



**Written inputs to the List of issues prior to reporting (LOIPR),
prepared by the People's Advocate for the Rights of the Child
(Ombudsperson) of the Republic of Moldova**

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I. Introduction

II. Measures taken and progress achieved by the state party

A notable progress was recorded on 30 November 2023, with the adoption of Law No. 370/2023 on the rights of the child. This legal act is compliant with the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter referred to as „the Convention” or „UN CRC”).

Through the Government Decision No. 347/2022, the National Program for Child Protection for the years 2022–2026 was approved. It contains actions such as: strengthening institutional capacity at the local level to prevent the separation of children from their families; ensuring zero tolerance towards all forms of violence against children; expanding the network of professional parental assistance services as a family-type alternative to institutionalization for various categories of children, including children with disabilities, young children, sibling groups etc.; strengthening the potential for improving professional competencies in child protection and related fields; coordinating the deinstitutionalization process; intensifying parenting education activities implemented throughout the country; developing specialized services for children available at the local level.

III. Factors and difficulties hindering the implementation of the Convention

One of the major difficulties remains the lack of control over the Transnistrian region, which creates a protection gap for children in this area and prevents the direct application of the Convention.

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on children has accentuated pre-existing inequalities. The study „Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Youth”¹ highlights significant barriers to access to online education, such as the lack of equipment, digital skills, and internet connection, especially among poor households and single-parent families. In the post-pandemic period, the phenomenon of multidimensional poverty has intensified, affecting children's nutrition, education, and health.

After the start of the Russian war in Ukraine, the authorities of the Republic of Moldova took prompt actions to ensure the protection of refugee children. Over 330,000 Ukrainian children entered the country in 2022–2023², and the establishment of 133 refugee accommodation centres was an essential step in addressing urgent needs. At the same time, innovative legal instruments were adopted for the identification and monitoring of children in risk situations, including unaccompanied children or those accompanied by unauthorized persons.³

¹ <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/md/undp-vulnerable-groups-ro.pdf>

² <https://data.unhcr.org/en/working-group/336?sv=54&geo=10784>

³ <https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/respectarea-drepturilor-copiiilor-stramutati-din-ucraina-.pdf>

IV. Key areas of concern and recommendations

A. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44 (6))

Legislation

The Republic of Moldova has made significant progress in developing a legislative framework dedicated to child protection, increasingly aligned with the principles of the Convention. The current child protection framework has been developed with a strict focus on respecting the best interests of the child in any decision that may concern them. Thus, the main legal acts in this field, namely: the Family Code No. 1316/2000, Law No. 99/2010 on the legal status of adoption, Law No. 140/2013 on the Special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents, as well as Government decisions adopted regarding services addressed to children, regulate the obligation of authorities to prioritize the best interests of the child.

Comprehensive policy and strategy

The Government of the Republic of Moldova approved a new National Child Protection Program for the years 2022–2026⁴ and its Action Plan, which is anchored in the Sustainable Development Goals.

An important aspect to note is that, in all financial planning exercises for implementing the actions in the Plan, the responsible authorities did not follow through; as a result, the amount allocated from budgetary sources for the implementation of the Program in 2022 was 0 (zero) lei, which led to a limited number of proposed activities being carried out. In 2022, only 2 out of 4 planned actions were implemented. In 2023, in addition to planned actions, processes initiated in 2022 continued, and two actions initiated in 2022 were completed. Six actions, which had a deadline of 2023, were finalized by the reporting stage (July 2024). If we total the actions implemented by July 2024 under General Objective 1 (actions 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19), we obtain an implementation rate of 50%. The actions under General Objective 2 are in progress, some already completed or partially realized. General Objective 3, which refers to ensuring the upbringing of children in a safe and protective family environment that guarantees their well-being, includes 5 specific objectives with 25 actions planned for implementation by 2026. Of the 24 actions that had a 2023 deadline, 4 were completed (actions 11, 12, 15, and 55 – in progress), which represents 17%.⁵

Coordination

Although the Republic of Moldova has taken important steps to improve the institutional framework for the protection of children's rights, including through the adoption of Government Decision No. 338/2023 of 31 May 2023 regarding the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights (hereinafter referred to as the Council)⁶, these changes remain predominantly formal, without a consistent structural impact. This normative act grants the

⁴ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=145280&lang=ro#

⁵ Report on the Midterm Evaluation of the National Child Protection Programme for the Years 2022–2026 <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Raport-cu-privire-la-evaluarea-intermediara-a-Programului-National-pentru-Protectia-Copilului-pe-anii-2022-2026.pdf>

⁶ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=137530&lang=ro

Council new competencies and a distinct mandate to coordinate activities related to the implementation of the UN CRC at all levels (national, district, local), through intersectoral collaboration. Despite this legal reform, the actual functionality of the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights is limited by the availability of necessary human, technical, and financial resources for effective activity. Since the adoption of the above-mentioned Government Decision, the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights met only once. The Territorial Councils for the Protections of Children's Rights are in many cases inactive⁷.

Resource allocation

Limited budgetary resources continue to represent a systemic obstacle to the progressive realization of children's rights, directly affecting the efficiency of national strategies/programs and action plans. According to the evaluation report of the previous child protection strategy⁸, limited financial resources at both central and local levels were evaluated as one of the main causes of delays in the implementation of activities/results/objectives. The generic mention of the funding source, „according to the annual allocations provided in the national public budget”, reflects a reactive and unsustainable approach that has not allowed a rigorous assessment of the State's capacity to meet its international obligations. The situation is not much different in the case of the 2022–2026 National Child Protection Program⁹ and its related Plan.

The adoption of the „Restart” Social Assistance System Reform, regulated by Law No. 256/2023 and implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (hereinafter referred to as MLSP), marks a turning point in the institutional reconstruction of social protection. This reform redefines the funding mechanisms for social services, including those for children, focusing on equitable and universal access to quality benefits. The "Restart"¹⁰ reform aims to ensure equitable access to quality social services across the population by funding them directly from the state budget, thus ensuring the distribution of financial resources for social services across the entire country.

Data collection

The MLSP, as the central authority responsible for the development and monitoring of state policy in the field of child protection, has acquired an essential tool for enhancing its activities: the Child Protection Information System (CPIS), approved through Government Decision No. 491/2024. CPIS is an advanced digital solution designed to address essential needs in the field, aiming to streamline and improve existing processes, supporting access to relevant information about each child's case within the protection system, including case status, generating alerts and notifications, making referrals to relevant social services, transferring case files between case managers in different administrative-territorial units, and retrieving relevant information from other sectors (health, education, public order, justice) via the government interoperability platform MConnect.

⁷ https://cnpdc.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/ppt_raport_ctpdc.pdf

⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/6531/file/Evaluarea%20intermediar%C4%83%20a%20Implement%C4%83rii%20Strategiei%20pentru%20Protec%C8%9Bia%20Copilului%202014-2020.pdf>

⁹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=145280&lang=ro#

¹⁰ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=138928&lang=ro

Additionally, the information system calculates performance monitoring indicators and generates statistical reports regarding case management in child protection, alternative care, or adoption. These functionalities will help all actors involved in child protection operate more efficiently and deliver better and faster services for the benefit of children.

Independent monitoring

Under Law No. 52/2014 on the People's Advocate (Ombudsman)¹¹, the People's Advocate for Children's Rights operates with responsibilities to ensure the observance of children's rights and freedoms and the implementation of the provisions of the UN CRC. The People's Advocate for Children's Rights receives and examines complaints regarding the violation of children's rights. At the same time, individuals can be received in audience both at the central office in Chişinău and at the four regional offices in Bălţi, Cahul, Comrat, and Varniţa.

