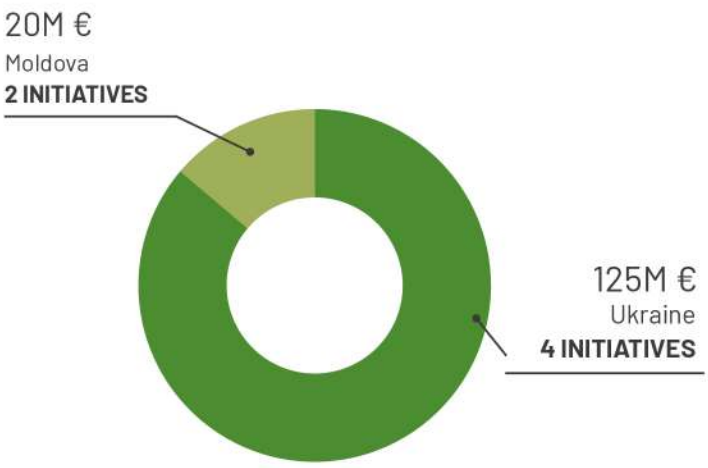



*Chart 4. Energy 2024*

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), over **60% of Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been damaged or disrupted**. More than **six million people live with the daily risk of blackouts**, which severely affect the functioning of hospitals, schools, water systems, and the overall wellbeing of communities. To support the resilience of the energy system and accelerate the reconstruction process, Italian Cooperation has activated a comprehensive package of interventions, ranging from immediate assistance to the promotion of a long-term, sustainable energy transition.

Among these, a standout initiative is a **€100 million** concessional loan—Italy's most significant intervention in the sector—granted as part of a joint initiative with the **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development** (EBRD), for a total value of €200 million. The Italian funds, allocated to the state-owned company PJSC Ukrhydroenergo, will support strategic operations aimed at improving operational efficiency and enhancing the responsiveness of the energy system, ensuring stable and continuous supply, particularly in areas most affected by attacks.

In parallel, Italy supports the **Green and Resilient Energy Solutions initiative**, implemented in partnership with **UNEP**, with a contribution of over **€2 million**. This project aims to pilot sustainable and decentralized energy solutions in selected Ukrainian cities, promoting the use of renewable sources and local backup systems.

Completing the picture is Italy's support to the **Ukrainian Energy Support Fund** (UESF), through a nearly **€13 million contribution** intended to meet the most urgent needs of Ukrainian energy companies. The funding covers the procurement of equipment, spare parts, technical components, fuel, and essential services to repair damaged infrastructure and ensure the continuity of electricity and heating throughout the country.

***Moldova***

Although the war has not directly affected Moldovan territory, its impact on the country's energy system has been significant. Moldova has historically depended on gas imports from Russia and electricity from Ukraine. The disruption of these supplies—combined with soaring energy prices and the strain of hosting Ukrainian refugees—has placed thousands of households under severe pressure.

To address this emergency, Italian Cooperation allocated **€10 million** to **UNDP**, including €4 million in direct support to the **Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund** (EVRF). During the 2023–2024 winter season alone, the fund provided bill support to approximately **793,000 households,** over **80%** of whom were in the highest energy vulnerability categories. According to UNDP analysis, over the past two heating seasons, this intervention led to a 7.7-point decrease in energy poverty, a 9.4-point **decrease in absolute poverty**, and a 7.8-point reduction in extreme poverty.

Italy's strategy, however, also looks to the medium and long term. A second project, also in partnership with **UNDP** and funded with an additional **€10 million**, aims to promote a just, equitable, and sustainable energy transition. Ongoing activities include the installation of **25,000 smart meters** in urban and rural areas (in addition to the 35,000 already planned under the first project), the design of photovoltaic systems for public buildings—such as the **Strășeni hospital**, which will be able to cover 80% of its energy needs—and the training of condominium associations to improve residential energy efficiency.

The overarching goal is to make Moldova's energy system more equitable, efficient, and independent, with a focus on renewable energy, local empowerment, and digitalization.

