IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

(PARTIAL) EX-POST EVALUATION

ODA DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION for SMEs PROGRAM



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

COOP	Agricultural Production Cooperative
DAC	Committee for Development Assistance
EU	European Union
FF	Family Farm
GD	Government Decision
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
HORECA	Hospitality Industry (Hotels, Restaurants, Cafes)
IE	Individual Enterprise
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IT	Information Technology
JSC	Joint Stock Company
LLC	Limited Liability Company
MDED Moldova	Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization of the Republic of
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ODA	Organization for the Development of Entrepreneurship
SFS	State Fiscal Service
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

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Table

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS 2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 4

1. INTRO 7

2. PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION 10

3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY 11

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION 15

5. SCORE ACCUMULATED BASED ON THE EVALUATION CRITERIA AND FINDINGS 48

6. CONCLUSIONS 50

7. LESSONS LEARNED 52

8. RECOMMENDATIONS 54

APPENDICES ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Public

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Digital Transformation of SMEs Program of the Organization for Entrepreneurship Development (ODA) was designed as a strategic intervention to support the entrepreneurial environment in overcoming the challenges generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, when small and medium-sized enterprises felt strong constraints in carrying out their economic activities and an acute need for digital solutions. Initially launched as a pilot tool (2020), it has evolved into a formal grant mechanism (Government Decision No. 129/2022), based on public consultations, international best practices, and lessons learned. High demand has confirmed the relevance and necessity of the program, which contributes to the resilience and competitiveness of SMEs through digitization and innovation, and is constantly being adjusted through subsequent normative acts (GD No. 910/2022; GD No. 726/2023; GD No. 82/2025) to respond to the real needs of beneficiaries and economic dynamics.

During the 36 months of program implementation (2022-2025), 259 investment projects were approved for funding, of which 17 beneficiaries withdrew from implementation, resulting in a final number of 242 actual beneficiaries. This result exceeds by 61% the indicator set out in the Government Decision on the Program and by 27% the target set in the context of attracting financial support from external sources. The total value of the non-reimbursable financial support provided was MDL 64.88 million, and the average value of a grant awarded under the Program was MDL 264,947.3. The beneficiaries' own contribution amounted to MDL 49.87 million.

The impact assessment of the Digital Transformation Program was carried out with the support of GIZ, at the request of the ODA, and aimed to analyze how the financial support provided through the program contributed to the development and modernization of the activities of the financed enterprises by measuring the long-term effects of the development intervention, taking into account both the positive impact and the gaps, tracking the direct and indirect, intended and unintended effects. ***This evaluation sought to identify how the intervention contributed to sustainable change in communities and sectors, assessing its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and coherence, according to OECD/DAC criteria.*** The assessment analyzed how the Program responded to the current needs of beneficiaries and the extent to which it contributed to the priorities set out in the National Strategy for Digital Transformation 2023–2030 and in national policies aimed at developing a digital society, strengthening the ICT sector, creating an innovative digital economy, operating a smart and transparent state, ensuring digital security and inclusion, and strengthening the image of the Republic of Moldova as a digital nation, with a view to modernizing digital infrastructure, increasing inclusion, and aligning with European standards.

The impact assessment of the Digital Transformation Program for SMEs was carried out using a mixed methodological approach, which included:

- analysis of statistical data provided by the ODA, NBS, and SFS;
- a focus group with ODA representatives;
- an exhaustive survey of the 107 beneficiary companies (with contracts signed between 2022 and 2023) that are 12 months or more from the date of the last non-reimbursable funding tranche;

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- seven in-depth interviews conducted in the field with beneficiaries from various economic sectors;
- an interview with a third party—a service provider who assisted some of the entrepreneurs in the program application process.

Data collection took place between May and July 2025.

It is important to note that when drafting the Government Decision on the grant program, the application of OECD criteria was not mandatory, as they were not required by law. However, most of the indicators defined largely meet these international standards.

The evaluation highlighted performance and gaps on each of the OECD/DAC criteria.

The program proved to be **relevant**, adequately responding to the real needs of beneficiaries, with 78% of survey respondents stating that the ODA grant contributed to the development of their business to a "large" or "very large" extent.

The intervention was **coherent**, well aligned with other national and international initiatives and policies, covering gaps in the field of digitization, and was thus recognized as "more effective and useful" compared to other programs.

The program proved **its effectiveness**, with the proposed objectives being achieved to a significant extent. The number of companies interested in developing their own businesses, as reported in the media and according to data provided by the ODA Information and Consultation Center, exceeded the proposed target by 5% and 10%, respectively. Most of the companies supported by ODA Digital Transformation non-reimbursable funding have recorded increases in turnover that exceed the average growth in sales revenue at sector level per country, indicating that the support provided has contributed significantly to their economic performance and to strengthening their competitiveness in the market. This development reflects both the efficiency of investments made in the digitization process and the ability of SMEs to leverage new technologies and practices implemented to expand their business, attract new customers, and optimize internal processes.

The stages of participation in the program were designed and implemented **efficiently** in terms of time and financial resources. The ODA team managed the interaction with beneficiaries efficiently and was responsive to requests. ***Almost all respondents (99%) rated ODA's assistance in the application and implementation process as good or very good in terms of employee attitude, language used, responsiveness to requests, and to a very large extent the ability to provide adequate responses (98%) and professional competence (97%).*** With minor shortcomings in terms of representativeness, access to financing, and the period for analyzing requests, the Digital Transformation Program largely succeeded in ensuring the successful completion of the implementation stages, with staff performing excellently (with some objections mentioned) according to the opinions of the beneficiaries who participated in the evaluation.

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The program had a noticeable **impact**, generating sustainable changes for beneficiary SMEs, reflected in expansion, innovation, efficiency, and restructuring. ***Half of the respondents introduced at least one new product or service as a result of the digitization process—examples include online sales with delivery, the provision of agrochemical services using drones, microscopic dentistry, 2D and 3D mapping using drones, and the diversification of the service portfolio for industrial customers. At the same time, 95% of respondents mentioned that digitization has changed their way of working and internal processes.*** The program also had a demonstrative effect, with an impact at the sectoral and national level, prompting companies in the same fields to adopt similar practices. In addition, 68% of participants shared their experience with new technologies with friends, acquaintances, on TV, or on social media, providing advice to other companies, thus generating a catalytic impact on economic growth and stimulating the adoption of digitization among small and medium-sized enterprises in various sectors of the economy.

The intervention showed a high degree of **sustainability**, with benefits continuing to be felt even after the end of funding. 52% of beneficiaries who participated in the survey confirmed that they had made additional investments (own or attracted) to support or expand the results related to digitization. 55% of respondents were optimistic and growth-oriented, either with their own finances, borrowed funds, or by applying for new grants. Another 17% plan (at least) to maintain the digital results achieved by continuing to pay annual subscriptions, training all employees, and learning more about all the possibilities offered by the implemented digital technology. Given that a significant majority of entrepreneurs (72%) allocate resources to maintain and expand the results achieved in the digitization process through the support of the Program, and at the same time inspire and guide other entrepreneurs from various sectors to follow the same direction, we can conclude that ***the Program has achieved its sustainability goal at a remarkable level, consolidating its role as an accelerator of digital transformation in the entrepreneurial environment.***

According to the evaluation criteria and the scoring system applied, the program scored 27 out of 30 points (or an average of 4.5), corresponding to a rating of "Very Good" (between Good and Excellent). The program demonstrated its relevance by aligning with the needs of beneficiaries and national strategies, achieved a high level of efficiency through the optimal use of resources and the dedication of the ODA team, stood out for its effectiveness in achieving its objectives, generated sustainable impact and catalytic effects at the sectoral and national levels, and confirmed its sustainability through subsequent investments by beneficiaries.

The proposed recommendations reflect a constructive and solution-oriented approach, aiming to increase the accessibility, efficiency, and transparency of the program. They focus on supporting entrepreneurs in regions and rural areas, simplifying procedures, training and developing entrepreneurial skills, and creating synergies with other programs and institutions. At the same time, it is proposed to strengthen the impact and sustainability through practical and useful indicators, external evaluations, promoting collaboration between entrepreneurs, and supporting local products on the local and international market. Overall, these measures would contribute to a more equitable, efficient, and sustainable implementation of the program.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1. Context analysis

During the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses in the Republic of Moldova faced significant sales losses, layoffs, operational bottlenecks, and payment delays, particularly in the service sector and among small companies. Adaptability (digitization, product adjustment) and innovation were factors of resilience, but support was needed to implement them. Many companies were on the verge of collapse. The labor market was also severely affected, with reduced hours, increased remote work, and significant disruptions in major sectors.

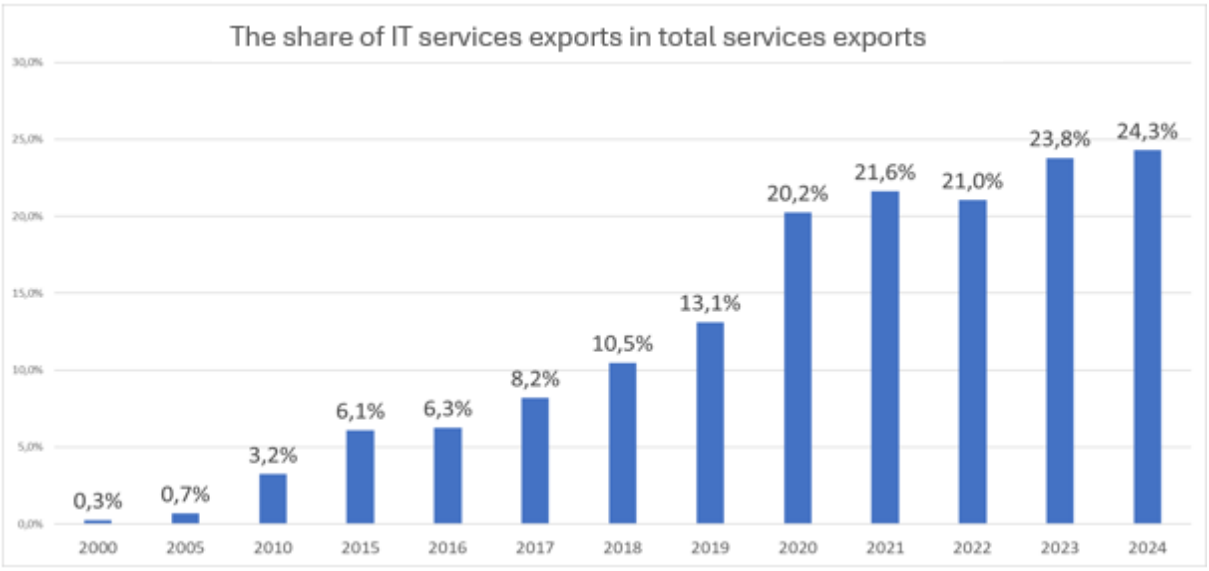
According to the World Bank study The Growing Impact of COVID-19 on Moldova's Private Sector[1] , approximately 20% of businesses were severely affected by mid-2020, with up to 15% closed temporarily or permanently — and in the service sector, the closure rate reached 18%. Average annual sales fell by 57%, particularly for small businesses (5–19 employees) and those in the manufacturing industry. Staff reductions affected 13% of companies, but around 20% of employees suffered consequences: 1,600 were laid off, 4,600 took leave or resigned, and over 33,000 were furloughed. Over 45% of companies postponed payments to suppliers, and over 20% delayed the payment of tax obligations, which also affected public revenues.

According to the NBS Report **on the Impact of Covid-19 on Labor Force Indicators in 2020**[2] , services were the most affected sector, accounting for 78.3% of the total number of affected employed persons, followed by industry (13.8%), construction (5.9%), and agriculture (2.1%). At the beginning of the pandemic (Q1 and Q2), temporary interruptions in activity prevailed, but towards the end of 2020, remote working increased, reaching 40.5%, and a significant number of employees reduced their working hours (around 45–48%).

At the same time, between 2018 and 2022, the IT sector in the Republic of Moldova experienced significant growth, becoming one of the main drivers of the digital economy. Its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased from 2.7% to 5.1%, reflecting a doubling of its economic impact in four years. IT has come to generate approximately 11% of the country's total exports, thanks to software services delivered to foreign markets. This evolution shows not only the accelerated development of the industry, but also Moldova's repositioning as a competitive provider of digital solutions at the regional and international level. Below (*Figure 1)* you can see the evolution of the share of IT service exports in total service exports.

[1] https://blogs.worldbank.org/ro/europeandcentralasia/impactul-tot-mai-mare-exercitat-de-covid-19-asupra-sectorului-privat-din
[2] https://statistica.gov.md/index.php/ro/impactul-covid-19-asupra-indicatorilor-fortei-de-munca-in-anul-2020-9430_49884.html

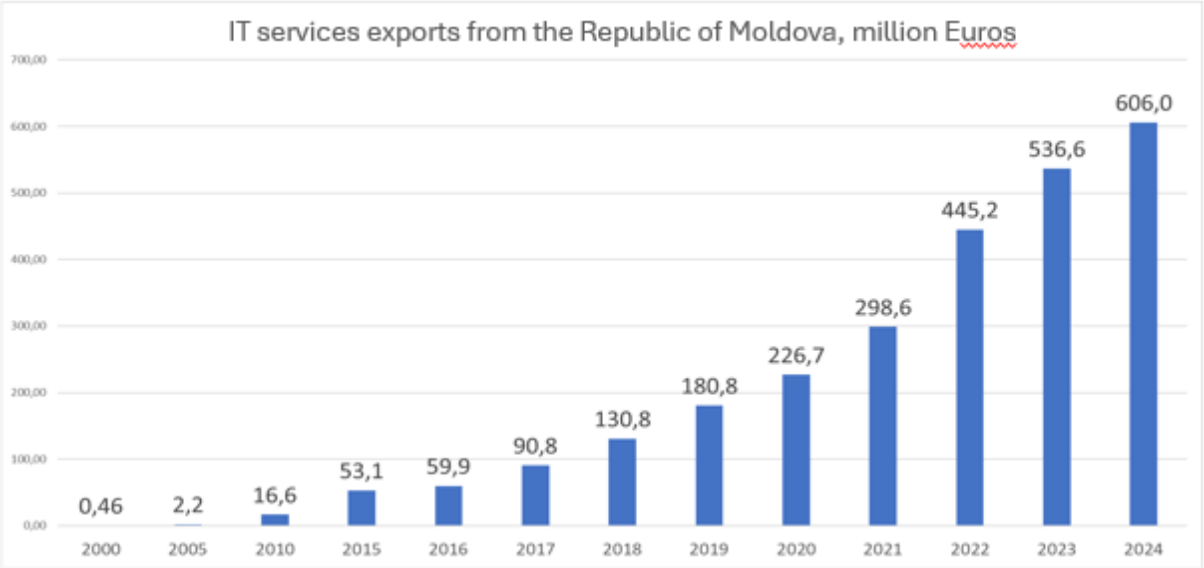
Figure 1. Share of IT service exports in total service exports



Source: National Bank of Moldova

In 2023–2024, Moldova's IT sector continued to expand strongly. In 2023, the share of the IT sector (excluding telecommunications) in GDP was around 5.3%, and the entire ICT sector, including telecommunications, was around 8.3%[3] . In 2024, the IT sector's share of GDP rose to ~6% of GDP. IT service exports increased from approximately €445 million in 2022 to nearly €606 million in 2024, consolidating its position as one of Moldova's main drivers of economic growth.

Figure 2. IT services exports in the Republic of Moldova



Source: National Bank of Moldova

[3] https://roboticsandautomationnews.com/2025/06/17/moldova-revs-up-its-digital-engine-as-it-sector-growth-accelerates/92202/

According to the above-mentioned World Bank report, about 33% of businesses started or intensified their online activity, 25% started deliveries, and about 19% changed their range of products or services.

The **Digital Transformation** Program **for SMEs** was designed as a strategic intervention to respond promptly to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, a period in which small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) faced major constraints in carrying out their economic activities in physical format and expressed an acute need for digital solutions to maintain operational continuity.

Initially launched as a pilot tool, the program evolved, following significant demand from the business community, into a formal grant mechanism. Its development was based on extensive public consultations, aligned with the principles of good governance and international practices in the field of supporting the digitization of SMEs, as well as on lessons learned from the implementation of the pilot instrument.

The analysis of business plans and data collected during the pilot phase identified specific needs at sectoral and regional level. The findings highlighted a significant digital resource gap and the high potential of digitization to increase the resilience and competitiveness of SMEs. The level of demand, considerably higher than the available budgetary capacity, confirmed the need for and relevance of a large-scale programmatic intervention. In this context, the launch of the program itself was an optimal and timely response, in line with national public policy objectives and international trends in the field of digital transformation.

Thus, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to adapt to new market conditions and manage crisis situations, on May 26, 2020, by Order of the Minister of Economy and Infrastructure No. 100, the Support Instrument for the Digitalization of SMEs was approved. Its objective was to promote the principles of innovation and technology transfer among SMEs, capitalize on their potential, and facilitate access to domestic and foreign markets.

Based on the experience gained with this instrument, the SME Digital Transformation Program was approved in early 2022 by Government Decision No. 129/2022. The program aims to support the digital transformation of small and medium-sized enterprises, contributing to their recovery and economic growth through digitization processes and the exploitation of their innovative potential.

During its implementation, the program has been constantly adapted through the introduction of several amendments (Government Decision No. 910/2022; Government Decision No. 726/2023; Government Decision No. 82/2025) in order to respond adequately to the needs of beneficiaries and developments in the economic environment.

1.2. Description of the Objectives of the SME Digital Transformation Program

Approved by Government Decision No. 129 of March 2, 2022, *the Digital Transformation Program for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises* was officially launched on June 24, 2022. Following the amendments applied in accordance with Government Decision No. 910 of

21.12.2022, the Program offers a single form of non-reimbursable financial support of up to **MDL 500,000,** with a **30%** own contribution.

The Program has set the following **specific objectives:**

1. to develop the skills of entrepreneurs in planning and implementing business practices conducive to the digital transformation of at least 40% of beneficiaries;
2. providing financial support for the implementation of digital transformation plans for at least 150 SMEs;
3. increasing the competitive advantage and customer portfolio of SMEs by at least 20%;
4. developing e-commerce, facilitating the process of reducing physical currency circulation, and developing courier services for at least 20% of beneficiary companies.

The SME Digital Transformation Program ended in March this year, and the results are analyzed in the "Effectiveness," "Impact," and "Sustainability" sections below.

2. PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

2.1. Purpose of the evaluation

The impact assessment aims to analyze how the financial support provided through the ODA Digital Transformation Program has contributed to the development and modernization of the activities of the funded enterprises, measuring the long-term effects of the development intervention, taking into account both the positive impact and the gaps, tracking direct and indirect, intended and unintended effects. This evaluation sought to identify how the intervention contributed to sustainable change in communities and sectors, assessing its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and coherence according to OECD/DAC criteria. Thus, the impact assessment provides a comprehensive picture of how resources were used to generate sustainable results, supporting decision-making and policy or program adjustments to maximize long-term benefits, highlighting lessons learned to improve future interventions and success stories to be replicated and scaled up.