To ensure the observance of children's rights and freedoms, the People's Advocate for Children's Rights is entitled to act *ex officio* to assist children in difficulty or at risk, without requiring the consent of their parents or legal representatives.

The establishment of the Children's Ombudsman within the national mechanism for the protection of children's rights represents a significant progress for the Republic of Moldova, reflecting the state's commitment to align its governance structures with international standards. However, the functional efficiency of this institution is undermined by systemic constraints, especially insufficient staff and financial resources allocated from the state budget for the conduct of its specific activities. Most of the institution's interventions and operational activities are carried out with the support of international donors, in the absence of consistent and predictable budgetary allocations from the state. An additional challenge is the staff turnover within the institution. The lack of an adequate financial motivation system leads to professional migration towards better-paid positions, that erodes institutional continuity and affects the transfer of expertise.

Dissemination, awareness, and training

Methodological and institutional dysfunctions affect the effectiveness of training sessions conducted for system employees. Although numerous training sessions have been organized, the lack of a clear concept for evaluating their effectiveness limits the authorities' capacity to monitor the real impact on professional practice. There are no standardized mechanisms to assess the applicability of acquired knowledge, which creates a gap between theoretical training and observable changes in social intervention. The implementation of the „Restart” Social Assistance System Reform has caused delays in the implementation of actions 20, 21, 22, 23, and 25 of the Action Plan, which refer to the development and approval of a methodology for assessing the training needs of social assistance staff, a mechanism for contracting providers of training services, as well as the development and approval of the composition and Regulation of the Commission for evaluating courses and training providers.¹² Moreover, high professional turnover among social field employees, caused by the lack of financial motivation, reduces the retention capacity of expertise formed during training.

¹¹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=147958&lang=ro#

¹² <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Raport-cu-privire-la-evaluarea-intermediara-a-Programului-National-pentru-Protectia-Copilului-pe-anii-2022-2026.pdf>

Although several information and awareness-raising campaigns were carried out under the auspices of the MLSP¹³, there are no impact reports. Without an integrated evaluation system, training and awareness campaigns remain fragmented tools with potential but unconfirmed effectiveness.

Cooperation with civil society

The MLSP has signed collaboration agreements with development partners such as UNICEF, USAID, and the Global Initiative Changing the Way We Care, a consortium of non-governmental organizations committed to supporting the Ministry in implementing the 2022–2026 National Child Protection Program.¹⁴

B. Definition of the child (art. 1)

The provisions of the Family Code¹⁵ define a rigorous legal framework for the exercise of the right to form a family and to enter into marriage, based on the fundamental principles of family legislation, including monogamy, equality between spouses, and freely expressed consent between a man and a woman (Art. 2). The Code stipulates a minimum marriage age of 18; however, under justified circumstances, this age may be lowered by up to two years, with the consent of the guardianship authority and the parents. This derogation allows for normative interpretations that may weaken the protection of children's rights, especially in communities where arranged marriages involving children continue to occur, including among the Roma minority. So far, no legislative amendments have been made to eliminate the exceptions that permit marriage under the age of 18.

In parallel, on 10 July 2025, the Parliament adopted, through Draft Law No. 70, an amendment to the Criminal Code introducing criminal liability for entering into marriage or cohabitation with persons who have not reached the age of 18. This provision represents an important step toward explicitly criminalizing child marriage/cohabitation, strengthening the criminal protection of minors against this form of abuse disguised as the institutionalization of family relations.¹⁶ Nevertheless, while the criminal law proposes a punitive approach, the Family Code remains inconsistent, maintaining exceptions to the legal age of marriage. In this context, there is a risk of poor intersectoral coordination between the legal system, child protection, and social inclusion policies, especially in vulnerable communities.

C. General principles (arts. 2-3, 6, and 12)

Non-discrimination

The Republic of Moldova has made legislative progress through the adoption of Law No. 121/2012 on ensuring equality¹⁷. The establishment of the Equality Council¹⁸ has strengthened

¹³ <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Raport-cu-privire-la-evaluarea-intermediara-a-Programului-National-pentru-Protectia-Copilului-pe-anii-2022-2026.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Raport-cu-privire-la-evaluarea-intermediara-a-Programului-National-pentru-Protectia-Copilului-pe-anii-2022-2026.pdf>

¹⁵ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=148507&lang=ro#

¹⁶ <https://www.parlament.md/material-details-md.nspx?param=81da8b57-3ea5-417b-9a6a-e4481dc716b2>

¹⁷ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=144449&lang=ro#

¹⁸ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135531&lang=ro#

the institutional framework for preventing and combating discrimination. Nevertheless, Moldovan society remains segmented along multiple criteria and tends to reject, more than in most European countries, LGBTQI+ persons, people living with HIV, refugees etc.¹⁹ Thus, discrimination continues to be a major barrier to the social inclusion of children with disabilities, with the Roma population being the most disadvantaged minority group.²⁰

The report „Discrimination in the Republic of Moldova, 2020”²¹ highlights the stigmatization and exclusion of children with disabilities from extracurricular activities, especially in educational settings. According to the findings of the study „Perceptions and attitudes towards equality”²², in 2021, the general population’s attitude toward Roma was predominantly negative. Although the Government is in the process of implementing Government Decision No. 576 of 03-08-2022 on the approval of the support program for the Roma population for the years 2022–2025²³, ensuring the effective exercise of the rights of Roma people remains a challenge for the authorities.

For children from the LGBTQI+ community, the same pattern of discrimination as seen among Roma children is observed. Including topics related to sexual and gender diversity in the school curriculum could help reduce prejudice and promote tolerance among students.

Although several actions have been taken, children living in poverty continue to be marginalized and discriminated against in both the community and school environment, where informal payments are widely present.

Best interests of the child

The current framework developed in the field of child protection aims to ensure respect for the best interests of the child in any decision that may concern them. Thus, the main normative acts in this field, namely: the Family Code No. 1316/2000, Law No. 99/2010 on the legal regime of adoption, Law No. 140/2013 on the special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents, as well as Government decisions on case management and services addressed to children, regulate the obligation of authorities to consider, first and foremost, the best interests of the child. However, the best interests of the child are not always consistently implemented by guardianship authorities. The lack of a standard regulation and methodology for assessing the best interests of the child when determining visitation rights in cases of divorce/parental separation creates operational uncertainties.

Respect for the views of the child

Although the normative framework promotes the involvement of children in decision-making processes and respect for their views, the actual impact of such participation is minimal, remaining a formal practice without concrete influence on final decisions. In educational institutions, children’s voices are often marginalized, with teachers perceiving students’ opinions as immature or irrelevant. Representative structures (e.g. the Student Council) function mostly formally, without real influence on school decisions. Student participation is

¹⁹ https://egalitate.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/RO_Studiu_distanta_sociala.pdf

²⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/copiii-de-etnie-rom%C4%83>

²¹ <https://egalitate.md/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/final-infografic-COE-discriminare-RO-1.pdf>

²² <https://rm.coe.int/studiu-privind-perceptiile-si-atitudinile-fata-de-egalitate-study-on-p/1680a655e7>

²³ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=133208&lang=ro

often treated superficially, which leads to reactions of disinterest, irony, or teasing among children themselves. Although, in theory, student involvement in decision-making is promoted, in reality, it often remains a formality without concrete impact on final decisions²⁴.

