

Chambers of Commerce in Romania and Moldova as B2A Partners in Social Dialogue and Sustainable Development

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Article Structure: 11 Sections

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Comparative analysis of two chamber systems: Romania (42 county chambers + CCIR) and Moldova (CCIRM + 10 regional branches)

Country Contexts since 1990/1992



Romania

- Area: 238,391 km² | Population: ~19.1M (2024)
- GDP: \$382.6 bn (2024)
- Democratic revolution (Dec. 1989); first free elections (May 1990)
- EU member since 2007 | NATO since 2004
- Chamber system re-founded by Decree-Law No. 139 (May 1990)
- Currently - Law on Chambers No. 335 (2007)
- 42 county chambers + national chamber (CCIR)

Moldova

- Area: 33,851 km² | Population: ~2.4M (2024)
- GDP: \$18.2 bn (2024)
- Declaration of sovereignty (Jun. 1990); independence (Aug. 1991)
- EU candidate since June 2022
- Transnistrian conflict since 1992 (Russian troops remain)
- Single national chamber (CCIRM) + 10 regional branches
- Law on Chambers No. 393-XIV (1999)

Indicator	Romania	Moldova
Population 2000 ⇒ 2024	22.44 ⇒ 19.05M (-15%)	2.92M ⇒ 2.40M (-18%)
GDP 2000 ⇒ 2024	\$37.3 ⇒ \$382.6 bn (x 10.2)	\$1.3 ⇒ \$18.2 bn (x 14)
GDP per capita 2000 ⇒ 2024	\$1 660 ⇒ \$20 080 (x12)	\$441 ⇒ \$7 576 (x 17)
Active enterprises 2024	~816,000 SMEs (apx. 820k total?)	~49,000

Literature Review

Research Gap

Lack of academic literature on chambers of commerce in Macedonia and very few publications in Romania – no comparative institutional studies.

Significant gap identified.

Key Sources for Romania

Romania: Popescu (2016) on Law 335/2007; Păun & Păun (2024) on institutional history; Radu (2008, ILO Working Paper) on chambers as "organised players" in social dialogue.

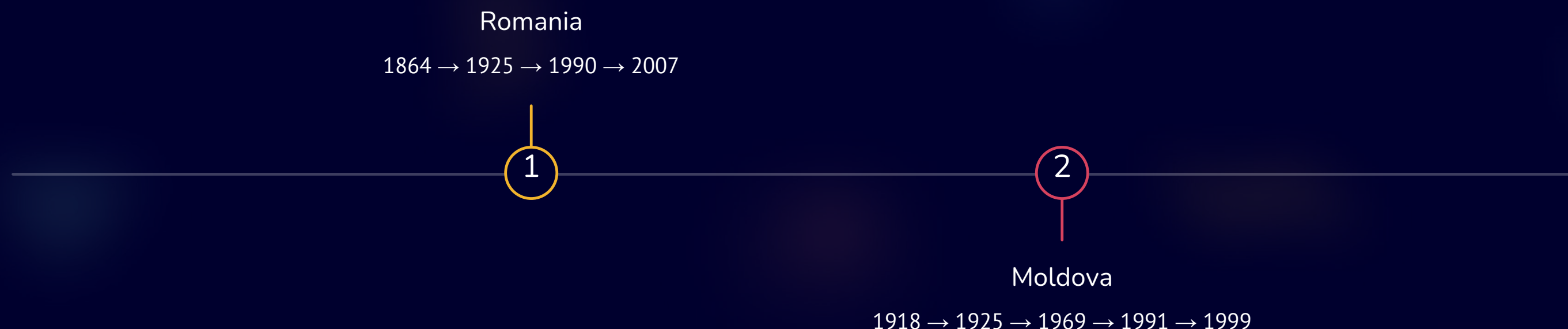
Moldova – Legal Analysis

Moldova: Law 393-XIV (1999) – no peer-reviewed monograph on Moldovan chamber history exists. No prior study systematically compares both systems.

Methodology

This article fills the gap using a seven-dimension comparative methodology, legal analysis, and publicly available data within a single analytical framework.