2.2. Objectives of the evaluation

This impact assessment of the Digital Transformation Program was conducted independently and impartially with the support of GIZ, at the request of ODA, with the following objectives:

- to measure the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and medium- and long-term results of the ODA Digital Transformation Program on beneficiaries (small and medium-sized enterprises) and on the economic environment in general, based on the Methodology for the ex-post evaluation of grant programs for SMEs in the Republic of Moldova according to OECD standards
- to assess the extent to which the program has achieved its objectives regarding the digitization of SMEs and increasing their competitiveness
- to analyze the potential continuation or change of direction/parameters of the program

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- justify the efficiency of public funds and external assistance involved and highlight the results of progress for stakeholders and taxpayers
- identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program according to OECD criteria
- outline recommendations for adjusting and improving the design and implementation efficiency of future programs and contribute to improving OECD policies and procedures, MDED in full compliance with OECD criteria.

The overall objective is to assess the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the Digital Transformation Program interventions, as well as the impact and factors of success or failure of the program. Thus, the way in which the Program responded to the current needs of beneficiaries was analyzed, as well as the extent to which it contributed to the achievement of the priorities set out in the National Strategy for Digital Transformation 2023–2030 and in national policies aimed at developing a digital society, strengthening the ICT sector, creating an innovative digital economy, operating a smart and transparent state, ensuring digital security and inclusion, and strengthening the image of the Republic of Moldova as a digital nation, with a view to modernizing digital infrastructure, increasing inclusion, and aligning with European standards.

2.3. Scope of the assessment

The analysis covers the 2022-2023 implementation period of the Digital Transformation Program, a period chosen in accordance with the OECD methodological criteria indicated in the Evaluation Methodology, including beneficiaries (107) for whom at least 12 months have passed since the last tranche of non-reimbursable funding was granted or since the final investment was submitted, thus providing an adequate time frame for any changes to be made.The evaluation of the SME Digital Transformation Program was carried out in accordance with OECD criteria, based on information obtained directly from the beneficiaries' experience. The results form the basis for identifying lessons learned and formulating recommendations that will guide the decision-making process for future interventions.

This report can be considered a practical example of how to apply the OECD criteria evaluation methodology.

3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1. Evaluation criteria

This report assesses the impact of the SME Digital Transformation grant program offered by ODA in accordance with the Methodological Guide and Toolkit for the Ex-Post Evaluation of Grant Programs for SMEs in the Republic of Moldova in accordance with OECD standards, issued by ODA in July 2025. The OECD criteria can be viewed in the image below:

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Figure 3. OECD evaluation criteria



Source: Ex-post Evaluation Methodology

Thus, the analysis will answer the following questions:

- How RELEVANT was the program, or - to what extent did the program respond to the real needs of the beneficiaries?
- How COHERENT was the intervention, or - how well did the program align with other initiatives and policies?
- The EFFECTIVENESS of the program, or - to what extent were the proposed objectives achieved?
- Was the program EFFICIENT, or - how were resources used in relation to the results achieved?
- What was the IMPACT of the program, or - what lasting changes did the program generate in the long term?
- What is the degree of SUSTAINABILITY of the intervention, or - will the benefits continue after the funding ends?

3.2. Metric/scoring system used

PERFORMANCE SCORE	SCORE DESCRIPTION	PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTION
5 – Excellent	High performance (Always/almost always)	Performance fully meets the evaluation criterion. Weaknesses are not significant and have been effectively managed.
4 – Good	Positive performance (for the most part, with some exceptions)	Performance meets most aspects of the evaluation criterion. Gaps are insignificant, have been managed effectively, and do not affect overall results.
3 – Satisfactory	Acceptable performance (with many gaps and exceptions)	Partially meets the criterion; there are moderate gaps/weaknesses, but the effects are limited. Some improvements are needed.

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2 – Poor	Unsatisfactory performance (there are obvious shortcomings)	Does not meet most requirements. Problems affect quality/results.
1 - Inadequate	Poor performance	Does not meet the criterion; lack of compliance; significant negative impact on results.

The OECD criteria will include a series of findings formulated in accordance with the programme's objectives. Each finding will be assessed according to the above scoring system. The overall score for the OECD criterion will be the average of the scores calculated by dividing the total number of points accumulated by the number of findings.

3.3. Principles guiding the assessment

Objectivity: The design and implementation of this evaluation are based on a maximum level of objectivity and impartiality. *The research included the ODA perspective through the lens of all its departments, collected through a Focus Group, but also through individual interviews with department representatives, the opinions and views of beneficiaries, collected through online surveys, telephone interviews, and field visits. At the same time, the opinion of a third party was collected - a consulting company that assisted a number of entrepreneurs in the application process for the program. The results, conclusions, and recommendations are based on evidence, information, and first-hand feedback. The information comes from various data sources and is triangulated. Data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics and the State Tax Service provided a complete picture of the evaluation.*

Independence of evaluators: The evaluation team included evaluators with expertise in the field. The credibility of the evaluation is based on the independence of the evaluators from all operational staff involved.

Involvement of relevant actors in the process: During the design and implementation of the evaluation, the team responsible made sustained efforts to ensure that the entire process was participatory. In addition, all stakeholders had the opportunity to comment on and make suggestions regarding the conclusions and findings presented in the evaluation report. A presentation of the results is planned with the participation of all ODA departments and, where appropriate, other interested actors.

Transparency and good organization: The evaluation has a well-defined purpose and is rigorously planned, including a detailed presentation of the initial context (program description), specification of the objectives pursued, and formulation of questions. The OECD/DAC methodology applied was designed so that each criterion analyzed contributes significantly to the relevance and value of the evaluation process, as well as to the collection of useful information.

Credibility and consistency of data: The evaluation provides solid and comparable information that allows for justified conclusions. The data and information collected from various sources underwent a rigorous triangulation process before being used to support the evaluation conclusions**.**

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Completeness and clarity of the report: In accordance with this principle, the evaluation report is structured in line with OECD/DAC criteria and evaluation questions. The report provides answers to all evaluation questions.

Respect for the rights and protection of the interests of the parties involved: The evaluation team took all necessary measures to ensure the security, dignity, and rights of the persons involved in the evaluation. The survey was comprehensive, including evaluation visits and telephone interviews – participants were informed about the confidentiality of the information provided and that the data would be presented exclusively in aggregate form. Regarding the personalized success stories that resulted from the field visits, the protagonists gave their consent for the use of their names and certain information, exclusively for this Report. In order to publish the success stories on the website or other publicly accessible platforms, ODA will inform and request additional written consent from the protagonists featured.

Usefulness: The assessment recommendations are designed to improve future interventions, both in terms of digital transformation and other ODA products. At the same time, they aim to highlight the rational and efficient use of resources, strengthening institutional credibility with European funders and creating favorable conditions for attracting new funds from the European Union.

3.4. Data sources and data collection methods

Several methods were used to analyze the impact of this program:

- Analysis of data available from ODA, NBS, SFS, which included information on all beneficiaries, including economic results such as: number of employees, turnover, and financial results (profit or loss) for the period 2022-2024.
- Focus group with ODA representatives to gather the donor's perspective.
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of beneficiaries' perceptions, based on an exhaustive survey with questions covering the six OECD criteria, applied to the 107 companies that were beneficiaries of non-reimbursable funding under the Digital Transformation Program for SMEs in the period 2022-2023. Beneficiaries had the opportunity to respond online (by completing a Google Forms form or by telephone).
- Seven in-depth interviews during field visits directly to beneficiaries, to directly observe the investment made with ODA support and discuss in more detail the expectations, results, and challenges they faced. The seven beneficiaries were selected from different economic sectors.
- An interview with a service provider who consulted some of the beneficiaries in the application and (partial) implementation process.
  The data collection period was May-July 2025.

3.5. Limitations of the evaluation and risk mitigation strategies

- Partial participation of Program beneficiaries - Given that only a portion (107) of the 242 actual beneficiaries of the Digital Transformation Program participated in this evaluation, based on the methodological criteria of involving only those who have 12 months or more since the date of the last non-reimbursable funding tranche, it is possible that some results superior to those presented here, or some gaps other than those

mentioned in this report, may have been omitted. An attempt was made to mitigate this risk by exhaustively questioning/contacting all 107 beneficiaries. At the same time, we would like to mention that only 88 of the 107 beneficiaries were receptive and agreed to participate in the survey during its implementation period, which constitutes approximately 82% of respondents, which constitutes a very high representativeness/ 19 beneficiaries refused either due to lack of time or promised to respond online, but did not respond to subsequent calls, or could not be found after many repeated calls at different times. The survey results reflect the opinions of the 88 survey participants, while the output and outcome indicators calculated on the basis of available secondary data reflect the situation of all 107 beneficiaries.

- Evaluation period - Improved financial performance may take longer to become apparent, which may limit objective short-term evaluation. As a solution, relevant proxy data (e.g., number of new customers, market diversification, future plans) were collected that may indicate positive trends before full financial results are available.
- Influence of external factors - Financial performance may be affected by general economic conditions, inflation, regulations, or market fluctuations, independent of the program's intervention. This limitation is somewhat controlled by the fact that the analysis includes many industries in various markets that are not affected in the same way by regulations and fluctuations. Thus, the general trend is identifiable.
- Limited access to updated official data – inconsistency between financial data and employee numbers provided by beneficiary companies to the ODA, data provided by the NBS, and data provided by the SFS. Information on the wage fund was not provided by the SFS and NBS; average wages by sector may be published late or may be aggregated too broadly (e.g., "manufacturing" instead of "furniture manufacturing"), which affects the accuracy of the comparison. For this assessment, the limited data available was used, and in case of discrepancies between data, priority was given to the data provided by the SFS. However, for subsequent assessments of other ODA programs, it is recommended to use indicators for which data is already available through the M-Connect Platform, which is currently in the process of connecting with the Institution.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

This chapter presents the analysis and findings of the Digital Transformation Program evaluation structured according to OECD evaluation criteria. Certain findings are deduced by analyzing information from direct sources and collating it with data from research conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics in the field of IT, as well as using other sources, articles, etc.

4.1. RELEVANCE

The extent to which the Program responded to the real needs of beneficiaries, the extent to which the Program was relevant to the current context at that time at national and European level.

Finding 1. The SME Digital Transformation Program is aligned with national and European strategies for economic development, promotion of entrepreneurship, and support for digitization objectives. The Program is relevant to the priorities set out in national strategies and legislation. (Excellent score 5/5)

At the national level, the Program is in line with the objectives of the National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030," the National Economic Development Strategy 2030, and the National Program for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness in 2023-2027. At European level, this objective falls under the pillar "Strengthening capacities and supporting the transition to sustainability and digitalization" of the SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe.

The program has contributed to the achievement of the following objectives of national strategies:

- National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030" - Specific Objective 1.2. Developing opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship;

- National Economic Development Strategy 2030 - Objective 1. Creating a favorable environment for entrepreneurship and investment and preparing the economy for accession to the European Union;

- National Program for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness in 2023-2027 - Specific Objective 2.2. Increasing the productivity of enterprises by promoting innovation, advanced technology, and efficient management practices.

- Moldova's digital transformation strategy for 2023-2030 - General objective: Creating an innovative and resilient digital economy.

Finding 2. Changes to the Program, made in order to adjust to the needs of beneficiaries, had an ambiguous effect on them. (Satisfactory score 3/5)

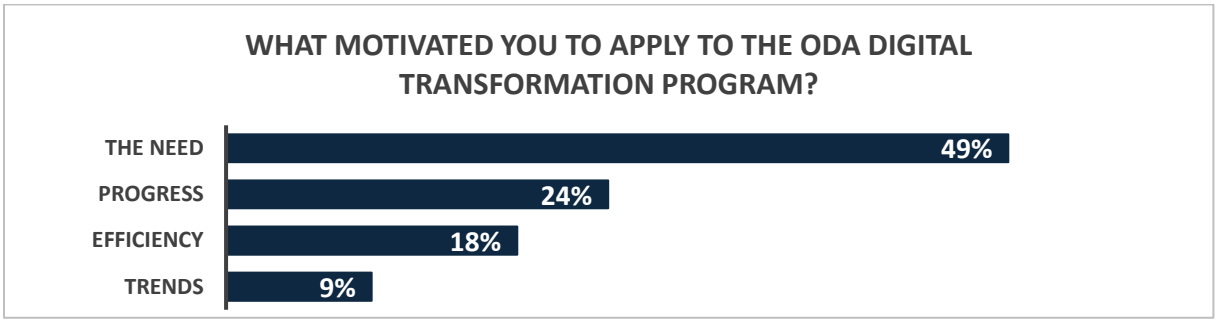
The program was continuously adapted during implementation, with several changes being introduced (Government Decision No. 910/2022; Government Decision No. 726/2023, Government Decision No. 82/2025). Although the stated goal of the ODA was "for the program to better meet the needs of beneficiaries," certain changes were not appreciated by beneficiaries: Changes in the application conditions in the middle of the program created frustration among applicants who had already submitted their documents, and ultimately placed companies in unfair conditions with regard to the object of funding. The wording of Government Decision No. 726 of 26.09.23 excluded certain eligible costs, when certain equipment approved for some companies was refused to others, which created dissatisfaction and a feeling of unfairness among beneficiaries. According to the ODA, although the list of eligible and ineligible expenses included in the Program's Operational Manual has not undergone any changes in content, there has been a reinterpretation of eligible costs. This adjustment resulted from the experience gained in the process of evaluating the files and from the conclusions of the Evaluation

Directorate and the Financing and Risk Committee regarding the actual degree of digitization of the requested equipment, with beneficiaries being informed and supported in identifying alternative solutions appropriate to the digitization process. However, the effect of these changes on beneficiaries was not necessarily as expected.

Finding 3. The Digital Transformation Program was relevant to beneficiaries and the socioeconomic context at the time of its conception and remains relevant today (Excellent score 5/5)

By focusing on digitization, the program responded to a current and pressing need for SMEs to increase their efficiency, resilience, and innovation capacity in an increasingly digitized economic context. The 88 companies from 23 industries that responded to the questionnaire found the ODA program relevant and useful. 49% were motivated to apply to the Digital Transformation Program by the need for modern work tools and equipment, 24% to progress, improve the quality of their products and services, and become more competitive, 18% mentioned the need to streamline work processes as the main factor, and 9% saw the ODA program as an opportunity to keep up with trends and implement new technologies at low cost.

Figure 4. Applicants' motivation for the program



Source: author based on survey data

The keywords used by respondents in the interviews can be found in the word cloud below, with size and amplification representing frequency of mention. Respondents spoke about greater clarity and transparency of work processes, better control, increased accessibility, the desire to offer higher quality, the desire to be more competitive and introduce innovations, etc.

Figure 5. Motivation of program applicants, word cloud



Source: author based on survey data

The beneficiaries' responses to the questionnaire substantiate the motivation, necessity, and relevance of the program. Some of them can be viewed in Box 2.

Box 2 THE NEED FOR & RELEVANCE OF THE PROGRAM
RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS
(from the survey)

The conditions of the grant program perfectly matched our needs.
(Sports Center, Chisinau)

It imposed on us the need to provide services that meet current requirements.
(Medical Center, Chișinău)

We wanted to keep up with new market trends.
(Medical Clinic, Chișinău)

We were motivated by the need to introduce digital workflow.
(Medical clinic, Chișinău)

Digitizing our processes has brought us greater efficiency, transparency, and quality in the services we offer. The ODA program was the right opportunity to take this strategic step in the development of our clinic.
(Medical clinic, Chișinău)

The current market is becoming increasingly competitive, and digitization is no longer an advantage but a necessity.
(Beneficiary in the textile industry, Chișinău)

For us, ODA was an opportunity to implement new technologies at low cost.
(Farmer, Ungheni)

We applied to increase productivity and save on inputs.
(*Farmer, Florești)*

Innovative digital techniques are a primary necessity without which we cannot maintain the dynamics, quality, and level of services we want to offer our customers.
(Medical center, Chișinău)

We wanted to automate repetitive processes and eliminate human error, thereby increasing productivity and data accuracy.
(Construction industry beneficiary, Chișinău)

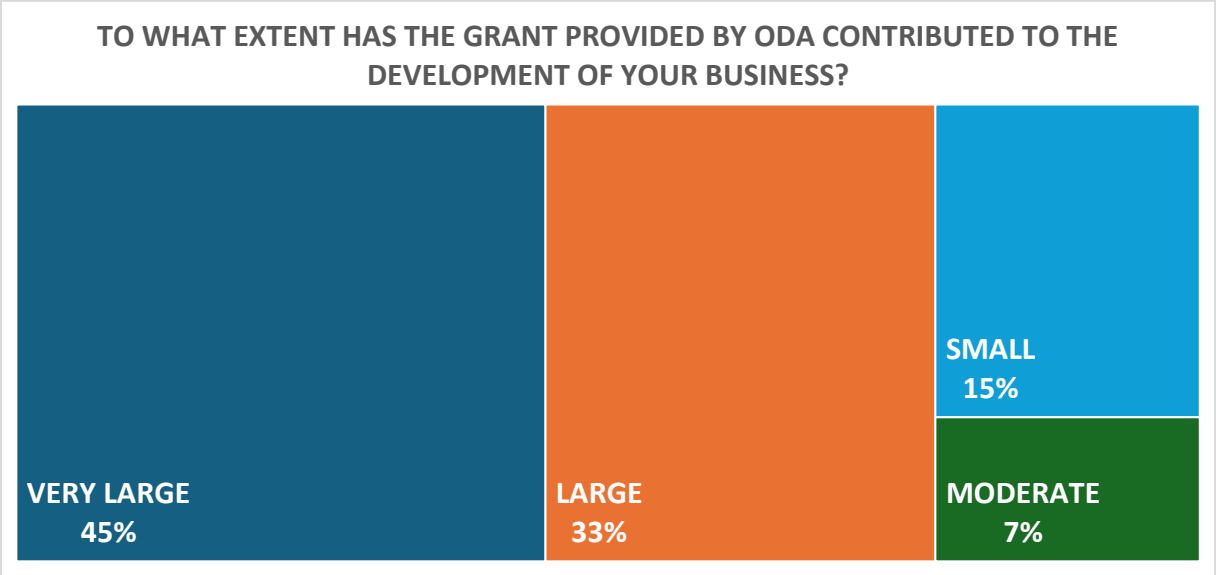
We set out to optimize the work process in serving tourists.
(Travel agency, Chișinău)

We felt the need for clarity in how we keep track of orders for increased efficiency.
(Service provider, Chișinău)

Without ODA, we would not have started the digitization process.
(Design and construction company, Ialoveni)

The vast majority of respondents (78%) mentioned that the grant provided by ODA contributed to the development of their businesses to a very large extent (45%) and to a large extent (33%).

Figure 6. Importance of financial assistance received for beneficiaries



Source: author based on survey data

Those who responded that the program contributed to a "small" extent (7%) cited external factors that limit their business, such as "*the war with Russia, which was the most important market for the* business" or "*competition from TEMU and other international platforms that are increasingly being used by local consumers*," or "*customers who now spend more time on TikTok and visit the website less often*." Other reasons mentioned included "*we are still in the process of installing the application*" or *"we are just learning how to use the software*."