A group of Children Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) pointed out the following challenges:

- Lack of recognition and support – many adults do not take children’s voices seriously regarding human rights, and institutions do not always provide safe platforms where children can express their views;
- Discrimination and stereotypes – some CHRD are marginalized due to their age, being told they are “too young” to understand serious issues;
- Risk of intimidation and reprisals – children may be targets of harassment or threats from adults (including their own families or peers), who discourage them and perceive activism as dangerous;
- Limited access to information and resources – CHRD often struggle to understand laws and mechanisms for the protection of human rights, which need to be age-appropriate, friendly, and accessible to children;
- Psychological and emotional pressure – children may face stress and emotional exhaustion, especially when they do not see immediate changes. Sometimes they may feel excessive responsibility or even guilt if their efforts are unsuccessful.

D. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7-8 and 13-17)

Birth registration

While the Ministry of Justice is promoting a draft law on civil status documents, targeting birth registration and digitalization as a promise for service efficiency, a critical challenge remains unresolved: the lack of a functional mechanism for the undocumented children, including those from the Roma community. Approximately 5% of beneficiaries consulted in the „Roma Access to Justice” project²⁵ do not possess identity documents or a birth certificate, which severely limits their access to education, social services, legal aid, and justice.

E. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24(3), 28(2), 34, 37(a) and 39)

Abuse and neglect

Although the Republic of Moldova has made some progress in combating violence against children, the phenomenon remains widespread. Corporal punishment is often perceived as a normal practice for educating and disciplining, without awareness of its negative consequences for the child. According to the sociological study „Opinions and perceptions regarding domestic violence and child abuse”,²⁶ about one-third of respondents (36.2%) stated that corporal punishment of children is common in families.

²⁴ <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/raport-tematic-respectarea-dreptului-copiilor-la-opinie-si-implicare-in-luarea-deciziilor-2024/>

²⁵ https://www.justitiatransparenta.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/A4_Report_justitie_web.pdf

²⁶ <https://cnpac.md/uploaded/Publicatii/PDF/publicatii/studiu.opinii%20si%20perceptiile%20privind%20violenta.pdf>

Another alarming phenomenon concerning violence against children is violence in educational settings. Educational institutions rarely dismiss teaching staff who have committed violence against children, usually limiting sanctions to reprimands. Sometimes teachers voluntarily leave but are re-employed in the education sector in other institutions. There is no registry of sanctions applied to teachers, including for violence against children, that future employers (educational institutions) can consult.²⁷

The rates of violence against children in the Republic of Moldova are alarming. The „Violence Against Children” (VAC) survey²⁸ conducted in 2019 in Moldova revealed that 2 in 5 girls (36.8%) and boys (37.8%) were subjected to some form of violence before the age of 18. Additionally, 1 in 7 girls (14.4%) and 1 in 20 boys (5.3%) experienced sexual violence before turning 18, and most did not tell anyone about their experiences.

According to the 2024 Activity Report of the Prosecutor’s Office²⁹, 1,058 children became victims of crimes, compared to 898 criminal cases in 2023, indicating a 12% increase compared to the same period in 2023. Of the total number of offenses committed against minors, 69.19% were violent in nature, of which 48.68% were sexual offenses or domestic violence. 94 criminal cases were initiated under the offense elements of Article 201/1 (domestic violence) of the Criminal Code, with 116 child victims (in 2023 – 56 cases, 64 children). In recent years, Moldova has made significant progress in adopting legal frameworks to prevent and combat domestic violence. A positive step is the institutional strengthening through the National Agency for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, which supports prevention and coordinated intervention in domestic violence cases. However, the number of reported child abuse and violence cases remains significantly below the actual incidence, which hinders adequate intervention and accurate statistical reflection of the phenomenon.

The number of child victims of trafficking and exploitation is increasing. In criminal cases involving child trafficking, 30 child victims were identified (26 girls and 4 boys), compared to 25 in 2023 (19 girls and 6 boys)³⁰. One of the current challenges faced by law enforcement in preventing child trafficking is dictated by the regional context, refugee crisis and illegal migration.

In recent years there have been numerous cases of violation of children's rights and parental rights, especially in situations where parents are separated or undergoing divorce, through acts of alienating children, usually from the parent living separately (parental alienation/psychological abuse)³¹. Unfortunately, there are no national legal mechanisms to regulate this form of severe psychological violence or to implement compensatory/transitional measures for restoring the relationship/attachment with the alienated parent once such acts are confirmed. These challenges are compounded by gaps in regulating preventive measures and clearly

²⁷ <https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/raport-anual-privind-respectarea-drepturilor-si-libertatilor-omului-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024.pdf>

²⁸ <https://www.togetherforgirls.org/en/resources/moldova-vacs-report-2020>

²⁹ <https://procuratura.md/sites/default/files/2025-04/raport-privind-activitatea-procuraturii-anul-2024-finalcpr.pdf>

³⁰ ibidem

³¹ <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/raport-anual-privind-respectarea-drepturilor-si-libertatilor-omului-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024/>

assigning the obligations of all actors involved in the prevention and early identification of parental alienation.

Bullying remains widespread, affecting a significant number of students and negatively impacting their emotional well-being and social development. According to UNICEF's 2019 study „Bullying Among Teenagers in the Republic of Moldova”³², 70.8% of students in grades 6–12 are victims of bullying. About 21% of students in grades 5–12 experience weekly bullying, according to a study³³ by the Alliance of NGOs Active in Child and Family Social Protection (APSCF), conducted between January–June 2023. Additionally, 3 out of 100 students reported experiencing cyberbullying at least once a month in the past school year.

The Republic of Moldova has a robust legislative framework for child protection from all forms of violence, including: the Education Code (defining bullying and the principle of non-violence); Law No. 140/2013 on the protection of children in risky situations; Government Decision No. 270/2014 on the intersectoral cooperation mechanism; The Orders of the Ministry of Education No. 77/2013 on institutional intervention procedures; No. 858/2013 on methodology for abuse cases; and No. 1024/2022 on preventing and combating bullying. However, implementation reveals numerous deficiencies. According to semi-annual reports by the Ministry of Education and Research, around 8,000 cases of suspect cases of violence against children are recorded annually in Moldovan educational institutions³⁴. A comparative data analysis shows that the number of reported cases is significantly lower than the actual number. This is due to several factors, including limited capacity of educational staff to identify and respond to VAC and the erroneous belief that it is better not to report such cases in order to preserve the institution's reputation.

Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

Sexual abuse of children, often committed by persons close to the child, is particularly concerning. According to the 2024 Activity Report of the Prosecutor's Office³⁵, 386 criminal cases concerned sexual offenses with 399 child victims (in 2023 – 347 cases, 339 children), of which 132 children (2023 – 37) were sexually abused by their biological father or the mother's partner (92 children) and by other relatives (40). Teachers, who should identify signs of abuse, are not always prepared to do so, and in some cases, abusers remain unpunished due to legal loopholes.³⁶

Online sexual abuse and exploitation of children is also a growing concern. According to a 2021 study by La Strada on the online experiences and risks faced by children in Moldova³⁷, of the 3,829 children aged 9–17 surveyed, 12% said they had received messages containing vulgar language or sexually explicit images. Approximately 1% of children aged 12–17 reported having sent, in the past 12 months, nude photos or videos of themselves to people they

³² <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/3146/file/Bullying-ul%20%C3%AEn%20r%C3%A2ndul%20adolescen%C8%9Bilor%20din%20Republica%20Moldova.pdf>

³³ <https://aliantacf.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Raport-KAP-Bullying.pdf>

³⁴ <https://mec.gov.md/ro/content/prevenirea-si-combaterea-violentei-0>

³⁵ <https://procuratura.md/sites/default/files/2025-04/raport-privind-activitatea-procuraturii-anul-2024-finalcpr.pdf>

³⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/training-intervening-abuse-ro-final/1680a40d5c>

³⁷ https://lastrada.md/storage/pic/uploaded/Studiu_Siguranta_online-comportamente_si_riscuri-FINAL.pdf

communicated with online. 13% of those who sent such content did so to someone they only knew online (8% because they were threatened, 4% to obtain money or goods in exchange)³⁸.

F. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9-11, 18 (1)-(2), 20-21, 25 and 27(4))

At the end of 2024, 7,928 children were recorded as being in situations of risk, with 80.0% of them coming from rural areas. The most vulnerable among them were children living in rural environments. Boys made up the majority, representing 51.1% of all children at risk. By age group: 11.5% were aged 0–2 years, every fourth child (24.6%) was aged 3–6 years, 52.8% were aged 7–15 years, and 11.1% were aged 16–17 years. Out of the total number of children at risk, 272 were children with disabilities³⁹.

Among all children in risk situations, 7,288 thousand were classified as neglected children, 324 were victims of violence, 120 had lost one or both parents, 34 had both parents or the sole parent refusing to fulfil parental duties related to child upbringing and care and the remaining 162 children were in other circumstances.

According to the thematic study „Analysis of the child protection system”⁴⁰, the right to various forms of assistance and support (financial, social, medical etc.) for children in situations of risk and for their families is recognized under national legislation and regulatory norms. However, in most cases, the assistance and support provided is insufficient, either because the promotion and development of quality services for children largely depends on the limited capacity of the state budget, or because these services are not widely known.

Children left without parental care due to migration lack adequate protection. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, in 2024, the proportion of households with children with members who had gone abroad for work or in search of work was higher in rural areas than in urban ones. Of all households with children, 16.0% had at least one member who had gone abroad for work or to look for work. In rural areas, this figure was 22.7%, compared to 9.6% in urban areas. Based on the number of children per household, households with members abroad were distributed as follows: 37.5% had one child, 40.0% had two children, and 22.5% had three or more children.⁴¹ Although the situation improved in recent times, still a large number of parents go abroad for extended periods without appointing a guardian for the child left behind.

A significant proportion of parents fail to fulfil their financial obligations to support their children. Statistical data indicate that this leads to a growing number of enforcement procedures for child maintenance payments. Currently, it is estimated that one in ten children in the Republic of Moldova is involved in a court-ordered enforcement procedure for collecting child support. Since 2012, enforcement rates have dropped dramatically, from over 50% to under 20%⁴².

³⁸ https://lastrada.md/pic/uploaded/Studiu_Siguranta_online-comportamente_si_riscuri-FINAL.

³⁹ <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Raportul-statistic-anual-nr.-103-%E2%80%93-%D0%A1opii-aflati-in-situatie-de-risc-si-copii-separati-de-parinti-pentru-anul-2024.pdf>

⁴⁰ <https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Studiu-tematic-privind-analiza-sistemului-de-protec%C8%9Bie-a-copilului.docx-Final-1.pdf>

⁴¹ https://statistica.gov.md/ro/situatia-copiiilor-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024-9578_61802.html

⁴² <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/raport-tematic-analiza-mecanismului-si-procedurilor-de-executare-a-pensiei-de-intretinere-a-copiiilor/>

According to the thematic report „Analysis of the mechanism and procedures for enforcing child support payments”⁴³, legislative changes from 2017-2022 have reduced the methods and scope of enforcement measures. Most creditors perceive the failure to receive child support payments as a result of a sense of impunity felt by the debtor. It has become increasingly difficult to collect child support due to various methods used by debtors to conceal their income or avoid registering assets in their name. Current enforcement measures, which target only the debtor’s assets, are often ineffective, making it necessary to identify alternative solutions.

Recent developments in the deinstitutionalization process reflect the national authorities’ firm commitment to aligning the child protection system with international standards, emphasizing every child's right to live in a safe and nurturing family environment. In 2024 alone, 129 children were deinstitutionalized, including 23 children with disabilities.

Although in 2024 several services were piloted, such as the Professional Parental Assistance (PPA) service for children with severe disabilities, the PPA service for children at risk of committing offenses or in conflict with the law, and the emergency PPA service, modelled after best practices from several European countries⁴⁴, family-type alternative care services, such as professional parental assistance and family-type children's homes, have developed slowly or not at all in some districts. The main cause identified is the low level of allowances, which are insufficient to cover a child’s needs, deterring potential participants from becoming foster parents, guardians, etc. The slow development of family-type care services is also due to low wages in these services, which are disproportionate to the level of responsibility involved.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, in 2024 the child absolute poverty rate was 33.6%, but increased by 3.4 percentage points compared to 2023. Children from rural areas are at greater risk of poverty than their urban counterparts: in 2024, the absolute poverty rate for rural children was 46.6%, compared to 18.6% for urban children⁴⁵.

Transnational migration of Moldovan families generates complex legal disputes related to custody and child support involving cross-border elements⁴⁶. These cases often concern determining the child’s place of residence and parental responsibilities in cases where both parents are Moldovan citizens who previously lived abroad and one parent returns to Moldova with the child and seeks custody. However, the existing measures and mechanisms for resolving such disputes are insufficiently consolidated and coordinated. Even though Law No. 112/2020 amended the Civil Procedure Code (No. 225/2003) to regulate procedures for returning a child to their habitual residence or enforcing visitation rights under the 1980 Hague Convention on the civil aspects of international child abduction, the changes were not sufficient.

Similarly, although Law No. 292 of 13 December 2024 was adopted to provide special protection for children against illicit removal abroad or retention, and to align national legal provisions with international standards, particularly the 1980 Hague Convention, this law also

⁴³ <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/raport-tematic-analiza-mecanismului-si-procedurilor-de-executare-a-pensiei-de-intretinere-a-copiiilor/>

⁴⁴ <https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/raport-anual-privind-respectarea-drepturilor-si-libertatilor-omului-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024.pdf>

⁴⁵ https://statistica.gov.md/ro/situatia-copiiilor-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024-9578_61802.html

⁴⁶ <https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Studiu-tematic-privind-analiza-sistemului-de-protoc%C8%9Bie-a-copilului.docx-Final-1.pdf>

does not resolve current practical obstacles. In particular, it does not adequately address the issue of non-compliance with court orders on the return of the child (Article 21).

Another identified problem concerns gaps in the national legal framework regarding the enforcement of decisions on the child's residence and visitation schedules, which leads to violations of the child's right to family life. The national framework is overly concise and does not describe in sufficient detail how these legal relationships should function. According to the Methodological Guide on improving the enforcement of court decisions, the failure to enforce judgments on residence and access to children is primarily due to three factors: insufficient legal regulations, poor application of existing procedural tools, and minimal or formal involvement of guardianship authorities, which are responsible for resolving such disputes outside the courts.

G. Children with disabilities (art. 23)

As of January 1, 2025, the number of children with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova stood at 11,404⁴⁷. Children identified with a primary disability are predominantly from rural areas, with the main causes of disability being mental disorders and congenital malformations.

Although the Republic of Moldova has a sufficiently comprehensive legal framework concerning the educational and social inclusion of children with disabilities, challenges lie in the low level of acceptance of such children and in the insufficient availability of services. In recent years, there has been a diversification of services for children with disabilities, developed with the support of civil society organizations and development partners. Nevertheless, for instance, access to medico-social services for children and young people with autism spectrum disorders or at risk of developing such disorders remains a challenge, even though the legal framework has been approved.

