



REPORT

EVALUATIONS OF THE ACCESSIBILITY OF COURT PREMISES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Chisinau, 2021



BACKGROUND

On September 8, 2017 the Government of the Moldova adopted Decision No.723 approving the Action Plan on the implementation of the National Programme for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities for 2017-2022. According to para. 7.5 of the Action Plan, the courts shall undertake measures to ensure accessibility of infrastructure, information and communication for persons with different types of disabilities by developing, approving and implementing institutional accessibility programs.

To support justice authorities in implementing the provisions of para.7.5, the Center for the Rights of People with Disabilities (CDPD) offered to conduct an audit of accessibility of courts. This activity is implemented within the Access to Justice Project "Support to Persons with Disabilities in Accessing Justice" implemented by the Center for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Millennium DPI Partners. Access to Justice is a grant funded by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), United States' Department of State, for the purpose of improving access to justice for Moldovans, especially the most vulnerable members of society who are marginalized and excluded. It is being implemented by Millennium DPI.

During June 2020 - August 2020 CDPD conducted the initial evaluation of the accessibility of 25 court buildings in 15 jurisdictions and reported on the accessibility issues to stakeholders. CDPD has conducted substantial advocacy efforts in addition to providing tailored assistance to the courts to improve the accessibility of court buildings.

The accessibility evaluation took place in the following courts:

- 1. Supreme Court of Justice (2 buildings)
- 2. Court of Appeal (Balti, Chisinau, Comrat, Cahul)
- 3. Courts from 15 judicial constituencies:
 - Chisinau Court (headquarters, Riscani, Buiucani, Centru, Ciocana)
 - Headquarters of courts from: Edinet, Drochia, Soroca, Balti, Ungheni, Orhei, Straseni,
 Criuleni, Anenii Noi, Hincesti, Cimislia, Causeni, Comrat, Cahul.

The accessibility audit covered two components:

• Physical accessibility (access to the building, including the road to the building within 200 m from the entrance to the building)



• Informational accessibility (access of persons with disabilities to the information on court agenda, authorized interpretation services in the sign language for persons with hearing impairment).

Following the initial audit, the presidents of the evaluated courts were informed about the identified issues and received practical recommendations regarding the accessibility of courts in line with the needs of persons with disabilities. At the same time, the CDPD requested the presidents of the evaluated courts to develop and approve action plans on gradual accessibility of court premises, as provided for in para. 7.5 of the Action Plan on the implementation of National Programme for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities for 2017-2022.

During the period March 2021 - June 2021, the CDPD conducted a follow-up evaluation or audit of the accessibility of the 25 court buildings.

In the follow-up audit, the following aspects were evaluated:

- actions of the presidents of the courts, undertaken after the initial accessibility audit, with a view to making the courts accessible
- barriers that have arisen in the process of making courts accessible

The results of the subsequent evaluation on the accessibility of the court buildings are reflected in this report.

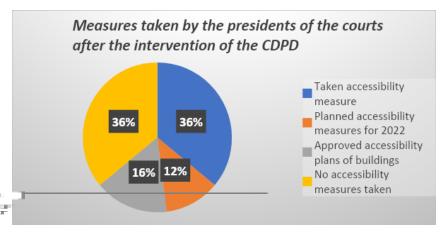
I. ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE PRESIDENTS OF THE COURTS FOLLOWING THE INITIAL EVALUATION OF ACCESSIBILITY

After the initial evaluation of accessibility, the presidents of the 25 evaluated court buildings undertook the following measures:

- in the case of nine buildings, measures were taken to make the court accessible (in June 2020-June 2021)

Diagram 1: Measures taken by the presidents of the courts after the intervention of the CDPD

- in the case of three buildings, accessibility works were planned for 2022



- in the case of four buildings, plans were drawn to make the courts accessible
- in the case of nine buildings, no measures were taken to make the courts accessible (see Diagram 1: Measures taken by the presidents of the courts after the intervention of the CDPD)

The accessibility measures undertaken by the judges during the CDPD intervention period (June 2020-June 2021) included the following actions:

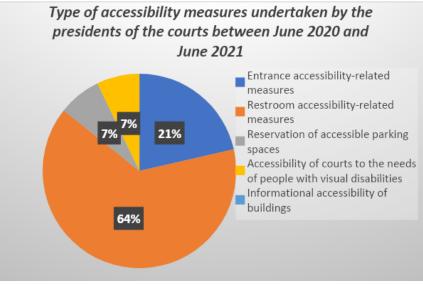
- in the case of three buildings, measures were taken to make the entrance accessible
- in the case of nine buildings, the accessibility of the restrooms for people with disabilities was ensured
- in the case of one building, parking spaces have been reserved and are accessible to people with disabilities
- in the case of one building, financial resources were allocated to make the building accessible to the needs of people with disabilities
 - no building has become accessible informationally (indicators, pictograms, information boards, etc.) (see Diagram 2: Type of accessibility measures undertaken by the presidents of the courts between June 2020 and June 2021)

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n order to improve access for people with disabilities to roads and areas within 200 meters of the buildings of the evaluated courts, the

In order to improve access for people with disabilities to roads and areas within 200 meters of the buildings of the evaluated courts, the presidents of the courts undertook the following actions:

- in the case of eight buildings, the presidents of the courts formulated requests to the LPA to assist in making the territory near the court premises accessible (Edinet, Balti, Criuleni, Causeni, Chisinau (Center premises), Balti Court of Appeal, Cahul Court of Appeal, Comrat Court of Appeal)
- in the case of one building, parking spaces have been reserved and are accessible to people with disabilities (Balti Court of Appeal)
- in the case of two buildings, it is planned to create parking spaces reserved for people with disabilities (the two buildings of the Supreme Court of Justice)



- in the case of 12 buildings, the presidents of the courts did not take any measures to make the territory accessible near the court premises (see Diagram 3: Measures taken by the presidents of the courts to make the roads and parking around the courts accessible)

In order to ensure the access of people with disabilities to restrooms adapted to their individual needs, out of the 19 buildings with no accessibility to restrooms, the presidents of the evaluated courts:

- in the case of nine buildings, ensured the accessibility of the restrooms to people with disabilities
- in the case of three buildings, they planned the restrooms-related accessibility works in 2022;
- in the case of seven buildings, they did not take any measures to make the restrooms accessible to people with disabilities (see Diagram 4: Measures taken by the presidents of the courts to make the restrooms accessible)

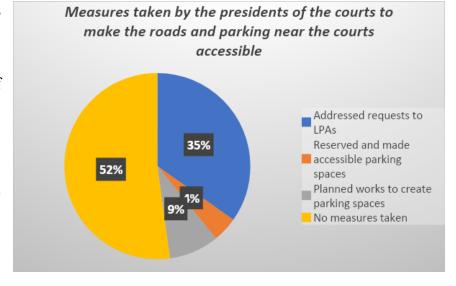


Diagram 3: Measures taken by the presidents of the courts to make the roads and parking near the courts accessible

To ensure the access of people with disabilities to the premises of the evaluated courts, out of the 16 buildings that do not have accessible entrance groups:

- in four buildings, measures were taken to make the entrance groups accessible (door, including doorsteps, access ramp, steps) (Edinet Court, Balti Court of Appeal, Cahul Court of Appeal)
- in five buildings, the accessibility of the entrance groups was planned for 2022 (Soroca, Criuleni, Cahul Court of Appeal, two buildings of the Supreme Court of Justice)
- in eight buildings, no measures were taken to make the entrance groups accessible (see Diagram 5: Measures taken by the presidents of the courts to make the entrance groups to the building accessible)

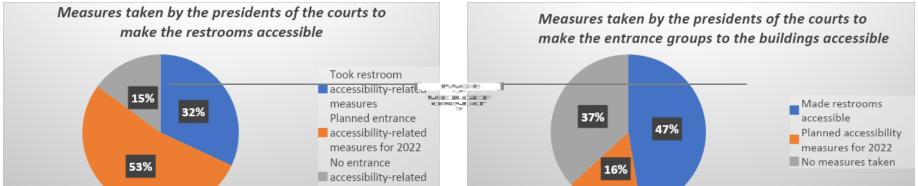


Diagram 4: Measures taken by the presidents of the courts to make the restrooms accessible

Diagram 5: Measures taken by the presidents of the courts to make the entrance groups to the buildings accessible