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UNDP MOLDOVA

# HEALTH

**Hospitals, people, dignity: the Italian response to the Health crisis in Ukraine**

The war in Ukraine has also severely impacted the right to health. Damaged or overcrowded hospitals, shortages of medicine, exhausted medical personnel, and entire communities with no access to basic healthcare—this is the daily reality for millions, especially for the most vulnerable groups: children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and internally displaced people. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over **2,200 attacks on health facilities** have been documented since the beginning of the invasion. The need for medical care has increased exponentially, particularly for trauma victims: Ukraine's Ministry of Health estimates that by mid-2024, approximately **100,000 amputations** had been performed. Yet the country lacks specialized doctors, prosthetic devices, and rehabilitation centers. Conditions further deteriorated during the winter months, as targeted attacks on energy infrastructure left many hospitals without heating or electricity.

In response, Italy launched a multifaceted strategy that combines immediate aid with the strengthening of the national health system. Through the **first multisectoral emergency initiative** (p.10), launched in 2022, Italy provided medical supplies, ambulances, life-saving equipment, and direct support to eight Ukrainian regions. In a second phase, AICS allocated remaining funds to the **purchase of diagnostic and emergency equipment** for three key facilities: Dnipro Hospital No. 4, located just 90 km from the eastern front, and the UNBROKEN and Halychyna centers in Lviv, which serve as reference hubs for the physical and psychological rehabilitation of both civilian and military victims.

One of the flagship initiatives in this field is the project entrusted to the **Rizzoli Orthopedic Institute of Bologna**, aimed at strengthening Ukraine's rehabilitation capacity for persons amputated as a result of the conflict. The programme involves **three specialized centers** in the Lviv region—Superhumans, UNBROKEN, and Halychyna—and delivers a comprehensive package of training, technical assistance, and clinical mentoring to improve prosthesis production, physiotherapy quality, and reconstructive surgery. Ukrainian orthopedic technicians will be trained to produce more efficient prosthetic limbs in less time; physiotherapists will acquire skills to treat complex cases, including children and home-based patients, with support from both the Italian and Ukrainian Red Cross. Surgeons will receive professional development from Italian specialists through on-site practical sessions and remote consultations.

Training activities will be supported by Italian centers of excellence, including INAIL Budrio, the Santa Lucia Foundation, the Bambino Gesù Pediatric Hospital, and the Rizzoli Institute itself. According to estimates, the three centers involved will be able to assist over **20,000 patients** per year. The project also includes the direct training of approximately **150 healthcare professionals**, contributing to the development of local human capital and the sustainability of the intervention in the medium to long term.

aken as a whole, Italy's health-related initiatives go beyond emergency response, charting a deliberate path toward reconstruction, aimed at building a health system that is more accessible, resilient, and humane.

This vision is also reflected in Italy's **second multisectoral Emergency Initiative** (p.12), which—in addition to direct support to over 120 health facilities, the distribution of medicines and ambulances—includes a core component focused on **mental health and psychosocial support** (MHPSS). In a context marked by widespread and profound trauma, the intervention has provided individual and community-based psychological support, safe spaces for women and children, and dedicated pathways for survivors of conflict-related violence. Invisible wounds—such as anxiety, fear, grief, and isolation—have been addressed through an integrated, person-centered approach.

This model of intervention restores dignity and a sense of future, making health—physical, mental, and social—one of the pillars of Italy's commitment in both Ukraine and Moldova.