Score for the Relevance criterion: 4.3/5 – Good Performance

Three findings were identified for the relevance criterion, which accumulated two *excellent* scores and one *satisfactory* score, resulting in an average score of 4.3, demonstrating good performance in terms of relevance. The Digital Transformation Program is thus relevant to the national development priorities of the Republic of Moldova and aligned with a number of sectoral strategies during the implementation period. At the same time, the program is essentially relevant to the needs and priorities of the target beneficiaries. However, certain adjustments to the program were not consulted in advance (through public consultations or focus groups) with potential beneficiaries, nor were they announced in advance, affecting companies that had already submitted their applications under the previous rules, thus creating a sense of unfairness and lack of transparency.

Public

4.2. COHERENCE AND COORDINATION

The extent to which the program has aligned with other initiatives and policies at the national level.

Finding 4. The Digital Transformation Program is organically integrated into the overall portfolio of programs run by ODA (Excellent score 5/5)

The SME Digital Transformation Program is strategically integrated into the overall portfolio of programs run by ODA, complementing the institution's efforts to support the sustainable and competitive development of the business environment. This program is aligned with ODA's objectives of increasing the competitiveness of SMEs, supporting innovation, digitization, and adaptation to new technologies, complementing other initiatives such as support for start-ups, business internationalization, or entrepreneurial education programs, and entrepreneurs have the opportunity to benefit from support from several grant programs, but with different investment projects.

Some respondents in the survey recognised the Digital Transformation Programme as a very useful complement to other programmes under which they received funding, such as "Start for Young People" or "Re-engineering".

By integrating this program into its portfolio, ODA is diversifying its intervention and support tools, adapting to market developments and national and European strategic priorities in terms of digitization and the transition to a smart economy.

Finding 5. The program complements or creates synergies with other initiatives in the same field (Excellent score 5/5)

The program was developed in synergy with other SME support programs, maintaining the same structure of grant programs, but with a distinct objective, namely the digitization of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises and facilitating their integration into domestic and foreign markets.

At the same time, this program, like other grant programs managed by the ODA, is complementary to other financial support instruments. Therefore, SMEs eligible for the program that do not have sufficient financial resources of their own to co-finance the requested project had the opportunity to supplement their capital shortfall from credit sources, such as a financial guarantee issued by the Credit Guarantee Fund and/or financing instruments provided from the financial resources of the Fund for Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth of Moldova (FACEM).

Finding 6. The ODA program aligns organically with other national/international initiatives to support SMEs (e.g., EU programs, bilateral donors, international organizations), while also being recognized as "more effective and useful" compared to some programs (Excellent score 5/5).

The SME Digital Transformation Program, run by ODA, aligns with both national strategic objectives and European and international initiatives dedicated to supporting the digitization of SMEs. It responds to the directions set out in strategic documents such as:

- The EU Strategy for SMEs (2020), which emphasizes the need to support the digital transition of small and medium-sized enterprises through access to technology, digital skills, and financial support;

- Initiatives such as the Digital Europe Programme, the Single Market Programme, and Horizon Europe, which aim to support innovation and digitization ecosystems among European SMEs.

- At the same time, the ODA program complements the efforts of ODA's strategic partners, as it, along with six other grant programs for SMEs, is financially supported by the European Union through the "EU for Sustainable, Innovative, Green and Competitive Economy (EU4SMEs)" project.

- The Star Venture program dedicated to innovative and high-tech start-ups with the support of the EBRD in cooperation with Italy through the Central European Initiative Fund (CEI), which has allocated EUR 500,000 for 2022-2023 EUR 500,000 for MSMEs and start-ups to increase digitization, access to finance, and competitiveness. This initiative is part of the EBRD Strategy for the Republic of Moldova 2023–2028, which prioritizes digitization and support for a competitive and innovative private sector.

The ODA program was considered more effective and targeted than other programs (according to observations provided by the consulting company), and was in demand, covering needs not covered by other programs (autopilot systems for agriculture, dedicated software for all sectors, design software, etc.).

Finding 7. There was a preliminary analysis of existing premises and programs to demonstrate the need for support to SMEs (Excellent score 5/5)

According to Law No. 100/2017, in the process of drafting all normative acts, including government decisions on the basis of which grant support programs are approved, it is mandatory to prepare a Regulatory Impact Analysis, which determines the need to adopt, approve, or issue the normative act and identifies the most effective solution, based on an analysis of the issues, in order to set objectives, identify alternative solutions, and assess costs and benefits, in accordance with the methodology approved by the Government.

The regulatory impact analysis on the draft Government Decision on the approval of the Digital Transformation Program for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises was prepared on October 15, 2021, by the MDED in conjunction with the ODA. The analysis includes the results obtained from the implementation of the SME Digitalization Support Tool, highlighting both the needs of the SME sector and the relevance of their digital development.

Finding 8. The program was consulted with other actors (ministries, donors, international organizations) during the planning or implementation stage of the program (Good score 4/5)

The program was developed and approved in accordance with the normative acts in force at that time. Thus, according to Article 32 of Law No. 100/2017 on normative acts, " (1) The draft normative act, accompanied by the explanatory note and, where appropriate, other documents, shall be submitted for approval to the central public authorities responsible for the application of the provisions contained in the draft and to the institutions concerned, depending on the subject matter of the regulation." and " (3) Simultaneously with or prior to submission for approval, the draft normative act shall be subject to public consultation in the manner established by Law No. 239/2008 on transparency in the decision-making process."

The draft Government Decision on the approval of the Digital Transformation Program for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises was submitted for public consultation, which was available on the government platform particip.gov.md during the period 21.12.2021 – 28.12.2021 (link). At the time of writing this report, there are no comments on this Government Decision on the respective page. Formally, the procedure was followed. However, it is unclear whether there is an archive or a protocol for storing all interventions and contributions from the public, including other partners, international donors, etc. (for example, if the person responsible for the Public Consultation, whose contact details are published on the above-mentioned page, was contacted by phone or email).

Score for the Consistency criterion: 4.8/5 – Excellent Performance

Of the five findings identified under the relevance criterion, 4 were rated *excellent* and 1 was rated *good*, resulting in an average score of 4.8, demonstrating excellent performance in terms of consistency. The Digital Transformation Program has aligned itself organically with other national and international initiatives and policies, filling gaps in the field of digitization, and is thus recognized as "more efficient and useful" compared to some similar programs. At the same time, in terms of public consultations, it would be useful to have a protocol for keeping records of interventions and contributions from the public, including other partners and international donors (Recommendation 7).

4.3. EFFECTIVENESS

The extent to which the Digital Transformation Program has achieved its objectives.

Finding 9. There is comparative data between the baseline values, planned targets, and actual results achieved (Excellent score 5/5).

Annex 1 presents the Theory of Change, which indicates the logical and strategic framework of the Program and illustrates how the intervention, through the set objectives and the resources invested in concrete actions, moves from the formulated problem to the planned targets and the expected impact.

In order to continuously monitor the progress made in the implementation of management support programs and projects, starting in 2022, ODA will prepare a quarterly "Report on the assessment of progress in the implementation of state programs and assistance projects." This

report includes the indicators established in accordance with government decisions on grant programs under management and reflects the quarterly progress made in achieving them. Thus, the most recent ODA Report for the first half of 2025 presents the final indicators, 36 months after launch, for the output and outcome indicators of the Digital Transformation Program (Table 1).

Table 1

SME Digital Transformation Program *(March 11, 2022 – March 11, 2025)*			
Name of product/result indicator according to GD	**Value of indicators according to GD**	**Progress in achieving product/result indicators according to GD**	
	Total implementation period (36 months)	*period from launch to reporting date (36 months)*	
Output indicators:	***target***	***achieved***	***%***
- **Number of companies interested in developing their own businesses, publicized and informed**	3,000	3,150	105
- **Number of SMEs consulted and assisted**	600	660	110
- **Number of SMEs supported in implementing digital transformation actions through non-reimbursable financial support**	150	259	173 (161)
• **from the State Budget**	150	183	122
• **from external sources**	40	59	148
Number of beneficiaries who terminated non-reimbursable financing contracts		-	
- **Approved grant amount, of which:**	79	68.38 (64.88)	86
• **from the State Budget (MDL million)**	60	45.6	76
• **from external sources (MDL million)**	19.1	19.27	101
Result indicators:			
- **Number of jobs maintained under the Program**	400	4,503	1126
- **Volume of investment in the national economy increasing by at least 120.0 million lei as a result of the Program's implementation**	120	118.58 (112.38)	99
- **Share of supported enterprises that will successfully implement digitization actions.**	70	65	93
- **Percentage of beneficiaries that will see an increase in taxes and fees paid to the national public budget**	60	The IP ODA is in the process of implementing an ex officio monitoring mechanism by collecting information from the progress reports submitted by beneficiaries on the achievement of objectives and result indicators for the period 2022-2024.	
- **Percentage of beneficiaries who will ensure that the average gross monthly salary is at the level of the sector**	60		
- **Percentage of beneficiaries that will record an increase in financial performance**	60		

Source: ODA report on the assessment of progress in the implementation of state programs and assistance projects - first half of 2025

At the time of completion of this Report, some indicators had changed: for example *The share of supported enterprises that will successfully implement digitization actions* reached 100%.

Finding 10. The program achieved 100% of its proposed indicators, and many of the indicators exceeded their targets (Excellent score 5/5).

The SME Digital Transformation Program ended in March this year. Analysing the results obtained after three years of implementation, it can be seen that the indicators set out in the Government Decision have been largely achieved. Therefore, it can be confirmed that the objectives set out in the program have been achieved, reflecting a significant evolution in the digitization potential of SMEs.

The number of companies interested in developing their own media-covered and informed businesses and the number of SMEs consulted and assisted, according to data provided by the ODA Information and Consultation Centre, exceeded the proposed target by 5% and 10%, respectively.

Table 2 below shows the final figures for funding under the Digital Transformation Program:

Table 2

SME Digital Transformation Program			
Period	**Approved projects for funding and ongoing or completed at the time of evaluation** (No.)	**Total grant amount approved** (MDL million)	**Value of investment in the planned economy** (MDL million)
TOTAL 36 months	**242**	**64.88**	**49.87**

Source: IP ODA calculations

During the 36 months of program implementation (2022-2025), 259 investment projects were approved for funding, of which 17 beneficiaries withdrew from implementation, resulting in a final number of 242 actual beneficiaries. This result exceeds by 61% the indicator set out in the Government Decision on the Program and by 27% the target set in the context of attracting financial support from external sources. The total value of the non-reimbursable financial support provided was MDL 64.88 million, which constitutes 82% of the total target. The average value of a grant awarded under the Program is MDL 264,947.3. The beneficiaries' own contribution amounted to MDL 49.87 million.

The main reasons for refusing to implement projects were related to the complexity of digital solutions, which were superficially analyzed by beneficiaries when submitting the project and which later proved difficult to implement, the non-compliance of some suppliers who did not meet deadlines and affected the quality of the work, the low level of training of the beneficiaries' staff, who resisted implementation, as well as the lack of time and sufficient human resources to carry out the project properly. The profile of beneficiaries shows 100 businesses (41.3%) run by women, 74 businesses (30.6%) run by young people under the age of 35, and 90 beneficiaries (37%) from rural areas. In terms of legal form, the beneficiary enterprises were predominantly Limited Liability Companies (LLC) (213), 22 Family Farms (FF), 5 Joint-Stock Companies (JSC), 1 Individual Enterprise (IE), and 1 Agricultural Production Cooperative (COOP).

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The program contributed to the integration of the digitization process into the activities of the enterprises that benefited from funding.

All survey respondents confirmed that the financed item is integrated into the company's assets, is used in daily operations, and is maintained and updated as needed. This result indicates a 100% adoption rate of the digitization process by beneficiaries. With regard to the objective of developing e-commerce, facilitating the reduction of physical currency circulation, and developing courier services, 21.5% (52 out of 242 companies) received funding for this purpose, which represents an achieved objective.

The program contributed to increasing the financial performance (expressed in turnover) and competitive advantage (expressed in revenue per employee productivity compared to the sector average) of most beneficiaries.

Turnover is an essential indicator of a company's financial performance, as it reflects its ability to generate revenue from its core business. The level of turnover provides a clear picture of the volume of economic activity, market positioning, and growth potential. At the same time, its evolution over time is an important benchmark for assessing the sustainability and competitiveness of the enterprise, but also for analyzing the impact of investments made, including those supported by financing programs.

When asked in the survey whether the company had recorded an increase in turnover compared to the period before financing, 68% confirmed, 28% answered negatively, and 5% did not know the answer to this question. Among those who answered negatively, the reasons given included "drought," "unfavorable weather conditions," "the war in Ukraine," and "market stagnation." 11% of respondents did not recognize the impact of the grant on their turnover growth.

Only a quarter of respondents were willing to share the value of the increase. Thus, the growth values ranged from 1% to 300%, with an average of 51%.

Comparing the reference values of the group of beneficiaries studied with the data provided by the NBS and SFS, we obtained the following picture:

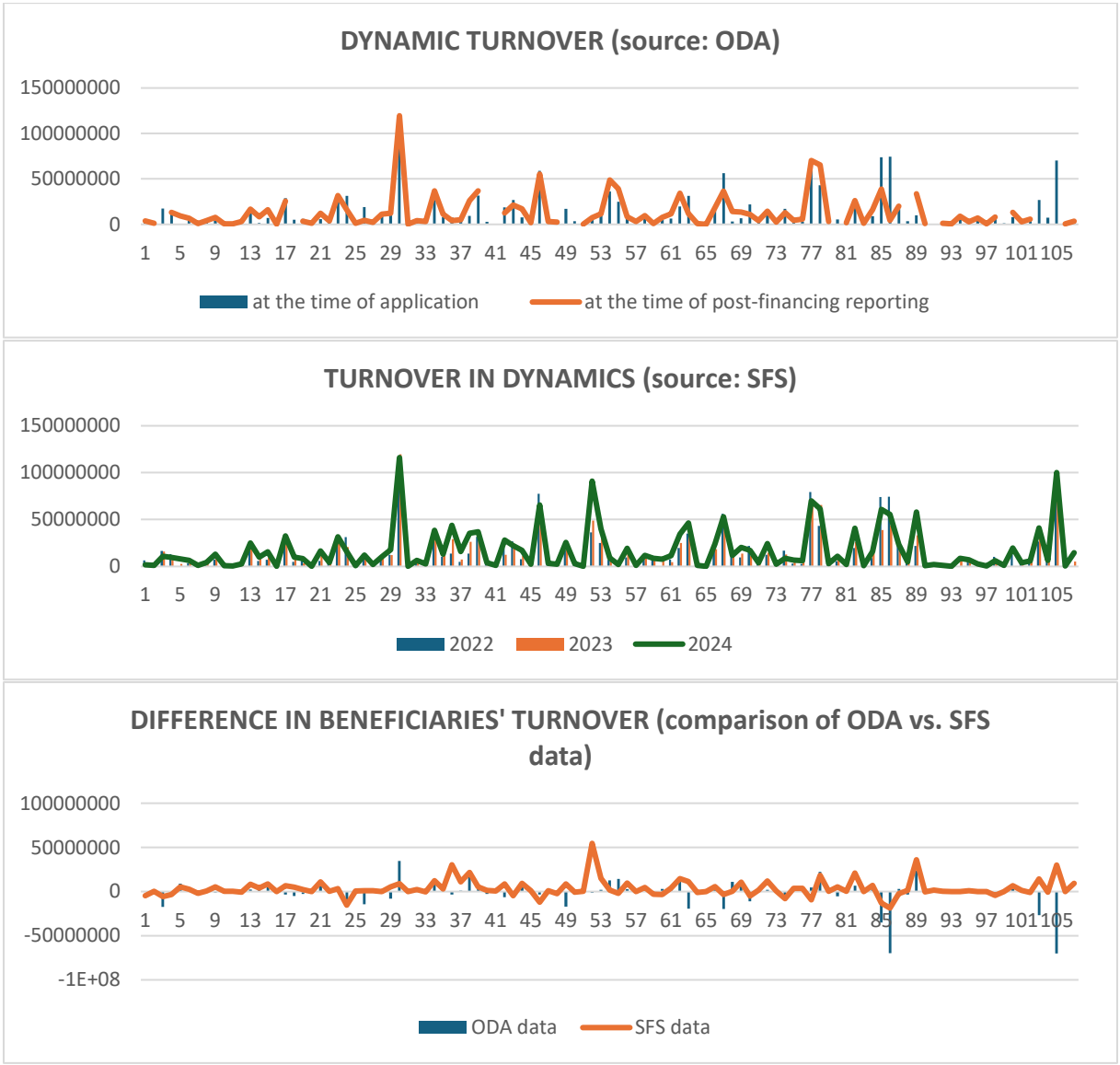
The year 2022 was set as the reference year for the 107 beneficiaries included in the evaluation, as the first grants were awarded towards the end of 2022, and 2024 was set as the result year for beneficiaries who have 12 months or more from the date of the last non-reimbursable funding tranche, with official data provided by the SFS and NBS being available per calendar year.

Thus, according to SFS data, 66% of entrepreneurs recorded an increase in turnover in 2024 compared to 2022. The average value of the increases was MDL 7.1 million. Calculating the same indicator according to data provided by ODA, 59% of companies recorded an increase in turnover in the post-financing report compared to the time of application, with an average value of MDL 4.6 million.

The results of the comparisons according to the two sources can be viewed below:

Public

Figure 7. Dynamics of beneficiaries' turnover, compared according to sources



Source: author based on data provided by ODA and SFS

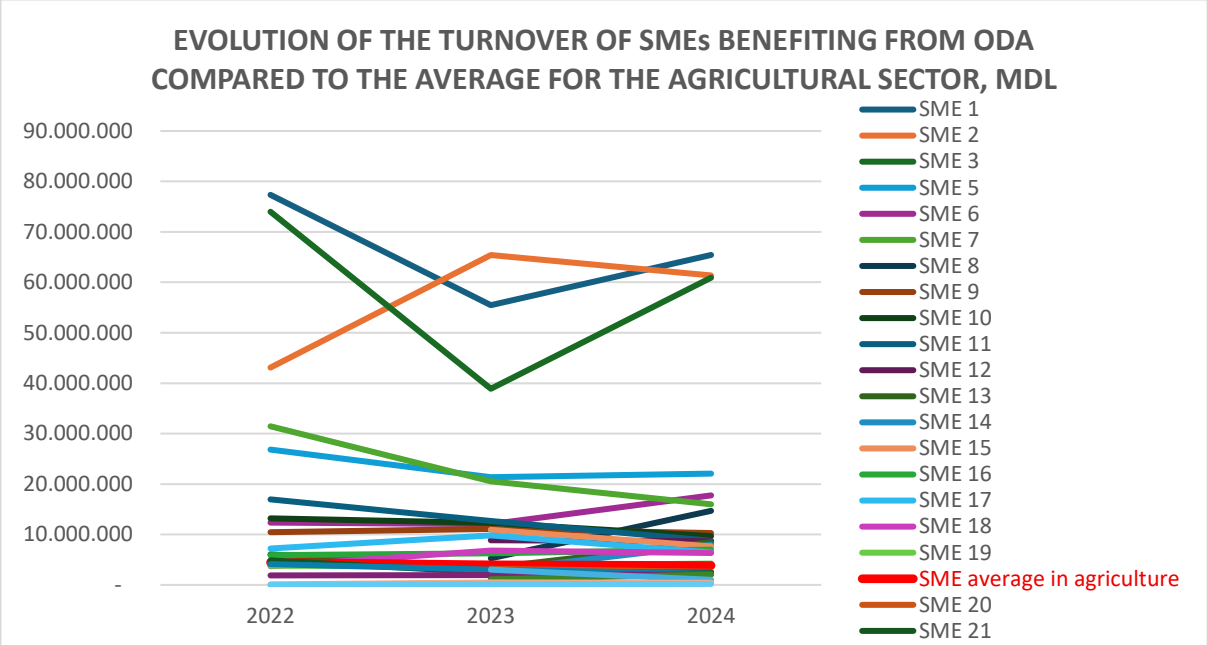
The average turnover growth for the target group of beneficiaries (SFS) was 53% (including negative values). Excluding negative values, we have an average growth of 91%, which is a very good result. The average decrease in turnover is -19%.