Legal Basis and Historical Development



Romania: Private Law Model (Anglo-Saxon)

- First chamber: Royal Decree 1363 (1864), Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza – 15 chambers
- Royal Decree 102 of 1925 by King Ferdinand – 51 chambers till 1937
- Re-founded post-socialism: Decree-Law No. 139 (1990)
- Current legal basis: Law No. 335/2007
- Character: 2-tiers, private law, non-governmental, non-profit, autonomous
- Principle of "one chamber per county" – closed system
- Principle „one bilateral chamber per partner country” verified by CCIR/Ministry

Moldova: Public Law Model (Mixed)

- First chamber: Decree of King Ferdinand (1918) in Bessarabia – 8 counties
- 1925 – chambers in Bessarabia became a part of the Union of Chambers of Commerce of Romania
- 1969 - Chamber of Commerce and Industry was established in Chisinau
- Re-established: CCIRM adopted NGO status (1991); Presidential Decree 1994
- Current legal basis: Law 393-XIV (1999)
- Character: centralized „one chamber” system with 10 local branches, non-governmental but public-law legal entity, "enjoys support of the state"
- Exclusive use of term "chamber of commerce" reserved by law

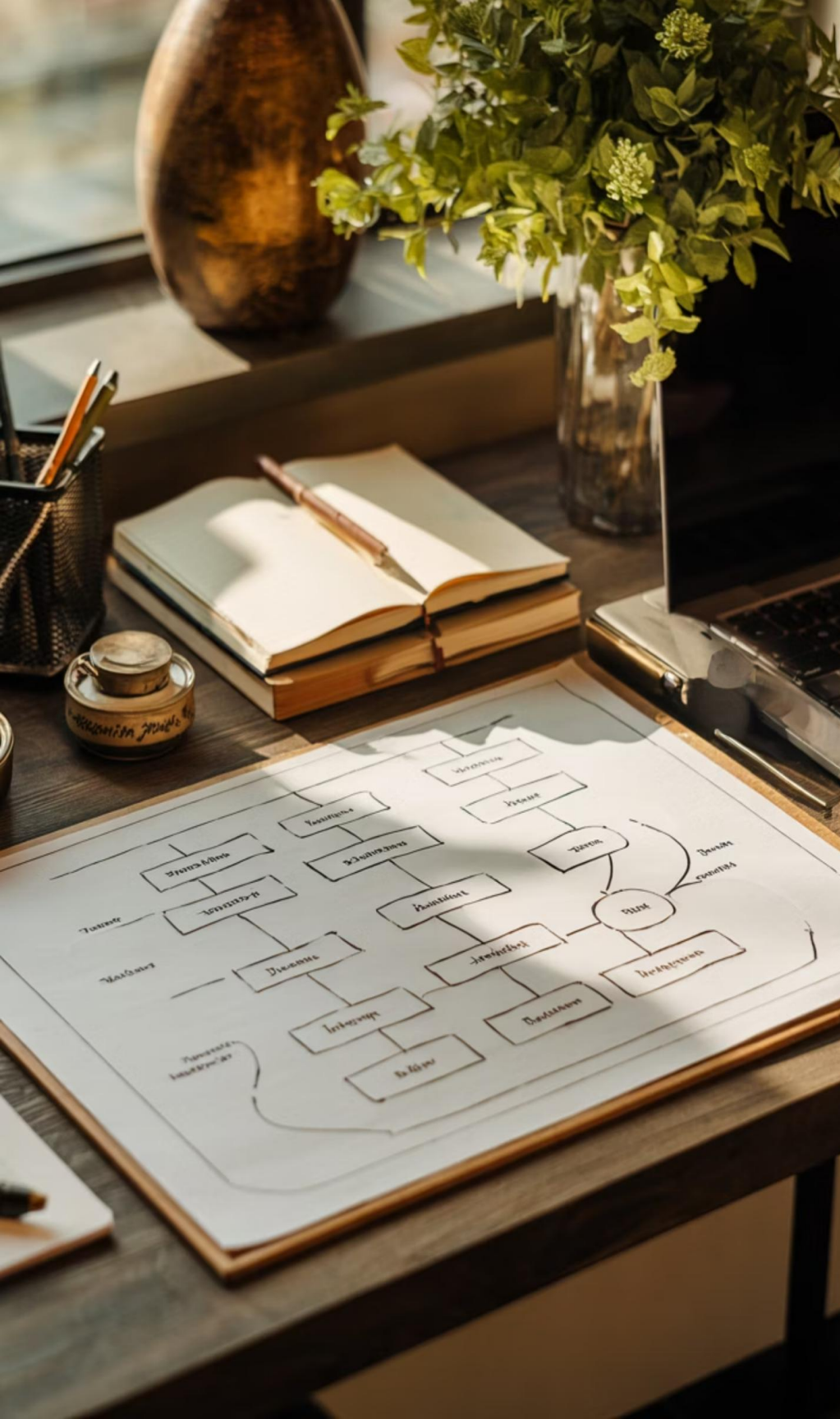
National Structure and Internal Organisation