When it comes to the provision of medical, rehabilitation, social, and educational services for children with disabilities, a major difference exists between the informal care provided by families and support persons, and the official services provided by the state and civil society organizations. A major issue currently faced by Moldova is the insufficient budget allocations for personal assistance, with waiting lists for this service still existing after the Restart reform.

At the end of 2023/beginning of 2024, the municipal authorities in Chişinău made decisions that severely impacted the activity of personal assistants and the realization of the rights of the persons assisted. As a result, some personal assistants were dismissed, while others had their work schedule changed from full-time to part-time.

According to the findings of the 2021 study „Perceptions and attitudes towards equality”⁴⁸, persons with mental disabilities are still viewed with reservation. The Equality Council has issued numerous decisions⁴⁹ recognizing discrimination against children based on disability.⁵⁰ Although the Government has approved the Inclusive Education Development Program in the

⁴⁷ https://statistica.gov.md/ro/situatia-copiiilor-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024-9578_61802.html

⁴⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/studiu-privind-perceptiile-si-atitudinile-fata-de-egalitate-study-on-p/1680a655e7>

⁴⁹ <https://egalitate.md/decisions-opinions/>

⁵⁰ <https://egalitate.md/decisions-opinions/>

Republic of Moldova for 2024–2027⁵¹, children with disabilities and with special educational needs (SEN) still face challenges in exercising their right to education and inclusion.

At the beginning of the 2024/25 academic year, 11,798 students with SEN and disabilities were enrolled in primary and general secondary education institutions across the country. Of these, the majority (95.6%) attended general education institutions, while 4.4% studied in schools for children with intellectual or physical development disorders. The proportion of SEN students integrated into general education institutions has increased.⁵²

However, according to the study „Inclusion of children with special educational needs in the education system”⁵³, although over the years there has been a trend toward improvement, reflected by an increasing share of respondents supporting the inclusion of these children in general education institutions and a decreasing share supporting their placement in residential institutions, there continues to be a high level of rejection when it comes to the inclusion of children with mental or intellectual disabilities. The education system is facing a shortage of staff, aging teaching personnel, and insufficient equipment in educational institutions.

General education institutions are not physically adapted to accommodate students with visual impairments, or those who are hard of hearing or have late-onset deafness. They also lack assistive equipment and technologies tailored to individual needs that would ensure access and full participation in lessons. There is a shortage of support staff for SEN children. The current funding formula for inclusive education (2% of the education budget allocated per district) does not meet real needs, with funds primarily used for the salaries of support teachers⁵⁴.

Respecting the child’s right to health within educational institutions remains a challenge. Students from rural areas have more limited access to water, sanitation, and hygiene in schools. In 86 educational institutions (about 8% of all schools), students use toilets located outdoors. Of these 86, 32 have sanitary facilities designed inside the buildings, but they are non-functional due to the lack of necessary infrastructure, such as sewerage and water supply systems. A total of 297 educational institutions require renovation of sanitary blocks, and in some cases, entirely new toilets must be built to ensure decent conditions for students⁵⁵.

H. Basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (3), 24, 26, 27 (1)– (3) and 33)

At the end of 2024, the structure of disease incidence among children aged 0–17 was dominated by respiratory diseases (497 new cases per 1,000 children), traumatic injuries, poisonings, and other consequences of external causes (57 new cases per 1,000 children), infectious and parasitic diseases (54 new cases per 1,000 children), diseases of the nervous system and sensory organs (33 new cases per 1,000 children), skin and subcutaneous tissue diseases (25 new cases

⁵¹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=141025&lang=ro

⁵² https://statistica.gov.md/ro/situatia-copiilor-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024-9578_61802.html

⁵³ [https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/15376/file/Incluziunea%20copiilor%20cu%20cerin%C8%9Be%20educa%C8%9Bionale%20speciale%20%C3%AEEn%20sistemul%20de%20%C3%AEEnv%C4%83%C8%9B%C4%83m%C3%A2nt%20\(2024\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/15376/file/Incluziunea%20copiilor%20cu%20cerin%C8%9Be%20educa%C8%9Bionale%20speciale%20%C3%AEEn%20sistemul%20de%20%C3%AEEnv%C4%83%C8%9B%C4%83m%C3%A2nt%20(2024).pdf) pag.68.

⁵⁴ <https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/asigurarea-dreptului-la-educatie-a-copiilor-cu-deficiente-senzoriale.pdf>

⁵⁵ <https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/raport-anual-privind-respectarea-drepturilor-si-libertatilor-omului-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024.pdf>

per 1,000 children), blood diseases and hematopoietic organ disorders (18 new cases per 1,000 children), and digestive system diseases (15 new cases per 1,000 children)⁵⁶.

One of the causes of the prevalence of infectious diseases is the low vaccination rate. The Republic of Moldova currently falls below the 95% vaccination coverage threshold with the sole exception of BCG vaccine. Thus, the risk of the re-emergence of vaccine-preventable infections becomes imminent, with major social and economic consequences in the event of an epidemic outbreak.⁵⁷ For instance, in Moldova there were 0 cases of measles in 2021, 0 in 2022, 3 in 2023, and 216 cases in 2024⁵⁸. In 2024, the coverage rate for measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine was 83.9%.

The number of Roma children who received at least one vaccine under the National Immunization Program is 5,386 (76% of the total registered)⁵⁹. Roma individuals do not attend medical institutions regularly but seek care only in serious or extremely serious cases. The lack of information available in the Romani language on public health programs, the delayed seeking of medical care by Roma people, and insufficient knowledge about health education are also among the social constraints in realizing the right to health.

Although the authorities have taken several measures to protect public health by reducing exposure to tobacco smoke and related products, in 2019, 16.3% of adolescents aged 13–15 were active users of tobacco and nicotine-containing products: 20.4% of boys and 11.8% of girls (GYTS Study, 2019). According to the most recent data from 2022, based on the "Health Behaviour in School-aged Children" (HBSC) study in the Republic of Moldova, 25% of adolescents aged 13–17 had used electronic cigarettes: 28.3% of boys and 22% of girls. A positive aspect is the adoption in 2025 of the Law on amending and supplementing the regulatory framework on tobacco control, part of a legislative package initiated by the Ministry of Health in response to the alarming increase in the consumption of tobacco and nicotine products among adolescents. The Law aligns national legislation with European Union standards and the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. A negative aspect is the postponement of the entry into force of the ban on flavours in electronic cigarettes till 2029⁶⁰.

Inequitable access to treatment and adequate nutrition for children with rare diseases remains a challenge in realizing the right to health. According to existing estimates, about 2,500 individuals with rare diseases are registered under the supervision of specialists from tertiary-

⁵⁶ https://statistica.gov.md/ro/situatia-copiilor-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024-9578_61802.html

⁵⁷ https://www.google.com/search?q=programul+na%C8%9Bional+s%C4%83n%C4%83tatea+2030&rlz=1C1GCEA_enMD986MD986&oq=programul+na%C8%9Bional+s%C4%83n%C4%83tatea+2030&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIHCAEQIRifBTIHCAIQIRifBTIHCAQIRifBTIHCAQIRifBTIHCAUQIRifBTIHCAAYQIRifBTIHCAcQIRifBTIHCAgQIRifBTIHCAkQIRifBdIBCTExMTIzajBqN6gCALACAA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

⁵⁸ <https://ansp.md/ansp-informeaza-despre-situatia-epidemiologica-prin-rujeola-in-republica-moldova-7/>

⁵⁹ The updated report on the mapping of densely populated Roma communities in the Republic of Moldova, GIZ, 2021, https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/final_raport_privind_cartografierea_localitatilor_dens_populate_de_romi.pdf

⁶⁰ <https://www.sanatateinfo.md/News/Item/12397/copiii-pot-vapa-linistiti-guvernul-si-parlamentul-amana-interdictia-aromelor-din-tigaretele-electronice-cu-inca-3-ani>

level specialized medical institutions in the Republic of Moldova, with children accounting for more than 50% of those affected. Although the number of patients with rare diseases is increasing annually by about 10%, this figure does not reflect the real situation in the country, according to international estimates⁶¹.

