



people's
advocate
OMBUDSMAN

SHADOW REPORT

**submitted by the People's Advocate Office
to the UN Committee on the Elimination
of Discrimination against Women**

(93rd session, October 5–30, 2026)



Contents

Background to the preparation of the Report	3
About the People's Advocate Office	4
Access to justice	5
Gender-Based Violence against Women	5
Education	7
Employment	8
Health	10



Background to the preparation of the Report

This report has been prepared by the People's Advocate Office (PAO) pursuant to art.16 h¹) of Law No. 52/2014 on the People's Advocate (Ombudsman)¹, in the context of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's review of the Republic of Moldova's seventh periodic report. The report provides an independent perspective on the State's implementation of its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and highlights the main issues that, in the PAO's view, require the Committee's attention.

The **report's methodology** is based on an analysis of the regulatory framework, official statistical data, and findings from PAO activities. Primary sources include monitoring visits, complaints review, hearing, assistance to individuals, and *ex officio* investigations, as well as thematic, special, visit, and PAO's annual reports.

The report draws primarily on the Ombudsman's findings since 2025 and the Concluding Observations on Moldova's sixth periodic report.² It does not include data on the transnistrian region due to the Ombudsman's limited physical and informational access. Nevertheless, the PAO's Varnita territorial office continues efforts to collect information on the situation there. The PAO remains concerned about restricted access to institutions and the absence of independent monitoring mechanisms, which may affect the effective protection of rights guaranteed by the Convention.

Therefore, **data collection and disaggregation remain a challenge** for public authorities, limiting their ability to identify and monitor inequalities and discrimination affecting women. From a women's rights and HRBA perspective, disaggregated data are essential for identifying gender disparities, vulnerabilities, and the differentiated impact of policies.

To support this process, the PAO, in cooperation with OHCHR, the Equality Council and the National Bureau of Statistics, initiated the development of four sets of human rights-sensitive indicators covering education, social security, health, and the prevention of torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The initiative supports Moldova's commitments under the 2030 Agenda and aims to strengthen the development and implementation of public policies in line with international human rights obligations. It also seeks to generate high-quality, accessible, relevant and reliable disaggregated data to monitor progress and advance the principle of "leave no one behind."

Accordingly, the **Ombudsman recommends the systematic collection and publication of disaggregated data—including by sex, age, and other relevant characteristics—to ensure the effective protection of women's rights.**

¹https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=147958&lang=ro#

²https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FMDA%2FCO%2F6&Lang=en



About the People's Advocate Office

The PAO is the NHRI, with a constitutional mandate³ and autonomous status vis-à-vis other public authorities and institutions, regardless of their type or structure.

The institution operates in accordance with the Paris Principles. It was recredited in 2023 with "A" status⁴, confirming its firm commitment to independence, pluralism, and effectiveness in promoting and protecting human rights.

The Ombudsman carries out his mandate in accordance with the Constitution, Law No. 52/2014 on the People's Advocate (Ombudsman)⁵, Law No. 164/2015 on the organization and functioning of the People's Advocate Office⁶, and the international treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party.

The Ombudsman also examines complaints, requests information and documents from public authorities, and interviews responsible officials to clarify the circumstances of the cases under review.

In 2025, the Ombudsman received 953 complaints from individuals, of which **342 were filed by women. In the first half of 2026**, the PAO received 634 complaints, **241 of which were filed by women**, alleging violations of the right to life and physical integrity, the right to a fair trial, the right to health care, and the right to work.

Financial constraints and institutional capacity: The PAO continues to face budget deficits and staff shortages. In 2025, approximately 15% of the budget was allocated to renovating the headquarters, and 85% for mandate-related activities. In 2026, the share allocated to renovation increased to approximately 43%, leaving 57% of the budget available for carrying out its mandate. At the same time, only 48 of the 56 filled positions are financially covered, meaning that approximately 14% of the filled positions lack financial coverage. The PAO's staffing structure was modified in 2026, with the number of positions increasing from 72 to 75 as part of efforts of strengthening the whistleblower protection mechanism⁷; however, only 56 (75%) are filled.

In 2025, the Ombudsman established a working group to develop the concept for the independent monitoring mechanism provided for in Article 33(2) of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The concept is currently being finalized and involves amending Law No. 52/2014.

³ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=136130&lang=ro

⁴ <https://ganhri.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/SCA-Report-Second-Session-2023-EN.pdf>

⁵ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=141519&lang=ro#

⁶ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=120702&lang=ro

⁷ <https://www.parlament.md/preview?id=b6cfd5fd-966d-4790-9cc0-6b12d8a6049f&url=https://ep-sp.parlament.md/materials/639173304202744617/Documents/20260811120913.docx&method=GetDocumentContent>



Access to justice

Law No. 252/2025⁸ expanded the legal framework for preventing and combating violence. The Ombudsman notes its closer alignment with the Istanbul Convention, including criminal liability for digital violence, harassment and non-consensual sharing of intimate images, broader protection against economic, psychological and sexual violence, and improved access to effective judicial protection, including the immediate enforcement of protection orders.

The Ombudsman draws attention to the need for a proportionate response to domestic violence: Article 78¹ (Contravention Code), which provides the sanctioning of **abuse or other violent acts committed by a family member that have caused minor bodily harm, with 40 to 60 hours of unpaid community service or 7 to 15 days of contravention arrest.**

The Ombudsman recommends monitoring the implementation of this provision to ensure effective protection of victims and prevent repeated acts of violence.

According to the 2025 National Legal Aid Council report⁹, out of 47,148 cases of qualified legal assistance, 9,388 beneficiaries were women (about 20%). In 3,767 cases (about 8%), beneficiaries were victims/injured parties, including 2,474 victims of domestic violence. These data highlight the importance of legal aid in facilitating access to justice and the need to ensure women's effective access, particularly for victims of violence, to accessible and high-quality legal services.

Gender-Based Violence against Women

According to the General Police Inspectorate, in Q1 2026, 5,033 reports concerning family conflicts were registered (+0.6%), including 272 cases identified by the Police *ex officio*. Police also recorded 380 domestic violence offences involving 393 victims (**311 women**, 48 children and 34 men) and 491 domestic violence contraventions (+8.9% compared with 2025). The data confirm that women remain the majority of victims, underscoring the gendered nature of domestic violence and the need to strengthen prevention, protection and perpetrator accountability.

The National Study "*The intersection of violence against children and women in the Republic of Moldova*"¹⁰ highlights the close link between the two phenomena and the need for an integrated institutional response. Services for women and children are still often developed separately, although both may experience violence within the same family context. For girls, childhood violence may constitute both a current rights violation and a risk factor for violence later in life.

Parliament adopted Draft Law No. 70 in final reading, strengthening the legal framework on violence against women and domestic violence. The law criminalizes digital violence, stalking (Article 169¹), and forced marriage (Article 167¹, with aggravated liability when committed against children), introduces protection measures for victims of digital violence, extends protection orders to six months, and adds the definition of "**femicide**" to Article 134²⁷ of the Criminal Code.

The PAO considers these amendments important for strengthening the protection of women and girls and aligning national legislation with the Istanbul Convention.

The Ombudsman recommends monitoring the practical implementation of the new provisions and continuing to evaluate the legislative framework to ensure effective protection against all forms of gender-based violence.

⁸ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=150197&lang=ro

⁹ https://www.cnaigs.md/uploads/asset/file/ro/3232/Raport_anual_de_activitate_2025.pdf

¹⁰ <https://moldova.unfpa.org/en/publications/national-study-%E2%80%9Cintersection-violence-against-children-and-women-republic-moldova%E2%80%9D>



The case of *G.M. and others v. Moldova* highlighted the serious consequences of the **lack of protection for women with intellectual disabilities in residential and psychiatric institutions**. Three residents of the neuropsychiatric institution were raped by a chief physician and subsequently subjected to forced abortions; one of them was also subjected to contraception without her consent. The ECtHR found violations of Article 3 of the ECHR, in part because the authorities failed to prevent such abuses and to conduct an effective investigation.

More than two decades after the events underlying the case, the structural vulnerabilities that allowed serious abuses to go undetected or to be addressed inadequately continue to be evident in Moldova's residential care system.