Romania: Decentralised

- CCIR (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania) - national umbrella organization but NOT hierarchical superior
- 42 independent county chambers, each with legal personality and various level of activity
- Bilateral chambers are part of the network
- Governing bodies: General Assembly → Board/Council → President → Executive departments
- Trade Register transferred to Ministry of Justice in 2002

Moldova: Centralised

- CCIRM (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova):- single national chamber
- 10 regional branches - NOT separate legal persons; operate under CCIRM's corporate identity
- Governing bodies: General Assembly (Congress) → Chamber Council → President & Board → Censors Committee → Executive Office
- Chamber seal bears State Emblem – reinforcing public-law status



Membership Levels – official vs county chambers data

1.71%

Romania

~14,000 members (i) from ~820,000 enterprises

2.24%

Moldova

~1,100 members from ~49,000 enterprises

40%

Low Transparency

Only 17 of 42 Romanian chambers publish verifiable member lists

Romania

Voluntary membership - three types: individual, collective, honorary.
No central register of members—each county chamber operates independently. Only 40% of them publish lists of members.

Moldova

Mixed system: mandatory for large enterprises (commerce, industry, transport, construction); voluntary for SMEs and individuals.
CCIRM publishes only aggregated number of members, not their list.

Data on the aggregate number of members provided by CCIR are questionable.

- (i) A website search done in April 2026 showed that all 17 chambers publishing data (including the largest ones) have a total of only 3,446 members. The result suggests that the number of chamber members does not exceed 50% of the official data.
Suceava example - chamber lost ~27% of members in last 10 years (318→232 from 2015–2024).

Income and Finances

Free Riders challenge

Romania

Revenue sources: membership dues, service fees, grants, sponsorships, dividends, EU and national project funds.

Dues set by each chamber's General Assembly—no national standard. [Share for CCIR](#). Financial data not publicly available.

Strong chambers: EU funds absorption + historic property assets

Weak chambers: limited budgets, ~5 employees, minimal activity

Moldova

Revenue sources: registration fees, membership fees, service payments. Fee cap: up to 5× minimum wage for individuals; up to 30× for legal entities.

CCIRM entirely exempt from taxes. Revenue also from service fees, government/international grants, trade fairs, sponsorships.

No public annual budget nor financial statements identified.

Example of a strong budget - Timiș Chamber (CCIAT) Revenue Structure 2025

Based on interview data: **Services (events, certificates, business center) 66.32%** | **Rent & external funds 26.58%** | **Membership fees 4.96% (415 companies)** | Arbitration court 2.14%. Staff: 35–40 full-time employees.

Tasks: Public and Private Functions



Romania

Historical public function - managing national Trade Register (until 2002).

Current role: consultative councils, sectoral committees, social dialogue structures, EU policy domains.

CCIR - formal gatekeeper over bilateral chambers.

Romanian Services

Trade fairs, events, training, vocational education, certification (certificates of origin), international partnerships, arbitration & mediation.

Greatest demand from entrepreneurs: business consultation & information—72.3% (Popescu, 2016).



Moldova

CCIRM's public-law mandate explicitly includes: drafting economic legislation, force majeure certification, independent expertise on draft regulations, ATA carnet issuance, electronic signature services, industrial property protection, non-state commercial register.

Moldovan Services

Combined advocacy + service + promotional activities. Moldova's law formally codifies more delegated public-like functions, giving CCIRM a sharper quasi-institutional B2A profile relative to Romanian chambers.