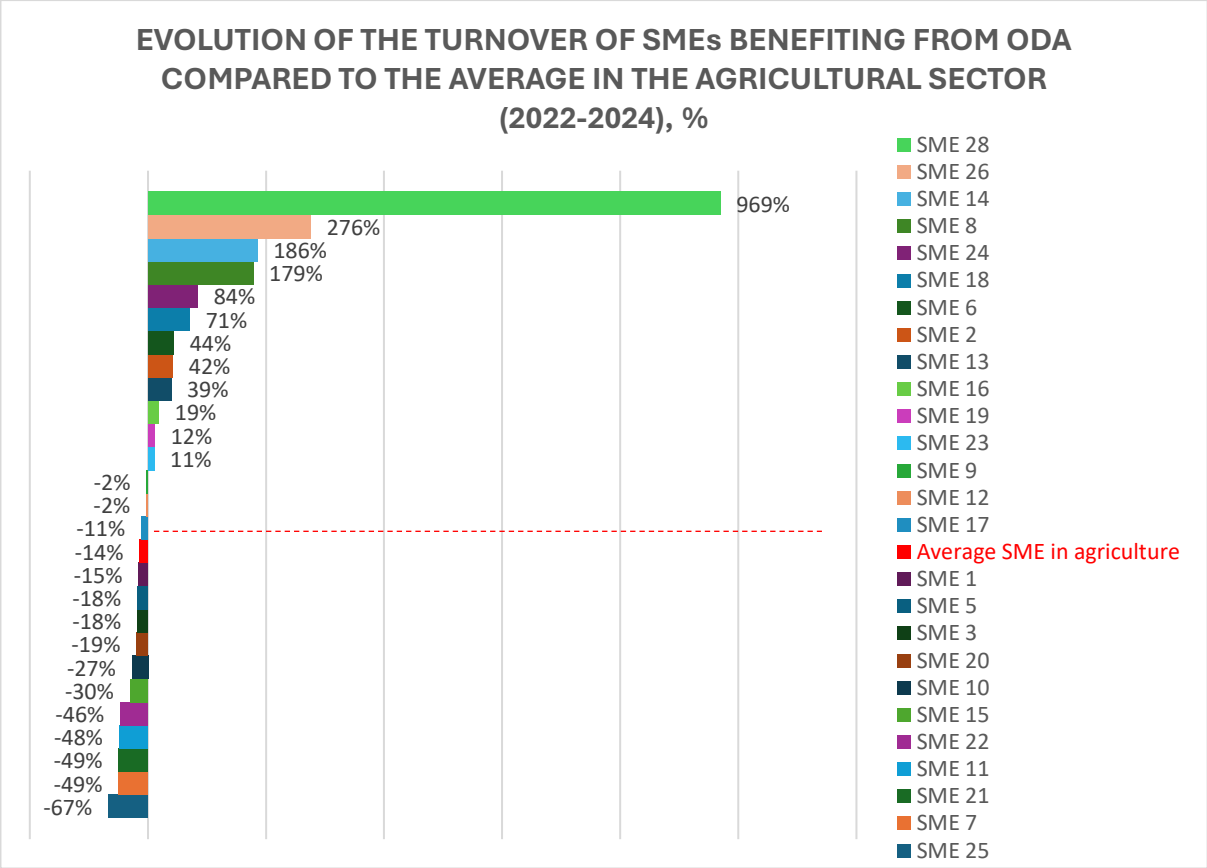
The average evolution according to ODA is 61.5%, and the average growth (excluding zero and negative values) is 111.3%. The average reduction in turnover is equal to -34%.

For a comparative analysis between the performance of beneficiaries supported through the program and other companies in the sector, data provided by SFS and the average turnover for the top three industries with the highest share in the sample (agriculture, healthcare, and furniture manufacturing) were used calculated according to data from the statistica.md website.

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Figure 8.





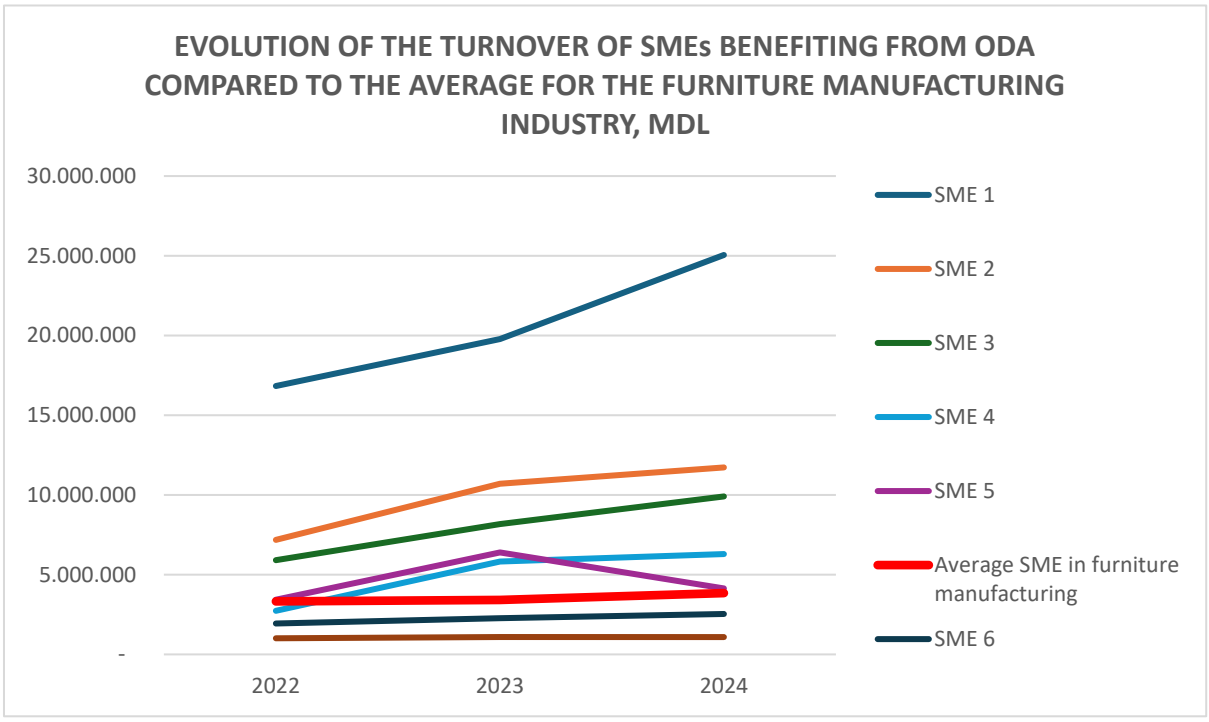
Source: author based on data provided by SFS and from the NBS website

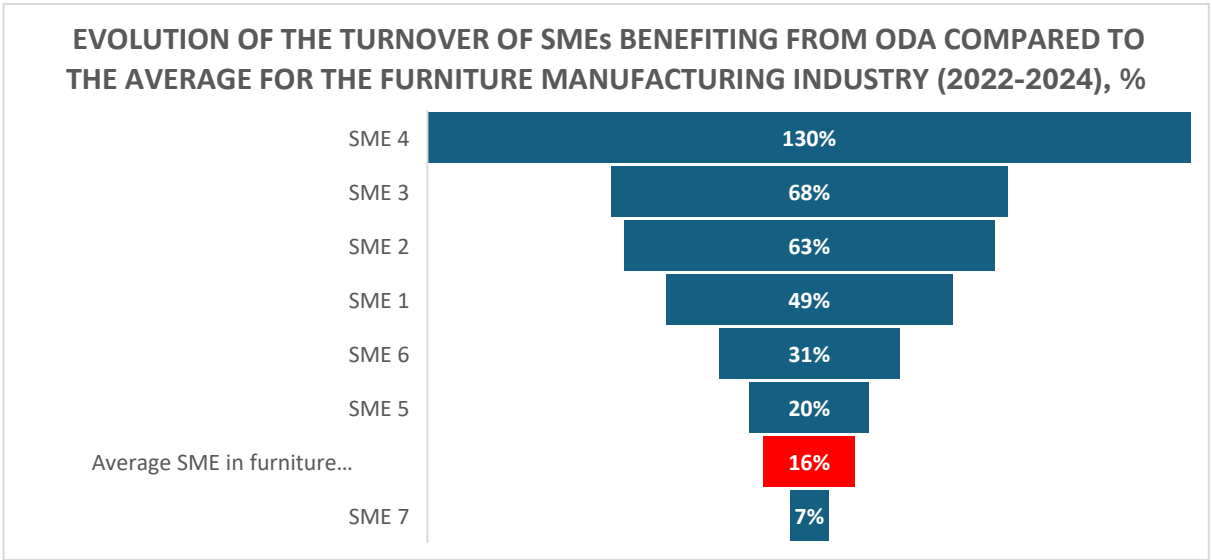
In the agricultural sector, 18 ODA beneficiary companies (67%) have revenues similar to or higher than the industry average. Average turnover in agriculture fell by 14% in 2024 compared to 2022, with 2023 being a difficult year for SMEs in the industry. The year 2024 marked a financial recovery, but not to the levels seen in 2022, with 44% of beneficiaries in the

agricultural industry recording increases in revenue (by an average of 161%) and the rest recording decreases (by an average of -28%).

By comparison, in the furniture manufacturing industry, ODA beneficiaries recorded higher increases in turnover (an average increase of +53%) than the national average (+16%).

Figure 9



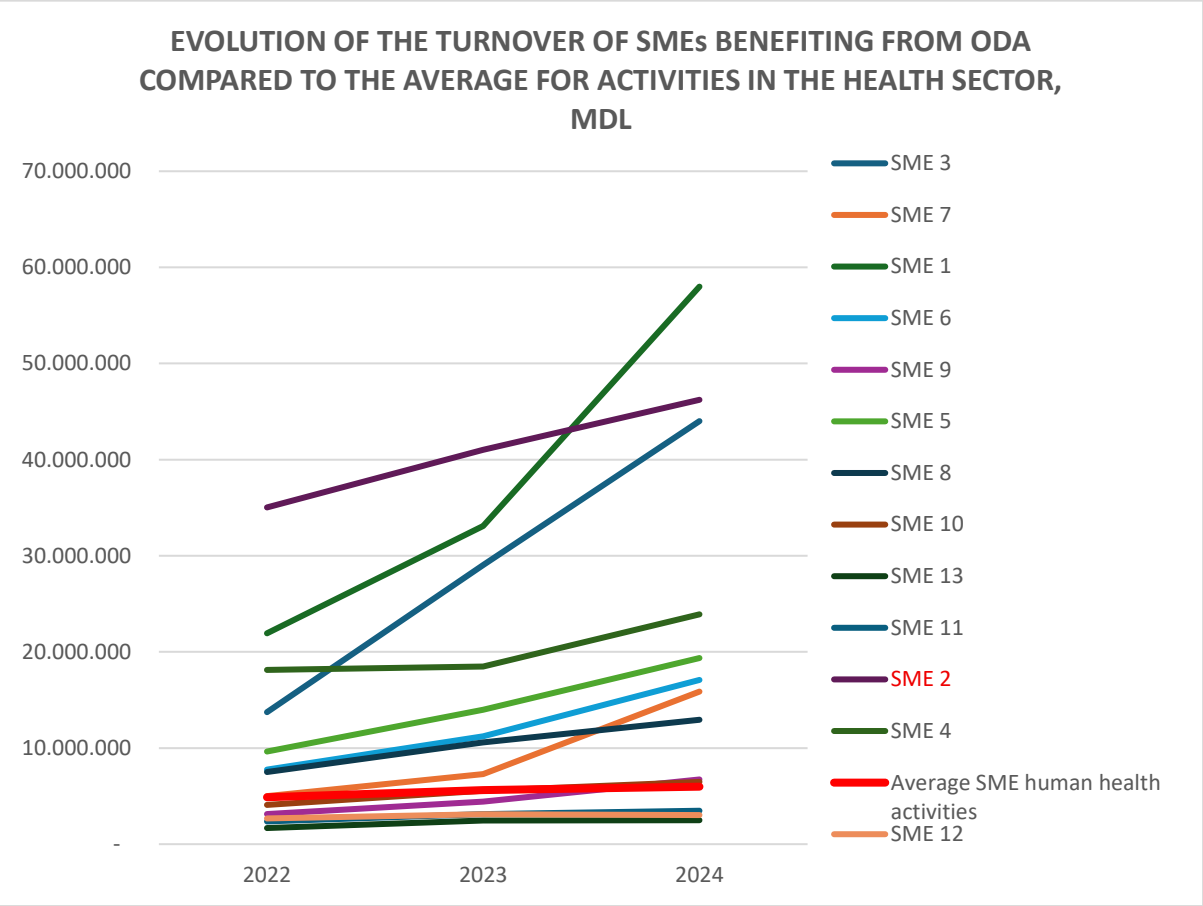


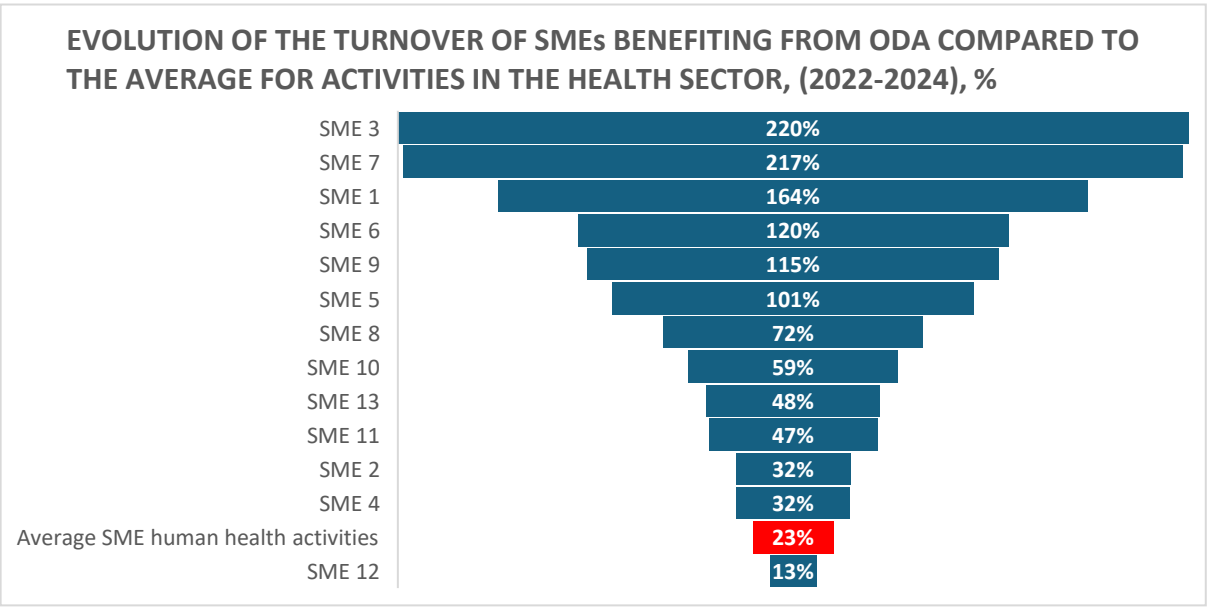
Source: author based on data provided by SFS

In the health sector, ODA beneficiaries also recorded higher growth (+95%) in 2024 compared to 2022 than the national average (+23%).

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Figure 10



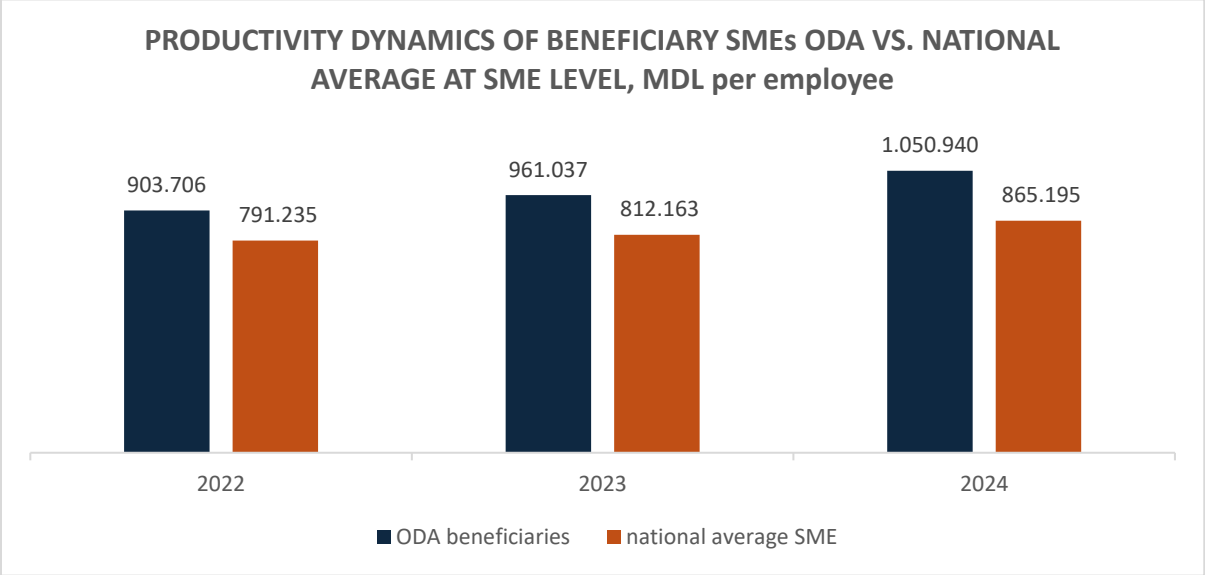


Source: author based on data provided by SFS

The dynamics of revenue productivity per employee is a very good indicator of the degree of modernization and digitization of processes, as through technology, employees can produce more value at the same time, and companies that increase productivity tend to introduce new

practices, tools, or business models more quickly. Higher than average sector productivity indicates a sustainable competitive advantage for the company.

