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Building Moldova's Crisis Management System

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BUILDING MOLDOVA'S CRISIS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
OPERATIONALISING PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE IN AN ERA OF MULTIFACETED POLYCRISIS

Executive Summary

The Republic of Moldova has entered an advanced operational phase in the development of its national crisis-management system. Law No. 248/2025, the National Crisis Management Centre (NCMC), the National Crisis Management Commission, regional, territorial and local crisis-management structures, and the National Framework for Integrated Analysis and Management of Risks to National Security provide the institutional architecture for coordinated crisis governance (Republic of Moldova 2025; Republic of Moldova 2026a; Republic of Moldova 2026b).

During 2026, several elements of this system moved from institutional design into practice. The NCMC has produced integrated assessments for national decision-makers; the National Crisis Management Commission has coordinated responses across sectors; water operators and local authorities have activated continuity planning; risk thresholds are being used to prepare differentiated response measures; and integrated reports have been submitted to Parliament following emergency interventions. Moldova has also participated in complex crisis exercises involving strategic, operational and local levels (CNMC 2026a; CNMC 2026b; CNMC 2026c).

The simultaneous energy and hydrological emergency in force from 26 September 2026 provides the most demanding test so far. Moldova enters the 2026–2027 cold season amid severe hydrological pressure on the Nistru and Prut, high electricity-import requirements, constrained guaranteed cross-border capacity, exposure to regional energy infrastructure disruption, fuel-market pressures and volatility in European energy markets (Government of Moldova 2026a; Ministry of Energy 2026a).

The current situation demonstrates the operational character of polycrisis. Water, electricity, fuel, transport, telecommunications, health, agriculture and supply chains function as interconnected systems. Pressure in one system can propagate rapidly across several others.

The next phase of reform therefore concerns system maturity and performance. Moldova requires measurable readiness standards, deeper analysis of cascading failures, stronger continuity requirements for critical services, permanent resource-mobilisation arrangements, greater local-level readiness, and a formal mechanism that converts crisis experience and exercises into institutional change.

The 2026 emergencies provide a strategic opportunity to consolidate these capabilities while operational experience is fresh and political attention remains high.

Problem Description

Moldova's security and resilience environment increasingly combines military, energy, climate, economic, infrastructure, cyber and societal pressures. Russia's war against Ukraine continues to influence regional energy infrastructure, transport routes and electricity markets. Prolonged drought places pressure on water resources, agriculture and hydropower generation. Electricity imports and cross-border transmission remain central to Moldova's energy security. Fuel and gas supplies depend on regional markets, logistics, financing and functioning transport infrastructure.

A hydrological crisis can affect drinking-water availability, agriculture, hydropower production and river transport. An electricity disruption can affect water abstraction, hospitals, communications and industrial activity. Fuel constraints can affect emergency services, agriculture, logistics and backup generation. A cyber incident during an energy or water emergency can intensify disruption across interconnected infrastructure.

This interaction defines the practical meaning of polycrisis for Moldova: several risks developing concurrently and amplifying one another through common systems and dependencies.

A nationwide state of emergency in the energy and hydrological sectors entered into force on 26 September 2026 for 60 days. Authorities linked the measure to increasing regional risks, electricity-import limitations, instability in international gas and fuel markets, severe drought and exceptionally low levels on the Nistru and Prut rivers (Government of Moldova 2026a; CNMC 2026d).

The winter energy outlook illustrates the scale of exposure. Government estimates indicate that approximately 59 percent of Moldova's electricity requirement during winter 2026–2027 will need to be imported. Peak-hour import requirements could reach approximately 400–450 MW, while guaranteed cross-border capacity is approximately 360 MW (Ministry of Energy 2026a).

The hydrological situation has deteriorated simultaneously. During September, inflows into the Novodnistrovsk reservoir remained substantially below downstream releases. By the end of the month, the reservoir had fallen around the critical level identified by Moldovan authorities, increasing pressure on water-supply planning and Moldova–Ukraine coordination over Nistru flows (Ministry of Environment 2026a; Government of Moldova 2026b).