SOLETERRE

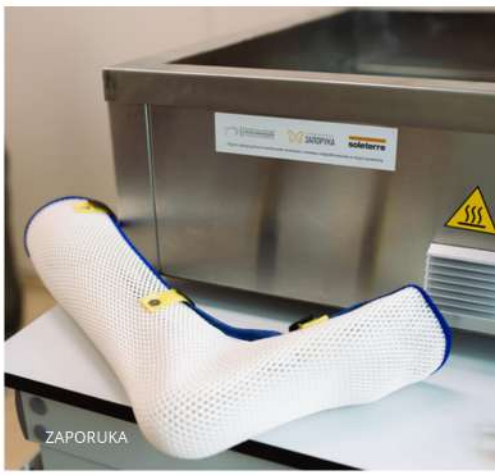

THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM


ZAPORUKA


ОХМАТДИТ
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ZAPORUKA


STOP
AMADEO
tyromotion


ZAPORUKA


INTERSOS


ZAPORUKA

# CULTURE AND GOVERNANCE

**Symbols under siege, a future to rebuild: between culture and governance**

IIn Ukraine, the war has not only affected people—it has also targeted their memory. Bombs have struck theaters, churches, museums, libraries—spaces that preserve identity, history, and collective pride. According to UNESCO data (April 2025), more than **485 cultural sites have been damaged or destroyed** since the beginning of the invasion. A significant number of these are located in the city of **Odesa**, overlooking the Black Sea—a historical crossroads of exchange and cultural coexistence, now listed as a World Heritage Site in danger.

On the night between 22 and 23 July 2023, a missile attack struck the city's historic center, causing severe damage to the **Transfiguration Cathedral**, the most important Orthodox church in Odesa and a spiritual and civic symbol deeply tied to the city's identity. The images of shattered columns, destroyed mosaics, and collapsed vaults spread around the world, becoming an open wound in the European consciousness as well.

In response to this grave attack, Italy chose to act, providing **€500,000** through UNESCO to support: a structural assessment using advanced diagnostic tools, the reconstruction of part of the roof, and the repair of the cathedral's heating system, with the goal of securing the damaged structure and enabling the launch of future restoration phases.



Iltaly's support represents not only a strong gesture of solidarity, but also a statement of confidence in the power of culture as a driver of cohesion, dignity, and reconstruction.

Rebuilding does not only mean restoring what has been destroyed—it also means strengthening institutions, promoting transparency, and enhancing public capacity to lead recovery. For this reason, Italy has contributed **€500,000** to the **OECD Ukraine Country Programme**, a strategic initiative that supports the country in aligning with European standards and implementing structural reforms in key sectors: anti-corruption, fiscal governance, investment attraction, digitalization, and public resource management. The Italian investment is part of a broader effort to support Ukraine in rebuilding its institutions, contributing to the modernization of public administration and the strengthening of transparent and efficient decision-making processes.

Interventions such as the one promoted with the OECD are essential to ensuring that reconstruction rests on solid, inclusive, and sustainable foundations. In parallel, support for the Transfiguration Cathedral in Odesa stands as a tangible example of Italy's commitment to Ukraine's cultural heritage—at a time when protecting the past becomes an integral part of building the future.
Two different actions reflecting the same vision: reconstruction is not only about bricks—it's about perspective.



# RURAL DEVELOPMENT

**Agriculture: rebuilding from the Land**

In Ukraine, the agri-food sector is a fundamental pillar of the national economy and a strategic element for the country's stability and recovery. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), prior to the conflict, agriculture accounted for **20% of GDP** and employed **14% of the workforce**. Despite the challenges imposed by the war, the sector has continued to operate, maintaining a key role in global grain markets.

Daily threats such as mine contamination, damage to irrigation infrastructure and storage facilities have jeopardized productivity and local food security. In response, Italy launched a **€9 million programme** in 2024, implemented by **CIHEAM Bari**, to support the restoration of Ukraine's agri-food sector. The initiative focuses on strengthening the production capacities of small and medium-sized farms through targeted actions on training, access to technological innovations, and the promotion of sustainable practices. A key objective is to consolidate local agri-food value chains, enhancing existing skills and creating new economic opportunities for rural communities.

The project also adopts a long-term approach: rebuilding what has been damaged while modernizing the sector, aligning it with EU standards, and enhancing the competitiveness of Ukrainian agribusiness. In a context where the economic resilience of rural areas directly affects the social and demographic stability of the country, this intervention represents a concrete lever to ensure production continuity and support local employment.