Figure 11



Source: author based on data provided by ODA and SFS

Thus, the average productivity growth among beneficiaries of the Digital Transformation Program was 16% in 2024 compared to the reference year, while the average productivity growth at the country level was 9% for the same period.

Net profit showed a growth trend for a smaller number of beneficiaries (53% according to ODA data and 51% according to SFS) compared to turnover, with an average value growth of MDL 29.7 thousand (ODA) or MDL 288 thousand (according to SFS).

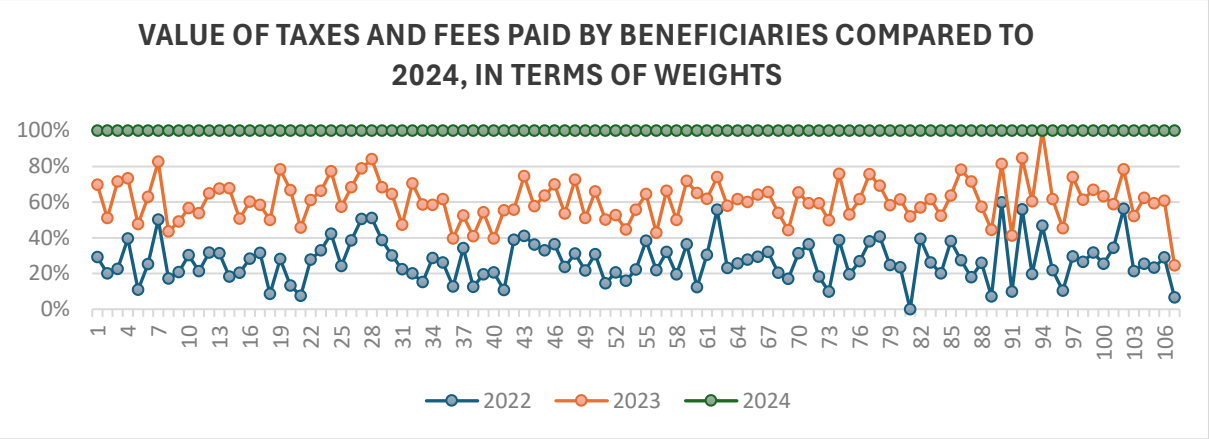
Analyzing the above data, we can see that most companies supported by non-reimbursable funding from the ODA Digital Transformation Program have recorded y increases in turnover and productivity levels that exceed the average growth of these indicators at the sector level per country , which indicates that the support provided has contributed significantly to their economic performance and to strengthening their competitiveness in the market. This development reflects both the efficiency of investments made in the digitization process and the ability of SMEs to leverage new technologies and practices implemented to expand their business, attract new customers, and optimize internal processes.

The program has contributed to an increase in the share of beneficiaries who have seen an increase in the taxes and fees paid to the national public budget

Another telling indicator of the program's positive impact is the share of beneficiaries who have recorded an increase in taxes and fees paid to the national public budget. According to SFS data (the only data available at present), this share amounts to 78% of the supported enterprises. The chart below shows the evolution of the percentage distribution over time of taxes and fees paid by beneficiaries.

Public

Figure 12. Dynamics over time of the proportions of taxes and fees paid by beneficiaries



Source: author based on data provided by the SFS

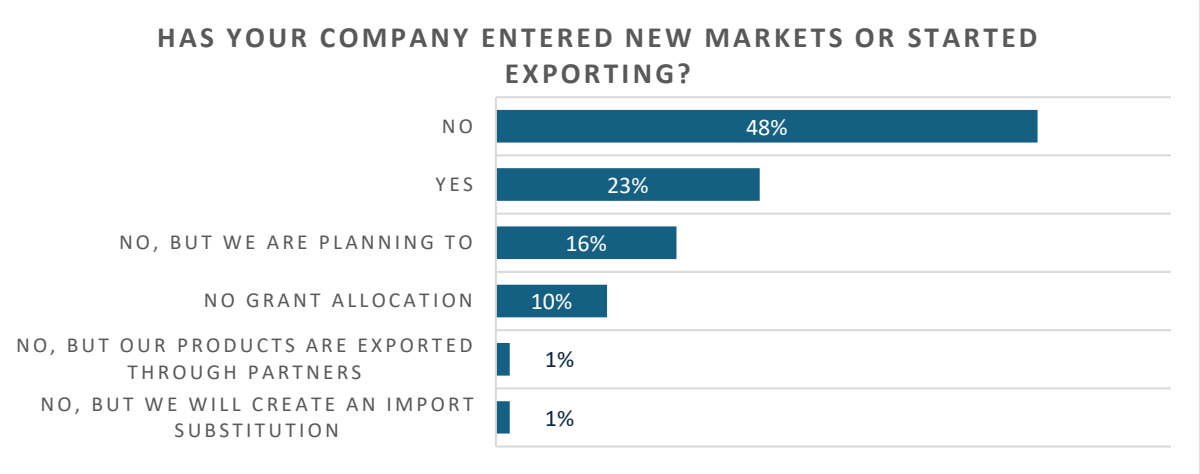
Another relevant indicator of positive dynamics is the share of ODA-supported companies that had arrears to the state budget. This share has fallen steadily, from 46% of beneficiaries in 2022 to 42% in 2023 and 34% in 2024. This trend shows a significant improvement in financial discipline and a strengthening of the economic and financial health of beneficiary enterprises.

Finding 11. The program has been less helpful to beneficiaries in entering new markets (including export markets) and/or increasing their customer base (Satisfactory score 3/5)

Most respondents (48%) operate only on the local market and have no plans to expand their market or export. A smaller proportion (23%) confirmed market expansion, attributing part of their success to ODA grants (Box 6). Of those who do not yet export but are planning to do so (16%), they are focused on the Romanian and Ukrainian markets. 10% say they have been exporting for some time, without attributing this to the ODA grant.

The chart below illustrates the correlation between respondents' answers to this question.

Figure 13. Respondents' answers regarding entry into new markets



Source: author based on data provided by SFS

Public

Box 3. ENTERING NEW MARKETS (RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS)

The brand book brings us more local customers.
(Clinic, Chișinău)

We have entered the retail niche in Romania, we sell in bulk in Bulgaria and the United Kingdom. *(Food manufacturer, Ialoveni)*

Export volumes to Romania have tripled.
(Industrial manufacturer, Chișinău)

We entered the Romanian market through franchising.
(Personal services provider, Chișinău)

We have new customers in Romania and Hungary.
(Industrial manufacturer, Chișinău)

We entered the Slovak market in 2024. *(Food manufacturer, Cahul)*

We started exporting to Romania and Georgia in November. We are able to compete with large companies there. *(Publishing house, Chișinău)*

Chisinau will be a new market for us.
(Educational services provider, Sangerei)

We are on the Italian market through the diaspora.
(Industrial manufacturer, Chișinău)

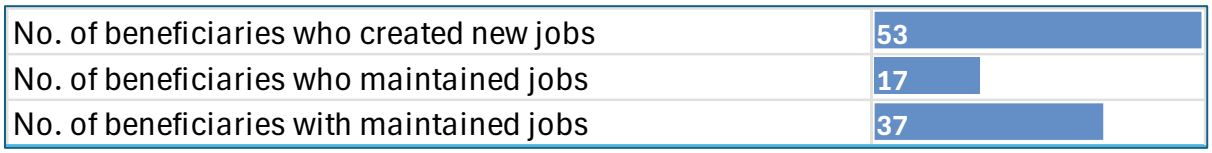
We make international deliveries to Israel and the United Kingdom.
(Industrial manufacturer, Chisinău)

When asked, "*How many new customers have you added to your portfolio in the last 12 months?*", only 34% of respondents said that their customer base had grown. Respondents' answers regarding the number of new customers were indicated as a percentage and ranged from 1% to 300%, with an average of 40%. The total number of new customers mentioned was over 8,900, with an average of 308. It should also be noted that for some respondents, customers are legal entities (where even 1 customer represents a substantial contribution), and for others, they are individuals, a small portion of whom are permanent, and the rest are occasional (depending on the type of business). Those who answered 100% are either start-ups or have doubled their number of customers.

Finding 12. The program contributed to maintaining or creating new jobs and increasing the professional level of employees (Good score 4/5)

According to data provided by the SFS, of the group of beneficiaries evaluated (107), 66% of entrepreneurs created new jobs or maintained their number of employees in 2024 compared to 2022 (or 2023) (reference period), which is a fairly good score.

Figure 14. Evolution of jobs in beneficiary companies

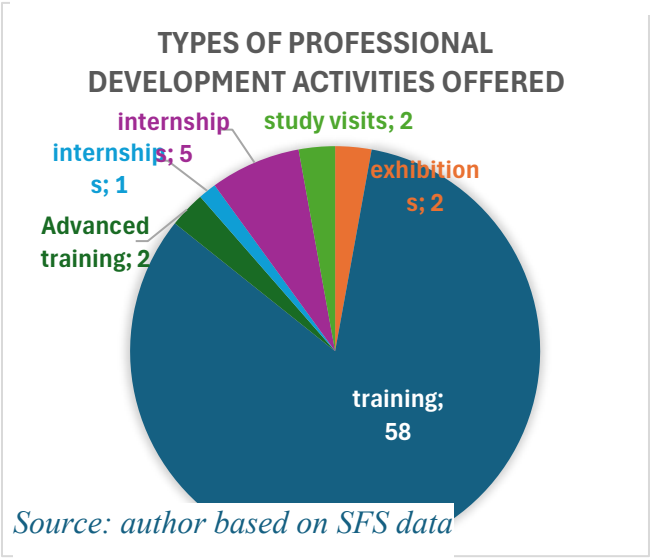


Source: author based on data provided by SFS

A total of 326 new jobs were created and filled, with the balance (including the number of jobs reduced) in 2024 indicating 125.

Returning to the survey, when asked if they had created jobs with the support of the grant, 51% of respondents answered affirmatively, with the number of jobs created with the support of the grant indicated being 228. The rest of the respondents replied that they either did not create new jobs or did not attribute the new jobs created to the Digital Transformation Program.

Figure 15



Source: author based on SFS data

The program contributed to raising the professional level of employees (especially in the field of digitization) through training, study visits, internships, participation in international exhibitions, etc.

80% of respondents confirmed that they organize training, internships, and participation in exhibitions abroad for their employees in order to develop their professional skills related to both the digitization process and their job duties.

Box 4 shows some of the respondents' statements regarding investments in the professional and digital development of employees.

Box 4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYEES (from survey)

We have invested heavily in our own training, learning IT and coding to adjust the software to our own needs and add modules—ERP, Accounting, HR, customers, etc. *(Design and construction company, Ialoveni)*

Every month, software specialists come from Romania and train all 18 of our employees. *(Clinic, Chișinău)*

I am in charge of drone operation and needed some special training, which is also an investment. *(Farmer, Ungheni)*

We invest heavily in our specialists. We spend 6-7 thousand lei per employee per year on webinars, courses, and everything related to digital technology. *(Clinic, Chișinău)*

We have trained 5-6 employees on CRM, plus we participate in international exhibitions. *(PR media services)*

Salespeople have been trained in taking electronic orders. *(Industrial manufacturer. Chisinău)*

One of the program's expected outcomes was **the Register of IT Solution/Service Providers**, which is published on the IP ODA website in the "Library" section https://www.oda.md/ro/transformare-digitala-biblioteca. According to ODA's specifications regarding the mechanism for including and excluding IT service providers, approximately three internal and external meetings were held, including with representatives of Moldova IT Park, for which there are no minutes. This action can be considered more of an initiative, as there are no concrete activities recorded during the implementation of the Program, thus making it impossible to present final deliverables. Currently, work is underway to develop a unified register, which will include not only IT solution and service providers, but also other categories of providers, such as consulting or goods services. Currently, **the Register of IT Solution/Service Providers – version 2022** is available on the Digital Transformation Program page, under the "Library" section**.**

Score for the Effectiveness criterion: 4.25/5 – Good Performance

Of the four findings identified under the effectiveness criterion, two were rated *excellent*, one was rated *good*, and one was *rated satisfactory*, resulting in an average score of 4.25, demonstrating good performance. The Digital Transformation Program has largely succeeded in achieving its main indicators and objectives. The output indicators were exceeded. The same applies to most of the result indicators. The program was successful in terms of increasing competitive advantage (measured by productivity per employee), while at the same time showing insufficient growth (compared to the target of at least 20%) in the portfolio of beneficiary SME customers.

4.4. EFFICIENCY

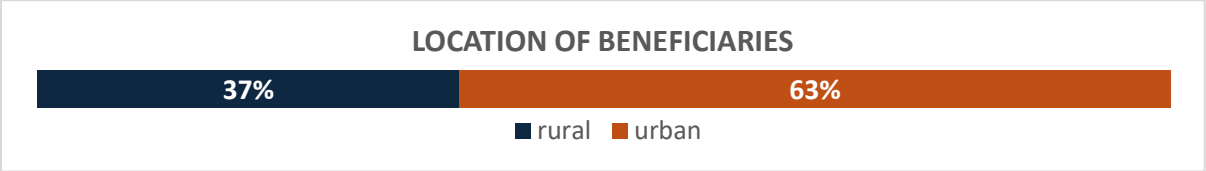
The extent to which program resources were used efficiently in relation to the results achieved; the cost-effectiveness ratio of activities.

This section considered the beneficiaries' survey responses regarding the stages of participation in the program and their own assessment of the degree of difficulty given the time, knowledge, experience, and financial resources involved. Opinions from the interview with a consulting company, which assisted 22 beneficiaries (of those covered by this evaluation) in the program application process, were also included.

Finding 13. Resources were distributed relatively fairly across regions or economic sectors (Good score 4/5)

OECD assessments highlight the trade-off between efficiency (cost-effectiveness) and equity (access for vulnerable groups in more disadvantaged areas or with more limited access). Supporting beneficiaries in rural or peripheral regions typically requires more time, travel, and administrative resources per participant (higher costs per beneficiary) compared to urban beneficiaries, who are concentrated and more easily accessible. In urban areas, access to services often requires less investment. Collecting documents, monitoring progress, and providing technical assistance in regions usually requires more resources per case. Urban beneficiaries are closer to program offices, which simplifies processes and reduces costs.

Figure 16



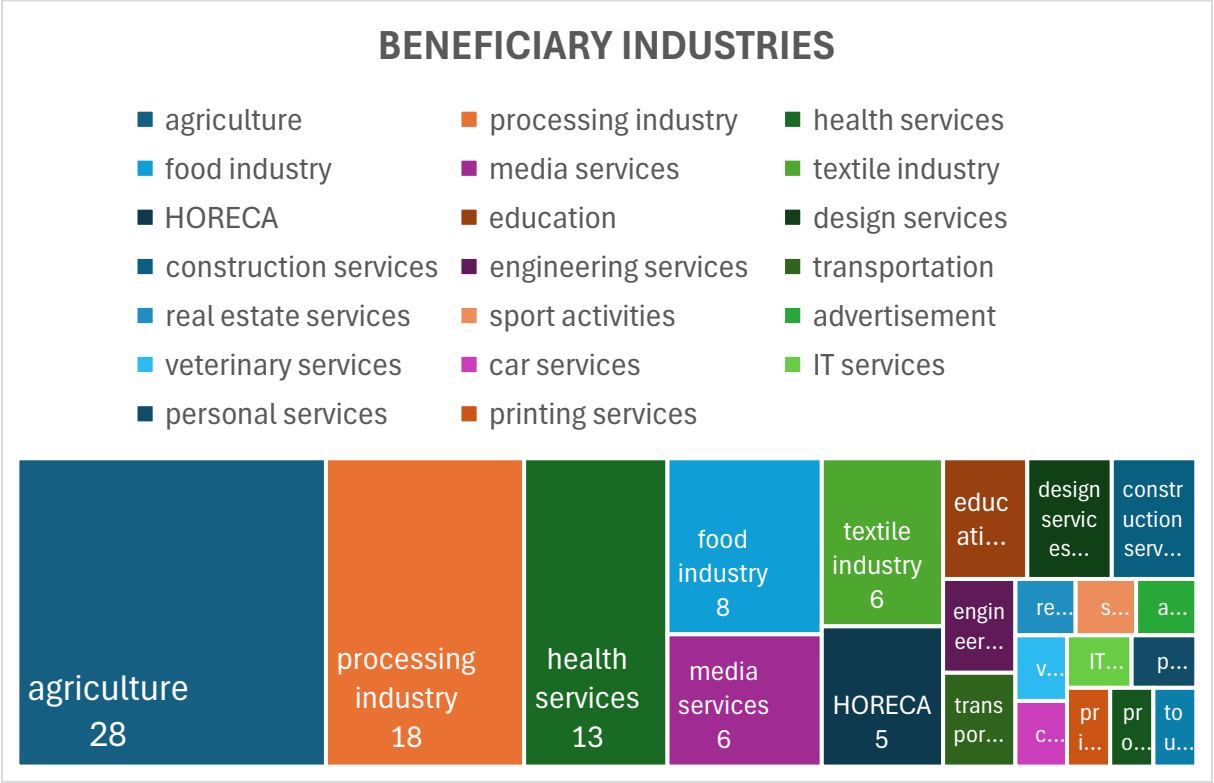
Source: author based on ODA data

The data provided by the ODA indicates that one-third of the beneficiaries of the Digital Transformation Program operate in rural areas or in regional cities, which shows that resources were distributed not by region, but according to demand. This could qualify access to the Program as not fully inclusive, as these peripheral areas are the ones that most acutely feel the need for funding, but usually have less time for information, limited skills in project development, and reduced resources for contracting specialized assistance.

With regard to the distribution of funding across economic sectors, the analysis was carried out on the group of 107 companies participating in this evaluation. Thus, the agricultural sector received the largest share of grants, with a share of 26%, followed by manufacturing (17%), health services (12%), food industry (7%), textile industry (6%), media services (6%), the HORECA sector (5%), education services (3%), etc. If we compare these shares with the presence of sectors in Moldova's GDP (2023), we get an inverse ratio (services 61.1%, industry 17.4%, agriculture 7.6%)[4] , which could mean an unbalanced representation of economic sectors in the Digital Transformation Program.