PAO monitoring visits in residential institutions for people with disabilities identified systemic problems: **deficiencies in the identification, documentation and, in particular, external reporting of cases of abuse, violence and other serious incidents to the competent authorities**. Internal recording of incidents is not always followed by notification to the relevant authorities, risking that cases remain uninvestigated. Findings from visits in highlight the seriousness of these problems.¹¹ The visited center kept records on bodily injuries, altercations, acts of violence, harassment and rape. The PAO found that reporting to law enforcement authorities was "*deficient or non-existent*", and serious cases remain unreported and uninvestigated. The 2025 register contains a case of rape between residents, reported by the survivor, but not reported to the competent authorities. Reporting mechanisms were weak: complaint boxes were rarely used by residents due to communication barriers, and resorting to the telephone or seeking help from other residents involved risks of retaliation. These findings show that internal registers and procedures are insufficient, without accessible, confidential and independent mechanisms for reporting abuse, as well as without prompt notification to the authorities and effective investigation of cases of abuse and violence.¹²

The Ombudsman recommends the development of clear and uniform procedures governing the reporting and investigation of acts of violence and abuse, as well as mechanisms to ensure that each serious incident is reported without delay to the competent authorities and followed by appropriate protective measures.

Online sexual violence and exploitation disproportionately affect girls. According to the 2025 SigurOnline Hotline report, 87.59% of reported child sexual abuse material depicted girls (10,206 materials), while 71% was self-generated, highlighting the need for stronger prevention, digital education and a legal framework addressing AI-generated or manipulated content¹³.

UNICEF reports that in 2026¹⁴ around 1,000 children become victims of crime each year, nearly one third of them victims of sexual offences, with **adolescent girls disproportionately affected**.¹⁵ Expanding Barnahus-type services is important, alongside equitable access to specialized support for all children, including **girls in rural areas**.

Parenting programmes¹⁶ should better integrate gender equality, caregiving responsibilities, family power dynamics and referral mechanisms. Rural girls also need accessible, gender-sensitive community support to identify abuse and seek protection and assistance.¹⁷

¹¹ <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/raport-privind-vizita-de-follow-up-centrul-de-plasament-temporar-pentru-persoanele-cu-dizabilitati-adulte-badicieni-soroca/>

¹² <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/raport-privind-vizita-de-monitorizare-efectuata-la-centrul-de-plasament-temporar-pentru-persoane-cu-dizabilitati-adulted-in-s-brinzeni-r-edinet-din-data-de-25-mai-2026/>

¹³ https://lastrada.md/storage/factsheet/380/SigurOnline_Hotline_RAPORT_2025_FINAL.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/en/press-releases/government-moldova-germany-and-unicef-open-southern-regional-integrated-assistance>

¹⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/en/press-releases/strengthening-support-child-survivors-sexual-abuse-moldova>

¹⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/21446/file/Review%20ENG%20online.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/en/media/19121/file/Case%20study%20final.pdf>



Education

In 2025, women represented **53.4% of employees in research and development, while women represented 52.9% of researchers, exceeding the share of men and 55.8% of researchers with a PhD**. Their share was much lower in engineering and technology (24.9%) than in social sciences (68.8%) and medical sciences (62.4%), underscoring persistent gender gaps in STEM¹⁸.

The **school dropout** rate was 0.08% in the first semester of the 2025–2026 school year (222 pupils out of 295,085, of whom **92 - girls** and 130 - boys) and 0.09% in the second semester (261 pupils out of 295,104, of whom **100 - girls** and 161 - boys).¹⁹ Thus, among the pupils who dropped out, 34 out of 222 were of **Roma ethnicity** in the first semester, and in the second semester the number rose to 49 out of 261.

The main causes of school dropout in the first/second semesters were **going abroad** (43.2%/35.2%), **parental refusal** (18.9%/16.9%), **financial hardship** (8.6%/8.8%), **poor academic performance** (3.6%/7.7%), and **other reasons** (25.7%/31.4%).

At least 5% of children are employed, rising to 14% at age 17 and 23% at age 18. Around 11% of students, especially those over 16, occasionally miss school due to dissatisfaction with the quality and relevance of education.

Roma girls and young women face heightened risks of **dropout, intergenerational poverty and early marriage**. While Roma participation in primary and lower-secondary education has increased, **upper-secondary enrolment remains very low**, with dropout particularly affecting Roma girls. Scholarship and accelerated education programmes aim to improve access and school retention.

The legal framework on **protecting children from violence** is set out in the Education Code, Law No. 140/2013, Government Decision No. 270/2014 and Ministry of Education regulations. Since 2022, it also covers bullying, with a specific prevention and response methodology adopted by Order No. 1024/2022.

According to Ministry of Education and Research reports²⁰, around 8,000 suspected cases of violence against children are recorded annually in educational institutions.