Currently, under Law No. 1585/1998 on mandatory health insurance and the related compensation mechanism regulation, medications and special food products intended for children with rare diseases are not included in the list of compensated items. This gap directly affects children's rights to health, protection, and equity. Due to high costs and limited availability, families are often forced to make significant financial sacrifices or, in some cases, to forgo necessary treatments altogether.

Access to mental health services remains a challenge for children, as child and adolescent mental healthcare is limited in the Republic of Moldova. According to statistical data, 9,798 children aged 0 - 17 years were registered in psychiatric care in 2022, with an increase in mental disorders among children over the past five years.⁶² In addition to discrimination and social exclusion, children with mental health problems face difficulties in accessing specialized medical services.

I. Children's rights and the environment (arts. 2, 3, 6, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 24 and 26–31)

Air pollution from fixed and diffuse sources in urban areas

The emission values for 2022 from all pollutant-generating activities reached values of 13.37 Mt (CO₂ equivalent), from transport reaching values of 2.78 Mt (CO₂ eq.), of which carbon dioxide - 2.72 Mt, methane 13.78 kt, nitrous oxide 38.11 kt, solid particles (2.5 and 10), carbon black, sulphur oxide, metal oxides, etc. A study published in *The Lancet Planetary Health* (2020) analysed the impact of air pollution on children in several European cities. It found a strong correlation between exposure to PM_{2.5} and the occurrence of childhood asthma, chronic bronchitis, and recurrent respiratory infections⁶³.

Landfills

According to the latest statistics, 30% of rural areas do not have a waste management system. Children are frequently involved in the collection of used metals from the landfills, with or without supervision. A specific problem that is often encountered is the incineration of landfills. This practice, although illegal, is used to reduce the volume of waste or to facilitate the collection of metals. The burning of plastic, rubber and other synthetic materials releases extremely dangerous pollutants into the atmosphere, such as dioxins and furans. These substances are carcinogenic and seriously affect respiratory health, with long-term effects. Due to their higher breathing rate, children are much more susceptible to the effects of these substances. Studies have shown a correlation between exposure to smoke from waste burning and an increased incidence of asthma, allergies and other respiratory diseases.

⁶¹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=143104&lang=ro

⁶² https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=143550&lang=ro#

⁶³ Berruti, M., & Forastiere, F. (2020). Long-term effects of air pollution on lung function development in children. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 4(11), e467-e468. DOI: 10.1016/S2542-5196(20)30252-9. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/air-pollution-and-childrens-health>

Lead Paint

Lead (Pb) in paints is used on playground equipment and in preschools. This risk is particularly relevant for the Republic of Moldova⁶⁴, where, although legislation is in place, implementation and monitoring remain a challenge. A recent study showed that approximately 57% of paints examined on the Moldovan market contained elevated levels of lead. According to data from the National Agency for Public Health, cases of lead poisoning have been recorded, especially in children. A 2022 report indicated a 40% increase in the number of cases among children in the past two and a half years. A 2018 study conducted by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova, in collaboration with UNICEF, tested 50 toys on the Chisinau market and found that up to 30% of them far exceeded the permissible concentration of heavy metals, including lead.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

A recent study (2024)⁶⁵ conducted by UNICEF Moldova in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research assessed water supply, sanitation and hygiene facilities in 968 primary, secondary and high school educational institutions, which constitute over 80% of the total number of educational institutions in the country. Of these, 751 are in rural areas. Of the 968 institutions participating in the assessment, 341 are connected to a centralized sewage system, another 136 institutions reported being connected to a local sewage system, 449 institutions store wastewater and solid waste in septic tanks, and 42 institutions reported using septic tanks. Due to high costs and insufficient financial resources, managers choose not to empty tanks/cisterns as frequently as necessary. This situation has a negative impact on both public health and the environment. About 50% of educational institutions in the Republic of Moldova do not have a wastewater collection and treatment system, which considerably affects aquatic resources.

Involvement of minors in illegal environmental actions

Mainly due to poverty, children are involved in activities such as washing vehicles, equipment and packaging in natural waters, in their vicinity and in other unauthorized places; poaching and illegal fishing; illegal logging to secure firewood; illegal grazing of animals and working on the sheepfold; collecting and trading endangered plants.

Environmental activism⁶⁶

Child and young human rights defenders may experience violence or threats of violence - before, during and after their engagement for human rights. For instance, in a Fridays for Future strike in Balti (2020), children were first attacked on the streets (including physically) and then online (including by being humiliated, ridiculed etc.).

⁶⁴ <https://am.gov.md/ro/content/s%C4%83pt%C4%83m%C3%A2na-interna%C8%9Bional%C4%83-de-prevenire-intoxica%C8%9Bilior-cu-plumb>

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<https://www.unicef.org/moldova/en/media/13076/file/Rezultatele%20evalu%C4%83rii%20facilit%C4%83%C8%9Bilior%20de%20alimentare%20cu%20ap%C4%83,%20sanita%C8%9B>

⁶⁶

https://drepturilecopilului.md/files/Human_Rights_Situation_in_the_Republic_of_Moldova_With_focus_on_the_rights_of_Child_Human_Rights_Defenders.pdf

This has also not been recognized as an opportunity for a genuine human rights education by the schools. “After the strike, the administration of a school from which several students came to strike gathered everyone from the school to threaten to expel the students who participated in the strike during school. They threatened with expelling or not admitting to the final exam.” (girl, 17yo).

Although Law No. 26/2008 on assemblies grants this right to everyone, it does not explicitly recognize children as rights holders. In the context of the Republic of Moldova (characterized by low awareness and recognition of children’s rights), this lack of clarity leaves room for interpretations for decision-makers (authorities and anyone else who has the power to influence children’s lives), which may compromise the exercise of this right by children.

In addition, the right to organize assemblies is granted only to children over the age of 14 and only if they are accompanied by a person with full legal responsibility. Denying this right to children under the age of 14 and making it conditional on adult support for children over 14 is problematic from a human rights perspective (UN CRC, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders), and is inconsistent with the position expressed by the Human Rights Committee or the Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. This issue was also pointed out in the 6th Report on Monitoring of Freedom of Peaceful Assembly in Selected OSCE Participating States.

J. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28–31)

Access to education

In the 2024–2025 academic year, 233 Roma children were enrolled in early childhood education institutions (kindergartens), 1,645 Roma students were enrolled in primary and general secondary education (of whom 832 were boys and 813 were girls), 42 Roma students were in high school, 33 Roma youth in technical vocational education, and 20 Roma students in higher education⁶⁷.

Of the total number of Roma children from the 154 localities analysed in a study, only 57% were enrolled in the education system, from kindergarten to higher education. The school dropout rate among Roma children is high, 65% of Roma children drop out of school.⁶⁸

The causes of school dropout and lack of schooling among Roma children include: the absence of an effective partnership between the educational institution, the local authorities, and Roma parents; children migrating with their parents for work; parental refusal and the lack of parental effort to encourage children to study; high rates of illiteracy among Roma parents; the absence of a permanent place of residence or appropriate study conditions at home; limited access to tutoring sessions in schools; children’s health problems; poor material conditions; discrimination in schools; bullying.