# THE 5 PS IN ITALIAN COOPERATION IN UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA




In a context marked by displacement, trauma, and extreme vulnerability, Italian Cooperation has placed human dignity and well-being at the heart of its response. This is not only about providing essential goods—it is a commitment that encompasses physical health, social protection, psychosocial support, and the rights to education and safety.In Ukraine, multisectoral initiatives have contributed to the reactivation of health services and safe spaces in areas of high vulnerability, while projects such as the one implemented by the Rizzoli Orthopedic Institute of Bologna are offering a future of hope to thousands of individuals amputated by war, through the training of local professionals and the development of integrated rehabilitation pathways.In Moldova, the protection of refugees and host communities is also pursued by strengthening social cohesion and promoting equal access to services.




The war in Ukraine has not only destroyed cities and lives—it has damaged entire ecosystems, severely affected infrastructure, contaminated agricultural land, and jeopardized access to essential resources such as water and energy. In this scenario, Italy has chosen to respond with an approach that embraces ecological transition even in times of crisis. Support for the safeguarding of hydroelectric power plants, the protection of critical infrastructure, the introduction of green solutions in urban settings, and investments in energy consumption digitalization are all part of a strategy that integrates emergency responses with environmental sustainability measures. In Moldova, support to vulnerable families through energy subsidies and investments in renewable energy for health facilities reflect Italy's commitment to strengthening equity and autonomy in the energy system.




In a region devastated by conflict, investing again in employment, skills, and local productivity is a strategic priority—both economically and institutionally. Italian Cooperation has made targeted investments in this area, supporting the revival of agri-food value chains, institutional strengthening, and the modernization of public services.
The ongoing programme to restore Ukraine's rural sector potential, for example, supports economic recovery in heavily affected agricultural regions, with a focus on sustainability, food security, and employment. At the same time, Italy's contribution to the OECD Country Programme for Ukraine promotes key reforms for transparency and economic attractiveness, laying the groundwork for a more inclusive and resilient development path.




At the heart of the crisis, peace is not just a future prospect—it is a daily necessity. It means restoring safety to people, clearing territories of unexploded ordnance, and protecting what constitutes collective identity and memory. Italy is actively engaged in humanitarian demining, in coordination with the UN system, to ensure that schools, fields, and homes can once again become safe and livable spaces. At the same time, the preservation of cultural heritage—as in the case of the Transfiguration Cathedral in Odesa, damaged by shelling—represents a tangible act of defending history and social cohesion.

Italian Cooperation in Ukraine and Moldova is based on a multilevel approach, developed in close coordination with the Italian Embassy, local authorities, and technical counterparts in the relevant Ministries. The multisectoral emergency initiatives have activated over 100 partnerships with Italian, Ukrainian, and Moldovan civil society organizations, strengthening the civic fabric in the areas most affected by the war. Alongside bilateral channels, Italy has launched joint interventions with UN agencies (UNDP, UNHCR, UNESCO, UNEP), with multilateral institutions such as the OECD, and with organizations like the EBRD and CIHEAM for rural development. In the health sector, the programme with the Rizzoli Orthopedic Institute stands out as a model of highly specialized cooperation. In the energy sector, Italy contributes to the Ukrainian Energy Support Fund (UESF).The recognition awarded to the Head of the AICS Office as a "Friend of the City of Odesa" is a testament to the quality of the relationships built on the ground.



# CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND LESSONS LEARNED

2024 marked a year of extraordinary intensity for the AICS Regional Office in Kyiv, called to operate in a context shaped by the ongoing war, logistical complexity, and growing pressure on public institutions and local communities. In this difficult and constantly evolving environment, the main challenges included ensuring safe access to the most affected areas, continuously adapting operational modalities, and effectively managing a broad, multisectoral, and geographically widespread portfolio of initiatives.