FROM ARCHITECTURE TO OPERATIONAL SYSTEM

Moldova has already established many of the institutional mechanisms required for contemporary crisis management. The National Crisis Management Centre serves as the Government's central coordination and analytical structure for crisis prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Its organisation includes crisis planning, integrated information, strategic analysis and forecasting, a 24/7 Crisis Room, crisis communication, international assistance and the National Crisis Response Platform. Its statutory personnel ceiling is 30 positions (CNMC 2026e).

The National Crisis Management Commission provides strategic coordination under the leadership of the Prime Minister. During

its first meeting in July 2026, the Commission considered petroleum-product risks and deterioration of the hydrological situation on the basis of assessments from responsible institutions and an integrated NCMC analysis. It subsequently coordinated implementation measures across sectors (CNMC 2026a).

The National Framework for Integrated Analysis and Management of Risks to National Security, approved in August 2026, establishes a common methodology for identifying, analysing, evaluating and monitoring national-security risks. It also assigns a role to critical-infrastructure operators and providers of critical services through continuity planning and information exchange with public authorities (CNMC 2026f).

Operational practices are developing alongside the legal framework. During the hydrological response, operators have been required to update and activate continuity plans, prepare alternative water sources and assess measures corresponding to reductions of 10, 20 and 30 percent in water availability. The NCMC monitors implementation of Commission decisions and provides updated assessments for further decisions (CNMC 2026b; CNMC 2026d).

Moldova is also building experience through exercises and international cooperation. Complex exercises have tested strategic and operational decision-making, disruption of public services, disinformation, sabotage, evacuation, population warning and coordination among national institutions, local authorities, private actors and communities (CNMC 2026c).

The operationalisation agenda should therefore build on capabilities already functioning. The next challenge is consistency across institutions, sectors and levels of government. A mechanism can function effectively during one emergency while retaining uneven readiness across other sectors, municipalities or critical operators. The maturation of the system requires common standards, measurable preparedness and repeated validation under increasingly complex scenarios.

THE 2026 STRESS TEST: WATER AND ENERGY

The Nistru situation demonstrates the strategic character of water security. During the first 20 days of September, average inflow into the Novodnistrovsk reservoir was approximately 23 m^3/s, while downstream releases remained around 60 m^3/s. Approximately 40.3 million cubic metres entered the reservoir during the period, while around 103.7 million cubic metres were released, producing a substantial reduction in stored water (Ministry of Environment 2026a).

The situation carries a strong transboundary dimension. A significant part of the Nistru's upstream flow originates in Ukraine. Reservoir management and downstream releases therefore have direct implications for Moldova's drinking-water supply, ecosystems and economic activity.
Moldova and Ukraine have used the bilateral Dniester Commission to discuss release regimes. In September, Ukraine proposed bringing releases closer to current inflow levels, while Moldova supported a gradual

approach to preserve downstream supply and hydrological stability (Ministry of Environment 2026b).

The national response has become progressively structured. Drinking water and priority public services receive precedence. Irrigation withdrawals from the Nistru and Prut have been suspended during the emergency. Operators are assessing reserve capacity, alternative sources and contingency measures. High-capacity pumps, verified artesian wells and mobile water distribution form part of contingency preparation (CNMC 2026d).

Earlier measures also required local authorities and operators to inventory reserve water sources, rehabilitate wells and activate continuity plans.

These measures demonstrate that Moldova is already moving from reactive water management toward structured preparedness based on thresholds and alternative operating arrangements.

The next question concerns how far the system can absorb a deeper and longer disruption, particularly when hydrological pressure coincides with electricity shortages, fuel constraints or other infrastructure failures.

ENERGY SECURITY AND REGIONAL EXPOSURE

Energy developments in 2026 provide a parallel test. On 23 March, disruption of the 400 kV Vulcănești–Isaccea transmission line following damage in Ukraine eliminated flows through Moldova's principal ENTSO-E import corridor. Authorities estimated a peak-hour electricity deficit of approximately 350–400 MW, leading to emergency measures in the energy sector (Ministry of Energy 2026b).