[4] https://www.statista.com/statistics/513314/moldova-gdp-distribution-across-economic-sectors/

Figure 17

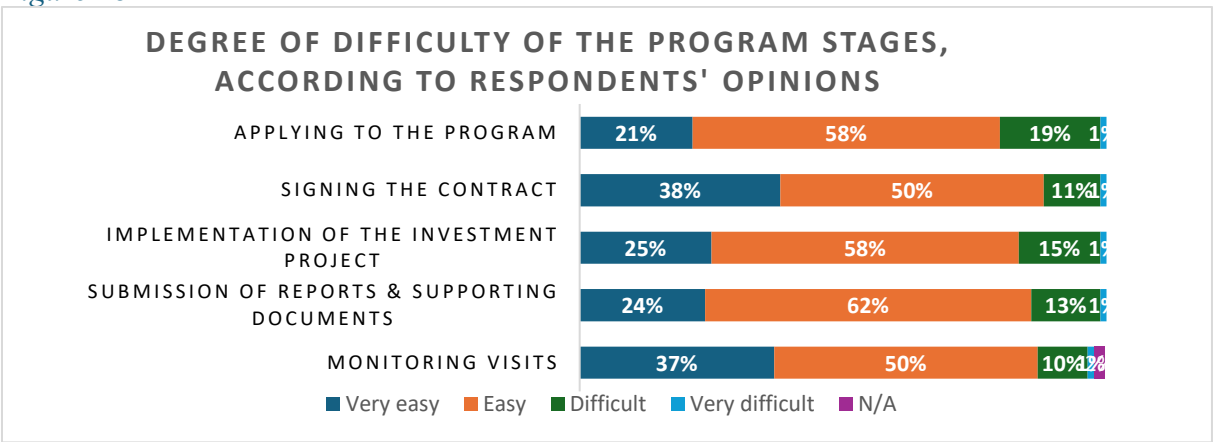


Source: author based on ODA data

Finding 14. The stages of participation in the program were designed and implemented efficiently in terms of time and financial resources (Excellent score 5/5)

Most respondents (from 79% to 88%) reported that they found the stages of participation in the program "very easy" or "easy."" to participate in the program. At the same time, some of them, at least 20% of all respondents (including those who rated the application process as "very easy"), sought help in applying for the program (based on their own statements and information provided by the company that advised them).

Figure 18



Source: author based on survey data

Public

Box 5 presents some of the positive statements made by beneficiaries regarding the efficiency of the processes related to application, implementation, and reporting within the Digital Transformation Program.

Box 5. EFFICIENCY OF PROCESSES
RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS
(from the survey)

The application process was well structured, with support available from the ODA team. The time allocated was reasonable, and the necessary resources (documents, information) were easy to collect.

The contract was signed quickly, following effective communication with ODA representatives.

Although substantial logistical and financial resources were required, the implementation of the project proceeded without any obstacles.

The monitoring visits were conducted efficiently, with open and constructive communication.

The most difficult stage was considered to be the application to the program (20% of respondents), followed by the implementation of the investment project (16%), and then the submission of reports and supporting documents (14%). 12% of respondents considered the contract signing process to be difficult or very difficult (12%), and 11% considered the monitoring visits to be difficult. Among the reasons for giving the ratings "difficult" and "very difficult" were the following:

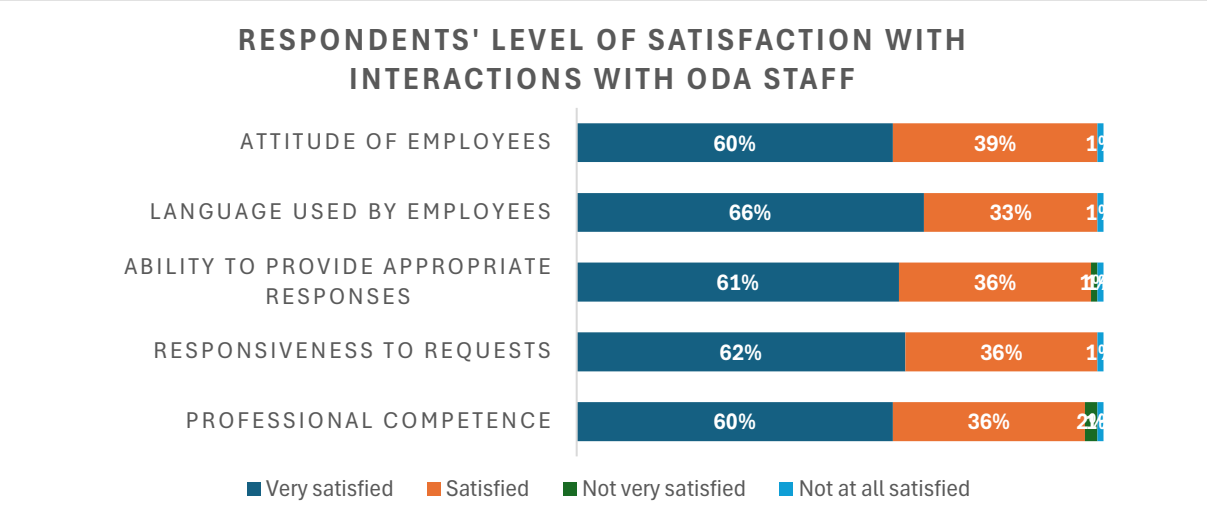
- The application process was difficult for some respondents due to lack of experience or time; The project preparation process became tedious, which is why some applicants sought additional support, generating delays and significant costs;
- The average time taken to review applications was 2-4 months, which caused inefficiencies for some beneficiaries (seasonal factors, price increases from suppliers, etc.);
- Some monitoring visits were announced only one day in advance, which created inconveniences;
- With regard to reporting and collaboration with suppliers, it was noted that not all suppliers are adapted to digital trends, such as the use of electronic invoicing or the transmission of scanned documents without the need to send them physically, which created delays or other inconveniences;
- There were delays caused by some partners (through no fault of the beneficiary), and ODA staff were not always understanding of certain issues.

Public

Finding 15. The ODA team managed interactions with beneficiaries effectively and was responsive to requests (Excellent score 5/5)

Almost all respondents (99%) rated ODA assistance in the application and implementation process as good or very good in terms of employee attitude, language used, responsiveness to requests, and to a very large extent the ability to provide adequate responses (98%) and professional competence (97%).

Figure 19



Source: author based on survey data

At the same time, even those who gave the highest ratings came up with a series of comments on the team's work in the challenges they faced, with the findings based on the comments grouped below. Many of the comments concerned interaction with ODA staff not only within the Digital Transformation Program, but in general, referring to all the programs they applied for and/or received funding for:

- Frequent changes of project curators;
- Lengthy decision-making processes regarding approval/investments, which in some cases led to the need to renew the offer, changes in available equipment, or higher prices;
- Lack of adequate response to requests, with communication often redirected to the guide, website, or other channels, which made it difficult to quickly identify the necessary information;
- Staff were always polite, but the level of support provided was not always sufficient to fully meet the needs of beneficiaries;
- Lack of proactivity in providing information to applicants about possible changes or additional steps;
- After long waiting periods, the deadlines given by the ODA for submitting additional information or documents were relatively short, which made it difficult for applicants to comply.

Public

Box 6. INTERACTION WITH ODA RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS (from the survey)

Interaction with ODA staff was excellent.

All questions were answered quickly and concretely.

We appreciated the professionalism, availability, and clarity of the responses we received throughout the process.

The team was always open and prompt in providing the necessary support, which gave us confidence and motivated us to make the most of the opportunities offered by the digitization program.

 There are aspects that need to be optimized to streamline processes;

 The process of preparing and correcting documentation was complex and sometimes difficult. In the absence of legal training, some documents required multiple revisions, and the procedure for obtaining documents from suppliers and collecting signatures involved a significant effort on the part of some applicants.

When asked if they would recommend participation in the Digital Transformation Program to other entrepreneurs in the field (on a scale of 1 to 10), 99% responded with a rating of "10 - I will definitely recommend it," which indicates a very high level of confidence and a positive "effort vs. result" ratio" ratio among beneficiaries in the ODA institution.

22% of respondents mentioned that they encountered certain difficulties in the process of participating in the program. Among these were mentioned:

- Price increases by IT providers, aware of the beneficiaries' access to funding, which reduced the efficiency of resource use;
- The lack of VAT exemption, coupled with delays in implementation, led to a significant increase in beneficiaries' own contributions (unexpected for many);
- Difficulties were encountered, in particular, in terms of employee adaptation to new technologies (some resigned because they did not want to adjust to the new systems) and the full integration of digital systems with existing processes. Delays also occurred due to the need for additional training and unforeseen technical revisions;
- The war in Ukraine has led to intense competition through low-price practices, which has caused a decline in revenues for beneficiaries in certain sectors.

Score for the Efficiency criterion: 4.7/5 – Excellent Performance

Of the three findings identified under the efficiency criterion, two were rated *excellent* and one was rated *good*, resulting in an average score of 4.7, demonstrating excellent performance. With minor shortcomings in terms of representativeness, equitable access to funding, and the application review period, the Digital Transformation Program largely succeeded in ensuring the successful completion of the implementation stages, with staff performing almost excellently (with some objections) according to the opinions of beneficiaries who participated in the evaluation.

4.5. IMPACT

The extent to which the program has generated long-term sustainable change.

Finding 16. The program has produced sustainable changes for beneficiary SMEs (e.g., expansion, innovation, efficiency, restructuring) (Excellent score 5/5)

Innovations & expansion of the range of products/services: 48% of respondents introduced at least one new product or service as a result of digitization:

Table 3

A SELECTION OF NEW SERVICES MENTIONED IN THE SURVEY		
online sales with delivery	Eco cord with printed photo	oral cavity scanning
patient access to their own investigations	drone herbicide application	agrochemical services with drones
expanded portfolio of services for industrial customers	online presence for customers	new digital services (TV & internet provider)
new modern sofas	a new clothing collection	X-ray services
e-commerce	additional options	microscopic dentistry
online courses	new fence designs	2D and 3D mapping with drones

Source: author based on survey data

Streamlining internal processes through digitization: 95% of respondents said that digitization had changed their way of working and/or internal processes as a result of the project implemented. Some of the respondents' arguments can be viewed in the box below.

Among those who responded that they had not experienced any operational changes, the reasons were: "we were already using this software unofficially, now we have licensed it," or "the website is our business card, it did not affect the way we work internally."

Box 7. RESPONDENTS' STATEMENTS ref. PROCESS EFFICIENCY (from the survey)

Now we have efficiency in time, planning, reorganization of activities, analysis of figures. *(Industrial manufacturer, Chișinău)*

Employees no longer carry notebooks, we have adjusted the CRM to our needs, we have IA invoices, we have optimized the systems. *(Medical Center, Chișinău)*

We have automated repetitive processes and eliminated human error. This has increased our speed fourfold; we used to process a customer in 30 minutes, now it takes 7 minutes. *(Industrial manufacturer, Chișinău)*

The tractor treads on 4% of the crop area. With the drone, we save fuel, water consumption is 20 times lower, and the 60-micron droplet reaches the underside of the plant. *(Farmer, Ialoveni)*

Without CRM, we were blindfolded. Now, order management, monthly metrics evaluation, and employee performance are so efficient. *(Personal service provider, Chișinău)*

The efficiency is very high. If before we used to do a job in 2-3 weeks, now it can be done in 4-5 days. That's amazing! In addition, the quality is much higher, because the device offers maximum precision. *(Dental office, Chișinău)*

Since we installed GPS on our tractors, we have been monitoring the technological process digitally: fuel consumption, work planning and analysis, field crop records, reporting. And autosteering provides a constant speed without interrupting the work process. The technological process is faster and makes the work of the administrator, agronomist, etc. easier. The CROPIO platform allows us to pay our mechanics correctly, in accordance with the work they have done. *(Farmer, Glodeni)*

The software allows us to analyze sales by model in real time, which allows us to streamline the production process so that we do not end up with excess stock and at the same time reduce the cost of purchasing raw materials. *(Textile manufacturer, Chișinău)*

The system helps us understand when a customer has outstanding payments, and with a single click we send messages regarding the outstanding payment via SMS, email, etc. *(Web hosting service provider, Chișinău)*

CRM has become an integral part of our company's activities, making our work easier. *(Educational center, Chișinău)*

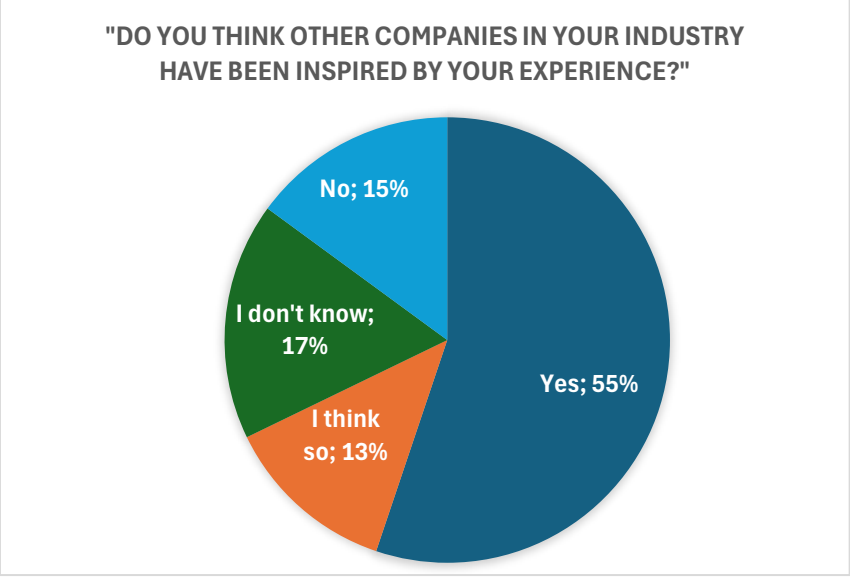
Finding 17. The program had a demonstrative or catalytic effect, with an impact at the sectoral and national levels (e.g., companies in the same sector began to adopt similar practices) (Excellent score 5/5)

Programs introducing certain practices often have a spillover effect, when other companies in the sector observe (or learn about) the results, changes, and effects at companies that have adopted new practices and technologies, and want to apply them themselves. This is an indirect impact, much desired by funders, as with a certain limit of resources, a much larger number of practices are adopted, and the targets to be achieved at national level are thus exceeded.

Beneficiaries were thus asked whether they believed that other companies in the sector had been inspired by their experience. To this question 68% of respondents answered "yes" or "I think so." These respondents also provided approximate numbers of companies that had been or could have been influenced, ranging from 1 to 30, bringing the total number of influenced or potentially influenced companies to 173, most of which referred to neighbours, direct local competitors, friends and acquaintances in the same sector or other industries, or "many" (when they mentioned the technology in the press). Some said they themselves had told friends and acquaintances about the new technology, and even on TV or social media, while others said they had been asked by neighbours. There was also a case where a competitor sent someone to work for them to find out more about the new software or technology and how it works.

17% responded that they did not know if anyone had been inspired by them, and 15% said they had not told anyone and were even keeping the new adoption a secret: "I hope they didn't find out, they are our competitors," "we don't tell anyone because the competition is fierce."

Figure 20



Source: author based on survey data

Box 8 presents some of the respondents' answers to this question.

Box 8. RESPONDENTS' STATEMENTS ref. CATALYSTIC IMPACT (from the survey)

We have provided consultations to at least three companies on the digitization models we have implemented. *(Industrial manufacturer, Chișinău)*

At least 5 companies have requested details about our efficiency. *(Agricultural producer, Drochia)*

We shared our experience during informal meetings and recommended software solution providers that have been successfully used in our company. *(Farmer, Anenii Noi)*

Three were inspired, and one purchased a drone just like ours with his own funds. *(Farmer, Ungheni)*

More than 10 have taken it up. Friends and competitors are always calling me to ask about it. *(Industrial producer, Chișinău)*

Local businesses rent the drone when the ground is muddy and they can't get their tractors in, and they want to buy one too. *(Farmer, Ialoveni)*

I have been quite vocal in interviews because I have always supported our field so that it can be good, high-quality, and accessible to everyone. This is, after all, a standard of living. . (Clinic, Chișinău)

I have told over 20-30 companies that we serve about this. This program is unique in Moldova. *(Industrial producer, Chișinău)*

We have over 20 competitors who are always inspired by us. *(HORECA beneficiary, Chișinău)*

We have helped several language schools to work with CRM. *(Publishing house, Chișinău)*

We have inspired many, and we have also been interviewed by Agromedia. *(Farmer, Glodeni)*

We say that thanks to ODA, look what we have. *(Transport services, Chișinău)*

I think so, they come and copy us. *(Flower shop, Ialoveni)*

Most of them are my friends and acquaintances. They come and are amazed at how we work. *(Farmer, Hîncești)*

On the one hand, we realize that we are being copied, but on the other hand, this motivates us. This competition challenges us to evolve. *(Industrial producer, Cahul)*

Our neighbors see what we are doing, they want it too, and I think more and more of them will invest in the digitization of agriculture. *(Agricultural producer, Ungheni)*

Public

Score for the Impact criterion: 5/5 – Excellent Performance

Both findings identified under the effectiveness criterion received an *excellent* rating, resulting in an average score of 5 out of 5, demonstrating excellent performance. Process efficiency and the development of new products and services are clear examples of impact, capable of bringing long-term benefits to both direct beneficiaries and society as a whole. Through its notoriety and results, the Digital Transformation Program has succeeded in demonstrating the advantages of digitization, contributing to an increase in the standard of living and generating catalytic effects, with repercussions in most of the country's economic sectors.

Public

4.6. SUSTAINABILITY

The extent to which the benefits will last/continue after the end of funding.

Finding 18. All beneficiary SMEs continue to use and maintain the equipment or practices financed 12 months after the end of the support (Excellent score 5/5)

All survey respondents confirmed that the funded item is integrated into the company's assets, is used in day-to-day operations, and is maintained and updated as needed. This result indicates a 100% adoption rate of the digitization process among beneficiaries.

Finding 19. Most program beneficiaries have a clear strategy for maintaining digital changes in the long term by maintaining or expanding the activities initiated through the grant, using their own resources or attracting additional funding (Excellent score 5/5).