II. BARRIERS FACED BY THE PRESIDENTS OF COURTS IN MAKING THE COURT BUILDINGS ACCESSIBLE

According to the information provided by the presidents of the evaluated courts, the following barriers were encountered in the process of making the court buildings accessible:

- 16 respondents cited insufficient financial resources allocated by the Superior Council of Magistracy and the Ministry of Finance for courts administration
- four respondents consider it inappropriate to allocate financial resources to undertake works to improve accessibility of existing premises due to planned construction of new unified court premises
- two respondents cited the unsatisfactory condition of the buildings (roof, damaged heating networks), which is why the court is forced to give priority to capital repair works of the building
- two respondents invoked the technical impossibility of making court buildings accessible (restricted physical conditions, restricted architectural features of the building, legal prohibition to change the architectural appearance of the building)
- three respondents cited the lack of specialists who could assess the volume and cost of the necessary works; and the lack of specialists who could apply correctly the provisions of the accessibility regulations
- two respondents invoked the refusal of the Local Public Authority to allocate space to organize accessible parking for people with disabilities (see Diagram 6: Barriers met in the process of making courts accessible)

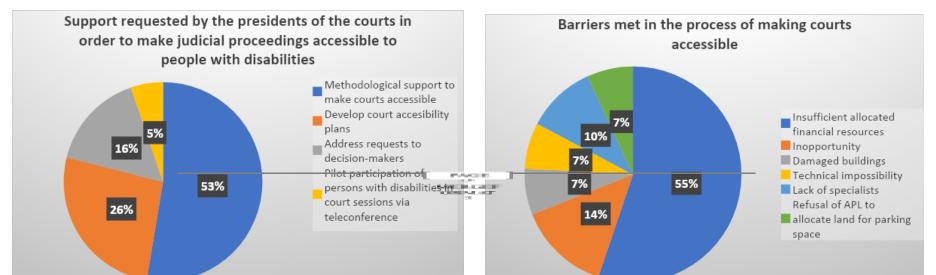


Diagram 6: Barriers met in the process of making courts accessible

Diagram 7: Support requested by the presidents of the courts in order to make judicial proceedings accessible to people with disabilities

The presidents of the evaluated courts communicated that they would need support from the CDPD in the process of making the courts accessible. The requested support refers to the following actions:

- 10 respondents communicated that they would need methodological support to implement the recommendations for court accessibility, especially to create accessibility conditions for people with visual impairment (providing sample specifications, designs, layout schemes and technical parameters of installations and devices)
- five respondents requested the support of CDPD in the elaboration of institutional plans on courts accessibility
- three respondents requested the support of CDPD in submitting requests to decision makers (Superior Council of Magistracy, Ministry of Finance, Agency for Court Administration) in order to allocate sufficient financial resources to make courts accessible and expedite the process of construction of new court premises, especially those that cannot be made accessible due to technical reasons
- one respondent requested the support of CDPD in piloting the participation of people with disabilities in remote court trials through the teleconference system

III. THE DEGREE OF ACCESSIBILITY OF THE EVALUATED COURTS (as of 25.07.2021)

A. Accessibility of roads to the building (within 200 meters from the entrance to the building)

The roads within 200 meters leading to 25 assessed buildings are:



- For two buildings the road is accessible for people with mobility impairment and visual impairments (Chisinau court, Buiucani premises; CSJ building, Criminal College premises)
- For three buildings the road is accessible only for persons with mobility impairment (Comrat Court of Appeal, Drochia Court, Chisinau Court, Centre premises)

The pedestrian crossing in the vicinity of Chisinau Court, Buiucani premises

For seven buildings - the pedestrian crossings in the vicinity of the building are accessible to persons with mobility impairment, however, small interventions are necessary to ensure the accessibility of roads to the building (lowering the curbstones, removing the obstacles: flowerpots, garbage bins, etc.): CA of Cahul, Edinet, Soroca, Chisinau CA, Chisinau court headquarters, Chisinau Court, Ciocana premises, SCJ, premises of Civil and Administrative Litigations Collegium)

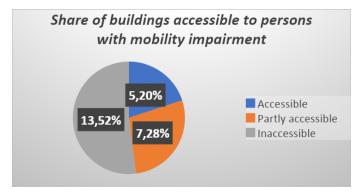


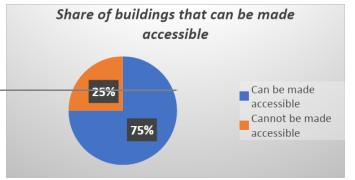
For 13 buildings - some road portions to the building and pedestrian crossings in the vicinity require a complete overhaul.