In the first semester of the 2025–2026 school year, **3,611 suspected cases of violence against children** were recorded, **involving 1,069 girls** and 2,542 boys, mainly physical violence, but also psychological violence, bullying and sexual violence.

¹⁸ https://statistica.gov.md/ro/activitatea-de-cercetare-dezvoltare-in-anul-2025-9454_62421.html

¹⁹ https://mec.gov.md/sites/default/files/2_-_abandon_sem.i_2025-2026.pdf

²⁰ <https://mec.gov.md/ro/content/prevenirea-si-combaterea-violentei-0>



Year of study	Forms of violence							Total cases			Source of the report		Decision following the assessment			
	Physical	Psychological	Sexual	Bullying	Neglect	Labor Exploitation	Trafficking, prostitution	Girls	Boys	Total number	teaching staff	employee of the educational institution	Parents	Children	examination in the educational institution	case referral
2023-2024 Semestr I	1297	782	15	475	870	17	4	1120	2701	3821	2059	412	481	869	3340	481
2023-2024 Semestr II	1721	732	20	613	1084	23	0	1336	2857	4193	2348	405	568	872	3501	692
2023-2024 Total	3018	1514	35	1088	1954	40	4	2456	5558	8014	4407	817	1049	1741	6841	1173
2024-2025 Semestr I	1718	631	15	587	827	6	0	1225	2559	3784	1912	295	578	999	3298	486
2024-2025 Semestr II	1523	710	8	695	852	10	0	1182	2616	3798	1896	305	454	965	3154	616
2024-2025 Total	3241	1341	23	1282	1679	16	0	2407	5175	7582	3808	600	1032	1964	6452	1102
2025-2026 Semestr I	1639	577	8	521	861	5	0	1069	2542	3611	1919	222	436	1023	3039	613

The Children's Ombudsman noted that teachers involved in such cases are rarely dismissed and may later be employed by other schools. The Ombudsman therefore welcomed the planned creation of a national register of employees involved in violence cases under the Ministry of Education and Research's 2025 Action Plan²¹.

Employment

In 2025, Law No. 194/2025²², aligned with ILO Convention No. 190, amended the Labour Code to **prohibit workplace violence and harassment in all forms**. Employers must ensure a safe, healthy and violence-free workplace and establish confidential reporting and investigation procedures.

The Contravention Code also provides sanctions for failure to prevent discrimination and sexual harassment or for obstructing complaints, with fines of 30–60 conventional units for individuals, 70–120 for officials and 150–240 for legal entities.

Regarding work–family balance, Law No. 46/2022²³ and related legislation strengthened the Labour Code²⁴ and introduced alternative childcare services²⁵, helping reduce barriers to

²¹ https://mec.gov.md/sites/default/files/final_plan_de_actiuni_mec_2025_.pdf

²² https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=150193&lang=ro#

²³ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=130448&lang=ro

²⁴ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=151096&lang=ro#

²⁵ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=139046&lang=ro



employment, **particularly for women**. The National Programme “Public Nurseries – Employed Parents, Children in Nurseries” expands childcare for children under three and supports mothers’ earlier return to work. The employment rate of women with children aged 0–6 increased from 39.4% in 2019 to 50.7% in 2024. The programme will create or rehabilitate 155 nursery groups for over 3,100 children, supporting around 6,000 parents.²⁶

In 2025, **women’s employment rate was 36.5%**, compared with 44.5% for men, an 8 percentage-point gap.²⁷ Although **women represented 52.8% of employees, they earned on average 15% less than men** (around MDL 14,400 about 699 euro vs. MDL 17,000 about 848 euro).

Accordingly, the persistence of gaps in women’s participation and remuneration in the labor market is highlighted. These gaps are also influenced by family responsibilities, being the main causes of economic inactivity for 51.9% of inactive women aged 25-54, compared to 2.1% of men. Nevertheless, the legislation provides for parental rights for both parents, including paternal leave and the possibility of using parental leave by either parent.

For **Roma women**, the employment rate is very low, mainly due to low levels of education and informal participation in the labour market. Access to unemployment benefits is also limited.

The **Personal Assistance Service is highly feminized**, with women accounting for **80% of personal assistants**.²⁸ The insufficiency, underfunding and limited capacity of support services, in particular the “Respiro” service, disproportionately shifts care responsibilities onto women, contributing to their physical and mental exhaustion and limiting their ability to participate equally in professional and social life.