Despite the dramatic nature of the crisis, it also opened up new spaces for action: it enabled the strengthening of local civil society organizations, the recognition of the contributions of Italian and international actors on the ground, and the testing of more integrated forms of intervention. The experience gained has reaffirmed the urgency of approaches based on speed, **proximity, and flexibility, capable of combining immediate response with strategic vision**.

Working in the context of a protracted war has underscored the critical importance of continuous adaptation—both in technical mechanisms and in operational choices. Disruptions in supply chains, vulnerabilities in the energy system, the complexity of the institutional landscape, and the diverse needs of affected populations have required a constant balance between rapid action and sustainable planning.

At the same time, the need to invest in strengthening the capacities of local institutions, in the **structural role of CSOs as pillars of development**, and in a coherent and proactive multilevel coordination has emerged with increasing clarity.

The integration of humanitarian and development approaches, along with a deep-rooted connection to the territories, has proven to be a key element in ensuring the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of the initiatives.















# BEHIND EVERY INTERVENTION: STORIES FROM THE FIELD








UNDP MOLDOVA

## WARMING FAMILIES IN MOLDOVA: SOLIDARITY IN TIMES OF CRISIS

In the village of Prepelița, in northern Moldova, the fire in the Smîntînă family stove never goes out during the coldest days. “It’s a necessity, not a luxury,” says Elena, as she adds wood to the stove that heats the home’s two main rooms—the heart of family life in winter. It’s where the children study, play, and sleep. With six children—five in school or kindergarten and a newborn—keeping the house warm is a daily responsibility. They used to burn coal too, but their stock ran out in the spring. This year’s energy compensation has eased the pressure. “We received between 800 and 1,000 lei per month, about 50 euros. It really helped us,” explains Elena. “Without that support, I don’t know what we would have done, especially since my husband works less when it’s cold. Our only stable income is the 1,000 lei monthly child allowance, which we use for bills and kindergarten.”

Her husband, Andrei, works in construction whenever possible and, on his days off, invests time and money to finish building their house. Even though they already live in it, the construction is not yet complete. Over 12 years ago, the couple returned to Moldova after working in Italy, where their first two children were born. With the savings they had set aside, they began building their home—step by step. “We were lucky to have invested that money in our house,” Elena says. “Otherwise, we wouldn’t have been able to do anything.”

The Smîntînă family is one of over 720,000 households that received energy compensation between November 2024 and March 2025. The average monthly amount was around 780 lei, with higher support levels for the most vulnerable families. The Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund (EVRF) operated for the third consecutive winter. Within this framework, Italian Cooperation played a key role, contributing both to the direct financing of the Fund and to strengthening its operational capacity. In particular, AICS Kyiv, in collaboration with UNDP, supported the launch of a dedicated call center—which handled over 136,000 calls and 31,000 emails—and the modernization of the information system, improving its efficiency and accessibility.

In a time of global crisis, solidarity meant warmth, safety, and hope for thousands of Moldovan families.



## FROM THE FRONT TO HUMANITARIAN AID: VASYL HNATIUK'S JOURNEY

In a context marked by more than two years of war—with millions of people displaced, civilian infrastructure destroyed, and a humanitarian crisis unprecedented in recent European history—Italy's response has been both timely and structured. Among the most significant actions is the Emergency Initiative for populations affected by the conflict in Ukraine and neighboring countries. Within this programme—which finances 26 individual projects—cooperation workers, humanitarian operators, and professionals dedicate their skills and humanity to serving those in need every single day.

One of them is Vasyl Hnatiuk, a logistics operator working on a project implemented by FOCSIV and a consortium of Italian and Ukrainian NGOs. The initiative operates in high-risk areas, including the Dnipro and Kharkiv oblasts, which remain among the most heavily bombarded regions. In Kharkiv alone, daily drone and missile attacks continue to cause numerous civilian casualties and injuries. Humanitarian operations in such conditions are extremely challenging, hindered by blocked roads, power outages, and the constant threat of new strikes.