⁶⁷ <https://mecc.gov.md/ro/content/incluziunea-scolara-copiilor-romi-discutata-cadrul-unei-consultari-publice-organizate-de>

⁶⁸ https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/final_raport_privind_cartografierea_localitatilor_dens_populate_de_romanii.pdf

Quality of education

In the PISA 2022 assessment, the Republic of Moldova consistently scored below the OECD and EU averages in all three evaluated domains - mathematics, reading, and science. The smallest gap compared to the OECD average was recorded in mathematics (58 points), while the largest was in science (68 points). The EU average exceeded not only Moldova's scores but also those of all the reference countries included.

Approximately 44% of students reached at least the baseline level of proficiency in mathematics. This proportion is significantly lower than the OECD and EU averages, where 69% and 70% of students, respectively, attained at least the baseline level. When compared with the reference countries, Moldova's result is roughly on par with Bulgaria.

In reading, about 51% of students in Moldova reached at least the baseline level of proficiency. Again, this is well below the OECD and EU averages, where approximately 74% and 72% of students, respectively, scored at or above Level 2 in reading.

Roughly 51% of Moldovan students also reached at least the baseline level of proficiency in science. As with mathematics and reading, this is significantly below the OECD (around 76%) and EU (74.8%) averages, and about the same as Bulgaria (52%).

A significant performance gap is observed between students in urban and rural schools. Students in urban schools outperformed those in rural schools across all three assessed domains. The largest difference in average scores was in reading - 57 points. In mathematics and science, the differences were 48 and 51 points, respectively.

The share of students in urban schools who reached the minimum proficiency level in the PISA assessment is approximately 54% in mathematics, 62% in reading, and 61% in science. Among students in rural schools, these percentages are roughly 1.8 times lower - 30% in mathematics, 35% in reading, and 36% in science.

There are also significant variations in average scores across schools of different sizes. On average, students in small schools (with fewer than 400 students) scored 34 points lower in mathematics than students in medium-sized schools (400–900 students), and 71 points lower than students in large schools (more than 900 students). In mathematics, around 31% of students in small schools reached the baseline level, compared to 48% in medium-sized schools and 67% in large schools.

Although the resource allocation is good (Moldova spends almost 6% of GDP on education, when the EU average is 4.4%), the PISA assessment results show the need to streamline expenditure.

Children's/ human rights education

In Moldova's national curriculum, elements of children's/ human rights education are incorporated into both mandatory and optional courses. For example, the mandatory discipline Education for Society (grades 5 to 12) is based on the Council of Europe reference framework of competences for democratic culture. Other subjects related to human rights education are included in the Personal Development mandatory discipline (grades 1 to 12).

Several optional courses also cover human rights. Although the curriculum framework offers multiple options for studying human rights education, its practical implementation remains fragmented. The actual inclusion in the school timetable depends on each institution's decisions, based on student demand and teacher availability. As a result, a significant number of students do not benefit from these courses, either due to a lack of specialised teaching staff or administrative choices.

Efforts are made by the Ministry of Education and Research, in collaboration with development partners, to strengthen the pre- and in-service training of teachers to deliver the human rights education.

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)

An evaluation of the alignment of sexuality education topics in compulsory school curricula with international standards for comprehensive sexuality education (according to UNESCO's SERAT methodology)⁶⁹ showed good progress, with greater challenges especially related to improving teachers' capacity to deliver it. The current revision of the school curricula (ends in 2027) is an opportunity to include the remaining key concepts of the CSE. The results of this evaluation are confirmed by another children's study on the topic⁷⁰.

Education in Transnistrian region

The situation in the educational system of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova - which is under the decisive control and influence of the Russian Federation since 1992 - is alarming due to widespread militarization, ideological control, and political indoctrination. As of 1 January 2024, 81,821 children reside in the temporarily occupied territory of the country⁷¹. Approximately 77,750 children are studying in schools located in the region⁷². Over 80% of children and students enrolled in preschool, primary, and general secondary education in the region study in Russian⁷³, while the official state language of the Republic of Moldova - Romanian using the Latin script - has been banned since 1994⁷⁴.

Basic military training has been integrated into the school curriculum for general education. In 2024, over 4,300 students from the 10th and 11th grades studied the mandatory subject "Initial Military Training" for two hours per week⁷⁵. The subject is taught by reserve officers or individuals with professional experience in the military field. In the final year of study, the practical component of the program includes training with firearms and grenades. For secondary and high school levels, the regime has established two military boarding schools for minors aged 11 to 17, which prepare them for service in paramilitary and security structures: the "Suvorov Military School" and "Grigori Potemkin-Tavriceski Cadet School"⁷⁶. The

⁶⁹ https://eeca.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/serat_moldova_full_web_0.pdf

⁷⁰ https://drepturilecopilului.md/files/educatia_sexuala_cum_o_face_scoala_si_ce_poate_fi_diferit.pdf

⁷¹ <https://minpros.gospmr.org/about/9867>.

⁷² Ibidem

⁷³ Ibidem

⁷⁴ <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#%7B%22itemid%22%3A%22001-114082%22%7D>.

⁷⁵ https://minpros.gospmr.org/files/uoo/common/2022_10_05_02-06_891.pdf.

⁷⁶ Two detailed analyses on the lives of minors enrolled in the Cadet School and the Suvorov Military School in the Transnistrian region, written by Promo-LEX, can be accessed here: <https://promolex.md/cum-sunt-pregatitii-copiii-din-regiunea-transnistreana-pentru-razboi-copilaria-petrecuta-in-scoala-de-cadeti/> and <https://promolex.md/cum-formeaza-regimul-de-la-tiraspol-viitorii-soldati-copilaria-in-scoala-militara-suvorov/>.

curriculum combines general education with systematic military training, which includes firearms practice, combat tactics, intensive physical exercises, and other activities specific to frontline instruction.

The eight Romanian-language schools operating in the Transnistrian region - which are under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova - continue to be subjected to illegal actions by Transnistrian structures^{77, 78}. At the same time, challenges related to educational infrastructure remain largely unresolved. The lack of modern and adequate transportation, poor conditions for the educational process, and insufficient financial resources to reconfigure or expand school facilities are becoming increasingly critical, particularly in light of the growing number of pupils.

Safety and security in sports, recreational spaces, public roads

Safety and security in sports and recreational spaces intended for children remains a problem, due to the absence of explicit requirements regarding the safety of equipment and the design of sports and playgrounds from the perspective of protecting the health and physical integrity of users, particularly children, as well as due to negligence in the planning and maintenance of infrastructure for children's recreation. For instance, national-level regulations do not contain any requirements for the design of football goals in terms of guaranteeing human health and integrity (materials allowed for construction, maximum weight, anchoring/ fixing/ stabilization etc.). Various tragic cases occurred because of football goals falling on children⁷⁹.

In 2022, the Republic of Moldova recorded one of the highest rates of road traffic mortality compared to EU member states (83 deaths per 1 million inhabitants)⁸⁰. Factors contributing to road traffic risks are largely human-related, particularly excessive speed, as well as the quality of road infrastructure.

K. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32–33, 35–36, 37 (b)–(d) and 38–40)

Children in street situations

The phenomenon of children in street situations is present in the Republic of Moldova⁸¹. Repeated leaving of home by children is a consequence of a high level of societal tolerance for VAC and neglect, weak intersectoral cooperation at local level, late identification and insufficient assistance of families with children in difficulty. The sole centre of services for children in street situations is located in the capital city.