B. Physical accessibility of buildings for people with mobility impairment

Out of 25 buildings assessed:

- five buildings are accessible: CA Chisinau, CA Comrat, CA Balti, Causeni Court, Comrat Court, Vulcanesti premises
- seven buildings are partly accessible (only one element of the building is not accessible: either entrance, restroom or other rooms):
 - Chisinau Court, Buiucani premises (accessible, except for the entry ramp)
 - Chisinau Court, Centre premises (accessible, except for the restroom)
 - Chisinau Court, headquarters (accessible, except for the entry ramp)
 - Ungheni Court (accessible, except for the restroom)
 - Comrat Court headquarters (accessible, except for the entry ramp)





- Straseni Court (accessible, except for the entry ramp)
- Cahul Court of Appeal (accessible, except for the entry ramp)
- 13 buildings are inaccessible

C. Share of buildings that can become accessible for persons with mobility impairment

Out of 13 inaccessible buildings:

- nine buildings can be made accessible for all types of disabilities
- four buildings cannot be made accessible for persons with mobility impairment or require considerable financial resources to become accessible—these are:
 - Cahul Court operates in a building rented from a company, all rooms are located on the second floor, there is no lift, and physical conditions do not allow for the installation of an access ramp
 - Soroca Court the restroom is in the basement, there is no possibility to build a restroom accessible at the ground level
 - Orhei Court operates in a building that is considered a historical monument, and any interventions that might affect the architectural facade are prohibited; the restrooms are located in the basement, and there is no possibility to build one accessible at the ground level
 - Chisinau Court, Riscani premises access to the first floor is possible only via internal staircase but there is no sufficient space to include an access ramp

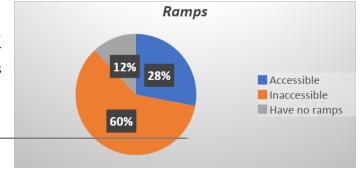
Temporary SOLUTION - REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION - conduct court sessions with the participation of persons with disabilities in an accessible room within other institutions (for instance, school, library, city hall premises, etc.), which have accessible rooms and restrooms.

D. Share of buildings with accessible ramps for persons with mobility impairment

Out of 25 buildings assessed:

- seven buildings - have accessible ramps: (Chisinau Court of Appeal, Comrat Court of Appeal, Balti Court of Appeal, Chisinau Court Center premises, Ungheni Court, Causeni Court (one of the three ramps is accessible), Comrat Court, Vulcanesti premises

- 15 buildings - have inaccessible ramps



- three buildings - do not have ramps: (Orhei Court, Cahul Court, Chisinau Court, Rascani premises)

E. Share of buildings with restrooms accessible to persons with mobility impairment

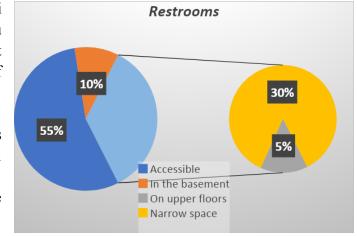
Out of 25 buildings assessed:

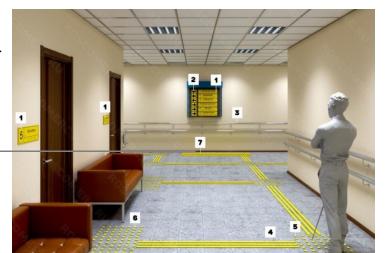
- 11 buildings have accessible restrooms (Chisinau Court, Buiucani premises, Chisinau Court of Appeal, Comrat Court of Appeal, Chisinau Court headquarters, Causeni Court, Straseni Court, Comrat Court headquarters, Comrat Court, Vulcanesti premises, Balti Court of Appeal, Cahul Court of Appeal, Drochia Court)
- 14 buildings have inaccessible restrooms, of which:
 - five buildings have Asian style restrooms (the toilet bowl has to be reached by steps and is not accessible to persons with mobility impairment);
 - two buildings have restrooms in the basement and cannot be accessed by persons in wheelchairs;
 - one building has restrooms at the top floor and cannot provide access to persons with disabilities;
 - six buildings have restrooms with narrow doors, or insufficient space for a wheelchair.