Vasyl, now in charge of field logistics, acquired critical skills during his previous military service. "That's where I really honed my driving abilities. I had to go through such impossible roads that nothing scares me anymore. But when I returned, I knew my contribution had to take a new form."

The job is demanding: "At first glance, it seems simple—unload, arrange, deliver. But in reality, it takes a lot of energy. Especially in the beginning, when the volumes were massive and we were still figuring out our workflow. But when you look into the eyes of the people receiving those packages, all the fatigue instantly disappears."

One memory still stays with him: "An elderly woman thanked me with such disarming sincerity. She told me how important that package was to her. In that moment, I realized we were doing something truly essential. It's not just food: it's presence—it's proof that someone cares, even when it feels like the world has forgotten you."




**ANNA, 18 AND AT WAR: "AT FIRST I RECEIVED HELP. NOW I'M THE ONE GIVING IT"**

When the bombing reached Kharkiv, Anna was 16 years old. She spent two weeks under attack before leaving with her mother: five days of travel to reach Lviv, then six months displaced, and eventually they settled in Kyiv. "Now I'm 18 and I go to university," she says, "but my adolescence ended right there, with the sound of the sirens."

In Kyiv, her mother received assistance through a project supported by the Italian Cooperation and implemented by the Community of Sant'Egidio. At first, they were just beneficiaries. But when Anna was offered the chance to volunteer, she didn't hesitate.
"I didn't want to just say thank you. I wanted to do something."

Today, she leads a group of more than 20 young people distributing aid to internally displaced persons at the humanitarian center in Troyeshchyna, one of the most densely populated and vulnerable neighborhoods in the capital. "We welcome people, listen, observe. They come in tired, disoriented. Some need a food package. Others just need someone to look them in the eyes."

She remembers one woman, ill and distressed, asking for a clean shirt to wear to a hospital appointment. "We didn't have one at first. But when we finally found one, I ran after her in the street. She hugged me. It was just a shirt, but for her, it meant dignity—even in the middle of pain."

"Many people, especially the elderly, have fallen into poverty. They can't afford even basic things like a pair of shoes or a jacket to get through the winter. Every day, people ask us for clothes, blankets—simple things. Those who lost their homes or lived under occupation fled with nothing. Now they rent modest places, often in poor condition, with no sense of home and no familiar faces. Sometimes they give up." "War changes you. But it also gives you a sense of urgency. For me, helping others is not charity—it's participation. It's deciding to show up. Even when it's scary."




## IN THE HEART OF THE CRISIS, SAVING LIVES: DR. BUBLII AND THE STRENGTH OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

In Dnipro, less than 90 kilometers from the front line, Hospital No. 4 has evolved from a regional reference center into a strategic lifeline for the entire eastern part of Ukraine. Every day, it receives patients evacuated from field hospitals and occupied areas: civilians wounded by the war, internally displaced people, individuals suffering from trauma, cold, and the disruption of essential services. Since the beginning of the war, the hospital has more than doubled its number of patients—from 20,000 to over 44,000 annually—and surgical procedures have risen from 8,000 to more than 15,000 per year.

Among those who make all this possible is Dr. Rostyslav Bublii, a gastroenterologist. Over the past year, his department has performed more than 3,000 gastroscopies and 1,200 colonoscopies, often under extremely difficult conditions: extended shifts, shortages of medical supplies, power outages, and a constant stream of new cases.

A lifesaving boost came from the donation of a modern endoscopy tower, provided by the Italian Cooperation under its Rapid Emergency Response Programme. “This machine has helped us save lives that would otherwise have been lost,” says Dr. Bublii. One of his patients, a 38-year-old man, came in for a routine check-up with no symptoms. The colonoscopy revealed early-stage cancer, which was removed just in time. “It’s not just about the clinical aspect,” the doctor adds. “It’s about giving someone the chance to return to their life, their family, their community. That’s what makes this kind of support so vital.”