The line was restored rapidly and the emergency regime was subsequently terminated as risk indicators stabilised. The NCMC later produced an integrated report on the measures adopted and their impact, providing an early example of post-crisis institutional reporting (CNMC 2026g).

New pressures emerged during summer and autumn. Regional reductions in hydroelectric and nuclear generation affected electricity availability. Low Danube levels reduced fuel-transport capacity. Drought simultaneously intensified pressure on the Nistru basin. The National Crisis Management Commission adopted measures concerning electricity supply, fuel availability and water resources within the same coordination framework (CNMC 2026h).

The current emergency therefore represents a significant institutional evolution Moldova is already managing cross-sector dependencies through integrated assessment and coordinated decisions.

The next stage involves ensuring that this capacity performs consistently as the number of simultaneous disruptions grows and operational margins narrow.

POLICY PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT PHASE

The following priorities build on mechanisms that Moldova is already implementing and concentrate on the next stage of system maturity.

Develop Cross-Sector Cascade Assessments for High-Impact Risks.

Use the national risk methodology to model how major disruptions propagate across systems. Priority scenarios could examine prolonged electricity-import constraints combined with drought; water shortages combined with high winter electricity demand; cyber disruption affecting energy or telecommunications during an emergency; and regional transport disruption affecting fuel and food logistics. The outcome should identify critical dependencies, escalation points and resource competition.

Create Permanent Crisis Resource-Mobilisation Arrangements.

Develop pre-arranged mechanisms for rapid mobilisation of pumps, generators, fuel, transport capacity, communications equipment, specialist personnel and other scarce resources. Framework contracts, verified inventories, designated suppliers and clear allocation authorities would reduce dependence on improvised procurement during a rapidly developing crisis.

Move Regional, Territorial and Local Structures from Establishment to Readiness Assurance.

The newly created local-level crisis mechanisms require regular validation through exercises, communication tests and readiness reviews. Standard operating procedures should define how local authorities report emerging risks, request national assistance and implement national decisions. Particular attention should be given to municipalities hosting critical infrastructure and communities exposed to water, energy or transport disruption.

Institutionalise a Corrective-Action Process after Crises and Exercises.

Build on existing NCMC reporting by establishing a formal lessons-management mechanism. Each significant crisis and national exercise should generate a limited set of corrective actions with institutional owners, deadlines and a requirement for subsequent validation. Senior leadership should receive periodic information on implementation.

Deepen Cross-Border Operational Preparedness.

Moldova's water and energy security depend heavily on regional systems. Operational arrangements with Ukraine and Romania should increasingly connect data exchange, early warning, technical contact points and crisis procedures. Joint or coordinated exercises could test situations involving Nistru flows, electricity transmission, fuel logistics and regional infrastructure disruption. Moldova's participation in European civil-protection mechanisms provides an additional platform for interoperability and external assistance.

CONCLUSION

Moldova has made substantial progress in constructing and activating a modern crisis-management architecture.

Integrated assessments are being produced. The National Crisis Management Commission is functioning. Continuity plans are being activated. Threshold-based measures are being applied. Implementation is monitored. Crisis reports are being consolidated. Complex exercises are already contributing to preparedness.

The energy and hydrological emergencies of 2026 demonstrate that Moldova's principal strategic challenge lies in the interaction between systems. Severe hydrological pressure affects water supply, energy production and logistics. Electricity-import constraints influence water systems, telecommunications and public services. Fuel availability affects transport, agriculture and backup generation. Regional infrastructure disruption can quickly reshape domestic crisis conditions.

A mature crisis-management system must therefore anticipate cascades, understand dependencies and preserve critical services under simultaneous pressure.

For senior leadership, the benchmark is operational: when several risks converge, decision-makers should understand the likely consequences across sectors, know the endurance of priority services, identify where resources will become constrained and have tested mechanisms available for national and local response.

The institutional foundation for this system already exists. The next phase is to measure readiness, test the architecture under stress, close identified gaps and ensure that each crisis leaves Moldova better prepared for the next one.

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