Out of 25 buildings assessed not one building is accessible to persons with visual impairment:

- the orientation (on the traffic routes) and warning (in front of obstacles), and tactile pavement is missing in all functional rooms (entry, session room, restroom, etc.)
- in 15 buildings there is not sufficient illumination of rooms





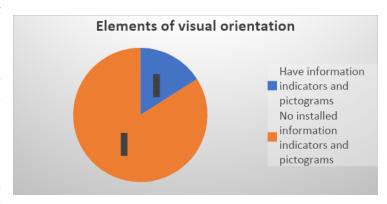
- no voice interpretation of information displayed on electronic boards is offered
- not all courts have staff responsible to inform/guide persons with disabilities about the court agenda, place and time of court hearings.

Although the evaluated courts received recommendations from the CDPD on undertaking accessibility measures for people with disabilities, only one court (Comrat Court of Appeal) has allocated financial resources in 2021 to make the building accessible to people with disabilities.

G. Physical accessibility of buildings for persons with hearing impairment and psycho-social disabilities

Out of the total number of evaluated buildings, only 16% have visual orientation indicators and pictograms for persons with hearing impairment and persons with psycho-social disabilities.

Although the evaluated courts have received recommendations from the CDPD to undertake measures of informational accessibility of court buildings for people with hearing impairment and for people with psycho-social disabilities, only one court (Edinet Court) has plant to conduct installation works of signs, piets groups and information.

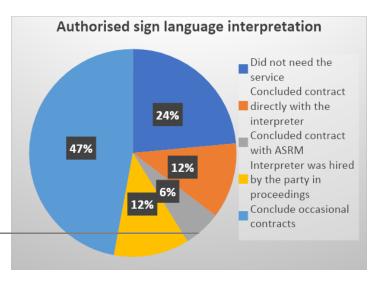


(Edinet Court) has plans to conduct installation works of signs, pictograms and information boards in 2022.

H. Procedural accessibility of courts for people with hearing impairment

Out of the total number of assessed courts,

- 47% conclude occasional service provision contracts
- 23% had no cases examined with the participation of persons with hearing impairment
- 12% the interpretation was provided (including paid) by the participant in the proceedings
- 12% the court concludes an annual contract with a certain translator
- 6% the court concludes an annual contract with the Association of Deaf People of the Moldova (Cahul Court of Appeal).



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IV. ACCESSIBILITY WORKS CARRIED OUT WITH CDPD SUPPORT

A. Balti Court of Appeal

In 2020, the Balti Court of Appeal initiated the construction of an accessible ramp. At the request of the CDPD, the Agency for Court Administration approved an institutional plan on ensuring the accessibility of the building (2021-2022), based on which, it allocated the appropriate financial resources for the accessibility of other elements/communications of the building.

In 2021, the Balti Court of Appeal set up two parking spaces reserved for people with disabilities near the building and initiated the restroom-related accessibility works.

The accessibility works of the Balti Court of Appeal are in line with the accessibility regulations and ensure equal access, under conditions of autonomy, for people with disabilities in the building and functional rooms of the court.

ACCESS RAMP TO THE BALTI COURT OF APPEAL BUILDING:

Before CDPD intervention:



After CDPD intervention:



Before CDPD intervention:



PARKING:

After CDPD intervention:



RESTROOM:

Before CDPD intervention:

After CDPD intervention:







B. Cahul Court of Appeal

In 2020, the court started the reconstruction works of the restroom, and the CDPD provided necessary methodological support to ensure the construction of an accessible restroom. During the execution of the construction works of the accessible restroom, the court took into account the following recommendations of the CDPD:

- replaced the door at the entrance to the restroom, including widened its gap to 0.9 m;
- provided sufficient illumination of the restroom
- installed 2 support bars (one fixed and one foldable) on both sides of the toilet bowl
- provided sufficient space for handling the wheelchair in front of the toilet bowl
- set up the sink with support bars

As there were no offers of embossed tiles on the domestic market, the court could not install tactile paving for blind people inside the restroom. The court has also modified the entrance ramp to the building, but these arrangements do not meet accessibility standards.