In a region frequently targeted by missile attacks, where sirens wail every night and each day is a race against time, equipping a hospital to function in emergency conditions means extending lives, relieving suffering, and protecting the future.
“Now more than ever,” Dr. Bublii concludes, “we need to know we are not alone. Every piece of equipment, every act of solidarity, every sign of trust helps us move forward. And reminds us why it’s worth it.”



## FROM STRATEGY TO THE FIELD: LUCA'S MISSION WITH AICS IN UKRAINE

*Luca's path is marked by over 25 years of experience in fragile international contexts – from Palestine to Libya, the Balkans to the Sahel – across the UN system and civil society. Since 2023, he has brought his expertise to AICS Kyiv:

"Our job is not only to contribute to Ukraine's reconstruction, but to do it fairly. There's a real risk of widening the social and economic gap between areas where rebuilding is already possible and those still facing daily emergencies. It's precisely on this dual track – development and humanitarian response – that the impact of our work is measured."

Luca has been closely involved in one of the most extensive operations ever undertaken by AICS: the emergency initiative involving 26 projects, which has delivered vital assistance to hundreds of thousands of people in the most war-affected areas.

During a mission to Naddnipryans'ke, a village of just 326 inhabitants in Kherson oblast, Luca witnessed first-hand the daily consequences of war for civilians. The village lies only 8 kilometers from the front line. Residents live under the constant threat of FPV drones. To protect themselves, they've built makeshift barriers of metal and plastic between their homes and the road. There is no access to drinking water or basic food supplies, and the population survives solely thanks to humanitarian aid. Children cannot play outside – it's simply too dangerous.

"And yet," Luca reflects, "no one wants to leave. That's their home. There's a fierce, quiet courage in that decision. It's in places like this that you understand cooperation is not some abstract concept, but a tangible act of presence, respect, and support."

In settings like Naddnipryans'ke, the vision of Italian Cooperation proves more relevant than ever: acting justly, inclusively, and with deep awareness of local realities, to ensure no one is left behind. Because in these lands, development begins with protecting the dignity of those who have chosen to stay.




UNHCR MOLDOVA

## CHOOSING TO STAY BY THEIR SIDE: IRINA AND ITALIAN SUPPORT FOR REFUGEES IN MOLDOVA

Every morning, Irina Grecu, Senior Registration Assistant at UNHCR Moldova, starts her day by opening a full inbox — even if she managed to empty it the day before. It's the natural rhythm of those working on the front lines to support refugees and displaced people. Irina has worked with UNHCR since March 2022, just after the war in Ukraine began: "I saw the first refugees arrive," she recalls. "Exhausted mothers, babies asleep in their arms, families in clothes unfit for the cold and grateful for even a simple blanket."

Irina's daily work is part of a broader effort made possible also thanks to the support of Italian Cooperation. Through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), Italy has funded a project that has strengthened the protection and socio-economic inclusion of Ukrainian refugees. In Moldova, thanks to a 3 million euro contribution, UNHCR expanded its network of Community Support Centres (CSCs), now counting ten operational hubs across the country.

These centres provide refugees – like those Irina welcomes every day – with financial assistance, legal support, child protection services, mental health and psychosocial support, livelihood opportunities, and awareness-raising sessions on health, education and protection. The initiative has reached over 7,500 refugees and an equal number of host community members with essential services. Regionally, more than 4,800 beneficiaries in Moldova and 2,500 in Poland received direct financial assistance, boosting their resilience and reducing protection risks.

Even now, more than three years later, the memories of those first days remain vivid. Irina recalls one moment in particular: a mother, holding her child tightly, was startled by the sound of a water bottle hitting the floor. "She thought she was finally safe. But the fear was still with her. That moment reminded me why our work matters."

Today, Irina remains a vital source of support for both refugees and colleagues: "Still today, many are forced to flee and start over, often with nothing. They didn't choose this condition – but we can choose to stand by them."




# ANNEXES

## ANNEX 1 - INITIATIVES
## ANNEX 2 - PROJECT SHEETS