To the question " " 52% of the beneficiaries who participated in the survey answered affirmatively . Of these, half agreed to mention specific annual investment amounts. Thus, the maximum amount mentioned is MDL 4 million, the minimum is MDL 10,000, the average amount is MDL 450,000, with values between MDL 30,000 and MDL 600,000 having the highest share. The purposes of these investments, as mentioned by the beneficiaries, can be found in the table below:

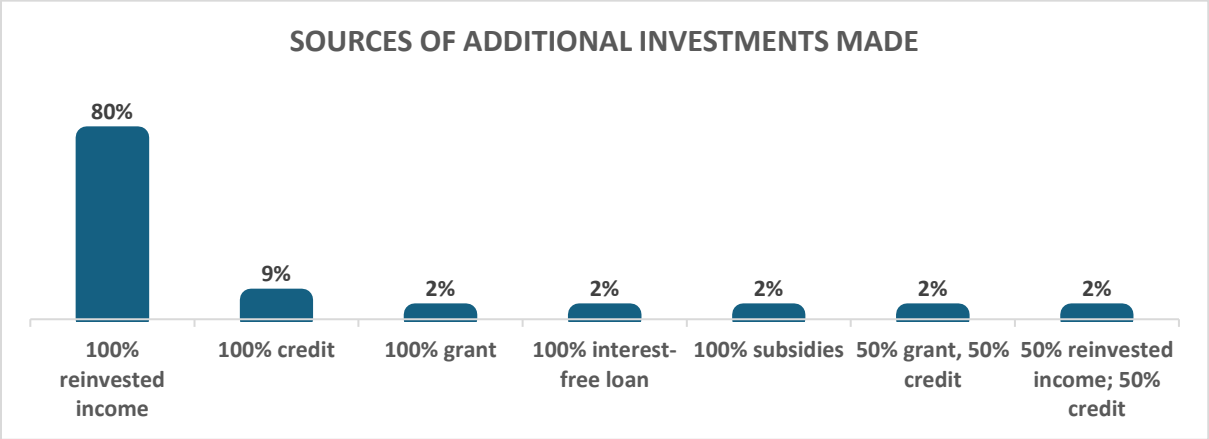
Table 4

OBJECTS OF ADDITIONAL INVESTMENTS MADE BY RESPONDENTS		
Renewal of annual software subscription	New computers	New software modules
Periodic software updates	Website hosting	Sensors installed
Additional accessories for donated equipment	ERP consulting for reporting systems and additional job descriptions	Vehicle for field trips with the mapping drone
Automatic guidance upgrade	Social media promotion	Other digital equipment
Drone batteries	Annual drone license	Purchase of additional CRM features
Electronic menu application	Google ads	Online advertising

Source: author based on survey data

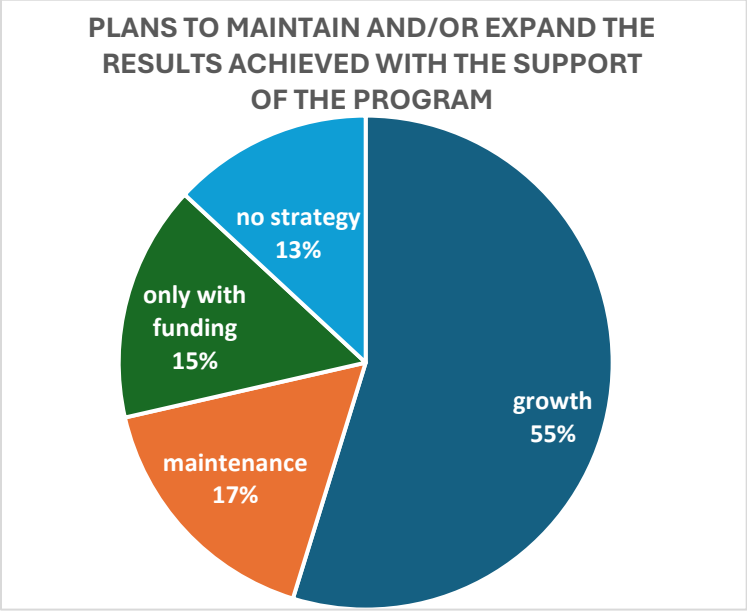
Most respondents (80%) mentioned reinvesting their own income as a source for investments, 9% confirmed using loans, and the rest mentioned sources such as: interest-free loans from another company they own, subsidies, 50/50 grants with credit, or 50/50 personal income & credit, as shown in the chart below:

Figure 21



Source: author based on survey data

Figure 22



Source: author based on survey data

When asked "*How do you plan to maintain and multiply the results achieved with the support of the* program," respondents gave different answers (Figure 22), depending on the situation of their business at that time and the available finances. ely, 55% of the 84 respondents (who answered this question) were optimistic and growth-oriented, either with their own finances, borrowed funds, or by applying for new grants. 17% plan to maintain the digital results achieved by continuing to pay annual subscriptions, training all employees, and learning more about all the possibilities offered by the implemented digital technology. 15% talked only about seeking new grants or other financial solutions to maintain their results or expand, and 13% were either pessimistic about the business because things are going badly or have no plan at the moment.

Public

Box 9. GROWTH STATEMENTS (from the survey)

We are currently making continuous investments in the digital development of the company. *(Food industry exporter, Ialoveni)*

To expand through franchising in Moldova and Romania. *(Personal services provider, Chișinău)*

We aim to increase sales through online platforms. (Medical center, Chișinău)

Build new technological and medical partnerships to stay connected to innovation and best practices. (Clinic, Chișinău)

Gradually expanding digitization to other internal processes. We will also promote best practices within our network of partners and collaborators to generate a broader impact. (Industrial manufacturer, Chișinău)

We want to create new modules and open a new department. (Clinic, Chișinău)

We want to open another location and will use the IT services that were provided through the grant. (HORECA beneficiary, Chișinău)

Box 10. MAINTENANCE STATEMENTS (from survey)

The results are already multiplying. Thanks to the investment under the program, we have streamlined the diagnostic procedure, shortened patient waiting times, and raised services to a higher level. *(Clinic, Chișinău)*

The software is so sophisticated. We want to learn it well and train more people in its use. *(Industrial manufacturer, Chișinău)*

We want to continue what has been started, as it has become an indispensable tool for controlling and running the business smoothly. (Farmer, Drochia)

We intend to maintain the same high standards and provide regular training. (Service provider, Chișinău)

We will continue to maintain the website. We have ideas, but they are costly. Sales are not growing, we are trying to maintain our position. (Industrial manufacturer, Chișinău)

We maintain CRM through annual payments, GPS fees, and online advertising. (Transport service provider,

Score for the Sustainability criterion: 5/5 – Excellent Performance

Both findings identified under the effectiveness criterion received an *excellent* rating, resulting in an average score of 5, demonstrating excellent performance. Given that a significant majority of entrepreneurs allocate resources to maintain and expand the results achieved in the digitization process through the support of the Program, and at the same time inspire and guide other entrepreneurs from various sectors to follow the same direction, we can conclude that the Program has achieved its sustainability objective at a remarkable level, consolidating its role as a catalyst for digital transformation in the entrepreneurial environment.

Public

5. SCORE ACCUMULATED BASED ON EVALUATION CRITERIA AND FINDINGS

With regard to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria—relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability—the evaluation used a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 represents an excellent score, 4 a good score, 3 a satisfactory score, 2 a poor score, 1 – poor score. The scale with explanations of the scores is presented in subchapter 3.2.

Each criterion was presented and argued in a certain number of findings, in accordance with the program's objectives and indicators, each receiving a score according to the scale presented above. The average score per finding reveals the score per criterion.

Relevance: 4.3/5 – Good Performance

The Digital Transformation Program is relevant to the national development priorities of the Republic of Moldova and proves to be relevant through its alignment with a number of sectoral strategies during the implementation period. At the same time, the program is essentially relevant to the needs and priorities of the target beneficiaries. However, certain adjustments to the program were not consulted in advance (through public consultations or focus groups) with potential beneficiaries, nor were they announced in advance, affecting companies that had already submitted their applications under the previous rules, thus creating a sense of unfairness and lack of transparency.

Consistency: 4.8/5 – Excellent Performance

The Digital Transformation Program has been organically aligned with other national and international initiatives and policies, filling gaps in the field of digitization, and has thus been recognized as "more efficient and useful" compared to some programs. At the same time, in terms of public consultations, there are no publicly visible contributions/comments on the particip.gov.md website. In this regard, it is unclear whether there is a protocol for keeping all interventions and contributions from the public, including other partners, international donors, etc., to the Government Decision, in case the person responsible for Public Consultation, whose contacts are published on the public consultation page, was contacted by phone or email.

Effectiveness: 4.25/5 – Good Performance

The Digital Transformation Program has largely succeeded in achieving its main indicators and objectives. The output indicators have been exceeded. The same is true for most of the outcome indicators. The program was successful in increasing competitive advantage (measured by productivity per employee), while at the same time achieving insufficient growth (compared to the target of at least 20%) in the portfolio of beneficiary SME customers.

Efficiency: 4.7/5 – Excellent Performance

With minor shortcomings in terms of representativeness and inclusive access to finance (by sector and region), the Digital Transformation Program managed to successfully complete the implementation stages , with staff performing excellently (with some objections) according to the opinions of the beneficiaries who participated in the evaluation.

Impact: 5/5 – Excellent Performance

Process efficiency and the development of new products and services are clear examples of impact, capable of bringing long-term benefits to both direct beneficiaries and society as a whole. Through its notoriety and results, the Digital Transformation Program has succeeded in demonstrating the advantages of digitization, contributing to an increase in the standard of living and generating catalytic effects, with repercussions in most of the country's economic sectors.

Sustainability: 5/5 – Excellent Performance

Given that a significant majority of entrepreneurs allocate resources to maintain and expand the results achieved in the digitization process through the support of the Program, and at the same time inspire and guide other entrepreneurs from various sectors to follow the same direction, we can conclude that the Program has achieved its sustainability goal at a remarkable level, consolidating its role as a catalyst for digital transformation in the entrepreneurial environment.

It is noteworthy that the Digital Transformation Program, with 4 EXCELLENT ratings and 2 GOOD ratings, achieved a very high score of 28 out of a possible 30 points.

Public

6. CONCLUSIONS

Despite the fact that the application of OECD criteria was not mandatory in the substantiation of the Government Decision on the grant program, as they are not required by law, most of the established indicators largely correspond to the respective international standards.

6. Relevance

The SME Digital Transformation Program proved to be relevant both to the socio-economic and political context of the Republic of Moldova at the time of implementation and to the real needs of the beneficiaries, being aligned with national and European strategies for economic development, entrepreneurship, and digitization. Beneficiaries reported a significant positive impact on process efficiency, product and service quality, competitiveness, and the ability to implement new technologies, with 78% of respondents considering that the grant contributed "greatly" or "very greatly" to the development of their business. At the same time, certain adjustments to the program, which were not communicated in advance or consulted with potential beneficiaries, created a perception of unfairness and lack of transparency for some companies. Overall, the program remains a relevant and effective tool for supporting the digital transformation of SMEs.

6.2. Coherence and coordination

The SME Digital Transformation Program has been strategically and coherently integrated into the ODA program portfolio, complementing the institution's efforts to support the sustainable and competitive development of SMEs and aligning with both national strategies and European and international digitization initiatives. The program has created synergies with other grant programs, avoiding duplication of support and offering specific solutions for the digitization of enterprises, and is considered more efficient and useful compared to other similar initiatives.

6.3. Effectiveness

The SME Digital Transformation Program has achieved most of its objectives, exceeding the targets set for output and result indicators, reflecting effective implementation and significant adoption of digitization among SMEs. 100% of beneficiaries have integrated the funded solutions into their daily activities, and 66% have recorded increases in turnover and tax payments to the public budget. The program also contributed to maintaining and creating new jobs, the professional development of employees, and the implementation of modern digital solutions, thus strengthening the performance and competitiveness of enterprises. In contrast, the results in terms of market expansion and customer portfolio growth were more moderate, with a visible impact only for some of the beneficiaries. Overall, the program's performance is rated as "good" (score 4.25/5), highlighting the success of the intervention in the digitization of SMEs, but also areas with potential for improvement.

Public

6.4. Efficiency

The SME Digital Transformation Program used resources efficiently, achieving significant results in implementing the program stages and supporting beneficiaries. Resources were distributed relatively evenly across regions and economic sectors, although full access in rural and peripheral areas was limited, and the representativeness of economic sectors was slightly unbalanced compared to the GDP structure.

Most respondents found the participation stages easy to navigate, and the ODA team managed interaction with beneficiaries efficiently, being responsive and providing professional assistance, although some processes needed optimization.

6.5. Impact

The program generated sustainable changes for beneficiary SMEs by expanding the range of products and services, innovation, streamlining internal processes, and restructuring, with 48% of respondents introducing at least one new product or service and 95% changing the way they work as a result of digitization. The program had a demonstrative and catalytic effect at the sectoral and national levels, inspiring other companies to adopt similar practices. Process efficiency and the development of sustainable products and services are clear examples of long-term impact, benefiting both direct beneficiaries and society as a whole, and the program's notoriety and results demonstrate the advantages of digitization, contributing to higher living standards and generating catalytic effects in most of the country's economic sectors.

6.6. Sustainability

All beneficiary SMEs continue to use and maintain the equipment and practices funded 12 months after the end of support, integrating their digitalization into their daily work and demonstrating a high level of adoption. More than half of the respondents have made additional investments of their own or attracted to support and expand digital results, using mainly their own revenues, but also loans or combinations of grants and external financial sources. Plans to maintain and multiply digital results are diverse, with most focusing on growth through own resources, external funding, or new grants, while others continue to invest in subscriptions, employee training, and deepening the technologies implemented. In this context, the score for the sustainability criterion is 5/5, reflecting the fact that the Program has achieved its goal of generating sustainable benefits, consolidating its role as an accelerator of digital transformation in the entrepreneurial environment and inspiring other companies to follow the same direction.

Public

7. LESSONS LEARNED

The analysis of the questionnaires and interviews highlighted a number of findings that can be used as "lessons learned" to improve future programs. These are complemented by a set of recommendations, presented in the following section.

The participation of beneficiaries from rural areas (or outside the capital) at a rate of only 37% raises questions about the inclusiveness of access to the Program. It is precisely these peripheral areas that feel the most acute need for funding, but they usually have less time for information, limited skills in project development, and reduced resources for contracting specialized assistance.

The obligation to record a positive balance sheet has generated dissatisfaction among potential beneficiaries. Thus, companies that make major investments in equipment, raw materials, or infrastructure are automatically excluded from accessing financing in the event of a temporary negative financial result. According to the ODA, the pre-financing assessment is based on reports to the NBS or SFS for the last reporting year at the time of application to the program. Only complete files are accepted at the pre-financing assessment stage, and they include: 1. Compliance analysis 2. Economic and financial analysis 3. Investment project analysis 4. Risk analysis. In European grant programs, the general principle is similar: the applicant must demonstrate economic viability and financial capacity to implement the project. However, a positive balance sheet (profit) in the last financial year is not always required. The enterprise must demonstrate financial capacity and economic sustainability, including through indicators such as *liquidity, solvency, cash flow, and diversification of income sources* (in the future, relevant and available indicators can be selected through the M-Conect platform).

Amendments to the initial GD and the reinterpretation of the eligibility of certain categories of costs in the Operational Manual excluded certain CAEMs and/or eligible costs, which created dissatisfaction and a sense of unfairness and lack of transparency among beneficiaries. This resulted in certain equipment (the same) being refused to one clinic but approved for two others, or some beneficiaries being approved for laptops that they do not appreciate (as their initial need was different), while other beneficiaries cannot use the donated equipment (e.g., the drone) because the data must be processed on the laptop that was denied to them ("we were donated a car without an engine"). Some beneficiaries reported that "ODA does not provide funds for ERP subscriptions, etc.," while others benefited from similar subscriptions. To avoid such situations in the future, it is recommended that changes to the conditions during the Program be made in accordance with strict pre-established rules and announced publicly in advance, so as not to affect project proposals that have been submitted previously and are currently under review.

The need to reorganize and optimize certain processes - revealed by the analysis of the questionnaires: Some monitoring visits were announced only one day in advance, which created inconveniences; Lengthy (2-4 months) decision-making processes regarding approval, which in some cases led to the need to renew the offer, changes in available equipment or higher prices, and seasonal failures; Lack of adequate response to requests, with communication often redirected to the guide, website, or other channels, which made it difficult to quickly identify the necessary information; Lack of proactivity in providing information to applicants about

possible changes or additional steps. In some cases, there were contradictions between the conditions set out in the Operational Manual and those stipulated in the Government Decision.

The lack of VAT exemption led to a significant increase in the beneficiaries' own contribution, which some declared to be "unexpected." y in advance is equivalent to a temporary credit to the state, as it is recovered as production is delivered, but y is a considerable burden for entrepreneurs by blocking financial resources. In this context, examining the possibility of applying a 0% VAT rate for the purchase of machinery and equipment would represent a legitimate and fair advantage for companies.

The need for closer communication between the monitoring team and beneficiaries via telephone, online, and during monitoring visits. From general observations, some beneficiaries (20-30%) do not see the connection between the grant and its effects on their business: many responded that their turnover had increased, but without any connection to the impact of the grant. There were situations where even essential equipment directly related to the field of activity was not recognized as a factor that contributed to attracting new customers. Similarly, in the case of the donation of video surveillance systems, beneficiaries did not associate their successes with the grant/program. Only through helpful questions were they able to make the connection. Closer communication between ODA and beneficiaries would not only contribute to a better understanding of the impact of grants, but also to fostering a spirit of collaboration. Many entrepreneurs are reluctant to share their experiences or reveal their new digital equipment and solutions for fear of giving their competitors an advantage. Strengthening the relationship between ODA and beneficiaries could contribute to a better understanding of the program's impact on their activities and successes.

Identifying methods to stimulate learning and training among entrepreneurs . Some beneficiaries mentioned the need for a complementary, continuity program focused on business scaling in order to fully leverage investments in software, machinery, and digital equipment so that the initial investments generate sustainable growth. Other beneficiaries mentioned the desire to expand grant programs for needs such as the purchase of real estate for industrial production (a common production hall, a furniture storage warehouse, workshops, etc.). These statements, together with the reluctance of entrepreneurs to use sources of financing other than their own or grants, point to the need for adequate training for entrepreneurs—who, however, do not have enough time to devote to training. Grant programs aim to provide an impetus for starting a business, testing new technologies or business models. In this regard, it is important to ensure that they do not create dependence on financial support but, on the contrary, encourage sustainable development and business autonomy.

Public

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations were developed based on suggestions from survey respondents, our own observations during field visits, and comments from the consulting team that helped beneficiaries apply to the program. The decision to adopt and implement them rests solely with ODA, depending on the possibilities.

8.1. Relevance

1. Developing a more inclusive strategy to ensure equitable access to non-reimbursable funding for entrepreneurs in regions and rural areas, which could include: adjusting the selection process by establishing quotas for these areas, promoting the Program more intensively in the territory through information and question-and-answer sessions and answer sessions, organizing training workshops on how to write applications, and analyzing the possibility of launching a separate digitization program exclusively for rural areas.

2. Modifying the eligibility criterion regarding positive balance sheets so that companies making major investments (in equipment, raw materials, infrastructure) are not automatically excluded from funding in the event of a temporary negative financial result. Eligibility should be based on growth and development indicators, such as investment volume, turnover, or expansion plans, and not exclusively on accounting profit.

3. It is recommended that changes to the Program be made in accordance with pre-established rules and parameters that are announced publicly in advance, so as not to affect project proposals that have already been submitted and are currently under review. The Government Decision may stipulate a period of validity upon adoption, after which changes to the eligibility criteria or other provisions may be introduced. This term may be extended later, if necessary. Changes should be introduced either on the basis of at least one public consultation (which may also be online) or an analysis carried out by an independent expert (based on focus groups).

4. The rule introduced in 2025, "first come, first served" (currently applicable to programs for female entrepreneurs, small producers, and tourism), which gives priority to applicants with incomplete files but who are successful in terms of time, should be cancelled, as the procedure is unfair and non-transparent.

8.2. Consistency and coordination

5. Connect the internal data management system with information from the databases of other public institutions, such as the Agency for Intervention and Payments in Agriculture, the State Tax Service, the National Bureau of Statistics, and other relevant institutions to facilitate the collection and verification of data on the situation of applicant companies and

reduce the number of documents required when submitting an application, but also to monitor progress without repeatedly requesting information from beneficiaries.

6. Identify and create synergies with other programs supported by development partners—EBRD, GIZ, World Bank, etc.

7. Develop a protocol for keeping track of all interventions and contributions from the public, including other partners, international donors, etc., during the drafting or amendment of the GD (for example, if the person responsible for public consultation, whose contact details are published on the public consultation page, has been contacted by phone or email). The model used by most donor institutions can be followed, whereby any questions or comments sent privately to the person responsible are subsequently published on the public consultation website for transparency.