⁷⁷ The case of *Catan and Others v. Moldova and Russia* provides extensive documentation on the context in which these schools were subjected to a sustained campaign of pressure, intimidation, and discriminatory restrictions as a consequence of their refusal to adopt the Cyrillic script and the curriculum imposed by the Transnistrian regime, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-114082%22%7D>].

⁷⁸ <https://promolex.md/scolile-cu-predare-in-limba-romana-din-regiunea-transnistreana-sunt-tinta-unei-noi-campanii-de-denigrare-in-mass-media-controlata-de-tiraspol/>.

⁷⁹ <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/raport-anual-privind-respectarea-drepturilor-si-libertatilor-omului-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024/>

⁸⁰ <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/annual-report-on-the-observance-of-the-rights-of-the-child-in-the-republic-of-moldova-in-2023-2/>

⁸¹ <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Raportul-statistic-anual-nr.-103-%E2%80%93-%D0%A1opii-aflati-in-situatie-de-risc-si-copii-separati-de-parinti-pentru-anul-2024.pdf>

Juvenile justice administration

The number of offenses committed by minors has increased compared to 2023. According to data published by the NBS, the most frequently committed crimes by minors remain thefts, accounting for 45.6% of all offenses, followed by pickpocketing – 15.0%, hooliganism – 7.7%, robberies – 6.7%, vehicle theft – 5.5%, and other offenses – 19.5%. The total number of minors who committed offenses in 2024 was 802, including 757 children aged 14–17 (94.4%), with the remainder being under 14 years old (5.6%).

Despite the existence of a legal framework that places children in conflict with the law within the category of children at risk, there is a lack of specialized services and qualified specialists to assist children with antisocial behaviour. This leads to a reliance on placing these children in residential-type services. As a result, recidivism remains a concern.

According to the activity report for 2024⁸², the Prosecutor General's Office developed General Instruction No. 7-11d/2024-71 of 18.04.2024, which recommended that prosecutors apply, whenever possible, the institution of release from criminal liability of minors or the institution of release from criminal punishment of minors with the application, in both cases, of coercive measures of an educational nature. However, according to the statistical data reflected in the prosecutor's office report, in 2024, only in 5 cases the criminal prosecution was terminated based on art. 54 and art. 104 of the Criminal Code (release from criminal liability of minors with the application of coercive measures of an educational nature).

Criminal mediation is an element of restorative justice in Moldova. Unfortunately, the institution of criminal mediation is not fully utilized, and official statistical data are not disaggregated, so the number of criminal cases involving minors that have been resolved through mediation is uncertain.

According to NBS, in 2024, 32 children were detained in penitentiary institutions, including in pre-trial detention.

Goian Juvenile and Youth Detention Center houses adolescents from deeply disadvantaged backgrounds marked by educational exclusion, lack of family support, and violence. The absence of structural rehabilitation mechanisms exacerbates their vulnerabilities, and reintegration prospects remain limited. Children released from detention have no individual reintegration plans or coordinated community services (counseling, education, vocational training, employment), which fosters recidivism.

School programs are formal and not adapted to the individual educational levels of the minors, and there is a shortage of specialized teaching staff. In the absence of an institutional cohesion policy, informal groups form, perpetuating segregation and increasing the vulnerability of isolated minors. Therapeutic interventions are occasional. There are no continuous programs for trauma management, self-control, and self-esteem development. Vocational training and employment opportunities are limited.

During visits by the Council for the Prevention of Torture (CpPT) in 2024, detained children expressed dissatisfaction with staff attitudes, food quality, and restrictions on their right to

⁸² <https://www.procuratura.md/sites/default/files/2025-04/raport-privind-activitatea-procuraturii-anul-2024-final.pdf>

written correspondence. CpPT also found that the socio-educational activities for detained children are insufficient and that material conditions in the detention block for minors in pre-trial detention have significantly worsened compared to the previous visit (November 2023). Staff do not plan activities for minors in pre-trial detention that address their needs and risks⁸³.

Trafficking of children from Transnistrian region

Children left without parental care in the Transnistrian region risk to be trafficked through so-called ‘adoptions’. According to the so-called ‘Ministry of Social Protection and Labour’, there are 754 orphans or children left without parental care in 9 educational institutions, i.e.: 143 preschool age children and 584 school age children⁸⁴. All data on children left without parental care and on persons registered as adoptive parents and guardians are stored in the database formed under the ‘law on the state database of children left without parental care’⁸⁵. Thus, based on this ‘law’, the secessionist authorities publish on the web page of the ‘Ministry of Social Protection and Labour’ photos and other information about the children left without parental care in the Transnistrian region⁸⁶, that directly or indirectly identify the child.

Any of these children is exposed to the risk of being trafficked⁸⁷, given the lack of guardianship authorities responsible for ensuring protection of children in the Transnistrian region, the lack of mechanisms to ensure functionality in the administrative territorial settlements on the left bank of the Nistru river and in Bender municipality of the Law No. 99 of 28.05.2010 on the legal regime of adoption, and issuance by the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Chisinau, contrary to the provisions of the Convention No. 262 of 22.01.1993 on Legal Assistance and Legal Relations in Civil, Family and Criminal Matters⁸⁸, of Russian civil status documents based on the civil status documents issued by the Transnistrian entities.

Mechanisms for submitting complaints by children in cases of rights violations

Although Moldova ratified the Optional Protocol 3 to the UN CRC, there are no known complaints submitted by children from Moldova.

The thematic report “Mechanisms for submitting complaints by children in cases of rights violations”⁸⁹ finds that children do not make use of the existing complaint mechanisms when their rights are violated, except of calling Children’s phone line (116111) or 112 (Emergency phone line). The reasons for this phenomenon are varied, but mainly include: children’s lack of knowledge about the existing procedures; their ability to formulate complaints and petitions and to challenge decisions; their awareness of their rights and understanding of how to exercise them; fear of consequences; and concern that confidentiality will be breached.

⁸³ <https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/raport-anual-privind-respectarea-drepturilor-si-libertatilor-omului-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024.pdf>

⁸⁴ http://minsoctrud.gospmr.org/gosudarstvennyiy_bank_dannyih_o_detyah_ostavshihsvya_bez_popecheniya_roditeley/

⁸⁵

<http://www.minjust.org/web.nsf/All/67d3c0fc2e526e7fc22577380024b2df!OpenDocument&ExpandSection=1.1.10>

⁸⁶ <http://minsoctrud.gospmr.org/children.php>

⁸⁷ Greciuşchin case, <https://www.kp.md/daily/24410.5/584730/>

⁸⁸ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=116625&lang=ro

⁸⁹ <https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/raportul-tematic-mecanism-depunere-cereri.pdf>

There are major deficiencies affecting both the guarantees and the legal regulation of the mechanism for submitting complaints by children, which lead to inconsistencies in the practical application of the described mechanisms.

One of the identified shortcomings is the insufficient regulation of the procedural capacity of children between the ages of 14 and 16.

Another deficiency is that national legal norms governing the mechanism for filing complaints by children whose rights are violated are largely declarative and do not regulate the specific procedures that should be applied in cases involving children. These would include rules on how complaints are to be resolved, procedures for involving the legal representative, where applicable, the appointment of a state-guaranteed legal aid lawyer, the procedure for informing the child of the decision issued in response to their complaint, communication of the means of appeal etc.

At the level of rural communities, children have limited access to information and support services for submitting complaints, since most such services are concentrated in urban areas and high transportation costs prevent them from accessing these services. Accessibility challenges are also faced by Roma children, who are not always informed about these mechanisms. This may be due to their inability to read or write or because they lack identity documents.