Relations with Public Authorities



Romania

CCIR and 42 chambers: autonomous NGOs with public-interest character. No direct state funding. Structured consultations with government ministries and agencies (EU policies, trade, SME support). Represented on Economic and Social Council (CES). Cooperates with EU institutions via EUROCHAMBRES/ICC.



Moldova

CCIRM: public-law entity "enjoying support of the state" (Law 393-XIV). Closer, institutionalized relationship with public authorities. Mandated to cooperate in elaboration and implementation of economic policy. Single B2A interface - concentrated expectations and responsibilities. Represents entrepreneurs before public administration bodies and international organizations.



In practice, the effectiveness of B2A relations depends on organizational capacity, financial resources, and the prevailing political climate. Further empirical research (interviews, surveys) is needed for a comprehensive assessment.



Institutional Strength: SWOT Analysis

Romania

Strengths

- Full territorial coverage (42 counties)
- 160+ years of tradition
- EUROCHAMBRES & ICC member
- Various service portfolio

Limitations

- Fragmentation - 42 independent chambers
- Small membership base
- Financial limitations
- Uneven capacity across counties
- Limited influence in social dialogue

Opportunities

- EU structural fund absorption
- SME and regional development policy
- Digital transformation of services

Threats

- Declining membership trend
- Risk of marginalization by other business orgs on state
- Insufficient resources in weaker chambers

Moldova

Strengths

- Institutional centrality (single chamber)
- 1,100+ member enterprises
- Legal mandate + public-law status
- International integration - EUROCHAMBRES, ICC

Limitations

- Severe resource constraints
- Institutional overload
- Political/governance volatility
- Limited geographic reach (Transnistria excluded)

Opportunities

- EU approximation process
- Cross-Nistru cooperation
- Regulatory reform facilitation

Threats

- Geopolitical risks (Transnistrian conflict)
- Dependency on political will
- Donor fatigue in international programs

Implications for Social Dialogue and Sustainable Development

Romania

- Potential B2A partners for EU-aligned SME and regional development policies
- Participation in structured social dialogue—county, national and EU levels
- Active role of CCIR' in EU institutions and cooperation with other national chambers links Romanian chambers' network to EU policy cycle
- Unequal county-level capacity limits the effectiveness of B2A mediation
- Chambers contribute to SDGs through SME support, training, export promotion

Moldova

- CCIRM as primary intermediary for EU approximation and regulatory reform
- Positioned to support cross-Nistru economic cooperation
- Its quasi-public institutional status makes it a natural partner for government-led initiatives
- CCIRM's current position resembles Romanian chambers ~20 years ago (Radu, 2008)

✓ Policy Roadmap

Romania's 30 years of experience post-1990—including EU accession, structural fund absorption, and legal reform—constitutes a practical roadmap and reference examples for CCIRM's institutional development trajectory.

Executive Summary

Two Distinct Models

Romanian chambers follow private-law NGO model; Moldova's CCIRM operates as mixed public-law entity with state support.

Low Membership Rates

Both countries declare around 2% enterprise membership. Research suggests that in Romania rate is lower than 1%. This results in low real representativeness of chambers.

Financial Challenges

Low membership levels translate also into very limited budgets that must be supported by commercial activities.

Cooperation between both countries

Romania's 30 years of experience since 1990 – including EU accession and reforms – provide a practical model for institutional development for Moldova and the CCIRM.

Conclusions

01

Two different models. Romanian chambers represent private-law model. CCIRM represents mixed public-law model.

03

Financial sustainability is a structural challenge in both systems; only the strongest Romanian chambers with commercial assets and EU funds are fully operational.

05

Both chamber systems have the potential to be effective B2A partners, contingent on political will and capacity-building.

02

Membership rates are low in both countries (Romania ~1.71%; Moldova ~2.24%) and declining at last in Romania. The lack of transparency makes it impossible to verify official data.

04

CCIRM may follow and copy some of the activities of Romanian chambers from 1990/2000s. The experience of Romanian chambers provides a practical roadmap.

06

Further empirical research (surveys, interviews) is required to assess actual B2A effectiveness.

Chamber Systems in Romania and Moldova

A Comparative Analysis

Thank You

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