

Time bomb - Chisinau's new penitentiary on Uzinelor Street



The Moldovan Government has approved the signing of a project agreement between the Ministry of Justice and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in the end of December 2024, marking a significant step in the reform of the penitentiary system. The project, with an estimated budget of EUR 39 million, foresees the construction of a new penitentiary in the Chisinau municipality to replace Penitentiary No. 13, a building more than a century and a half old.

The new penitentiary will be located at 251 Uzinelor Street, in the Ciocana sector, [according to information from the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Moldova](#). The Feasibility Study and Operational Plan prepared by the Spanish company "Euroestudios", contracted by the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), was the basis for the organization of the construction project.

Time bomb - Chisinau's new penitentiary on Uzinelor Street

Penitentiary No. 13, built around 1850, has become the symbol of the poor conditions of detention in Moldova, attracting numerous convictions before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) for inhuman and degrading treatment. Overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure have highlighted the urgent need for a modern solution that meets international human rights standards.

The new prison will occupy 4.9 hectares and have a capacity of 1,536 places, designed to ensure decent conditions in line with today's requirements. In addition to improving detention conditions, the project focuses on the social reintegration of prisoners through facilities dedicated to education, vocational training and rehabilitation programs. The aim is not only to reduce the pressure on other penitentiary institutions, but also to help prisoners reintegrate into society after serving their sentences.



Photo: Graphic suggestion of the new penitentiary located on Uzinelor Street 251, in Ciocana sector, Chisinau, according to the project of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Moldova - Prison Reconstruction 2025

But this location of the large penitentiary in the north-eastern part of the capital may generate a number of long-term social, urban compatibility and economic problems. Such as public safety risks, negative impact on local infrastructure, noise and visual pollution, decrease in land values and altering the perception of residents, stigmatization of the area.

The proximity of a prison to an inhabited area may generate fears of possible escapes, violent incidents or other problems that could affect community safety. The presence of

Time bomb - Chisinau's new penitentiary on Uzinelor Street

highly dangerous inmates could exacerbate these concerns, as well as lead to the criminalization of the Bubuieci village surroundings.

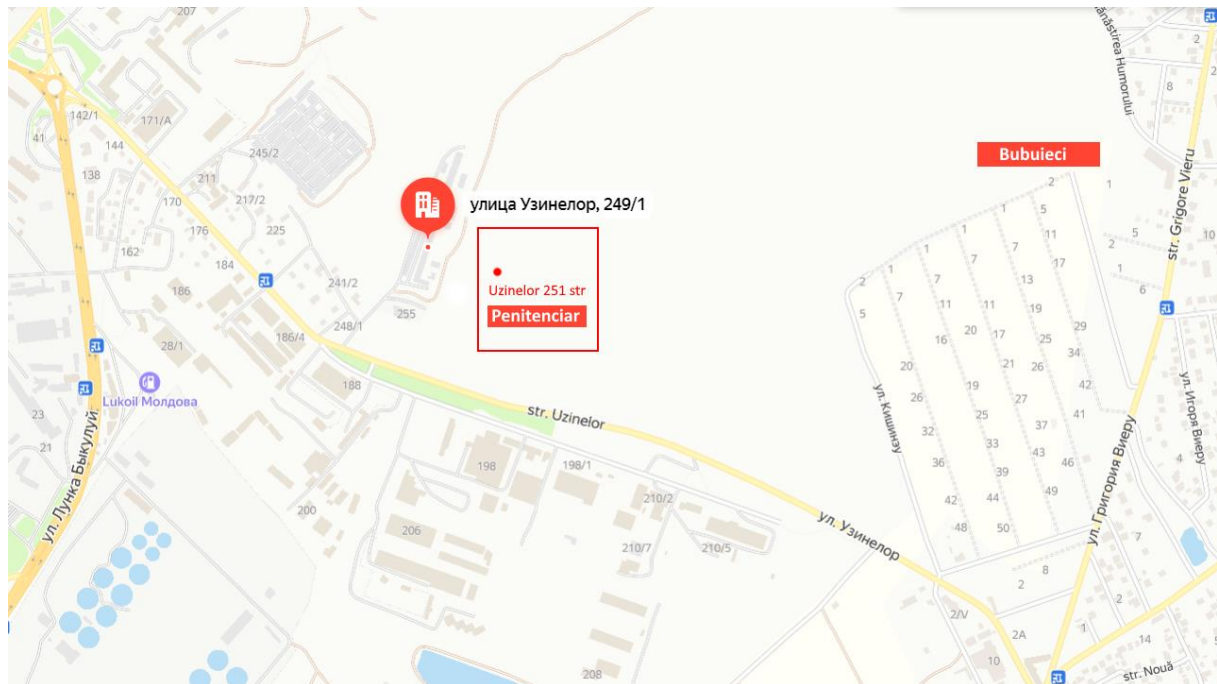


Photo: Map of the new penitentiary on Uzinelor Street 251, Ciocana sector, Chisinau, according to the project of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Moldova - Yandex Map

An institution of this kind requires constant vehicular traffic (transportation of prisoners, supplies, visits), which could overload the local road infrastructure. The pressure on water, sewage, and energy networks could also increase significantly.

The existence of a penitentiary close to residential areas (Bubuieci) may negatively affect real estate values and discourage investment in those neighborhoods. Inhabitants may be reluctant to the project, considering it as an element that makes the area less attractive.

Associating an area with the presence of a penitentiary can create a stigma, affecting the reputation of the local community and creating a feeling of discomfort for residents. Frequent visits from prisoners' families could bring an influx of people causing overcrowding and other disruptions.

In order to minimize the risks associated with the construction of this penitentiary, it is essential to choose a suitable site as far away as possible from crowded residential areas (e.g. Cricova). It is also crucial to build a double-secured perimeter and implement modern technological measures to prevent escapes and incidents altogether.

Time bomb - Chisinau's new penitentiary on Uzinelor Street

An active and transparent communication with the local population is necessary to explain the benefits of the project and reduce their fears. In addition, investment in local infrastructure will help to offset the impact on the community, ensuring a balance between the development of the project and the well-being of local residents.

The land for the construction of the new penitentiary, considered as special purpose land, was expressly mentioned in Law No. 97/2014 on amending the Annex to Law No. 66 of 23.11.2015 on the approval of the List of units whose land for agriculture remains state property.

Author

Iurie Barbaroș Jr.

Independent Journalist