RESTROOM IN THE CAHUL COURT OF APPEAL BUILDING:





C. Comrat Court (Vulcanesti premises, headquarters)

At the end of 2020, with the methodological support of the CDPD, Comrat Court managed to make the restrooms accessible in two buildings: the headquarters (Comrat) and Vulcanesti premises. At the same time, the administration made accessible the entrance to the Vulcanesti building for people with mobility impairment, including for people in wheelchair. The following changes were made based on the CDPD recommendations:

- a platform was created at the entrance to the building, thus providing the necessary space for maneuvering the wheelchair
- non-slippery paving was used on the platform, ramp and steps at the entrance to the building
- rubber strips combined with metal were used on both steps of the staircase, as well as on the access ramp
- stainless steel support bars were installed on both sides of the ramp

At the same time, in the restrooms in the buildings in Vulcanesti and Comrat municipalities, the following changes were made:

- the frames of the doors were widened and the entrance doors to the restrooms were replaced
- the tiles on the wall and floor were replaced
- the toilet bowl has been equipped with two support bars (one fixed and one foldable)
- additional illumination in the restroom was ensured

The CDPD recommended that the court remove the furniture from the restrooms in order to ensure sufficient room for wheelchairs and apply tactile paving to the surface of the floor to orient visually impaired people.

In 2022, with a view to ensuring the accessibility of the Comrat Court premises, the administration plans to request the allocation of 169,600 lei, of which 85,200 — for the total accessibility of the buildings in Comrat municipality and 84,400 lei in Ceadâr-Lunga municipality.

ACCESS RAMP TO COMRAT COURT BUILDING VULCANESTI PREMISES:

Before CDPD intervention:



After CDPD intervention:



RESTROOM IN COMRAT COURT BUILDING VULCANESTI PREMISES:



RESTROOM IN COMRAT COURT BUILDING HEADQUARTERS (COMRAT):

Before CDPD intervention:

After CDPD intervention:





D. Chisinau Court (headquarters)

Following the intervention of the CDPD, the court administration initiated the procurement procedure for the reconstruction works of the restroom. The court benefited from the methodological support from the CDPD in the preparing the specifications for the accessibility of the restroom.

In the subsequent evaluation, CDPD discovered that the measures taken to make the restroom accessible to people with mobility impairment including wheelchair users are not in line with the regulations on accessibility for people with visual impairments.

The CDPD recommended that the Court mark access lanes to the restroom and inside the restroom by installing tactile pavement of a contrasting color.

RESTROOM IN CHISINAU COURT BUILDING (HEADQUARTERS):

Before CDPD intervention:



After CDPD intervention:





E. Causeni Court (headquarters)

At the end of 2020, the court administration began the accessibility-related works in the restroom to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

The CDPD evaluators discovered that the arrangements partially corresponded to the accessibility regulations and recommended the court to remove the second toilet, increase the door gap from 82 cm to 90 cm and install the tactile pavement inside the restroom.

The court administration also cooperates with the Causeni City Hall in order to make accessible the pavements and pedestrian crossings within 200 meters of the court premises. In 2022, the City Hall will allocate financial resources for the accessibility of sidewalks and roads adjacent to the Causeni Court building.

RESTROOM IN CAUSENI COURT BUILDING (headquarters):





F. Straseni Court (Calarasi premises)

Following the intervention of the CDPD, the court began making changes to the restroom in Straseni Court, Calarasi premises to improve accessibility.

In its evaluation, the CDPD discovered that measures taken to make the restroom accessible to people with mobility impairment including wheelchair users do not meet the accessibility regulations for people with visual impairments.

The CDPD recommended the Court to mark the access lanes to the restroom and inside the restroom by installing tactile pavement of a contrasting color.



G. Drochia Court (headquarters)

Following the CDPD intervention, the court allocated financial resources from its administrative savings to make accessible some areas of the building for people with disabilities.