Low pay in this female-dominated sector further reinforces gender-based economic inequalities by restricting income, career opportunities and social security entitlements. Accessible care services and adequate remuneration for care work are therefore essential to women’s equal opportunities and economic independence.

In 2025, PAO developed the study “*National Baseline Assessment on Business and Human Rights in the Republic of Moldova*”²⁹ which identified structural vulnerabilities affecting women in employment, including **gender pay gaps, limited access to employment and a disproportionate burden of care responsibilities**, particularly in rural areas.

According to the National Social Insurance House, between 1 January and 1 October 2025, the childbirth allowance was received by 24,394 beneficiaries (24,391 women and 3 men); the childcare allowance up to age three by 24,566 beneficiaries (18,304 women and 6,262 men); and the monthly support allowance for twins or multiple births by 1,418 beneficiaries (1,378 women and 40 men).

Law No. 195/2022 amended the Labour Code to introduce flexible working arrangements for persons with family responsibilities, including remote work, home-based work, flexible schedules, part-time work and compressed working weeks.

Despite this legal framework and parental rights for both parents, care responsibilities continue to fall **predominantly on women**, reflecting persistent gender roles and limiting women’s economic participation. A human rights-based approach therefore requires not only formal equality, but also effective measures to ensure a fairer sharing of care responsibilities, work–family balance and equal participation of women and men in the labour market.

²⁶ <https://social.gov.md/comunicare/comunicate/rezultatele-apelului-de-proiecte-pentru-dezvoltarea-serviciilor-publice-de-cresa-din-tara-in-cadrul-programului-national-servicii-de-cresc-publice-parinti-angajati-copii-la-cresc/>

²⁷ https://statistica.gov.md/ro/forta-de-munca-ocuparea-si-somajul-in-anul-2025-9430_62388.html

²⁸ https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/monitoring-reports-for-the-return-of-funds-by-the-uk-to-moldova/monitoring-report-3-ensuring-the-sustainability-of-the-personal-assistance-social-services?utm_source=chatgpt.com

²⁹ <https://ombudsman.md/national-baseline-assessment-on-business-and-human-rights-in-the-republic-of-moldova/>



The Ombudsman recommends that the competent authorities strengthen measures to ensure the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between women and men, including by periodically monitoring and assessing the gender pay gap. He also recommends expanding childcare services and promoting flexible working arrangements, with a view to ensuring equal participation of women and men in the labour market.

Health

In **sexual and reproductive health**, Moldovan law allows abortion on request up to 12 weeks. Medical abortion via telemedicine, used during and after the COVID-19 pandemic³⁰, was discontinued by Ministry of Health Order No. 45 of 23 January 2025³¹, raising concerns about access for women and girls facing geographic, economic or mobility barriers.

In the 2025 Annual Report, the Child Ombudsman highlighted the importance of sex education in preventing child sexual abuse, including it in school curricula through the mandatory subjects: Biology, Personal Development, as well as through the optional subject Health Education. According to information provided by the Ministry of Education and Research, in 2025, it initiated a review of the curriculum to align sex and reproductive education with international standards.³²

Roma access to healthcare remains limited by gaps in health insurance and child vaccination, while **community and educational mediators** help facilitate access to health, education and social services.

Mental health: In 2025, PAO prepared a thematic report assessing the legal and institutional framework for preventing, identifying and managing violence in the context of mental health conditions, as well as child protection mechanisms.³³ The report notes that, although the national regulatory framework provides procedures for domestic violence, including in the context of mental disorders³⁴, implementation remains fragmented, standardized risk assessment tools are lacking, this being carried out mainly in the context of hospitalization or emergency, and early identification of risk in the community remains limited.

The Ombudsman recommends that the authorities strengthen community mental health services by improving early identification and assessment of violence risks, as well as by ensuring continuity of care.

³⁰ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur59/9404/2025/en/>

³¹ <https://ms.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/45-23.01.2025.pdf>

³² <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/raport-anual-privind-respectarea-drepturilor-si-libertatilor-omului-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2025/>

³³ <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/raport-tematic-evaluarea-cadrului-normativ-si-a-mecanismelor-institutionale-de-prevenire-identificare-si-gestionare-a-violentei-in-contextul-tulburarilor-mintale-precum-si-a-mecanismelor-de-protect/>

³⁴ https://sanatatemintala.md/images/documente/Ghid_urgente_tipar.pdf