

Letter of recommendation

To the selecting committee of 2016 Joe C. Baxter Award,

Dr. Iurie Ciocan is the Chairman of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) of the Republic of Moldova, Doctor in Political Science and Doctor Honoris Causa at the Academy of Public Administration of the Republic of Moldova, member of the Board of the Association of European Election Officials (ACEEEO), member of the Board of the Academy of Public Administration of the Republic (APA) of Moldova. He has been working in electoral field for the last 13 years, progressing from a District Electoral Commission member, to a Member of the CEC, the CEC Secretary, and, finally, since 2011 up to now – as the CEC Chairperson. He has a far-fetched record of advancing electoral expertise throughout the globe, being an accredited BRIDGE facilitator since 2008.

Under Dr. Ciocan leadership, the CEC Moldova has become a reference EMB worldwide. He is the driving force behind ascending and strengthening the professionalism of the CEC staff. He was a true visionary when decided to create the Centre for Continuous Electoral Trainings (CCET) the education and creative hub that challenges practice and theory to reinvent elections in Moldova.

Being a university professor, Dr. Ciocan encourages young generation to become genuine participants of the electoral process and political life of Moldova. The average age of the CEC Moldova staff is 30 years old, most of whom had their first job within the CEC. Nowadays, more than half of them has become head of departments, creating high performance teams. He has established a culture of positive and appreciative inquiry, motivating young talents to search for the best in electoral profession, the CEC, and the relevant world around them, offering on of the best examples he could – his own career path.

Elections are opportunities for voters to acquire valuable information that can help them make informed choices (Bartels 1996). The team conducted by Dr. Ciocan has understood the importance of the power of an “informed choice”. The CEC effort has been focusing on growing the interest of the entire society in the role of information and how information campaigns are being immersed by the society. The CEC team formed a philosophy of informational and civic education campaigns as a tool for creating a sustainable election culture in Moldova.

All informational and educational campaigns target youth as a powerful tool to increase their awareness of participatory and representative democracy. Since 2011, every year, during one month the CEC organizes The Youth Voters Day. Together with Dr. Ciocan and other team members they visit all higher education institutions. Open public lessons are meant to openly discuss the latest in elections and ask students’ feedback on election progression. Such events

boost significantly young people motivation to participate as voters, election officials or event candidates. Also, the CEC has been successfully implementing an entire system of internships, when every student could see the electoral process from inside.

Dr. Ciocan is one of the main promoters of the strategic planning. The first CEC strategic plan was adopted in 2011, immediately after Dr. Ciocan was elected as the chairperson of the CEC. Drafting the first 2011 edition was challenging, however the results were rewarding, as most of the planned activities were implemented successfully. The CEC has adopted its second edition 2016-2019.

Inspired by the technological progress in the Republic of Moldova in the past decade, the CEC has proposed as its main objective the automation of the entire electoral process, having developed the State Automated Information System “Elections” (SAISE). During Dr Ciocan leadership from 2011 to 2013, the system was implemented, tested and piloted. At the national level, the system was used for the first time during the parliamentary elections of 2014 and then during the 2015 local elections.

The parliamentary elections of 2014 as well as the 2015 local elections represented a successfully passed exam by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC). During the last six years, the voting system in Moldova has experienced a new level of development thanks to the efforts of the CEC team.

Although at the national level the State Register of Population exists, the voters’ lists were compiled based on information held by the Local Public Authorities (LPAs). The process was complicated and involved many human resources. There were many errors due to human factors and duplication of voters on the lists was a very common event, as well as the presence on the electoral lists of citizens who had been deceased for a long time or no longer lived in the locality they were listed as living in.

In 2014, the CEC designed and created the State Register of Voters (SRV), considered one of the biggest Dr Ciocan’s achievements. SRV enables data exchange with the State Register of Population. Currently, all information on voters is structured and is now more accessible and more accurate due to an automated process. With the SRV, the electoral lists are compiled correctly and do not contain duplicate names of voters. The information is no longer misinterpreted by LPA representatives, but is distributed by the system according to some well-defined criteria that have been established by law. Additionally, the SRV has meant that supplementary voters’ lists were reduced by 34 per cent in the last elections, which means a considerable reduction and a significant increase in voter confidence in the electoral process.