8.3. Effectiveness

8. Organising training on the economic justification of grants to increase access to funds for companies in the regions that need them most.

9. Organize training workshops on financial intelligence to help entrepreneurs distinguish between business resources and personal income and understand the importance of reinvestment. Practical training programs involving experts contribute to business sustainability and prevent failures caused by enthusiasm-based management (common in SMEs) and lack of proper planning.

10. Analyzing how the 0% VAT rate can be applied to the purchase of machinery and equipment. Paying VAT in advance is a credit to the state, as VAT is paid over time by delivering the production. At the same time, this payment is a significant burden for entrepreneurs, as it ties up important financial resources.

8.4. Efficiency

11. Establish a clear deadline for reviewing grant applications, optimising it to 6-8 weeks. Create a schedule posted on the website showing the deadlines for each stage of the process.

12. More accessible technical support should be provided through effective and transparent communication throughout the project implementation.

13. With regard to the Register of IT Solution/Service Providers, which is published on the IP ODA website in the "Library" section, it is recommended that the mechanism for including and excluding providers be clearly documented by recording the minutes of the meetings. To increase the transparency of this tool, it is recommended that IT service providers and

other relevant categories of suppliers be able to self-register on the program platform, thus ensuring the systematic renewal and updating of the register.

14. Adopting a more flexible approach to the documentation verification process, especially in cases where the documents issued by suppliers do not fully comply with the required format, but their essential content is correct. A more tolerant attitude in such cases would reduce bureaucracy and facilitate the implementation of projects without affecting the fairness of the process.

15. Formal establishment of the appeal procedure within the ODA to ensure transparency and fairness.

8.5. Impact

16. Development of outcome and impact indicators related to cost reduction, losses, and taxes paid for the post-project implementation period (data that will be collected from the SFS through the M-Connect platform). Digital transformation (may) involve job losses. Alternative indicators could be – "*number of employees trained in new digital technologies*", "*increased qualification in the use of digital technologies among employees*", "*improved working conditions for employees*", etc.

17. Conducting an independent external evaluation at the end of the implementation period, and/or at an intermediate stage, if changes need to be made.

8.6. Sustainability

18. The development of integrated financial instruments (loans with a grant component, interest rate subsidies, etc.) and the identification of methods to stimulate learning and training for entrepreneurs would contribute to the reinvestment of income in businesses, increase the capacity to attract additional funds, and facilitate access to investment loans. Such training is recommended for strengthening a true entrepreneurial spirit, accompanied by education on assessing and assuming the risks associated with each type of financial support accessed.

19. Promoting a culture of collaboration among entrepreneurs through education programs and the exchange of best practices in order to reduce reluctance to share experiences and facilitate cooperation within the business community.

20. Intensifying actions to promote local producers (who are severely affected by international sales platforms such as TEMU, etc.) on the local and foreign markets through institutional partnerships (e.g., MIA) or by lobbying the government to impose taxation on similar imported products.

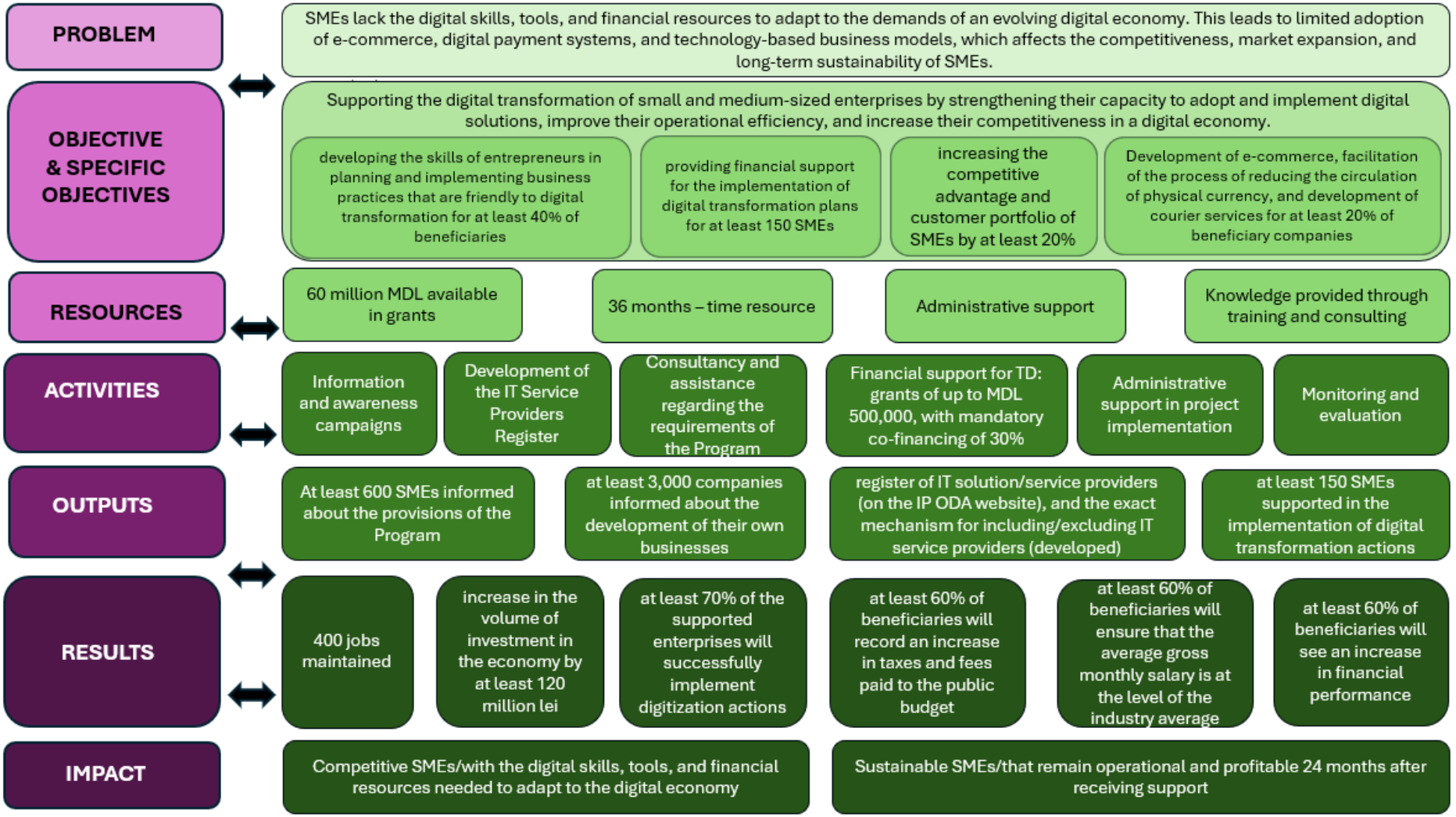
21. Improve and promote the existing **ODA/BusinessLink** digital platform for promoting domestic products, which is a digital catalogue of products and services offered by local

entrepreneurs, lists of importers and potential partners in Romania and other markets of interest, in order to facilitate the expansion of domestic companies into foreign markets (by sending product catalogues, etc.).

22. Strengthening local business networks through actions to support clusters and partnerships between SMEs for joint procurement, collective marketing, or joint export.

23. Developing a step-by-step guide to digitizing a business.

Annex 1: Theory of Change of the Digital Transformation Program



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Annex 2: Survey of beneficiaries of the Digital Transformation Program for SMEs

Ex-post evaluation questionnaire – Impact of the ODA Digital Transformation grant program for SMEs

Section 1: General information about the beneficiary

Company name: _____ Field of activity: _____

Respondent's name: _____ Mobile number: _____

What motivated you to apply for the Digital Transformation Program? _(Necessity, trend, etc.?_____

Section 2: Impact on the company

1. **To what extent has the grant awarded by ODA contributed to the development of your business?**

☐ Very much ☐ Great ☐ Small ☐ Very little ☐ Not at all

2. **Have you introduced new products/services following receipt of the grant?**

☐ Yes → what kind of innovations:
_____ ☐ No

3. **Are the activities supported by the grant now part of the company's regular business?**

☐ Yes (the financed item was included in the company's balance sheet/part of the company's assets_extract 123,124) ☐ No

4. **Have you changed your working methods, the type of products/services or internal processes as a result of the project?**

☐ Yes → please specify:
_____ ☐ No

5. **Has your company seen an increase in turnover?**

☐ Yes → by how much (%): _____ compared to the reference period/baseline (before the grant)
☐ Yes → by how much (%): _____ 12 months after the end of the program
☐ No

6. **Has the company entered new markets or started exporting?**

☐ Yes → please specify new markets/exports:
_____
☐ No, but we want to succeed in the future
☐ No, we only operate on the local market
☐ No, and we don't plan to

Public

7. **How many new customers have you added to your portfolio in the last 12 months?**
   _____ (_____% increase)
   ☐ We have not added any new customers

8. **Has your company made additional investments (own or attracted) to support or expand its digitalization results?**

☐ Yes → estimated value: _____ lei ☐ No

SOURCE: ☐ reinvested income _____%; ☐ credit, mortgage, or loan_____%; ☐ grant donor name _____, _____%; ☐ subsidy _____%

Section 3: Impact on employment

9. **How many jobs do you** currently **have**? _____ of them are young people <=35_____; women_____; disadvantaged people___
10. **How many of them did you create with the support of the grant?** _____ of them are young people <=35_____; women_____; disadvantaged people_____
11. **If the number has decreased, for what reason?**_____

12. **Have you invested in staff training? For how many people? _____**

☐ Yes: through ☐ training, ☐ study visits, ☐ internships, ☐ others _____ ☐ No

Section 4: Sectoral and community impact

13. **Did the program influence collaboration with other SMEs or organizations?**

☐ Yes → type of collaboration:
_____ ☐ No

14. **Do you think other companies in your sector have been inspired by your experience?**

☐ Yes → how many? how? _____ ☐ No ☐ I don't know

Section 5: Effects & sustainability

15. **On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 = I would not recommend at all and 10 = I would definitely recommend, how likely are you to recommend participation in this program to other entrepreneurs in your field?**

1 I would not recommend it at all	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10** I would definitely recommend
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. **Did you encounter any difficulties or unexpected negative effects as a result of participating in the program?**

☐ Yes → describe: _____

☐ No

17. How satisfied are you with aspects related to your interaction <u>with ODA staff?</u>

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Not very satisfied	Not at all satisfied	Comments
Employee attitude	□	□	□	□	
Language used by employees	□	□	□	□	
Ability to provide appropriate responses	□	□	□	□	
Responsiveness to requests	□	□	□	□	
Professional competence	□	□	□	□	

18. **Please describe how you went through each stage of participation in the program** (with reference to time, resources, etc.)

	Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult	Comments
Application to the program	□	□	□	□	
Signing the contract	□	□	□	□	
Completion of the investment project	□	□	□	□	
Submission of reports and supporting documents	□	□	□	□	
Monitoring visits	□	□	□	□	

19. **What factors contributed most to the success/failure of the program** (e.g., effective implementation, complementary support, economic context)?

_____

_____

20. How do you plan to maintain and multiply the results achieved with the support of the program?

_____

_____

21. What recommendations do you have for improving future grant programs?

22. What type of support do you consider most appropriate to support businesses in the process of digitizing their activities?

☐ Grant
☐ Loan with a grant portion
☐ Low-interest loan
☐ Vouchers for consulting/accreditation/standardization services, etc.
☐ Training for managers/employees

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Interviewer_____(□ **telephone; □ online; □ face-to-face)**
Date_____

Annex 4. Success Stories

Success story

Clean Shoes: From a traditional local service to a regional brand through digital innovation and franchising



Clean Shoes is a niche business in the Republic of Moldova that has managed to transform a traditional service into a modern, scalable, and digitized brand. The most significant effect for the company was the first ODA (ODIMM at the time) program, "Start for Young People," which provided them with the necessary resources and confidence and motivated them to persevere. Starting with manual shoe cleaning and reconditioning, the team quickly realized that the future of entrepreneurship lies in technology, standardization, and direct customer relations. By gradually integrating digital solutions (CRM, AI, website, digital marketing), the company developed a replicable franchise system.

The implementation of CRM (Customer Relationship Management) led to the automation of customer communication: notifications for each stage of the order, centralization of orders, and quick access to customer history. Previously, they used a free version with many limitations. With ODA's support, they were able to take full advantage of all the CRM's features, which now manage their sales, analyze employee performance and consumer trends. They also use artificial intelligence (AI) tools for sales and consulting, digital marketing on social networks, and their brand is becoming increasingly recognized.

"Without CRM, we were blindfolded, facing difficulties in managing orders, and expanding through franchising brought us other challenges related to maintaining quality and increasing operating costs," said Marcel Gușan, the company's director.

With the help of grants from ODA, the company invested in digital marketing and equipment upgrades. A standardized franchise model was created, allowing for the efficient replication of Clean Shoes services in other locations. Clean Shoes has grown from a single branch to five active units, with the ambitious goal of reaching 50 locations in Moldova, Romania, and potentially Ukraine in the next two years. The brand has gained notoriety in both Moldova and Romania, and its business model—with an estimated profit margin of 15 to 30 percent—has proven sustainable and attractive to franchisees.

Furthermore, the company has formed a young, multidisciplinary team that combines expertise in IT, marketing, administration, and sales—a key element in its continued success. Plans include launching a mobile app and expanding CRM with dedicated footwear management software, integrated into the existing system. A revolutionary step is the integration of Paula AI – a digital assistant that provides customer support and streamlines the sales process.

The Clean Shoes experience demonstrates that digitization is not a luxury but a necessity even for traditional businesses. Accessing grants and collaborating with state institutions can accelerate growth, and franchising—when well standardized—is a viable way to scale and grow the business beyond the country's borders.

Public

Success story

Book publisher: Digital transformation — from approximations to data-driven strategic decisions



"Even though we were planning to take the step towards digitization, we couldn't have done it now without the help of this grant from ODA—the software is very expensive, and for a small company, resources are limited."

This is how the story of a small publishing house begins, which, by participating in the Digital Transformation Program, managed in just 12 months to double its turnover, enter new markets, and become a company driven by clear data, not estimates. Before digitization, BC Partners House's internal processes were fragmented: the lack of integrated software and accurate data led to decisions based on approximations. The implementation of ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) and CRM (Customer Relationship Management) systems allowed the publishing house to track its inventory and sales in real time in each market. This gave them the flexibility to juggle between warehouses, including between Romania and Moldova, and to plan production based on actual demand.

"Now I have clarity: I know how many books I have sent for production, how many have been sold, and what my inventory is. I no longer have to guess. Planning has improved enormously. The team works differently when the data is clear. We no longer waste time counting or calculating from scratch," said Natalia Blanari, owner of BC Partners House Publishing.

Digitization was a catalyst for business expansion. Turnover doubled in 2023 compared to 2022 and continued to grow in 2024. Exports became a reality, with new partnerships in Romania and Georgia. The number of B2B customers has increased by more than 20 in the last 12 months, with occasional customers becoming loyal customers.

"We started exporting—we signed a contract with Romania after implementing digitization. For the first time, we were able to make clear strategic decisions: We noticed that there were no sales between 7 and 8 p.m., so we reduced the schedule and resources."

Optimizing the work schedule, reducing hours without sales, redefining the organizational chart, moving from classic roles (librarians) to positions with specific responsibilities, and optimizing the product portfolio, adjusting print runs based on actual sales – these are just some of the impactful benefits of digital transformation.

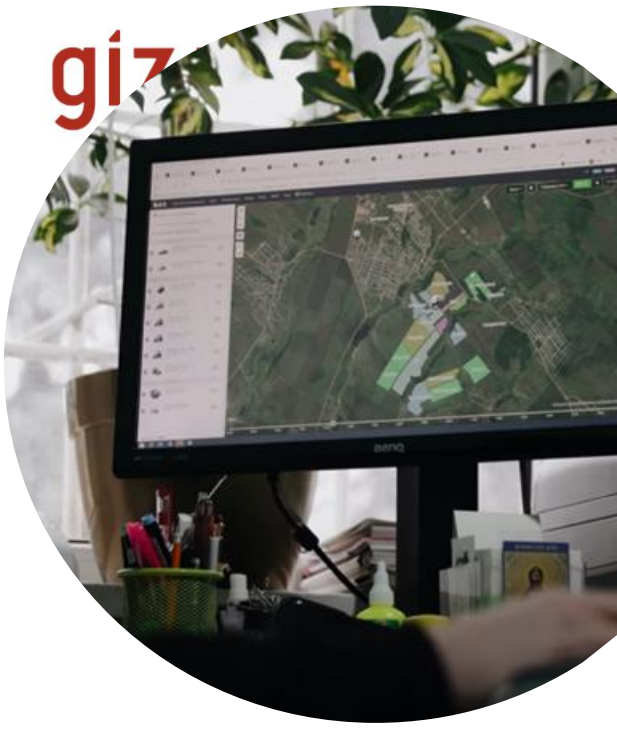
"The program helped me grow. We want to go further—we want to implement digital project management and task management," concluded the administrator.

Digitization has fundamentally transformed this publishing house, demonstrating that even a small business can become agile and data-driven. She is one of many beneficiaries who, with ODA support, have managed to implement digital transformation, generate real economic growth, and build a sustainable business at home in Moldova.

Public

Success story

Grain producer: Digital management of managerial activities and field work means making the right decisions at the right time



In a difficult agricultural context marked by unfavorable weather conditions and economic uncertainty, an agricultural enterprise has successfully implemented its digitization project, becoming a model of adaptation and efficiency. Using the Cropio platform and GPS equipment, the farm has managed to reduce working time and resource costs (fuel, sanitary products, etc.), optimize work processes and efficiently manage its workforce, maintain competitiveness without forced market expansion, and contribute to the formation of a young, digitally trained team.

The digital tools provided through the ODA grant, such as the Accu Guide self-guiding GPS system for nine tractors and the CROPIO platform for managing agricultural processes, give the manager or engineer greater visibility into field activities and real-time tracking and analysis of agricultural work. The agronomist enters the data, and the team can then make quick decisions.

"We weren't necessarily looking to increase turnover, but to make work easier and save time and resources. The GPS system helps mechanics work accurately, without losses. That matters when you only have one good day to work between rain and wind," said Valentin Airini, administrator of AGDAV, which grows wheat, barley, sunflowers, corn, sugar beets, rapeseed, and soybeans on 570 hectares. "We have 21 employees. We used to have over 25, but digitization has led to greater efficiency. We have also involved young people, training three employees in the use of the Cropio platform and six employees in the use of automatic guidance equipment!"

"We continue to work with the Cropio platform provider to expand the implemented functionalities. We are implementing them step by step. I recommend the program to other farmers. Without ODA, technical partners, and the grants we received, it would not have been possible to get here," added Mr. Airini.

The digitization implemented at this company has enabled efficient crop analysis and good resource planning, resulting in cost reduction, work optimization, and increased productivity. By accessing the grant offered by ODA and through its own involvement, the company has modernized its operations and demonstrated that digitization can be applied gradually, with a real impact on the company in particular and the country's economy as a whole. The project is thus a valuable example of digitization in the agricultural sector and serves as an inspirational model for other companies in the sector.

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