The identified resources allowed the court to carry out works aiming at making the meeting room and the restroom accessible to wheelchair users, namely:

- widened the door gap to 90 cm and replaced the entrance door to the meeting room no. 6, removed the doorstep;
- provided proper illumination in meeting rooms;
- widened the gaps of the access doors in the restroom and toilet cubicle, replacing the doors according to the accessibility regulations;
- removed the doorsteps at the entrance doors to the restroom and toilet cubicle



No.	Name of the court	Adjacent territory	Entrance to the building	Circulation inside the building	Restroom	Rooms, furniture, equipment	Sign language interpretation services
1.	Edinet Court (headquarters)	partially accessible	inaccessible	partially accessible	inaccessible	accessible	not contracted
2.	Drochia Court (headquarters)	partially accessible	inaccessible	partially accessible	accessible to people with mobility impairment	accessible	not contracted
3.	Soroca Court (headquarters)	inaccessible	inaccessible	inaccessible	inaccessible	accessible	contracted
4.	Balti Court (headquarters)	inaccessible	inaccessible	inaccessible	inaccessible	accessible	contracted
5.	Balti Court of Appeal	inaccessible	accessible	partially accessible (there is a turnstile at the entrance to the building)	accessible	accessible	budgeted
6.	Ungheni Court (headquarters)	inaccessible	partially accessible	partially accessible (there is a turnstile at the	inaccessible	accessible	not contracted



7.	Orhei (headquarter	rs)	inaccessible	inaccessible	the building) partially accessible	inaccessible	accessible	not contracted
8.	Straseni (headquarter		Accessible	partially accessible	partially accessible	Inaccessible	accessible	not contracted
	Calarasi prem	nises	inaccessible	inaccessible	inaccessible	accessible to people with mobility impairment	accessible	not contracted
9.	Criuleni (headquarter		inaccessible	inaccessible	partially accessible	partially accessible, inaccessible for wheelchair users	partially accessible	not contracted
10.	Chisinau (headquarter		inaccessible	inaccessible	partially accessible	accessible to people with mobility impairment	partially accessible	not contracted
11.	Chisinau (Center prem		partially accessible	partially accessible	partially accessible	inaccessible	accessible	not contracted
12.	Chisinau (Riscani prem		inaccessible	inaccessible	inaccessible	inaccessible	partially accessible	not contracted



13.	Chisinau Court (Ciocana premises)	inaccessible	partially accessible	partially accessible	inaccessible	inaccessible	not contracted
14.	Chisinau Court (Buiucani premises)	partially accessible	inaccessible	partially accessible	accessible	accessible	not contracted
15.	Chisinau Court of Appeal	inaccessible	partially accessible	accessible	accessible	accessible	not contracted
16.	Supreme Court of Justice (building of the Civil College)		Inaccessible (accessibility works planned for 2022)	inaccessible	Inaccessible (accessibility works planned for 2022)	partially accessible	not contracted
17.	Supreme Court of Justice (premises of the Criminal Collegium)		Inaccessible (accessibility works planned for 2022)	inaccessible	Inaccessible (accessibility works planned for 2022)	partially accessible	not contracted
18.	Anenii Noi Court (headquarters)	inaccessible	inaccessible	partially accessible	inaccessible	accessible	not contracted
19.	Hincesti Court (headquarters)	inaccessible	inaccessible	partially accessible	inaccessible	accessible	not contracted
20.	Cimislia Court (headquarters)	inaccessible	inaccessible	partially accessible	inaccessible	accessible	not contracted
21.	Causeni Court (headquarters)	partially accessible	accessible	partially accessible	Accessible to people with mobility impairment	accessible	not contracted

22.	Comrat Cou (headquarters)	t partially accessible	partially accessible	partially accessible	partially accessible	Accessible	not contracted
	Vulcanesti Headquarters	partially accessible	accessible	partially accessible	accessible	accessible	
23.	Court of Appe Comrat	al partially accessible	accessible	accessible	accessible	accessible	contracted
24.	Cahul Court (headquarters)	inaccessible	inaccessible	inaccessible	inaccessible	accessible	contracted, budgeted
25.	Cahul Court Appeal	of inaccessible	partially accessible	accessible	accessible to people with mobility impairment	accessible	not contracted