In the future, the CEC will further improve the quality and credibility of the electoral process in the Republic of Moldova based on similar innovations

Restructuring of the political finance reform has started since 2011 under the CEC umbrella with an enormous effort of IFES team. The process followed a series of important public events, conferences, 50 working group meetings, 25 different national and international organizations and more than 200 amendments proposed. The results of all these efforts highlighted in the adoption of the new political finance legislation. It was no small feat for a newly appointed President of the CEC, Dr Ciocan, to fulfill such a wide remit immediately upon its nomination. Today, the CEC has a broad remit: it encompasses political finance but also public finance of political parties. A smooth and effective rollout was an important foothold upon which the CEC has built a greater credibility – for the Moldovans and the international community.

Being a Gender Champion, Dr Ciocan ensured the first gender audit of a national public authority, the CEC, following an implementation of a series of gender sensitive regulations, laws and lobby actions. The gender dimension is embedded in the entire EMB structure starting with CEC to the last PEB member.

An inclusive election process is also one that is based on open, broad consultation with stakeholders. Dr Ciocan opened the CEC doors to concerns, opinions and initiatives of stakeholders (political parties, civil society and voters), that were central to decisions about whether and how to employ new voting or counting technologies for persons with locomotor, visual or hearing disabilities. One of them is piloting of E-Voting for the 2018 Parliamentary Elections.

In 2014 Parliamentary Elections, Dr Ciocan secured special funds to buy ramps in 17 most vulnerable localities, voting booths for disabled persons, screen envelopes for visual impaired persons people. Likewise, the CEC has conducted an accessibility audit of polling stations; voiced, recorded and distributed the Audio Guide of the Voter; subtitled a methodical-teaching film in sign language; produced a methodical-teaching film for training of PEB members, implemented projects for direct and secret voting of visually impaired persons using sample envelopes; integrated in its training programs accessibility and gender issues.

Between 2008 and 2013 IFES has been present in Republic of Moldova. Many areas of great achievements were based on a successful and fruitful collaboration of the CEC team, conducted by Dr Ciocan and IFES team, conducted by Staffan Darnolf and Steven Gray.

The CEC/IFES and other partners – funded, for the first time, a joined voter information campaign of 2010 and 2011– that were successfully received. Not only they provided value for all the participants, but also demonstrated the importance of a coordinated voter information campaign with the CEC as a leading partner.

IFES Moldova has been working with the Central Election Commission (CEC) of Moldova since 2008 to improve their design and implementation of training programs for temporary election officials. IFES was instrumental in helping the CEC move from large group short briefings of DEC and PEB members to small group competency-based training sessions and

finally, creating the Centre for Continuous Electoral Trainings (CCET), as the main resource for training, research and knowledge in elections. The CCET has been a tremendous support for the CEC in organizing trainings and educational campaigns for every electoral stakeholder, counting more than 40.000 people, developing their professional and personal abilities.

Dr Ciocan is a Leaders and Managers with a unique potential to serve as an energizing force within the CEC and CCET, development partners and all election stakeholders. As failure in Elections is not an option, it is fundamentally important to have a talented manager and a visionary leader in front of the EMB. Being one of the most exciting and challenging period for any country, putting together A-teams of talents require time, resources and energy, however conducting and retaining such teams one must have super talents, Dr Ciocan is one of them. The Moldova EMB family of more than 40.000 people consider him a **HERO**:

- **Hope.** Dr Ciocan has a strong belief in the ability to persevere toward CEC goals and always find paths to reach them.
- **Efficacy.** He has a robust confidence that the CEC/CCET team can put forth the effort to affect outcomes.
- **Resilience.** During all tough time the CEC Chairperson demonstrated the ability to bounce back in the face of adversity or failure.
- **Optimism.** Without his positive view of work and the potential of success, none of the mentioned CEC/CCET achievements would have been possible.

We are very pleased to recommend Dr Ciocan under consideration for Joe C. Baxter Award, with the assurance that he is deserving of this award considering his contributions to promote democracy in Republic of Moldova and all around the world.

I highly recommend Dr Ciocan to the Joe C. Baxter Award.

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Sincerely yours,

Natalia Iuraş

**Director,
CCET by the CEC Moldova**